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Editorial Board

India's Central Asia "Push"under Narendra Modi Government

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Abstract

India-Central Asia relations have got an upward push since Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government came to power in India in the year 2014. The fact that Central Asia is now the fulcrum of India's "Act North" policy stems from PM Modi's half a dozen visits to the resource rich Central Asian Republics (CARs) in the last six years, on different occasions, and for different purposes with the historical state visit in July 2015 as the precursor. The opening up of Chabahar port as India's gateway to Central Asia, India becoming a member of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), and strengthening political and diplomatic relations through high profile political and diplomatic visits and signing of Strategic Partnership agreements showcase the sustained efforts of Modi's "New India" to keep alive its vital stakes in this important region. Keeping in view the growing Chinese presence, India has finally shown astute leadership in pursuing its national and global interests in Central Asia.

Keywords: India, CARs, Modi, Act North, Strategic Partnership, historical-cultural link

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Introduction

The CARs have attracted considerable global attention after their independence in the year 1991 because of a) end of Cold War following disintegration of former Soviet Union; b) creation of a peculiar geopolitical and geostrategic situation; c) their natural resources, especially oil and natural gas, which became a potential alternative for Persian Gulf petroleum resources; and d) revival of Islam. Big powers (USA and Russia) and regional powers such as China, India, Iran, Turkey and Pakistan started making efforts to nurture their respective interests and accordingly devised strategies to establish their presence in Central Asia thus paving way for what is often dubbed as "New Great Game". India, which is not a party to this 21st century power struggle in Central Asia, has understood well the post-Cold War realities and its vital interests in this resource-rich region, with which it has strong civilisational connection. The NDA government under Modi studied India's Central Asia venture in the past 29 years and accordingly made a proactive approach to translate its deep-rooted bonding with Central Asia into a meaningful relationship that suits both India's interests in the region and fulfils the expectations and aspirations of the CARs as well. Prime Minister Modi, who reiterated that "Central Asia does have ancient roots with India and now occupies a significant place in India's future," (Putz, 2015) became the first Indian Prime Minister to visit all the five CARs in July 2015in a single visit spanning over a week that heralded the beginning of new age economic, security and strategic cooperation partnership with the CARs. Besides meeting the top-notch political leadership of these republics, attending several cultural programmes and addressing the Central Asian

leaders, Prime Minister Modi signed several agreements [Turkmenistan (eight), Kazakhstan (five), Kyrgyzstan (four), Uzbekistan (three), and Tajikistan (two)], which include the important civil nuclear cooperation agreement with Kazakhstan, and defence agreements with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan, several business deals and economic cooperation agreements (Chand, 2015: pp.12-13).

PM Modi's focus on Central Asia has assumed importance because of the massive Chinese presence and influence in South and Central Asia (Stobdan, 2015), which is considered asthe main stumbling block for India's efforts to consolidate its position as a major player in and around the region. Even India's quest for energy resources of the CARs (Turkmen natural gas, Kazakh oil and uranium, Uzbek natural gas and uranium, and Tajikistan's hydroelectricity) to secure her energy security could not be realized successfully. Further, the shattered security situation in South and Central Asia has given fatal crack to the citadel of peace in the region and is a cause of major concern for India. Amidst such grave concerns, key strategists of Modi government felt the growing convergence between USA and India in the global corridor in general and South and Central Asia in particular may augur well for Indian efforts in Central Asia. While the USA hesitates to see the CARs falling under the exclusive influence of either China or Russia, India is unwilling to see growing Chinese influence in the Central Asia region (Pant, 2015).

Against this background, this paper argues that India-Central Asia link has got an upward push in the last half a dozen years of Modi government. The fact that Central Asia is now the fulcrum of India's "Act North" policy stems from PM Modi's half a

dozen visits to the resource rich Central Asian Republics (CARs) in the last six years, on different occasions and for different purposes, with the historical visit in July 2015 as the precursor. The paper describes that the opening up of Chabahar port as India's gateway to Central Asia, India becoming a member of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), welcome developments with regards to International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC) and Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan India (TAPI) pipeline, and strengthening political and diplomatic relations through high profile visits and signing of strategic partnership agreements showcase the sustained efforts of Modi's "New India" to keep alive its vital stakes in this important region. Keeping in view the growing Chinese presence and influence in South and Central Asia, India has finally shown astute leadership in pursuing its vital interests in Central Asia, the paper adds.

Uzbekistan: Key Pillar of India's Engagement in Central Asia

Uzbekistan's importance as the key pillar of India's engagement in Central Asia and an important ally in Asia was ironically felt, when Prime Minister Modi chose Tashkent as the first stop of his Central Asia sojourn on 6-7 July 2015, where he emphatically stated: "I have begun my journey in Uzbekistan. This underlines this nation's importance for India, not just in the context of this region, but also more broadly in Asia" (Media Statement.., 2015). Further, it reminds us the interests and high hopes the Uzbek political leadership under Islam Karimov had generated in 1992, a few weeks after the creation of CARs in December 1991, looking at India in high esteem, which culminated in a State visit to India as the first Central Asian Head of State after independence. While hailing the historic-cultural relationship between the two

countries, both Prime Minister Modi and President Karimov reached an understanding on a wide range of issues to further deepen Uzbekistan-India strategic relations, mutually beneficial bilateral cooperation in various fields, as well as international and regional issues of mutual interest. The Joint Statement between the two leaders highlighted 16 important issues, the most important being defence cooperation (Joint Statement between Uzbekistan and India.., 2015).

Both India and Uzbekistan have not looked back since then and have made sincere efforts to take forward their relationship to a new high. It is imperative to highlight how the new found India-Uzbek friendship has got mentions in three consecutive SCO summits(2016, 2017 and 2018). While at the Tashkent SCO summit in 2016, India finalised its accession agreements of the SCO, which now highlights India's engagement with Eurasian region, India became a member of SCO at the Astana SCO summit in 2017. Further, during the Qingdao (China) SCO summit in 2018, PM Modi articulated the foundational dimension of Eurasia as being "SECURE" (Security of our citizens, Economic development for all, Connecting the region, Unite our people, Respect for Sovereignty and Integrity, and Environment protection issues) (Prime Minister's Intervention in Extended Plenary of 18th SCO Summit, 2018), which is likely to guide India's future engagement with the region, and Uzbekistan is believed to play a constructive role in this process.

Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, like his predecessor Islam Karimov, kept on stressing the age-old bonding between the two countries as key during a couple of visits to India in the span of three months - first the September-October 2018 State visit

wherein 17 agreements and MoUs were signed (Tayal, 2018), and second in January 2019 representing Uzbekistan as a partner country at the 3-day Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit. President Mirziyoyev concretised the long-pending uranium deal on 18 January 2019 with India's Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) and Uzbekistan's Novoi Minerals & Metallurgical Company exchanging contracts for long-term supply of uranium ore concentrates (Chaudhury, 2019). This "Strategic Partnership" between the two nations marked the "starting point for a new era in relations between India and Central Asia" duringthe First India-Central Asia Dialogue in Samarkand (Uzbekistan) on 12 January 2019, a meeting of Foreign Ministers from India, all the CARs and Afghanistan. This historic meeting of great strategic minds of the participating countries a) reaffirmed "centuries-old ties between the peoples of India, Central Asia and Afghanistan", b) dubbed themselves as "natural partners", c) underlined the need to develop a "modern and comprehensive partnership", which was envisioned by Prime Minister Modi during his landmark visit in 2015; and d) set up the "India-Central Asia Development Group" to take forward "development partnership" between India and the CARs (Press Statement by EAM.., 2019). Indo-Uzbek security concerns and recalibration of their defence partnership got a major boost when the inaugural Indo-Uzbekistan Joint Field Training Exercise (FTX)-2019, otherwise called as DUSTLIK-2019, was held from 4 to 10 November 2019 at Chirchiq Training Area during India's Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's visit to Tashkent (Exercise Dustlik, 2019). The aforesaid developments in the last six years put Uzbekistan in high pedestal making it the lynch-pin of India's northern neighbourhood policy.

"Tej Kadam" with Kazakhstan

The immense importance and regular focus India has been giving to Kazakhstan in the last quarter century, be it trade, energy or strategy, makes her one of its key political, economic and strategic partners in Central Asia. Kazakhstan, which caters to more than 80 per cent of India's uranium requirements, has already provided 9,000 tonnes of uranium in the last 9 years and would not only provide the rest 1,000 tonnes of uranium in 2020, but also renew the pact for uranium supply to India this year (India and Kazakhstan to Renew Uranium Supply Contract, 2019), a positive signal for India. It is heartening to note that both the countries are marching towards a "new horizon" and guiding their 2009 Strategic Cooperation Partnership to a new height with *Tez Kadam* (literally meaning quick steps) (Tej Kadam, 2015), the Indo-Kazakh Joint Statement signed during the Modi's Astana visit on 7-8 July 2015.Both the countries inked two agreements (including the Defence and Military-Technical Cooperation), two MoUs and the most important one, the long term contract between India's Department of Atomic Energy and JSC National Atomic Company (Kaz Atom Prom) for sale and purchase of natural uranium concentrates (List of Agreements signed, 2015). In global political arena, unstinted Kazakh support for India's membership of SCO at its Astana summit on 8-9 June 2017, Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) in June 2016, and India's bid to become one of the Permanent Member of UN Security Council (UNSC) is gracefully accepted, and in return India had extended wholehearted support to Kazakhstan for a Non-Permanent member of the UNSC in 2017-2018. Bulat Sarsenbayev, former Kazakh Ambassador in India, notes down three important

highlights of Indo-Kazakh cooperation under Modi government a) Modi's State visit to Kazakhstan in 2015 and other high profile visits have spurred bilateral economic cooperation; b) Modi's participation in 2017 Astana SCO Summit and the opening of EXPO 2017has added a new impetus to relationship; and c)within the ambit of Indo-Kazakh Defence and Military-Technical Cooperation, Kazakhstan for the first time could be able to participate in a UN Peacekeeping Mission in Lebanon in 2018 as part of an Indian battalion (Sarsenbayev, 2019). The last six years of mutual trust and understanding between the two largest nations of South and Central Asia have brought many hopes for their countries, region and the world as well.

From Turkmen Gate to Turkmenistan: India's Search for Energy Security

While giving specific reference to Delhi's Turkmen Gate that symbolizes 450-year Indo-Turkmen linkage, Prime Minister Modi, during his visit to Ashgabat on 10 July 2015,reiterated Turkmenistan's indispensability for India's energy security. While discussing bilateral, regional and international issues with Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov that resulted in seven bilateral agreements, the highest with any CAR during this visit. In their Joint Statement, the two leaders hailed the Defence Cooperation Agreement and exuded confidence that this agreement would provide a framework for intensifying bilateral defence and security cooperation through exchanges of high and mid-level visits, training and dialogue between the defence ministries of both countries and other relevant organizations, thus bringing a new momentum to the bilateral partnership in the defence sector (Joint Statement between Turkmenistan and India,

2015). Prime Minister Modi's visit, the first such visit since 1995,brought high hopes for the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline, otherwise known as "Peace pipeline" or "Trans-Afghan pipeline", to become a reality. Dubbing TAPI as a significant initiative in Indo-Turkmen relationship, Prime Minister Modi hinted at the possibility of land-sea route through Iran for the TAPI pipeline. Prime Minister Modi also expressed India's keenness to invest heavily in Turkmenistan's energy sector, besides proposing Turkmenistan to be part of International North South Transport Corridor (*The Economic Times,* 2015). India formally became a member of "Ashgabat Agreement" on 3 February 2018 to work on the establishment of an International Transport and Transit Corridor along with other member countries (Iran, Oman, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) (India-Turkmenistan Relations, 2018). With regular touch with the Central Asian political leadership, sincere efforts and prompt action Modi government has made Turkmen leadership and people feel the respect India confers on this country.

Kyrgyzstan: The New Strategic Partner

Kyrgyzstan's constant support to India for securing the full membership of SCO and India's bid to become the permanent member of the UNSC exemplifies the friendship and relationship between the two countries. During a visit to Kyrgyzstan on 11-12 July 2015 as part of his Central Asia tour, Prime Minister Modi assured Kyrgyz President, Almazbek Atambaev to tender any kind of help and support Kyrgyzstan expects from India. India and Kyrgyzstan signed two agreements and two MoUs, the most important being the agreement on defence cooperation, which aims at "deepening cooperation between India and Kyrgyzstan in

matters relating to defence, security, military education and training, conduct of joint military exercises, exchange of experience and information, exchange of military instructors and observers." Both the sides agreed to continue bilateral military exercise "Khanjar 2015" (India-Kyrgyzstan Joint Military Exercise, 2015) as an annual affair, besides calling for exchanges in joint expedition by the armed forces of both countries (Joint Statements between the Kyrgyz Republic and the Republic of India, 2015). Kyrgyzstan's importance for India was felt further, when top Cabinet Ministers of Modi government visited this CAR one after another: i) Home Minister (Rajnath Singh) and External Affairs Minister (Sushma Swaraj) at the Heads of Emergency Departments of the SCO member states on 24-25 August 2017; ii) External Affairs Minister (Sushma Swaraj) on 3-4 August 2018, iii) Defence Minister (N. Sitharaman) at the Meeting of Defence Ministers of SCO member states on 28-30 April 2019; and iv) External Affairs Minister (S. Jaishankar) at the Meeting of Foreign Ministers of SCO member states on 21-22 May 2019. The year 2019 witnessed Indo-Kyrgyz relations at its pinnacle when a) Kyrgyz President Sooronbay Jeenbekov visited India on invitation as one of the honourbale guests at Narendra Modi's swearing in of second term as India's Prime Minister on 30 May 2019, the only Central Asian leader; and b) PM Modi visited Kyrgyzstan on 13-14 June 2019 (just two weeks later) to take part in Bishkek SCO Summit2019. Out of the 15 agreements/documents signed between the two countries, main highlights were strengthening defence cooperation and preparing a five year roadmap for trade and economic cooperation. More importantly, the Joint Declaration designated the year 2021 as "Year of Culture and

Friendship" between the two republics. Kyrgyzstan, which remained non-descript for India for most of the time in the last three decades, became an important segment of Modi government's overall policy in the region, when the two countries agreed to uplift their bilateral relations to the level of "Strategic Partnership" (India-Kyrgyz Bilateral Relations, 2019).

Tajikistan: Fulcrum of India's Strategic Interests in Central Asia

Tajikistan, India's immediate and nearest Central Asian neighbor, has remained strategically important since its independence in 1991 because of a) geographical border with three sensitive regions such as Afghanistan, Indian Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir and China's Xinjiang province; b) frequent turmoil since 1991 in the form of civil war, Islamic extremism and terrorism; c) Pakistan's efforts to influence Tajikistan in favour of its robust Central Asia policy and d) Chinese dominance in Tajikistan's economic and security affairs. Tajik President Imomali Rahmonov was the first Central Asian leader to respond to India's Connect Central Asia policy during his state visit to India in 2012 that transformed the 20-year long Indo-Tajik bilateral relations into "strategic partnership". Three year later, Prime Minister Modi held out hands of friendship when Tajikistan was chosen the final destination of his Central Asia visit in July 2015, the second such visit by an Indian Premier since Atal Behari Vajpayee in 2003. The Joint Declaration signed between the two countries emphasized the need to fight against the inimical forces of extremism and terrorism and thus vouched for a Joint Working Group (JWG) on Counter Terrorism (List of Agreements Signed during Prime Minister's Visit to Tajikistan, 2015). Prime Minister Modi reiterated India's commitment to support Tajikistan's defence

capacity to enhance stability and security under the ambit of Indo-Tajik defence agreement (2002), as religiously done earlier by India in building a military outpost at Farkhor, adjoining the Tajik-Afghan border, and repairing and maintaining Ayni airbase (Joint Statement between the Republic of Tajikistan and the Republic of India, 2015). Two interesting political exchanges through high profile visits are notable here. Prime Minister Modi and President Rahmonov met on the sidelines of Tashkent SCO Summit (June 2016) and Qingdao SCO Summit (June 2018) and exchanged pleasantries that resulted respectively in Tajik President's sixth India visit (December 2018) in last two decades, and Indian President Ramnath Kovind's first visit to Tajikistan (October 2018).

Modi Government's Central Asia Thrust: Major Takeaways

The most telling achievements of India's policy towards Central Asia under the NDA government led by Prime Minister Modi in the last six years have been manifold and mostly strategic in nature. During several visits to Central Asia and interaction the leaders of CARs, Prime Minister Modi has not only had trade, commerce and economic development with the CARs in mind, but has also felt the indispensability of security and stability for achieving this. On the economic front, the major push Modi government gave to CARs was the revival of International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), a 7200-km-long multi-modal (ship, rail and road) transportation system for connecting the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf to the Caspian Sea via Iran and thence to Russia and North Europe, which was formalised in 2002.The INSTC can reduce the time and cost of container delivery by 30-40 per cent and once the flow of goods from the two Iranian ports begin the corridor will be able to move 30 to

50 million tons of goods per year (Stobdan, 2017). With the opening of Iran's Chabahar Port, that INSTC aims at boosting trade of USD 170 billion from India alone (60.6 billion USD in export and 107.4 billion USD in import). Further, India's trade with Central Asia has witnessed a steep increase to a combined 2.25 billion USD by the end of 2019.

On the energy front, two important developments have been witnessed: firstly, as per the Indo-Kazakh civil nuclear cooperation agreement signed on 6 July 2015, Kazakhstan has supplied India with 5,000 tons of nuclear fuel in the 2015-2019 period, which is more than twice it had provided during the period from 2010 to 2014 (2,100 tons) (Joint Statement between Uzbekistan and India during the Prime Minister's Visit to Uzbekistan, 2015); and secondly, some hopes for construction of TAPI were realized when Turkmenistan agreed to lead the TAPI Pipeline Company, a consortium that was incorporated in November 2014 by Turkmengaz (85% interest), Afghan Gas Enterprise (5%), Inter State Gas Systems (5%), and Gas Authority of India Limited (GAIL) (5%) that finally culminated in the first phase (215 kms) TAPI gas pipeline laying from Mary, near Galkynysh gas field (Turkmenistan) to Afghan border on 13 December 2015. All the four parties signed on the investment agreement in February 2016 to develop the project, which facilitated the beginning of construction of Afghanistan-Pakistan section of the pipeline in February 2018 at Islim Cheshme (Serhatabat) near Afghan border (TAPI Gas Pipeline Project, 2019).

Further, the defence and military deals with Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan assume significance because of the exponential rise in religious extremist forces in Kyrgyzstan and

Tajikistan. Even the National Strategy for Prevention of Violent Extremism and Countering Terrorism for 2020-2024 adopted and designed by Turkmenistan, the first CARs to do so, hints at the non-traditional security threats to the region (News, mfa.gov.tm, 2020). It has been reported that thousands of youth from Central Asia, especially Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, who had joined the Islamic State in 2014 onwards have now returned back to their respective countries after the fall of the terrorist infrastructure. However, it is apprehended that this sorry state of affairs may lead to a dangerous situation in Central Asia, which will ultimately spill over to adjacent regions, including India, a victim of cross-border terrorism for the last three decades. At this juncture, Modi government's emphasis on dealing with the menace of terrorism and extremism with iron hands gels completely with the genuine concerns of the CARs. And for both India and the CARS, working bilaterally, trilaterally or multilaterally or within the ambit of UN or regional organizations like SCO has been given top priority. In this context, establishing Joint Working Group on Counter Terrorism (Indo-Tajik) and regular military drills (Indo-Kyrgyz) shows the resolve of the political leadership in India and the CARs.

India under Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given a major boost to India's age-old historic-cultural linkage with Central Asia. In the last six years, Prime Minister Modi has only talked about four commonalities between India and the CARs: "common interests", "common issues", "common heritage", and "common historical space", which he believes would create a sense among the Central Asian leadership as well people (Dash, 2015). It is a well-known fact that India-Central Asia relations have been multi-

dimensional, deep, old and continuous from the ancient times till date. Modi's India has revived the high expectations the Central Asian leadership had from India after independence in 1991. At that critical juncture, the Central Asian leadership looked at India with awe and respect, and described India as a much avowed neutral actor with many virtues, a natural ally and an emerging global power. The major advantage with India at this point of time, according to one former Indian diplomat, was its soft power status with a plethora of virtues such as democracy, secularism, non-alignment, plural society, eclectic culture and significant technological and scientific advancement (Bhadrakumar, 2013). In this age of globalization, economy may be ruling the roost, but culture matters the most. India's cultural contact with the people of the CARs has been the mainstay of its relationship with the region. The present Indian government promotes culture as the fulcrum of her contact, cooperation and coordination with the CARs. The admiration, respect and friendliness both Central Asian people and Indians have towards each other is well known. This could be the basis of people-to-people contact between the two regions.

Conclusion

Thirty years ago, when the CARs emerged from the ashes of Soviet disintegration, the peculiar situation that occurred in Central Asia was understood (by India) as "purely strategic" and at that point of time, only one thing India wanted seriously and sincerely this strategically located region (Central Asia) not to be dominated by forces inimical or hostile to her (India's) interests, particularly, any encirclement either by China or the lone superpower (US). Similarly, six year ago, when Narendra Modi-led

government in India came to power, the "New India" reiterated that Central Asia, which is an important, "extended", "immediate strategic neighbourhood" or "near abroad," (Debata, 2013) should not fall prey to any anti-India element or force, pointing indirectly towards China, which has a huge base and presence in every sector and sphere of Central Asian society. As discussed earlier, Modi has not only visited the region over half a dozen times in last six years on different occasions and for different purposes, but also advised his top Cabinet Ministers and bureaucrats/diplomats to accord priority to the CARs, and the Indian Corporate sector to mull over investing there. Modi's Central Asia policies, which exemplify India's commitment on its relationship with Central Asia, are full of new found and promising prospects to cement our ties and reap the ultimate benefit. PM Modi has many firsts to his credit as far as India's relations with CARs in the last six years are concerned. Firstly, Modi is the first Indian Premier to make state visits to all the five CARs in a single visit; secondly, Modi is the first Indian Premier to visit Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan in the last 20 years; thirdly, PM Modi is the first Indian leader not to believe in the earlier "wait and watch approach" of India towards an important region like Central Asia; and fourthly, PM Modi is the first premier to replace the post-liberalisation "Look" policy with "Act" policy.

The discussions on India's relationship with Central Asia in this paper substantially show how Modi government has altered the quarter-century old thesis that India has failed to carve the much required niche in Central Asia despite decades of efforts. Modi government sent out a clear message to the CARs, the entire region and the world as well that India is as an old, neutral and

faithful friend of the CARS, and serious in strengthening multifaceted ties in political, security, strategic, defence, economic, culture and people-to-people contacts with the CARs (Sajjanhar, 2016). India has now established "strategic partnership" with all the CARs, except Turkmenistan, which "manifests in a variety of relationship" and encompasses a "long-term interaction based on political, economic, social and historical factors,"(Gupta and Azad, 2011) and hopefully augurs well for India in coming times.

Chinese strategy to spread its influence across the globe through its military might and economic prowess, especially through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has not yielded the much desired result. World powers like America in its various global policies such as New Afghanistan Policy (20 August 2017) and Indo-Pacific policy gives primacy to India, instead of China. Interestingly, two important points can be elaborated here, which could be advantageous for India to spread its goodwill in Central Asia. Firstly, there is a series of anti-Chinese protests in Central Asian nations such as Kazakhstan (May 2016) and Kyrgyzstan (January 2019) because of factors like a) Chinese labour migration; b) growing economic dependence of CARs on China; and c) mistreatment of Turkic ethnic minorities in Xinjiang (Niyazbekov, 2020). Further, in the Corona pandemic that has taken away nearly 200,000 lives across the world, has exposed China's duplicitous role and surreptitious nature, thus clearly diverting the global opinion as well as global order in India's favour. There is a positive sign for India during the Corona pandemic in 2020, when PM Modi showed his statesmanship and global leadership by providing hydroxychloroquine 55 countries,

including the CARs like Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, a gesture dubbed as "high mark of friendship and solidarity" by none other than the Kazakh Prime Minister, Qasym-Jomart Tokayev (High Mark of Friendship: Kazakh President Thanks India.., 2020). India is now rebuilding the faith and trust in the minds of Central Asian people as well as leaders and having an image makeover. India has to cash in on this unwavering faith by the people and political leaders of the CARs. This is high time India, with an astute and assertive leader like Narendra Modi at the vanguard, should march ahead to nourish its vital interests in the South and Central Asian region.

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Liberal-Idealist Tradition in Non-Western World: Study of Vasudaiva Kutumbakum and Ubuntu

Sandipani Dash[1]

Abstract

Prevailing humanitarian intervention in global affairs suffers from gross ineptness, ascribing to Western predominance on institutionalised discourse of Liberal Idealism. Recognition of limits to Euro-centric ideas and experiences in humanising global endeavours creates an urgency to explore non-Western roots of humanitarian actions. Of use, in this inquisitive quest, are ancient societal ideas of mutual existence and collective progress that drive humanist endeavours in India and Africa, notably Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam and Ubuntu, calling for focussed consideration.

Keywords: Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, Ubuntu, Indic-African Worldview, Liberal Idealism, Globalisation of Humanitarian Response.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his visit to South Africa in July 2016 proclaimed, "......Through the spirit of Vasudaiva Kutumbakum and Ubuntu.....Our relationship has been a story of resolve, determination, justice and the excellence of human endeavour" (PIB, 2016), It is not for the first time that idea of Vasudaiva Kutumbakum has been enunciated in an overseas forum. Indeed, New Delhi's eloquent articulation of this ancient Indian worldview in the United Nations gathering has been a regular occurrence right from the country's independence.

Search for cultural connectivity through expression of a co-equivalent philosophical narrative of the distant neighbourhood

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reflects the proclivity of India, for that matter of other non-Western civilisational entities, for their active engagement in ideas shaping exercises of global affairs on humane terms. Proclamation of ancient cultural ethos in global platforms has drawn renewed interest with increasing realisation of ideational inadequacy and, in extension, operational inefficacy of the West dominated contemporary word order.

Recognition of limits to Euro-centric ideas and experiences in humanising global endeavours creates an urgency to look for non-Western roots of humanitarian actions. Modi's pronouncement of positive interrelationship through the spirit of Vasudaiva Kutumbakum and Ubuntu resonates in exploring intrinsic value of Indic-African templates of mutual existence and collective progress for globalising humanitarian response in a substantive sense.

Keeping the above concern in perspective, this paper has examined Liberal-Idealism as an analytical construct emanating from the Western world. It has subsequently contextualised Liberal-Idealist tradition in the regions beyond the West. Then, also the paper has conceptualised Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam and, has later on made a reflection on *Ubuntu,* for seeking ideational expanse of the existing structure of global affairs.

Liberal-Idealism in Western World

Liberal Idealism is a dominant idea in the global affairs discourse, owing its origin to the celebrated concept of perpetual peace expounded by Immanuel Kant (Kant, 1795). Running through Woodrow Wilson's reiteration justifying American entry into World War I in 1917 and then enunciation of fourteen principles as part of his vision of inter-war world order, it culminated in the

Democratic Peace Theory and Liberal Peace Thesis in the post-Cold War context (Reiter, 2017). It essentially posits the inevitability of democratic governance for ensuring global peace. For bringing peace through introduction of structural democracy in select parts of the Non-Western world, orchestration of regime change becomes the principal strategy of the extra-regional powers, especially the US led actors of the West. Hence, an inescapable question arises: are gradually evolved democratic institutions, or the arbitrarily crafted ones, essential for global peace? To put a more fundamental question, how liberal and ideal are methods of applying Liberal Idealisms in the practice of global affairs?

Interventionist endeavour towards establishing democratic institutions in Libya is a revealing case. The unilateral military intervention of the West in this North African country, ignoring mediatory role of the African Union, has caused enormous domestic and regional destabilisation. The then US President Barack Obama, under whose leadership the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation forces carried out the military operation, admitted that failing to prepare for the aftermath of the ousting of Libyan leader Col Muammar Gaddafi was the worst mistake of his presidency (BBC, 2016). However, American Institutional Liberalist like Robert Keohane in the beginning interpreted regime change through military means in Libya as one of the major indicators of the 'revival of moralism' in the post-Cold War world politics (Keohane, 2012). The *moralpolitik* supposition of this exercise is demystified, with timely revelation on the American scheme of capturing oil resource (The Hindu, 2012) and the French government's covert operation for killing Gaddafi in Libya (Indian Express, 2012). Evidently, exogenous imposition of the apparent

political morality has recreated many such conflict theatres and insecurity zones in the Non-Western world.

Proactive persuasion for selective non-intervention in distant conflict regions is another facet of West-centred Liberal Idealist discourse. Cold war time humanitarian intervention by the Afro-Asian actors in their respective neighbourhoods, notably Tanzania's intervention in Uganda, India's in East Pakistan and Vietnam's in Cambodia, with a positive outcome of stopping large-scale atrocities and displacement, became an issue of so called international security concern in 1970s (Seybolt, 2007).

The idea and practice of establishing democracy and peace through top-ward compelling methods have so far received enough critical reflection and enormous discredit. Roberts views liberal state building and peace building as a "post-Cold War neo-imperial agenda of intervention" in which states in post-conflict environments are being built in the image of the West. For Roberts, such an approach which is invasive and imperial has failed and will continue to fail as long as there is a failure to recognise and understand that "transitional impositions of democratic practice cannot be substitute for or replace, in the short-term, political behaviours derived from needs, experiences, histories and evolutions quite different from those from which Western democracy is derived" (Roberts, 2008, p. 64).

Similarly, Darby using a post-colonial critique of liberal peace building notes that it is a colonial enterprise that marginalises the experiences, approaches and understandings of non-Western societies and does not connect with their everyday lives (Darby, 2009). Darby notes that, as long as peace building initiatives are

determined from "above and outside", they are "cast in the mould of colonialism" (Darby, 2009, p. 701). Richmond observes that "The whole apparatus of peace is sometimes colonial and racist in that it implies the transference of enlightened knowledge to those who lack the capacity or morality to attain such knowledge themselves" (Richmond, 2005, p. 204).

Patrick Tom argues that the practice of international peace building is grounded in the idea of the superiority of the liberal peace over other forms of peace, especially, local ones. He illustrates the case of Africa, where communities are rarely consulted about what kind of politics or state they want and as such, are being presented with no choice, but the liberal peace. For him, this assumes a priori that this is what they want, thus ends up looking like a colonial project. He adds that the liberal peace project has failed to achieve its aims including a democratic setting in which people's welfare and human rights are promoted. As such, it doesn't look like a very humanitarian practice, but as something that has been designed to recreate colonialism (Tom, 2011). Patrick suggests that if liberal peace building is to be "saved", it ought to be saved from its "cheer leaders" who offer prescriptive strategies without a critical reflection on their viability and acceptability in post-conflict environments, and have witnessed local resistance to them. While the liberal peace model has worked well in the West, it is crucial to question whether transplanting it wholesale to non-Western societies with different cultural and historical backgrounds from it will work. In fact, war-torn societies need to be "saved" from problem-solving approaches that are biased towards these societies and ignore local agency, capacities for peacemaking, order and recovery. It is

important for the locals' voices to be heard (Tom, 2011), since as insiders they "possess the historical, cultural, and linguistic resources that outsiders lack, and that are essential not only to understanding the root causes of conflict but also to the search for sustainable solutions" (Donais, 2009, p. 11).

Democratic/Liberal Peace Thesis marginalises experiences, approaches and understandings of non-Western societies. This exclusivist variant of liberal idealism systemically permeates the ideational structure of the global affairs, which bears centuries together ascendancy of the West, especially prolonged dominance of the Anglo-Saxon powers like Britain and the United States. R. J. Rummel gave a compelling story of the horrors that occur in modern societies. He depicts how 'democide' has been very much a part of human history. Among other examples, his depiction includes the massacre of Europeans during the Thirty Years' War, the relatively unknown genocide of the French Revolution, and the slaughtering of American Indians by colonists in the New World (Rummel, 1997). Liberal Idealist discourse emanating from the West, in effect, serves the purpose of raising a human facade for the brutality that has been unleashed under the existing global order that is constantly unleashed under the existing hierarchical global order, which is based on the presumption of supra-state anarchy (Bull, 1977).

The anthro-economic foundation of this Anglo-Saxon eclecticism is essentially based on individualistic economic freedom and Euro-centric cultural determinism. An apparently globalist project is rooted in Weberian thesis of 'Protestant Ethics and Spirit of Capitalism', which has overwhelmingly shaped the Western capitalist worldview. Max Weber, in his seminal treatise *The*

Religion of India — The Sociology of Hinduism and Buddhism published in 1958 argued, "Capitalism would remain weak in India because the ancient religions of India have no element of the Protestant ethic, a necessary element for the growth and development of capitalistic thoughts." Weber put forward further, "The irrational approach of Indian religious traditions, consisting of such dogmas as the *samsara* (illusionary world) and *karma* (doctrine of divine compensation), created a system that was highly traditional and progress-inhibiting" (Weber, as cited in Mishra & Kamal, 2014, p. 228).

Weber's stereotype vindication is thoroughly negated, when Paul Bairoch, a Belgian economist, has found India's share of global GDP at 24.5 percent in 1750, then taking a steady slide to 20 in 1800, 17 in 1830, 8 in 1880, and finally 1.7 in 1900 (Bairoch, 1982), under colonial grab. Predating Weber more than a century, another such powerful thinker like Hegel, who has immensely contributed, in addition to Immanuel Kant, to idealist philosophy in the West, in his 1830-1831 *Philosophy of History* lectures at the University of Jena stated:

> The Negro.....represents the natural man in his completely wild and untamed state. We must lay aside all thought of reverence and morality-all that we call feeling-if we would rightly comprehend him; there is nothing harmonious with humanity to be found in this type of character. The copious and circumstantial accounts of Missionaries completely confirm this.....(Hegel, 1956, p. 93).

Hegel's typecast description of Africans lacks credibility, since there is evidence of humanity protection institutions in pre-colonial Africa, as put forward in the later part of this paper. The

notional premise of such awful sense of Euro-cultural superiority is monotheistic theological traditions that have gained traction in many parts of the world, including the West. Though carrying global pretention, the Western version of Liberal Idealism consequently remains completely dismissive of the ideational and behavioural specificity of the Non-Western World.

Contextualising Liberal-Idealist Tradition beyond the West

Liberal Idealist narrative of the established International Relations (IR) has barely taken note of historical experiences and ideational traits of the regions distant to the West. It is a continuation of the larger problem that has systemically gripped the theory building exercises of the discipline, since non-Western specificity has received scant recognition in the literature on IR. However, any reflection on skewed empirical-normative basis of the so called universal theories of IR does not ignore the truth that the non-Western world, like the West itself, is not a homogenous construct. This spatial category has the diversity of units and inhabitants (Acharya, 2014).

Illustrating the analytical gaps in IR theories in general and Liberal Idealism in particular, Amitav Acharya fairly pleaded, "Liberalism also needs to acknowledge the significant variations in cooperative behaviour that do exist in different local contexts, and that no single model of integration or interactions can account for all or most of them" (Acharya, 2018). His basic contention is that the literature on pre-Westphalian international systems has ignored interactions anchored on trade, ideas (including political ideas) and culture, where empire, hegemony or explicit and continuous power balancing is absent. For him, international systems of that

time could develop out of ideational interactions as much as material ones such as war and conquest (Acharya, 2011).

There is scope for incorporating pre-existing practices and values in Asia and its adjoining regions into the Liberal-Idealist analysis of global affairs. For instance, South-East Asia and the Indian Ocean, with a long history of commerce and flow of ideas, but without unity by conquest, are seldom studied as international systems (Acharya, 2011). Contemplation on the roots of democratic dialogue in India, as reiterated by Amartya Sen in his masterpiece *The Argumentative Indian: Writings on Indian History, Culture and Identity* published in the year 2005, is again very instructive. Sen first identifies that democracy as practised in India is not just about elections, but also about civic discourse, including a 'willingness to listen to different points of view'. This maintains the 'long and written-up argumentative tradition' of India (Sen, as cited in Acharya, 2011, p. 637).

Equally, analytical attentions are also not drawn on the sphere of security prevailing in most pre-colonial African states through their indigenous customary and formal institutions. The maintenance of peace within many African communities was based on four legal principles: deliberation and discussion based dispute settlement, rather than force driven justice system; compensatory rectification of misconduct (except in severe crimes such as killing); assessment and adjudication by elders with standing of impartiality; and fairness. In this context, the thirteenth century's Mande Charter of West Africa deserves a proper notice. Its ruling ensured in Mali: - a) the prevalence of two inviolable principles guiding people's interrelationship: *sanankunya* (joking relation) and *tanamannyonya* (blood pact); b) consequently establishing respect of the other and peaceful

settlement of disputes as the rule; c) significantly the absence of harm to foreigners and inviolability of foreign envoy's security (Martin, 2012).Reflecting on the security setting in Mali Empire, Ibn Battuta pertinently observed, "Among these qualities [of the Blacks] there is also the prevalence of peace in their country, the traveller is not afraid in it, nor is he who lives there in fear of the chief or of the robber by violence" (Hamdun & King, 1975, p.58).

Obviously, the centuries together people's linkages between Asia and Africa have yet to capture their due space in the analytical construct of the Liberal Idealist strand of IR discourse. The pre-colonial interactions between India and the eastern seaboard of Africa were mainly economic and cultural. Trade was carried out between the two regions from very early times, some of it through intermediaries from the Persian or Arabian Gulf. India's cultural connectivity with East Africa extended to food and music. There is also evidence of Africa's long standing connection with China and Indonesia (Mazrui, 1977).

Analytical inclusion of these varied cooperative behaviours and outlooks lying across the non-Western regions could have enhanced the cognitive expanse of Liberal Idealist narrative of the Anglo-Saxon dominated IR. Such process has, however, failed to happen due to inherent limitation of the European Liberalism, which derives its genealogical motivation from monotheistic and semitic theology that is an anathema to the tradition of acceptance (Ketkar, 2017). It is, therefore, necessary to explore non-European/Western roots of Liberalism. Of use, in this inquisitive quest, are ancient societal ideas of mutual existence and collective progress that drive humanist endeavours in India

and Africa, notably Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam and Ubuntu, calling for focussed consideration.

Conceptualising Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam

The expression *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* (world is a family), written in bold letters on the first gate of India's Parliament, comes from a famous Sanskrit verse of the ancient Hindu text *Mahopanishad* (Prabhu & Mohapatra, 2014),saying *Ayam nijah paroveti ganana Laghuchetasam, Udaara Purushaanam tu vasudhaiva Kutumbakam.* Karan Sing attributed a near meaning to it through his properly translated words, "Division between 'mine' and 'yours' is a small and narrow way of looking at reality, indulged in by people with immature minds. For those of the greater consciousness, the entire world is a family"(Singh, 2001, pp. 148-149). He further interprets the consequent comprehension of human race as an extended family, due to realisation of divine inhabitation in all human beings. Such spiritual humanist outlook has made India's ancient philosophers perceiving unity in all mankind. The highest good is to be found, not in the domination of one race or nationality by another, but in a cooperative commonwealth in which the 'welfare of the entire world' or the 'good of all beings' (*Sarvavutahita*) is assured (Jha, 1989, p.50). In essence, Indian tradition has always nurtured the idea of an interlinked neighbourhood with a sense of enlightened national interest (Prabhu & Mohapatra, 2014).

Guidance of *Dharma* (duty) is the essence of the ancient Indian polity. Duties, instead of rights, are indeed the hall mark of state craft and citizenship in Indic tradition. The corollary concept of 'state without statism' was enunciated by Madhav Sadashiv

Golwalkar, popularly known as Guruji, and Deendayal Upadhyaya. It was further extended to the international plane by Dattopant Thengadi, a great thinker activist of contemporary world, in his seminal work *Third Way*. He unveiled the conception of 'One World State' *Prithvi Samudraparyangtaya Ek Rashtra* (Aitareya Brahmana 8/15) from sea to sea over all the land one state. Drawing upon the ideas of sages in Bharat, he gave his reflection on The *Hindu Concept of World Order* and wrote, "The goal of life.....has been human happiness and world welfare based upon the elevation and emancipation of individual souls: *Atmano Mokshartham Jagat Hitaya Cha*. Hinduness stands for development of human consciousness from individual to universal" (Thengadi, 1998, p. 184).

Globalism emanating from the land of ancient India is ideationally rooted in its civilisational ethos that truth is one but has a diversity of expression, *Ekam Sat Vipra Bahudha Vadanti* (Truth is one, but the learned refer to it with different names) (Patwardhan, 1992). Liberal tradition of India and its contemplation on plurality have indeed a deeper cultural essence – manifested diversity of intrinsic unity. Illustratively, Hindu text *Ishavasya Upanishad* says, "*Ishavasyam idam sarvam, yat kinchit Jagtyam jagat, tena tyaktena bhunjithah maa grudhah kasya svidh dhanam*" (The divine principle pervades every atom in this universe. So, enjoy the bliss of being a part of this universe and share the joy of living on this bountiful, beautiful earth with all your fellow beings and other objects without excessive greed and avarice) (PIB, 2018). Manifestation of such positive integral thinking in Indian national behaviour was eloquently communicated to the global community through Vivekananda's

Chicago address towards the end of 19th century. When cultural onslaught of the British imperialism on Indian society was on its peak, Vivekananda at World Parliament of Religions on 11 September 1893 fearlessly conveyed acceptance of all religions as true, transcending the mere belief in universal toleration, as religious message of India to the world. He asserted national pride in his country sheltering the persecuted and the refugees of all religions and all nations of the earth, notably Israelites and Zoroastrians (Vivekananda, 1893).

The behavioural dimension of India's integral humanist worldview was reiterated by C. Rajagopalachari in mid twentieth century, when he spoke of oneness and indivisibility of truth in his profound work *Hinduism: Doctrine and Way of Life.* Perceiving human mind, impinged by all external impulses, as the seat of harmony or unity of thought, he foreclosed the scope for selective use of truth. Rajagopalachari, therefore, offered a strong critique of wasteful consumption of human energy in ''disharmonies involved in the prevailing contradictions in science, religion, national politics and the conduct of international affairs." Instead, he went on making a case for harmonization of evolving knowledge on laws of nature, philosophical principles and in practice statecraft in the quest for a successful confrontation of problems presently posed by the most complicated world to the humanity (Rajagopalachari, 1959).

Accepting the premise of the 'world as a family' brings a fundamental shift in one's attitude towards nurturing the planet. The human race is looked upon as part of nature, in the Hindu thought process, foreclosing the space for enjoying dominion or the right to exploit and destroy the natural environment. It is

pertinent to revisit the extraordinary articulation of ecological values and clear portrayal of the Earth with reverence in the 63 verses of the Hymn to the Earth in the *Atharva Veda* of several thousand years ago (Singh, 2010). Few of these verses (Singh, 2010, pp. 29-30) are as follows:

> Earth, in which lie the sea, the river and other waters, in which food and cornfields have come to be, in which live all that breathes and that moves, may she confer on us the finest of her yield.
>
> Earth, in which the waters, common to all, moving on all sides, flow unfailing, day and night, may she pour on us milk in many streams, and endow us with lustre.
>
> Pleasant be Thy hills, O Earth, Thy snow-clad mountains and Thy woods!
>
> On Earth - brown, black, ruddy and multi-coloured. The firm Earth protected by Indra, on this Earth I stand, unvanquished, unslain and unhurt.
>
> May Earth with people who speak various tongues, and those who have various religious rites according to their places of abode, pour for me treasure in a thousand streams like a constant cow that never fails.
>
> Whatever I dig from the Earth, may that have quick growth again. O purifier, May we not injure Thy vitals or Thy heart.

Planet Earth, identified as 'Bhavani Vasundhara' in the Hindu worldview and 'Gaia' in the Greek tradition, has nurtured consciousness up 'from the slime of the primeval ocean to where we are today' (Singh, 2010, p. 30). Ensuing sense of reverence towards shared space resonates in the sensitivity attached to the family as an institution, which is recognised as a basic socio-economic cultural unit of Indian system. It is a strong base of the

economy and a unit for discharging social responsibilities and the preservation of socio-cultural-religious values and traditions. The restrained ethical consumption pattern is a significant massage that the family based system provides to the larger global community (Gupta, 2010). The age old idea of world as a family, which is appropriate in the case of global society, "has come within the realm of possibility," said Karan Singh, "with the astounding breakthroughs in science and technology." He added, "Instant communication has literally knit the world into a global community, and the internet has opened the gateways to human interaction transcending all barriers of space and time" (Singh, 2010, p. 28). He consequently pleaded for preferring Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam as the most befitting motto of the global society in the making due to present progress in technology (Singh, 2013).

Mechanical compression of world into a closely interconnected place is effected by a steady advancement in scientific discovery and technological invention. India remains one of the principal birthplaces of science through its contribution of geometry, zero, Yoga psychology, steel-making, Sanskrit grammar, binary numbers, music theory, combinatorics, algebra, astronomy, and physics (Kak, 2018). All of these go deep into the currently unfolding fourth stage of industrial revolution and in result the emerging scope for a global society. The contemporary world has, however, yet to become a shared space in humane terms, necessitating an endeavour towards informing ideational structure of global affairs with Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam again conceptualised in ancient India.

Reflecting on Ubuntu

The philosophy of Ubuntu remains deeply rooted in indigenous cultures of Africa, being interpreted by its many people, more specifically of Southern Africa, as a phenomenon of human interconnectedness (Gade, 2013). Denoting a cultural worldview of trying to capture the essence of humanity, it is found in diverse forms in many societies throughout Africa, in particular among the Bantu languages of East, Central and Southern Africa. Clearly articulated in Southern Africa's Nguni group of languages, it reflects the collectivist African philosophy of "I am human because I belong" in a significant contrast to the individualistic Western philosophy of *Cogito, ergo sum*(I think, therefore I am) (Brock-Utne, 2004, p. 114).Broadly defined as an African variant of humanism, the concept of Ubuntu accordingly places communitarian interests above those of the individual, with the premise that human existence is dependent upon interaction with others. Having a long tradition in Africa, its general meaning and spirit are mostly understood in common practice and parlance throughout much of the continent (McDonald, 2010). As a behavioural gift, Ubuntu is considered less an economy or even a philosophy, and more a lifestyle, a way of being, a way of seeing and acting. The gift is life itself, and at the root of each society (Muthien, 2008).

Ramose sees the word Ubuntu as 'two words in one', consisting of the prefix ubu- and the stem ntu-, evoking a dialectical relationship of being and becoming. In this sense, ubu- and ntu- are 'two aspects of being as a oneness and wholeness' (Ramose, 2002, p. 230).Desmond Tutu has described Ubuntu as "embracing hospitality, caring about others, being willing to go the extra mile for the sake of others. ...The solitary human is a contradiction in terms and therefore you seek the common good because your

humanity comes into its own community in belonging" (Tutu, 2009). He has given one of the best definitions of the term in his book *No Future Without Forgiveness*, explaining the term thus (Tutu, 1999, pp. 34-35):

> Ubuntu is very difficult to render into a Western language. It speaks to the very essence of being human. When you want to give high praise to someone we say, 'Yu, u nobuntu''; he or she has ubuntu. This means that they are generous, hospitable, friendly, caring and compassionate. They share what they have. It also means that my humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in theirs. We belong in a bundle of life. We say, 'a person is a person through other people' (in Xhosa Ubuntu ungamntu ngabanye abantu and in Zulu Umuntu ngumuntu ngabanye). I am human because I belong, I participate, I share. A person with ubuntu is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good; for he or she has a proper self-assurance that comes with knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed, or treated as if they were less than who they are.

Desmond Tutu's reiteration of the indigenous concept of Ubuntu, conveying the profound truth of interconnectivity in human experiences (happiness or distress), resonates in the post-apartheid campaign of South Africa for promoting an African Renaissance. Nelson Mandela gave the similar reflection in his autobiography, *Long Walk to Freedom* (Mandela, 1995), explaining mutuality in human liberation. The ancient principles of 'respect and gifting; of social egalitarianism and normative nonviolence' are critical for constructing alternatives to the pursuit of hegemony and domination. Ubuntu stands out to be at the core of such new forms of political practices, putting forwarding an

enlightening message of inextricably connected humanities and freedoms (Muthien, 2008, pp. 60-61). In its 1997 White Paper on Social Welfare, South African government defines Ubuntu as "the principle of caring for each other's well-being...and a spirit of mutual support....Each individual's humanity is ideally expressed through his or her relationship with others and theirs in turn through a recognition of the individual's humanity." The White Paper adds, "Ubuntu means that people are people through other people. It also acknowledges both the rights and the responsibilities of every citizen in promoting individual and societal well-being" (RSA, 1997).

An interdependent consciousness in the social, economic and political behaviours reasonably emerges from the conception that existential mutuality underpins human interrelationships. Pertinently, the ancient ethic of Ubuntu offers a perceptual base for striving towards comprehensive peace and security in Africa. For instance, Truth and Reconciliation Committee (TRC) in post-apartheid South Africa, a Committee chaired by Desmond Tutu, is a remarkable experiment to reverse the systemically inflicted dehumanisation. Timothy Murithi appropriately notes, "Even the supporters of apartheid were victims of the brutalizing system from which they benefited economically and politically: it distorted their view of their relationship with other human beings, which then impacted upon their own sense of security and freedom from fear."Observing correlation between Ubuntu and TRC, Murithi writes, "The notion of Ubuntu sheds light on the importance of peacemaking through principles of reciprocity and a sense of shared destiny between peoples."He adds, "It provides a value system for giving and receiving forgiveness. It provides a rationale for sacrificing or letting go of the desire to take revenge for past wrongs" (Murithi, 2006, p.29). Manifestly, TRC experiment has

gained its traction as an innovative conflict resolution approach in many countries of Africa and beyond, signifying relevance of Ubuntu, an African vision of humanism, for global endeavours of peace and security.

In conclusion, ideas of Vasudaiva Kutumbakum and Ubuntu are located in Indic-African worldviews, guided by non-Western societal pursuit of humanism with considerable significance for global efforts towards achieving peace, security and harmony in a comprehensive sense. Prevailing humanitarian intervention in global affairs suffers from gross ineptness, ascribing to Western predominance on institutionalised discourse of Liberal Idealism, an extension of Anglo-Saxon version of eclecticism premised on the notions of individualistic economic freedom and Euro-centric cultural determinism. Ensuing absence of standardisation of global response to humanitarian crisis, hence, remains a fundamental concern.

Increasing recognition of West-centred ideas and experiences as inadequate for unleashing globalisation of humanitarian response, creates an urgency to look for non-Western roots of humanising global endeavours, underlining exploratory worth of Indic-African templates of mutual existence and collective progress, exemplified in value systems of Vasudaiva Kutumbakum and Ubuntu. Indian message of Vasudaiva Kutumbakum has an enormous transformative potential in shaping mechanically interconnected world into a humanely shared space. Equally, African notion of Ubuntu has an immense action able relevance for nurturing a mutually secure and peaceful global setting. Consequent integration of ancient collectivist ethos underpinning Vasudaiva Kutumbakum and Ubuntu philosophy into its analytical construct increases the likelihood of Liberal Idealist tradition becoming global in scope and humane in substance.

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Anaj Bank: An attempt to undo hunger in remote areas

Avantika Singh[*]

Abstract

Given the highly problematic thrust area of food security in India, the prospect of mediation through small scale interventions to reduce the incidence of hunger and malnutrition by ensuring food accessibility should not be neglected. In this context, the article assesses the Anaj Bank, a locally devised strategy for tapping food security deficit, which chalks out significant deliberative intervention which can potentially and timely enable consumption smoothing in the food deficit lean season. It facilitates households to borrow grains in the lean agriculture season on the nominal interest rate to be returned in the form of grain only in next harvest season. It is generally located in distressed and isolated conditions and thus can act as a first line defence against food security shocks, and respond more rapidly and nimbly, especially compared to large, centralised programmes such as the public distribution system (PDS).

Keywords: Anaj Bank, food security, food deficit, food management, harvest festivity, Self Help Group, public initiatives, Hunger Index

Niti Ayog (2016) observes that there is a disjuncture between rapid economic growth and nutritional status in India. Resonating the vulnerable health profile, FAO (2018) estimates 14.8 per cent of the Indian population as undernourished in its report titled 'The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World, 2018'. The

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report further notes 51.4 per cent of women in the age group between 15 to 49 years are anaemic. In Global Hunger Index (GHI) based on four parameters – affordability, availability, quality and safety, 'India has slipped from 95th rank in 2010 to 102nd in 2019, with the increase in prevalence of wasting (low weight for height) among children under five contributing the most to the country's poor performance' (Waghmare, 2019).

There are many reasons attributing to the food distress and fair number of scholars have attempted this vital question in understanding the underlying scenario. Few of the noted concerns are: malfunctioning subsidised food security public initiatives, public institutions underscoring the problematic only in arithmetic and thus defying social factor associated with food etc. This paper focuses and argues on food as an entitlement and how the lack of it may umpteen hunger cases. While we don't discount the importance of macro- technocratic supra view of state's attempt in undoing hunger, but it is vital to realise that this is a limited and narrow view of the food security problem. A study by Borton and Shoham (1991) shows that despite sufficient food availability, people were food insecure as they lacked entitlement.

The argument put forth by Sen (1981) is that the issue is not essentially the availability of food but rather about the potential of an individual or a household to acquire that food. Forwarding the argument, Krawczyk (2017) in his work submits that ability to access food by an individual or household hitertho depends upon on their potential to produce food for own consumption (Physical access like- land, equipment) or to earn income (economic access). The potential to access food for instance according to

Agarwal (2003) is due to absence of cultivable land entitlement by nearly half of its population.

Given the highly problematic thrust area of food security in India, the prospect of mediation through small scale interventions to reduce the incidence of hunger and malnutrition by ensuring food accessibility should not be neglected. With this background, this article focuses on Anaj Bank a locally devised strategy for tapping food security deficit, which chalks out significant deliberative intervention by it which can potentially and timely enable consumption smoothing in the food deficit lean season. It facilitates households to borrow grains in the lean agriculture season on the nominal interest rate to be returned in the form of grain only in next harvest season. *It is* generally located in distressed and isolated conditions and thus , 'can act as a first line defence against food security shocks, and respond more rapidly and nimbly, especially compared to large, centralised programmes such as the public distribution system (PDS) or the Integrated Child Development Scheme.' (Bhattamisra, 2008).

Except for few countable articles, reports in media and case studies, the systemic empirical evidence is presently absent. This mandates the urgency to empirically test in local conditions the vitality and reliability of such locally manufactured best practices in seeking solutions to the poor hunger index of the country.

The study employing grounded research uses the base line data drawn from Government of India 2011 census. A multi stage sampling method was used to select the research site following hierarchal selection approach, i.e., State → District → Block → Village. Following the schema, In the state of Uttar Pradesh, District Jalaun, block

Rampura was chosen. The study is focused on existing 16 Anaj bank in this block namely in the village: Mirjapura, Andela Madaiya, Kadampura, Siddhapura, Ninawali, Chhodi Bed, Laxmanpura, Malhanpura, Bhaktpura, Rathauranpura, Mahoota, Chandanpura, Naraul, Munnekapura, Kishunpura, and Poosekapura.

Based on the study's epistemological and ontological stance, qualitative data collection was a preferred mode. The idea was to let empirical material influence theory rather than the opposite. The rationale for site selection is three fold: Rampura block in Jalaun district falls within Bundelkhand terrain which is highly vulnerable with its reported prolonged drought condition. The food security is deepening the crisis as is evidenced by district report from National Family Health survey 4, 2015-16 (IIPS 2017, NFHS-4, 2015-16). Rampura block belongs to underdeveloped districts of Uttar Pradesh where development indicators like road and electricity are minimally present. Third, PARMARTH, NGO intervention is quite visible in promoting the Anaj Bank in this locality. They readily agreed to independent research of its food security drive.

The layout of this article is bifurcated into three sections. The first section will seek to interrogate multifaceted factors which propelled the formation of Anaj bank in Rampura block of Jalaun district, Uttar Pradesh. In the second section, the findings from Anaj bank are presented discussing, for example, its procedural modalities, membership composition, its function in a monopolistically – competitive market with the corresponding analytical discussion. In the last leg of this article, the utility of imbibing an Anaj Bank in a remote setting marked with food

deficit scenario will be reassessed alongside its potential for prompting creative policy arrangements.

Section I: Reasons propelling the introduction of Anaj Bank

To unravel the causes in, we will briefly interrogate health and agricultural profile along with base line data. Health indicators for Jalaun, our case study district, indicate the vulnerable health profile of people there, even with the overall situation in rural UP. As is illustrated in Table 1, 26.5 per cent of women and 21.5 per cent of men in rural Jalaun district have a body mass index (BMI) below normal (BMI<18.5 kg/m2). With regard to the age category of 6 to 59 months, 85.3 per cent children are declared anaemic; the maximum percentage of anaemic cases among children is in the age group of 12-17 months. Women and men are 9 per cent and 3.1 per cent more anaemic in rural Jalaun than they are in rural UP on an average. Only with regard to BMI index does rural Jalaun perform better than the state average.

Table 1: Health Measurement

Parameters of Health Measurement (NFHS-4), 2015-16	Rural India	Rural Uttar Pradesh	Rural Jalaun
Women whose Body Mass Index (BMI) is Below Normal (BMI < 18.5 kg/m2)14(%)	26.7	28.1	26.5
Men whose Body Mass Index (BMI) is Below Normal (BMI < 18.5 kg/m2) (%)	23	29.1	21.5
Children Age 6-59 months who are Anaemic (<11.0 g/dl) (%)	59.5	62.7	85.3
All Women Age 15-49 Years who are Anaemic (%)	54.3	52.4	61.4
Pregnant Women Age 15-49 Years who are Anaemic (<11.0 g/dl) (%)	52.2	51.4	67
Men Age 15-49 Years who are Anaemic (<13.0 g/dl) (%)	25.3	25	28.1

Source: Consolidated from NFHS -4 DATA, 2015-16: Uttar Pradesh

This clearly depicts that our large-scale subsidised safety net programme like: Public Distribution System (PDS), the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS), the Mid-Day Meals Scheme (MDM) have failed in translating their core objective of averting nutritional deficiencies amongst the poor. Apart from institutional failure in delivering apt and accessible services, the villages are often incapacitated to earn their own food due to glum agricultural scenario. In expanding the scenario, the study relied on district data in the absence of block level data on crop production to have a broader understanding. The study found from district crop's production over the years from 1997 till 2014 that other than Sesamum and Potato, there is registered decline in Rabi and Kharif crops (Table 2).

Table 2: Season wise, Crop Production trend

JALAUN	Crops	1997	2006	2014
Kharif	Arhar/Tur	9023	6019	1750
	Bajra	18327	26385	12932
	Jowar	10065	19857	5877
	Rice	1053	1217	890
	Sesamum	353	4133	4490
	Soyabean	11017	883	18
Rabi	Barley	16517	7369	8856
	Gram	54430	36923	11736
	Rapeseed &Mustard	3908	6940	3591
	Wheat	246624	328038	206239
Whole Year	Potato	4856	140416	5798
	Sugarcane	79372	10176	54341

Source: Open Government data platform in India

It is important to note, that Bundelkhand region of Uttar Pradesh which includes Jalaun district is highly climate-vulnerable landscape (Kedia, 2010) making agriculture highly susceptible to climate stress. In recent past, Jalaun has seen worst of drought years from 2010-2014. In absence of any resolute administration to cover the transition cost for shifting to a more drought resistant farming, many farmers are averse to invest heavily in agricultural inputs in tune to climate hazard. According to anecdotal evidence, the other allied service like animal husbandry in the block also perennially suffered. The practice of Annapratha or Chooth Pratha wherein the domestic animals are left free to roam during lean and rainy season have destroyed approximately to about 25 to 35 percent of agricultural produce during Kharif season. Most of the animals are underfed, and as per empirical account many cattle move far off and die.

It is thus not surprising that there is a registered threefold increase in the outstanding credit from rural and semi urban branches of commercial banks in Uttar Pradesh's Bundelkhand region i.e., Rs 2,319 crore in 2010 to Rs 6114 crore in 2013, according to Reserve Bank of India (Bera, 2015). The ramification of findings in Rampura Block of Jalaun district introduces us to divergent and complex starling realities which further pronounce the need to have a locally manifested decentralised initiative encompassing the contextual needs and local complexities.

Profile of Rampura based on base line data

Before we specifically dwell on understanding the specifics of Rampura block, a glance at its parent district will be helpful in setting the agenda for testing the hypothesis of viability of Anaj

Bank in social and geographical setting like Rampura which is prone to climate hazard and far from meeting developmental parameters.

The population according to the census report (2011) in Rampura block is 54.25 per cent of male and 45.75 per cent of the female. 14.77 per cent of its population compromises of children aged between 0-6 years. The sex ratio is 843 per 1000 male, which is lower than its parent district, Jalaun (859) and Uttar Pradesh (918) in totality. The despicable performance of Rampura is reflected by female and a male literacy rate of 37.15 per cent and 62.85 per cent respectively which is also lower than the district and state average. Further in Rampura block which is home to 31.47% of total SC population of the district, only 65.41% of SC male and 34.59% of SC female are literate.

In terms of employment rate, 24.97% of the total population wherein 87.68% male (higher when compared to district and state level data) and 12.32% female (lower when compared to district and state level data) in the Jalaun district is working as the main worker. The percentage of marginal workers in the block is 9.82% of the total district population which is low in comparison to both state (35.4%) and district level (34.3%) data. Further, while the situation of employment in the category of male agriculture labour (76.85%) and male cultivators (88.2%) is better in the block when compared to district , the opportunity is only limited to 23.1% women agricultural labourer and 11.70% of women cultivator which is dim when compared to district statistics.

Contemplating the agricultural, demographic and employment data, the reasons beyond food consumption pattern in Rampura

block been integrated into its agriculture calendar is evident, wherein the quality, quantity of food consumption changes according to availability of food. As empirically noted, everyone in the 16 sampled villages is at least food insecure for few days with a mean of 62% population from sampled village hunger stricken for at least 3 months. People are generally food insecure in the Rampura block from the month of October to February. The consumption in the lean season mainly depends on reserve food stock (which is lean) and limited purchase capacity flowing from the sources like Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) wage. However the recorded narration factors the inefficacious performance of MGNREGA and thus difficulty in getting job / payment. Women have been the worst victim since they have been patriarchally trained in consuming less and at the end.

Therefore, in the absence of fewer alternatives, the propelling conditions favour the establishment of Anaj Bank. In all probability, villagers toil to make Anaj bank a success story in order to attain a higher level of functional utility from it.

Section II: Anaj Bank Findings

Anaj Bank Modalities

In accounting the reasons on why these specific 16 villages in Rampura block were chosen sites for implementation of the scheme supported by the local NGO, Parmarth? Anecdotes foregathered from the field workers seems to be working along the argument augmented by scholarship like of Olson (1965) which bespeaks about the negative impact of large size group on collective action. All the villages featuring Anaj Bank in Rampura block ranges from less

(kishanpura village, 39 households) to average(Naraul, 428 households) number of households when compared to other villages in the block. PARMARTH accounts that the cost of coordination, monitoring increases if Anaj bank is planted in larger villages along with the probability of free rider problem.

Under Jan Muhim project, PARMARTH advisory supported the Anaj bank in 16 villages of Rampura Block, Jalaun with the start up credit of 5 quintal grains to offset food distress specifically in lean seasons. The study notes that every Anaj bank was established just after harvest season to ensure considerable contribution by its member. This gives a sense of ownership. Thereby, the vested interest of household members in ensuring the functional and successful Anaj Bank becomes essential to prevent their loss if Anaj Bank collapse. Additionally, it has been instrumental in formulating the Anaj bank by-laws and managerial mechanism.

These Anaj Bank predominately deal with procurement and dispersal of Bajra and Wheat and charges interest of 25% per annum on the principal amount of grain taken as loan. The principal amount and the interest should be returned after the next harvest. However, if a beneficiary fails to timely return it, Anaj Bank gives them an opportunity to return it after the next harvest season with an additional 25% of interest. Payment in instalments is also facilitated in cases where the beneficiary is not able to return the entire loan altogether. The nominal interest rates according to many is a befitting instrument to overcome the drawbacks of local money lending.

Though, all the banks been set up under the project do not necessarily function on linear modalities. While few Anaj banks

are managed by the core committee of members, some are collectively governed by all the members. The core management can be a mixed composition of male and female members, or it can be an absolute women centric group governing Anaj Bank as per its by-laws. Gram Chetna Samiti and Mahila Mandal which are parallel operational community group across many of these villages have an instrumental role in selecting the beneficiaries. The distinct feature of Rampura block's 16 Anaj banks is the facility of inter loaning between them. It is a convenient arrangement for the Anaj bank falling short of supply to function effectively. Also, are quest by a Anaj bank to another can be made to release their surplus in support to a non member households. On such requests, in an emergent meeting, the concerned surplus bank in consultation with its committee members takes a decision. If surplus Anaj bank agrees to extend their help, it is the responsibility of the Anaj bank of the village that initially forwarded the request to ensure that the due quantity of food grain is returned to the lending bank after the next harvest by the non member beneficiary.

Anaj Bank meetings are held twice in a year. One immediately after harvest in May-June to collect loan repayments and further take note on defaulters case. The second meeting is convened at the beginning of the lean season October-November to assess the needs of the people and match up with the available stocks to disperse the grains to needy on a priority basis. The date of dispersal of grains in publically announced in an open meeting. Due information by members on the possibility of their absence from the meeting needs to be communicated to the Anaj bank in advance to ensure the collection of grains latter. The minimum quorum to initiate the

process of grain dispersal requires the mandatory presence of at least 5 members. The working ethics of Anaj bank involves maintenance of ledger where details of stock, grain distribution, and collection are maintained as well as the Proceedings Register, for noting down proceedings of the monthly meeting.

Enforcement of Anaj Bank Contract

The sampled 16 Anaj bank villages reflect a close knit group sharing moments of life together. This close affiliation allows each individual to possess knowledge about the fellow members.

The unwritten script of contract, therefore, refraining the system of state policing or judicial courts actualize as a self enforcing wisdom precipitating from peer monitoring and fear of social sanctions. Frequent interactions among the members of the household also subsidize the transaction and information cost. In his seminal work Ghatak & Guinnane (1999) have proven theoretically and empirically that fear of social sanction results in high repayment rates overcoming free rider problems. Contrary as pointed by Mude (2006), these benefits are not always acknowledged continuously, as in some cases the proximity of community networks likewise produces power and social relations that repress proficient or dynamic dissemination of assets and impedes peer monitoring process. However, in the rural hinterland of Rampura block whereby seasonal food insecurity is a repeated occurrence and in the absence of another viable alternative to cap the stress, there are few or no better alternative present and functioning then Anaj bank forcing its member to abide by rules. Further these villages which have relatively lower mobility, have adapted to dynamic incentives that is increasing the loan size over time to ensure lower default rates

assuming that participants will not want to withhold the possibility to access larger amount loan in future.

Membership Composition

Around 2004-05 in the quintessential model, PARMARTH endorsed the drive for Anaj Bank formation in 16 villages of Rampura block, by channelizing community cooperation. To attract significant no. of villagers to join the community food security drive, the membership of Anaj bank was kept voluntary and inclusive. Despite the fact that in none of the village entire community became its member, nonetheless the membership has seen a marginal to significant increase over the time as per every Anaj bank's documentation. Probing the inclusive character of the banks, the study finds that an average female participation in management coterie ranges across villages from 40% to even 100% in some villages like Malhanpura. Except for two villages Kishanpura and Rathanpura which have no SC population, the deprived members of schedules caste community are significantly engaged in these banks. The anecdotal evidence suggests that household which eschewed from taking its membership are either food secure or have guaranteed access of grains from kith and kin in times of distress and thus do not require to borrow grains for consumption smoothing. The other kind which are by intension excluded from its membership are those individuals/ household which has repeated and sorry history of debt repayment or does not share a cordial relation with larger village community or are excluded on caste based factor.

Positioning Women in Anaj Bank

In depth interviews in some of the villages of Rampura block during the author's visit in summer of 2019, adjourns the popular myth about the unitary model of family. Gary Becker (1981) for

example, in his work, conceptualised household as a single entity wherein all household resources and incomes are pooled, and an altruistic head of household representing the household utility, taste and preferences seeks to maximize it further. Juxtaposed, the campaign against male liquor consumption in the Rampura block by women is an evidence that greater disparity exists over the expenditure preferences. This is an important reason on why women in particular were made members of the Anaj bank, as, it is assumed that women accords more significant concern to better health functioning of the household and thus they will be disciplined members who timely repay the loan without defaulting. This exactly corresponds as a reason as to why women remain the primary target as a client in most of the microcredit schemes like Grameen bank or Foundation for International Community Assistance (FINCA). Though there are reservations to such assumptions and claims.

The study put forwards the argument, similar to those forwarded by Bina Agarwal (1997) that vulnerabilities embedded in the households differs on the ability of the person to physically survive outside the ambit of family. Greater the ability greater would be the bargaining power of the person over subsistence. Anaj bank in the given parlance has the potential to rescue the limitation women face due to patriarchal setup, wherein they cushion the specific vulnerabilities of women by providing them with fall back options.

Correlation between Anaj Bank and the presence of other local community institution

Anaj bank's successful functioning can additionally be reinforced by other existing jointly owned community institutions in the

village like Self Help Group (SHG), catering to credit and borrowing requirements. The inference has been drawn from the fact that higher is the level of interaction among the villagers through the medium of the regular meeting of these communities , greater will be the social cohesion, in turn, stimulating the longevity of the Anaj bank. In sampled 16 Anaj bank villages in Rampura block, the other prominent community institution having distinct functions than Anaj Bank are Gram Chetna Samiti, Mahila Mandal, Laxmi Self Help Group.

Anaj Bank - An inbuilt self insurance

Grasping from anecdotal evidence, the consumption loan been delivered by Anaj Bank is not just limited to its primary function of managing the lean food insecurity months but extends further in assisting member households with subsisting health vulnerabilities, wedding functions, etc. Anaj Bank thus is a package integrated with insurance against idiosyncratic shocks. Since the interest return is lower than the interest charged on obtained cash from moneylenders, it remains an alluring source of credit.

Anaj bank - Enabling savings

The adaptation technique adopted by villagers in the block to mitigate the food insecurity during lean season as recorded by open ended conversation with PARMARTH field staff, reveals two fold strategy: decline in food consumption especially women who have learnt to forgo their nutritional requirements to feed the rest in the family and, increase in consumption credit from local moneylender. Since the money lender who charges a high rate of interest does not ask collateral to be mortgaged, they remained as swift vantage for accessing loan. Repayment of the loan

however, often limits an individual's capacity to save during harvest season, creating a cycle of borrowing and debt. Additionally, the study also noted through its discussion with the field staff about the non saving habit of villagers before the commencement of Anaj banks in the block. Bhattamishra (2008) empirical study in Odisha talks about the social life of villagers indulging in lavish feast and alcohol as a mark of post harvest festivity describing the hyperbolic or time inconsistent preferences of villagers when contrasted with future food insecurity in the lean agricultural season. Such lavish investment in social and cultural life by villagers in Rampura block resonates the same problem of villagers short sightedness or impatience for near term trade offs compared to future trade offs. The consequent corollary is adapting to less eating habit in food inconsistent period as also evidenced by major locally observed fasts which categorically falls in the lean agriculture season.

Juxtaposed, numerous scholarship account (see Rutherford, 1999) are also present which talks about individuals demand for a tailored mechanism which can abbreviate commitment difficulty and enable savings. In absence of easy to understand and accessible institutional mechanism, the method adopted as a saving device were like; digging the floor of the house to keep the valuables or entrusting the savings to the trustworthy or placing the cash/gold in containers without anyone's knowledge in the house. Such informal saving method is often at risk of getting displaced. Anaj bank in such a scenario, act as a formal institutional commitment saving product which enable savings and simultaneously deal with self control problem.

Further Anaj Bank by its more formal character ensues trimming the rate of social taxation over liquid assets, which when left to the neighbour or a relative is vulnerable and prone to be lost under constant requests to aid the deprived relative, friend, neighbour or a spouse in times of distress. The investment thereby in a community led structure like Anaj Bank is a gambit, whereby disbursement is timely managed and is subject to management decision. The saving decisions hence become alluring with its effect on lowering the rate of social taxation (Bhattamisra 2008)

Anaj Bank Vs. the Traditional Credit System in Rampura Block

Numerous accounts exists supporting the ideational notion of borrower's welfare resulting from displacement of reliance on moneylenders by Anaj banks since the latter provides credit at more favourable terms than the exploitative conditions tailored by local moneylenders. Empirical evidence further triangulates it. The study outlines that borrowing from local money lenders has been among the most popular and highly used form of adaptation technique mainly to bear food related expenses in the lean season. Contrasted now, 90 per cent of the Anaj bank members in Rampura block are procuring consumption credit from Anaj bank functioning in their village. This is indicative of the fact that Anaj banks have facilitated consumer welfare by averting the borrowers reliance on credit often on humanitarian terms by money lenders. .

In contradiction, few distinct scholarships have theoretically postulated the broader overview of a contrary disservice to borrower's welfare under complex and constrained circumstances

resulting because of unregulated competition between potential credit providers. The seminal work by Hoff and Stiglitz as cited in Ruchira (2008) predict how,"the introduction of subsidized credit into a monopolistically – competitive market with high enforcement costs can lead to the exit of incumbent lenders and higher prices for borrowers." However as reported from the field, the interest rate has remained the same. One of the probabilities of being stable with interest rate may be resultant fear of losing more clients to its newly emerging competition. Since, it is beyond the scope of this study to ascertain how the existence of a Anaj bank which provides a specific type of loan for consumption smoothening may affect traditional money lending system; what we presented here is a naïve assertion which requires further proofing by empirical research on this particular point.

Conventional banks vs. Anaj Banks

The Anaj Bank is principally different from the conventional mode of banking. The clients/beneficiaries in Anaj methodology are not bound by a legal instrument as is the case between lenders and borrowers in a conventional system. The defaulter's case in Anaj Bank is not put in the courts to recover loan unlike in conventional banking. Such borrowers are allowed with the flexibility to repay their loan latter. In conventional banking method, the interest rate can heap and overflow the principal amount maxim, but in Anaj bank the interest is freezed when it becomes equal to the principal amount. The conventional system in their quest to recover loan amount does not shy from taking the borrowers collateral in their possession, Anaj banking management, on the other hand, ensures that the loan amount of defaulter in distress is paid through a collective voluntary collection. In an unfortunate

circumstance of borrowers loss of life, the liability of repayment is not transferred to the deceased family's instead the system of an inbuilt insurance mechanism takes the burden off on repayment. This is unlikely of the conventional banking system of operation. Thereby easier banking version facilitated by Anaj Bank is making it much popular among the villagers in the block.

Section III: Conclusion

Through the lens of Anaj bank, we understand food security as a subject, an agent, an identity, a medium of expression of one's rights and entitlement. It has a wider social framework to it. It can lead to conflict or cooperation and empowerment. Anaj bank resonates the idea of Maxwell (1990) on food security which, "will be achieved when the poor and vulnerable have secure access to the food they want".

This study is an add on to the literature (Subbarao et al. 1997; Alderman 2002; Conning and Kevane, 2002; Coady et al., 2004) which is spearheading the fact that social assistance arrangements which gives space to community discretion in managing and designing the procurement of welfare services and distribution thereon, better targets the poor populace then those which refrain community intervention. When contrasted with PDS, which is highly subsidized and expensive on the central government purse, Anaj Bank secures an upper hand given its acceptance. Since choices are made and executed by the office bearers of Anaj Bank, there are fewer slacks or hurdles and operational adaptability, contrasted with the public schemes like PDS.

However, like all other community-based institutions, Anaj banks are also susceptible to leakages, misappropriation, and captured

by local elites. PARMARTH field workers cite in-group favouritism as a reason which according to their experience may fail the system. Marques (1994) coined the word "black sheep effect" which works on in-group bias, effectively discrediting those in the group who threaten the positive social identity of the group by deviating from dominant benchmark. While the exclusion of non likeable members is fostered, misappropriation and nepotism also flows from it in favouring likeable members and thus, weakening the very foundational philosophy of Anaj bank. Besides, the lack of experience of management committee members can also attribute to the failure of Anaj Bank.

What Anaj Bank, however, can learn from its sister scheme elsewhere in sub Saharan Africa which functions on three modalities: buy, store and sell grains. Cereal bank in sub Saharan Africa, primarily functions to procure grains after the harvest season on low prices and sells its stock in the village during lean season when prices soar, on the rate above the original purchase price and below the thriving market price. With the generated revenue, it refinances its procurement in the subsequent harvest season (CRS 1998). Anaj bank on the similar lines can assist the producers to market their grain in urban centres where the market price is high.

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Narrative of Political Violence in Iraq: Some Observations

Manan Dwivedi[*]

Abstract

Iraq known as being part of the Mesopotamian waste was once a thriving Emirate. The paper argues that political violence of the order of the one witnessed in Iraq was due to the ethnic and sectarian within the domesticity of Iraq along with the external interventions. When a democratic deficit occurs and the popular feedback of the establishment and its policies cannot find an utterance and communication, then, the safety valve of the society in nations moves out rebellion becomes the order of the day. The paper analyzes and chronicles the internal security cleavages characterized by internecine political violence in Iraq within the rubric of the theoretical, Political Contest Model.

Introduction: Political Violence in Iraq and the Attendant Theory

Political Violence is a commonly faced and perpetual flashpoint in the internal security dynamics of some of the nations and regions with MENA being a case in point. Myriad ethnic, sectarian and religious cleavages mar the landscape of the State of Iraq. The Saddam Hussein era was rather stable and stolid but with the suppression of groups such as Kurds and Sunnis according to one reading of the narrative. In the-post Saddam Hussein phase, the

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nation lurches from one monstrous state of affairs to another due to internal fissures in the socio-political and diplomatic milieu. The American withdrawal from reconstruction and nation building exacerbated the internal security parameters and conditions. The paper analyzes and chronicles the internal security cleavages characterized by internecine political violence in Iraq within the rubric of the theoretical, *Political Contest Model.*

Political Violence amounts to the utilisation of forceful protests utilising weapons of arm as a final stage of rioting against themes and policies of a few establishments in countries, all across the spectrum of demographics, sects and nations in the larger international system. The spectacular impact of political violence by actors is aimed to attract the Media and public opinion attention of the international public sphere so that the rationale behind a rebellion or violence, whatever might be the case, can be, enumerated with a balanced argument.

In another explanation of the theme of Political Violence, when a democratic deficit occurs and the popular feedback of the establishment and its policies cannot find an utterance and communication, then, the safety valve of the society in nations moves out rebellion becomes the order of the day. In Iraq, too, the exigencies of the Saddam Hussein Regime propelled the entry of United States of Americas and the ongoing strife between the Shias and Sunnis along with the Kurdish revolt in the northern part of Iraq.

The United States of America and the State of Iraq are nations par excellence with overgrown and pending global role-playing responsibilities and popular expectations for yeomanly acts which

firms up a difficult-to-live-upto philanthropic resolve (Dwivedi, 2019). Despite the inward looking parlance of homeland security as advanced by President Donald Trump, the US has perennially strived to intervene in conflict scenarios and amidst the rigmarole of failed and failing nations to stand tall with its objective of the Global Demos which can be referred to as a pertinent poser. Why does the US need to democratize the larger neighbourhood, the case study here being the state of Iraq? And, what legal, democratic and political legerdemain it needs to adhere to escape the appellation of a being a crudely interventionist nation state. The narrative of political violence in Iraq can never be complete without the role played by the external powers as they have a larger and influential role to play in the "happenings in the ensuing turbulence in the state of Iraq.

It is not that the onus lies only with the audience and the decision makers of the World Polity in order to circumvent the staid argument of "American Illegality" and "American Illegitimacy," where-in, the nation with a Manifest Destiny has regularly intervened in national principalities such as Philippines, World wars, Europe, Serbia, Kosovo, the Korean Peninsula , Vietnam , the larger Indo China, Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Iraq, Syria, Libya and other national principalities. The grandiloquent American penchant for philanthropy and the Don Juan invocation in its foreign policy sometimes stands alone as a much ravaged policy instrumentality though the intentions have been an avid amalgamation of the fulfilment of national interest imbued with a messianic zeal of restoring order in "torn states and societies." as elucidated and pithily elaborated upon by Samuel P Huntington in his work, "The Clash of Civilizations". The internal security

dynamics will, too, be a key factor responsible for the eruption of instability in the MENA region and the nation state of Iraq. The theme of American intervention is an extraneous facet of the troubles brewing in Iraq, but, it too remains a significant factor as an outside variant in determining the role in the internal dynamics. The internal security dynamics of Iraq are factored in by the sectarian divide within Islam and the rebelliousness of the Kurds, due to historical precedents along with the rise and decline of the Islamic State in the post 2018 period.

It is here that the deliberations and discussions on the states premised in West Asia gain their significance. Internal dynamics in the MENA region play a key role in deciding the violence and conflict in the state of Iraq, apart from the external circumstances such as the ones perpetrated by the American and other national interests. The theme that is intriguing and can appear and be treated as a research poser is, that, how did the conditions come to such a passé and which factors made some of the nations such as Iraq turn into "torn state and society," in the light of the acts of domestic political violence. Though the issue of great power interventions has had a role to play in the West Asian conundrum, but an honest and straight fenced comprehension of the destabilization and imbalance in power equations in the State of Iraq can be pondered upon in the present narrative. Political Violence is a largely and comprehensively defined strategy and state of affairs where-in, both the State apparatus and the non-state actors have their cavalier and loud role to play in the context of the Political Contest Model. The stage is reached, where–in, the Democratic set up reaches a critical and collapsible stage and the larger context of sustenance of the society and polity needs to be

delved inside. The Political violence in the nation has deleterious impact of stability and well being of Iraq or any other besieged nationality. The ethnic and sectarian strife takes a toll on the peaceful intent of the country as it happened in the Iraq War as referred to by the Mainstream Media in Iraq. The violence involving the Kurds, Shia and Sunni sects of Islam are the bête noir for the efforts to sustain peace and quietude in the social and political ecosystem of Iraq as a contested nation.

The Saddam Hussein Era: Iraq Challenged

The Saddam Hussein era is replete with instances of the regional and international polity taking note of the dictatorial processes of the national leader in the uniform in Baghdad. The global scepticism and criticism of the American policy in Iraq can be delved inside with some of the ideas of the observers of international affairs. It has been contended by Paul R Pillar that, "The most extraordinary aspect of George W Bush's administration's launching of a war in March 2003 was the absence of any apparent procedure for determining whether that the war was a good idea. There was not a poor policy process or an incomplete one or a biased one, there was no policy process. Investigative reporters down the years have found no meetings, no policy papers, no debate in the White House situation room, or anything else that addressed that whether the war in Iraq was in the US interests or not as an input to a Presidential decision on whether to invade or not" (Pillar, 2014). Thus, the opinion of one segment of the global observers was that United States did not have a clear war rationale for entering inside both the Persian Gulf wars as we are considering both the Persian Gulf wars as part of a conjoined narrative. In the second Gulf War which was

launched in March 19, 2003, the war rationale as advanced by White House was that Saddam Hussein was sheltering Al Qaeda which included their diminutive leader Osama Bin Laden and that Iraq was linked to the sponsoring machine of global terrorism through Al Qaeda. What soured the domestic situation in Iraq? It can be attributed to the divisive role of various agents in a post-Saddam Hussein era.

Also, another allegation which was utilised was that Iraq was on its way to the creation of a stockpile of Weapons of Mass Destruction in the chemical, biological and nuclear mould. The Iraqi excesses amounted to the proportions of genocide in the Northern Iraq populated by Kurds where–in, towns such as Halabja and scores of sleeping Kurdish villages were decimated with their entire populations. Thus, the human rights record of the Saddam Hussein Regime was too a cause of concern for the Western community including the United States which after the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Towers, were concerned about their homeland security in a boundless manner. The September 11 attacks acquired a Pearl Harbour like pedestal in the itinerary of American reverses in the pantheon of American military, political and cultural history.

The critiques were out to hound the American strivings in Iraq. Deputy Secretary of State, Richard Armitage, when asked after leaving office whether the process for making war on Iraq was broken, replied, "There was never any policy to break by Condolezza Rice or anyone else. There never was one from the start, Bush didn't want one, for whatever reason" (Suskind, 2004). Still, the school of thought represented by the personages such as Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld and Richard Pearle reflected a

contradictory subset of the American foreign policy thought which was much more in the mould of the neo conservative strategic school of thought. For instance, since the terrorist attacks on USS Cole and the American embassy in Tanzania, till the Boston marathon bomb attack in 2013, the PNAC or the Project on New American Century, ruled the roost in the State Department. In this connection, even the doves in the policy making process were not able to a make a dent in the entire rubric of the US policy in Iraq in both the Gulf wars though the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Richard Lugar went ahead to order a re-think on the US decision to enter Iraq and augment the strength of the combat forces in the nation. The bipartisanship was still being reflected by some older and traditional segments of the American Senate, as a fresh whiff of air in the larger American legislative firmament. Still, despite what America did in Iraq, the reasons of conflict lie embedded in the political and social dynamics of Iraq, which, can be perceived through the percept of the Political Contest Model. Rules are present in the case of the international interventions in Iraq and the MENA group of nations but the domestic circumstances leading up to the state of disability in Iraq ought to have been controlled and mitigated by a rules based internal order, but, that does not seem to have transpired in the context of Iraq.

The Roots of Political Conflict in the Iraq's Homeland

The Sanctions Regime in Iraq as a Precursor element in the Homeland in Iraq

The intervening years for the population in Iraq was one of suffering and misery as elaborate sanctions had been heaped upon the nation

as it was dithering and was perceived of being ignorant in its decisions to give a free hand to the weapons inspectors and the larger American interests. Sanctions definitely had a debilitating impact upon the way of life in Iraq that needs to form part and parcel of an academic discussion when one refers to the theme of political violence in the region and specifically Iraq. New York Times has reported utilising United Nations sources that, child deaths were recorded as a result of the west sponsored sanctions. New York Times reports that, "As many as 576,000 Iraqi children may have died since the end of the Persian Gulf war because of economic sanctions imposed by the Security Council, according to two scientists who surveyed the country for the Food and Agriculture Organization. The study also found steeply rising malnutrition among the young, suggesting that more children will be at risk in the coming years. The results of the survey appeared too in The Lancet, the journal of the British Medical Association" (Crosette, 1995). Cases of malnutrition and stunting of growth of children was reported by the population in Iraq, when, the blame was diverted the way of American sanctions in the besieged nation. The New York Times Report further adds that, "The percentage of Iraqi children affected by "wasting," or emaciation requiring urgent attention, rose to 12 percent in 1995, from 3 percent in 1991, Dr. Fawzi reported, adding that these figures are extraordinarily high, similar to those found in Malagasy and Myanmar. Several United Nations agencies, including F.A.O. and Unicef, have expressed concern about the damage being done to Iraqis, especially children, by United Nations economic sanctions." Thus, sections from the International organizations groups falling under the ambit of United Nations and other allied agencies mouthed these concerns about the emaciated and

'suffering' state of the children in Iraq after Persian Gulf War-I. The American viewpoint had a different pronouncement up its sleeves, which is the other side of the argument's tilt, which can also be enumerated as the American defence of the sanctions despite the humanitarian misgivings of some segments of the international opinion. The rationale of crime and punishment can be regarded as one of the reason d etre's of the entire exercise of the sanctions being imposed upon Iraq.

Professor Lucas has mentioned in defence of the American sanctions that, "In the first place, if Saddam had been allowed to get away with one iota of his aggression towards Kuwait, it would have been only the first step to his domination of the Gulf region, and perhaps the Middle East more broadly. One should note that if he had got his hands on Kuwaiti oil and Saudi oil, in addition to what Iraq had, he would have controlled no less than 40% of the world's oil reserves. The reasons for Desert Storm being called off when it was were equally compelling. The United Nations mandate for the campaign was confined to expelling the Iraqis from Kuwait. To continue the march to Baghdad would certainly not have guaranteed that Saddam was overthrown, and even if he had been, it then would have probably involved us (the Americans and the British) sitting in Baghdad trying to govern the ungovernable" (Kirkfeld, 2000). Thus, whether one may attempts and escapes the exigencies of the all important "Oil Factor," still the centrality of the reasoning that international community attempted to contain the growing might of Saddam Hussein and the sceptre that the dictator might usurp the nationality of Saudi Arabia along with a major chunk of the oil resources, emerge as primordial factors in the discussion on the efficacy or the non-

efficacy of sanctions on Iraq leading to domestic conflict. The counter view about the non-efficacy and the deleterious ramifications of the sanctions on the Mesopotamian nation too can be brought about in bold relief which provides the counter punch to the American standpoint. Thus, sanctions though coming through not without the Global community, have a steadfast role to play in the misery and suffering due to shortages in the state of Iraq under the shadows of a fractious political leadership in Baghdad. The post-Saddam era in Iraq led to the exacerbation in the post conflict scenario with ethnic clashes led by Kurds in the North, the suffering of Yazidies and the traditional Shia-Sunni divide led to the creation of the Islamic State which is on the verge of being obliterated by the Government in Baghdad.

Professor Garfield in the same document cited above referred to the sanctions in Iraq. He contended that, "The political use of sanctions is important, but made specific criticisms both of the Oil-for-Food programme's failure to incorporate an evaluation component and of interference by the in rectifying that failure. He distinguished between short-and long-term assets, citing the damage done to the latter – especially in the provision of clean water, reliable electricity, and literacy through primary education – by the Gulf War and the sanctions regimes. However, he emphasized that the grim picture of public health presented by contemporary Iraq was not inevitable. He criticized the failures of the Iraqi government to mobilize resources and co-ordinate the dissemination of vital information on water boiling, child-feeding practices, immunization, and breast-feeding, etc" (Kirkfield, 2007). The humanitarian portents of the economy hurting, education harming and health stultifying nature of the sanctions, too, have

been brought out in the above written detailed account. To scholars and audiences following the contemporary trends, the idea of a post nuclear and post Geneva talks-Iran suffering from debilitating sanctions without having fought an overt war with United States, too, serves as a reflection of how recalcitrant nations suffer from the sceptre of such impositions. The realism ordained happenings at the keel of military and political keel tend to hobble and ignore the impact which the political decisions can have on the day to day and humdrum lives of innocent and unsuspecting mortals in the effected regions and countries. All these internal differences and domestic strains led to the idiom of political violence in the state of Iraq.

The rise of Difficulty in Turf: The Rise of Islamic State

The idiom of the conflict with the 'sudden' rise of Iraq deserves a re-look, as, a separate timeline. Four years ago in 2014, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant group (ISIL, also known as ISIS) began a series of lightning advances across Iraq and Syria, taking advantage of regional instability to make rapid territorial gains. Since then, there have been hundreds of battles, gruesome killings and a US-led campaign of air attacks. Today, ISIL is a group in decline, driven out of its urban strongholds, as, local and international forces reclaim key territory. Initially the Islamic State conquered AlRaqqa in the nation state of Syria to serve as a platform and a plotting ground for the IS in Iraq, too. The Kurdish equation in the region continued to play a part in the rise of domestic political violence in Iraq. It was the State of power vacuum and tribalism in leadership conflicts, which initiated the post Saddam strife in Iraq. Another factor which can be cited as a key factor in Iraq's disunity and the disintegration of order is the

policies adopted by the Shia led Bagdad Regime which led to the disillusionment of the Sunni factions and other peripheral forces such as the brigade of Moqtada-Al-Sadr which peaked internal conflict in several parts of Iraq. The Sunnis felt isolated and felt that they were relegated to the backburner by the Nur-Al-Maliki Regime comprising of Shias. The Badr armies soon achieved the barometer of violence in the state of Iraq and became involved in acts of violence, sabotage and bombing in Iraq.

The Green Zone which was the name given to the US Stabilization Regime, soon, morphed into a common target in the capital of Iraq. At one point of time in 2005-2007, the entire city was in a state of siege by the Sunni rebels and Bard militia which resulted in the introduction of, "The Surge" in Iraq by the Bush Administration. Also, the various ethnic groups were soon at loggerheads with each other which resulted in the spawning of the Islamic State, thus, ushering in an era of homeland insecurity and political-leadership of chaos and anarchy. In the Book, Forgotten war, the activity and the gory details of insurgency in cities such as Fallujah, Mosul and Tikrit, form an incisive and significantly in depth scenario of political violence in post Saddam era in the Mesopotamian nation. Vice President Wilfred Nun wrote the Book, " Tigris gunboats" (Nunn, 2017) which draws a corollary between the torn state of affairs in Iraq during the British occupation and the American incursion in the 21st century. The author summarizes, "A fascinating story full of contemporary resonance written with authority by the senior naval officer at the time March 2007 which sees the anniversary of the fall of Baghdad - not in 2003, but 1917. Few people realize that the latest American-led invasion was prefigured by a poorly-resourced

but ultimately successful British campaign during the First World War. Where the Americans had overwhelming air superiority, the British enjoyed a similar advantage -naval power" (Nunn, 2017).

The Kurds related Sectarian Violence

In the context of Iraq, Kurdish freedom might lead to a civil war in Iraq, in the words of one scholarly observation. Sean Lilling writes in the Vox that, "The Iraqi central government in Baghdad and the semi-autonomous region of Iraqi Kurdistan are fighting over control of Kirkuk, a multiethnic region in north eastern Iraq, that sits atop some of the country's most lucrative oil fields. It's an area that has been a flashpoint between the country's Arab majority and the Kurdish minority on and off for decades" (Lilling, 2018). The author further writes that, "The Kurds want Kirkuk to be part of a future independent state of Kurdistan, controlled from its capital, Erbil. The Iraqi central government, on the other hand, wants to keep Kirkuk — along with the rest of Iraqi Kurdistan — as part of a unified Iraq, controlled by Baghdad. When ISIS erupted on the scene in the spring of 2014, this fight over Kirkuk — and over Kurdish independence more generally — got largely shunted to the back burner as both Baghdad and Erbil focused on kicking ISIS out of the country. But, now that Iraqi and Kurdish forces, have pushed ISIS out of most of the country, those old divisions between Baghdad and Erbil have reared up again" (Lilling, 2018). Kurds have led a nomadic and challenged life since then and the presence of Turkey, Syria and Iran in the near vicinity makes the entire nation as a sanguine twilight zone which defeats the purpose of the sustainability of peace and order in ethnic and sectarian ridden strife in Iraq.

The Kurds too conducted a referendum which went against the sovereignty and territorial integrity a the status of Iraq. Patrick Cockburn writes in the Independent that, "An orgy of looting was going on inside the city, with the theft of everything from mattresses to fire engines. I saw two looters drive away a large yellow bulldozer, which they had just stolen. The Kurdish Peshmerga had taken over the city a few hours earlier, saying that they were there to fill the vacuum left by the disintegration of the Iraqi army and to restore order, though they did little to stop the looters" (Cockburn, 2017). The author furthers the fears and the scenario of the Kurds in Iraq, He writes that, "The Kurds still control Kirkuk, the oil capital of northern Iraq with a mixed population of Kurds, Arabs and Turkmen, as well as much of the surrounding province. The leaders of the US-led coalition during the invasion had feared that, if the Kurds captured the city, they would provoke a Turkish invasion, since Turkey had declared that it would not tolerate such a thing" (Cockburn, 2017). Thus, due to the three states, the status of Kurds is affected, the shadows of conflict continue to grow in Iraq as Kurds might be considered as rebels in Iraq and Turkey and Syria, but, the three nations which are facing the Kurd voice and action, are immensely effected by the Kurd militias such as YPG in Turkey. The recent move in the city of Afrin too poses a threat of great power and external involvement in the region where the Kurds are seeking a separate nation to be carved from the territories of Iraq, Syria and Turkey, with violent impact upon the Iraq.

The Shia-Sunni Divide Narrative of the Tradition of Sectarian Violence

The Islamic world has been ridden with violence since it's initial days by the conflict and divergence between the Shia sect and the Sunni counterparts. These facts have been avidly noted and commented upon by the International relations scholars and observers on West Asia**.** The America based Council of Foreign Affairs reports that. "Islam's schism, simmering for fourteen centuries, doesn't explain all the political, economic, and geostrategic factors involved in these conflicts, but it has become one prism through which to understand the underlying tensions. Two countries that compete for the leadership of Islam, Sunni Saudi Arabia and Shia Iran, have used the sectarian divide to further their ambitions." The Shia Sunni Divide has roots in religious antiquity and the history of West Asia with a religious tinge. CFR reports that, "A group of prominent early followers of Islam elected Abu Bakr, a companion of Mohammed, to be the first Caliph, or leader of the Islamic community, over the objections of those who favoured Ali Ibn Abi Talib, Mohammed's cousin and son-in-law. The opposing camps in the succession debate eventually evolved into Islam's two main sects. Shias, a term that stems from shi'atu Ali, Arabic for "partisans of Ali," believe that Ali and his descendants are part of a divine order. Sunnis, meaning followers of the sunna, or "way" in Arabic, of Mohammed, are opposed to political succession based on Mohammed's bloodline." In the case of Iran apart from the antiquity of the schism, the countries such as Shia Iran and the Sunni Saudi Arabia, have a hand in the stoking of political strife between the two sects in Islam with the Shia minority ruling the roost and the rise in the disaffection amongst the Sunnis. It is the same Sunnis, who identified with the home bred people to

support the rise of the IS and opened a new chapter since 2014 in the rise of the Islamic State which soon became notorious for its cruelty and barbaric modes of assassination and torture in Iraq, not that Al Qaeda was enough to spread terror and mayhem in Iraq and the other destinations of Osama's terror.

Iraq has a unique and peculiar station in the regional Shia-Sunni divide. In the case study of Iraq, it is widely believed that Iran and Iraq have a Shia majority and one can delve inside a Pew Research Poll to delve inside the reality. The Pew Research Poll reports that, "The few available survey measures of religious identity in Iraq suggest that about half the country is Shia. Surveys by ABC News found between 47% and 51% of the country identifying as Shia between 2007 and 2009, and a Pew Research survey conducted in Iraq in late 2011 found that 51% of Iraqi Muslims said they were Shia (compared with 42% saying they were Sunni)" (Lipka, 2018). The author further reports that, "On some religious issues, including whether it is acceptable to visit the shrines of Muslim saints, the differences between the sects are more apparent. For some, the divide is even exclusionary. In late 2011, 14% of Iraqi Sunnis said they do not consider Shias to be Muslims (By contrast, only 1% of Shias in Iraq said that Sunnis are not Muslims). Even higher percentages of Sunnis in other countries, such as Sunni-dominated Egypt (53%), say that Shias are not Muslims" (Lipka, 2018). It is generally believed that it was the power and leadership vacuum in the State of Iraq which percolated to the turf of violence in Iraq. Iran's hand in festering the divide, too, cannot be ruled out. The norms of, who, to follow and where to visit the religious shrines, are the traditional and the historical antecedents of the rise of political violence in Iraq on the lines of

a sectarian divide. The similar schism is the root cause of turmoil between the Alawi sect and the Sunnis in the besieged nation.

The Political Contest Model in the context of Iraq

The idea of the Political context model remains embedded in the larger nature and trajectory of the conflict in Iraq. Gadi Wolsfeld, a scholar of West Asian affairs posits an interesting analogy and a metaphor to comment and shed light on the nature of political violence in West Asia and Iraq. The author explains that the State and the non state actors are in a state of perpetual antagonism (Wolsfeld, 1990). The State actor with its accoutrements and the larger access to national and Institutional resources, holds an upper hand when it is pitted against an insurgent group, an ethnic conclave or a rebel coterie. The non-state actors are left with no feasible option, but, to act against the State actor by following a "Bamboozling strategy". This strategy includes committing an act of violence, a market bombing or a suicide bomber attack in a public and crowded place in order to draw the attention of the federal and international community to further their cause of protest or secession.

The narrative creates an imagery that the Media and the Public Opinion markers create a Gladiatorial contest of the Roman amphitheatrical times. The image is similar to that of two charioteers advancing upon each other in the arcade with spears and iron balls with pointed protrusions. The citizenry is the audience and it derives a vicarious pleasure in the bloodbath which is continuing in the Arcadia (Wolsfeld, 1980). Such is the nature of political violence in Iraq as a case study, where-in, the Baghdad led Institutions are involved in a conflict with the Islamic State and the

Kurds along with conflict between the Shia and Sunni sects of Islam. Ideally, in the Iraqi scenario the Government in Baghdad has an access to all the country's resources including Oil revenue though IS also controlled places such Mosul, rich in oil fields for a few years. Thus, political violence in Iraq and the MENA region can be considered in the genre of a "Gory Spectacle" for the international community with the non state actors switching to the "Shock and Awe" variant of a strategy in order to popularize their victimhood in the context of the state of Iraq.

The Post Saddam Era in Iraq: Some Observations

Boris Tugrul writes that, "Having been founded as a Marxist-Leninist revolutionary movement, the PKK has acquired more diverse concerns by time, leaning more on such issues as women's rights and ecology and gradually leaving behind rigid ideological borders of orthodox Marxism and the idea of founding a sovereign nation-state, replacing it with the vague idea of democratic autonomy" (Tugrul, 1990). Thus, the rebellious streak was always the driving idiom of the Kurdistan movement owing its origins from the neighbouring Turkey. The author then refers to the historical perspective of the Kurd movement. He contends that, "It's a fact that there have been a relative silence in Kurdistan of Turkey in comparison with Kurdistan of Iran and Iraq since the failure of those movements. [...] After the resistance which ended up in failure in 1938, resisting Kurdish ruling class in the Kurdistan of Turkey received a vital blow. Most prominent elements of this ruling class were destroyed. The remaining were imprisoned and sent to exile." The author further writes that, "As an armed movement emerges and involves under those social and political conditions in favour of the disadvantaged social stratum,

this solid social structure begins to get debilitated and the newly involved movement rises as a rival power centre. More this newly involved actor gets stronger in terms of legitimacy, more the society gets fragmented between those who support the State and its authoritative extensions, which at times cannot be separated from each other." Thus, the rise of Kurds as a prominent non state actor created a polarisation in Iraq and in the larger region which reverberates through the violence unleashed on the Kurds during the Saddam Hussein Regime. Thus, the political contest model of violent politics, comes into play here. The author further opines that as a conclusion, "Lack of plurality with regard to issue of legal representation of minorities and inclusiveness in Turkish political life and, therefore, physical and symbolic repressive approaches taken by the State against any formation considered threat to its unquestionable national unity and cohesion have hardly left any other choice for most Kurds with certain degree of national sensitivity."

Gadi Wolsfeld further writes in the larger context that, "The competition over the news media is a major element in modern political conflicts. The Pro-Choice and Pro-Life movements in America, the Serbians and the Muslims in Bosnia, Amnesty International, Russia, Chechnya, Al-Qaeda and the American government, all compete for media attention as a means to achieve political influence. Each antagonist attempts to promote its own frames of the conflict to the news media in an attempt to mobilize political support for its cause. If we can understand the rules of combat and the factors that lead to success and failure in the arena, we will be one step closer to understanding the role that the news media play in such conflicts" (Tugrul, 1990). Apart

from the role of the Fourth Estate in highlighting internal violence and political conflict, the basic details and the factors responsible for the origins and the continuation of political violence also play out in a significant manner with Iraq being a case study.

One of the significant modus operandi of political violence leads to the belittling of the efforts at nation-building in the state of Iraq. Harith Hassan writes in the World Peace Foundation that, "One important lesson we learned from post-Saddam Iraq, is, that violence is still an important political tool and it is not only used by the state, but also by groups competing to control or demolish the state. The excessive violence in Iraq was an outcome of nation-building process that was based on exclusion. One reason why I think this is a significant dimension in understanding political violence in Iraq is that historically the worst types of this violence have actually targeted groups or communities that can be labelled as the ' internal others'" (World Peace Foundation, 2013). The failure at nation building too has been a theme which has stymied the process of peace induction in Iraq. The nation building exercise too has been limited due to the decreased control of the Regime in Baghdad since the last decade after the departure of the Saddam Hussein Regime. The internally displaced populations along with the "internal others" are the communities which have targeted each other and ushered in external interventions such as those of Iran and United States. We need to deliberate upon the exigencies of what went wrong in Iraq and not to be bothered about the tenets of US Foreign Policy in Iraq and West Asia. Generalisations might appear here and there, but, they are part of the general scheme of things in Iraq which might provoke the author to realise

terms such as the Grandiloquent American Dream, and the US, as, being a nation par excellence.

He further writes that, "In the 1970s, war waged by the state against Kurdish insurgents who, were portrayed as traitors and proxies of foreign powers that threatened Iraq's integrity. At the beginning of the 1980s when hostilities with the new Islamic regime in Iran were escalating, tens of thousands of Iraqis were forcibly taken from their homes and sent to the borders with Iran. They were considered Iranian subjects who are not eligible for Iraqi nationality. In the official media they were labelled as a fifth column" (World Peace Foundation, 1990). Thus, Iran too has a stand in the continuing conundrum concerning the minority rights issues in the state of Iraq. The war waged by the Saddam Hussein Regime in the context of a rebel proposed Kurdistan, too, remains a cause of internal political Violence. In an instance, the town of Al Habaja was silenced by Chemical weapons by Saddam Hussein in the eighties which led to a casualty of around 20,000 Kurds, who slept in the night never to wake up again. Thus, the nature of Iraqi political violence, involving the Kurds has been gut wrenching and very insidious in nature which has added to the context of political violence in the region.

In the contemporary context, Iraq decided to go to polls for the 329 seats of representatives in Baghdad. These Parliamentary polls are important as it is the first electioneering exercise since the fall of ISIL in Iraq. Arwa Ibrahim contends in Al Jazeera that, "Today, Shia factions are divided into five coalitions, their fractured nature indicating that the government formation process will be long and complex. According to a nationwide poll conducted in March and featuring respondents from across

all 18 of Iraq's provinces, the top issues of concern include security, job opportunities, and the economy" (Ibrahim, 2018). Still, it is the Shias who will decide the fate of Iraq and the leader of the nation will be decided out of the coalition of Shias in the nation thus bringing back the charge of exclusionary politics since the times of Nur Al Malliki.

Conclusion

We need to ruminate and chew over the debates of the order of: the narrative of political violence in Iraq can never be complete without the role played by the external powers as they have a larger and influential role to play in the happenings in the ensuing turbulence in the state of Iraq. Still, the cleavages premised upon three concrete factors count for a lot. The Kurdish insurgency, the Shia Sunni divide and the rise of the Islamic state, are, those key factors which militate against the to-be- aspired for peace, stability and stolidity in the beleaguered and besieged state of Iraq. The state of political violence, is, also augmented by the idiom of a State vs. the non state actors violence in Iraq, where one person's freedom fighter can be equated as another person's terrorist, insurgent and unlawful militia, which holds true in the context of the State of Iraq. Thus, the primary significance to be revisited in the paper is not the idea of American and western intervention but the internal root causes of instability and up-rootedness, which, have added to the iota of political violence in the state of Iraq. The sectarian divide remains a key question which has cast its aspersions on the stability and peace in Iraq. The tribalism which was never the bane of the Iraq's origins and functionality, as, a nation was rendered imbalanced by the intervention of external actors along with the internal social-

political dissensions. Also we are not deliberating upon the theme of US Foreign Policy but a narrative premised upon, the Sanctions Regime in Iraq, the Saddam era and the post Saddam era times with all these segments to culminate upon the theme of the exigencies and undesirability of political violence in Iraq.

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Understanding ASEAN-China Conflict Prevention Measures: A Case Study of South China Sea

Chander Shekhar[*]

Abstract

Given the geopolitical importance of South China Sea, the members of Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and China have been engaging in the prevention or de-escalation of conflict in South China Sea by establishing norms and behavioral rules, such as the 2002 Declaration on Conduct of South China Sea, in order to establish peace and order in the region. In this context, this article seeks to examine the conflict prevention measures adopted by China and the ASEAN to mitigate conflict in South China Sea. The study is based on the argument that China and the ASEAN members have not faced an open war as trade interdependence is increasing among them and strives to forge a secure and stable order.

Keywords: ASEAN, China, Maritime Conflict, South China Sea, Conflict Prevention

Introduction

The maritime issues are emerging area in the domain of international relations. Also, "maritime boundary dispute is an alarming issue all over the world … becoming very much concerned about their marine resources because the world economy has turned into ocean-based resources termed as Blue economy" (Hasan, Jian, Alam, & Chowdhury, 2019: 89). The study on South China Sea from conflict prevention perspective has been

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neglected among scholars of IR and maritime scholarship despite of its geo economic imperatives and so on. At the onset, "the South China Sea has been a 'flashpoint' for a long time, and diplomats and scholars, whether from western society or states in the region, have tried for decades to provide possible solutions to the sovereignty disputes in this region" (Kao & Pearre, 2018: 104). As international relations have been undergoing a transformation countries as well seeking to build a new sort of relationship in which emerging maritime issues and conflicts are playing important roles. In this direction, economic relations also play an indispensable role as seen between China and the ASEAN. It is acknowledged that "the 10 member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) became China's second largest trading partner in the first half of 2019, overtaking the United States for the first time since 1997" (*China Daily*, 2019).

The Cold War period has been a period characterized as trust deficit as far as relationship building among countries is concerned. However, this trend has changed after the Cold War period in which China and ASEAN establish a new sort of relations based on economic development, growth and committing a peaceful environment. "the south china sea is a region that has made a significant contribution to joint development as a means of overcoming bilateral overlapping maritime claims" (Thao & Amer, 2009: 342).

Although South China Sea for a long time has been a source of tension and instability in the region that not only has had influenced relations but also welcomed external powers to take leverage from the suspicious relationship built during the Cold War. Likewsie, "the South China Sea has long been regarded as a

major source of tension and instability…many bilateral and multilateral efforts to manage the possible conflicts in the region have been recorded" (Thao & Amer, 2009: 333). It is though widely acknowledged that the colonial history and its long lasting peace disturbance strategies by not sorting out or clearing boundary conflict has been a pivotal factor in it.

What changed in the relations of ASEAN-China after the Cold War? It is widely maintained that "the disappearance of the ideological barriers and establishment of diplomatic ties between China and all ASEAN states by 1991… importance of economic links… the salience of the Spratly territorial disputes… and emergence of multilateralism as a mode of diplomatic interaction" (Chwee 2005:103). These are the major factors that push to China to rebuilt the centuries old security relations with the members of ASEAN.

This article has been organized into six sections: the first section deals with the basic understanding of maritime conflict and its rising importance in the realm of international relations and it also discusses the South China Sea conflict; the second section underlines the ASEAN efforts and approach to mitigate conflict such as South China Sea and reinforces ASEAN centrality; the third section addresses the Chinese engagement and its undergoing behavioral changes in maritime policy especially South China Sea; the fourth section talks about the concept of conflict prevention as a measure to reduce conflict possibility in South China Sea between China and the ASEAN; the fifth section demonstrates the opportunities the peace in South China Sea can bring such as more economic engagement and cultural identity strengthening; and the sixth section concludes by proving that the South China

Sea has become a zone of joint exploration from confrontation as witnessed between China-Philippines and so on and peaceful transformation facilitates other to secure and stable the region.

Understanding Maritime conflict and South China Sea

Waters or Seas have been essential to human kind as it is the source of minerals, such as gas, oil and other resources. "Maritime enterprises, such as shipping, trade and fishing, were significant facets of medieval and early-modern societies" (Sicking, 2017: 02). Maritime is linked with the boundry of seas and its uses by nation-states. Maritime conflict or dispute is defined as "a dispute relating to demarcation of the different maritime zones between or among states" (Hasan, , Jian , Alam, & Chowdhury, 2019: 90).

There have been several sorts of examples where countries claim their sovereignty over seas, thereby, give rise of conflicts. The Norway-Russia over Arctic and Cyprus-Turkish maritime conflicts is few instances. In Asia, the South China Sea maritime conflict is critical case where there are many countries keep claiming. South China Sea is a maritime conflict among many stakeholders as believed "China claims the Spratly Islands and other three maritime features in the South China Sea…four ASEAN countries, Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Brunei, dispute the sovereignty of the Spratly Islands with China" (Sato 2013:95). It is widely believed among scientific community that the South China Sea may consists of billions barrels of oil and gas—which could provide a push to human kind.

In recent years after several moment which could have led an open war among the stakeholders China and the members of

ASEAN have sought to maintain peace and order in the region. It is also stated that "the end of the Cold war and the settlement of the Cambodian conflict opened a new chapter in the development of ASEAN-China relations" (Chwee, 2005: 102).

ASEAN Efforts

In spite of challenges, such as the South China Sea, "ASEAN, as an organization, became involved in the South China Sea dispute in July 1992 when China and Vietnam became engaged in exploration activities" (Kipgen, 2018: 433). Nonetheless, after the Cold War period the relations are becoming trustful and cooperative and left the narrow approach adopted during the Cold War period.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is a regional organization of ten countries which was established in 1967 to maintain peace and enhance development. Although, it was the period when the world was divided into two groups based on ideologies, capitalism led by the United States and its allies and the socialism led by the former Soviet Union (now Russia) and influencing the unity of ASEAN organization. It is claimed that China considered it as a military alliance of United States while the ASEAN members also critical of communist expansion in the region. This was the fear that prevented both from mutual development and progress. The purpose of ASEAN is "to accelerate economic growth, social progress, and cultural development among the members" (Kim, 2011: 409).

Moreover, it is the ASEAN which establishes its norms and behavioral rules in 1976 with the signing of Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC). This was the first attempt of ASEAN members

to prevent intra-ASEAN conflicts and is opened for other countries which are willing to join and committed to follow. The TAC believes that the ASEAN members would follow the principles of "mutual respect for the independence, sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity… non-interference in the internal affairs of one another… settlement of differences or disputes by peaceful means" (TAC, 1976). This makes it an important measure to deploy peaceful techniques to resolve or mitigate regional conflicts. Here, it should be noted that the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TACT) was joined by China in 2002. As a model code of conduct, the TAC is pivotal in establishing partnership and maintaining peace in the region. Likewise, "the two fundamental principles of ASEAN since its formation have been non-interference in the internal affairs of member states and reaching an agreement by a consensus" (Kipgen, 2018: 434).

In addition, the ASEAN concord I and II are equally pivotal which focus on the economic, social, political and cultural cooperation among the ASEAN members. Holistically, it is termed as the 'ASEAN way' that consists of all its norms which drive it towards the path of development and peace. Pessimists believe that the ASEAN organization is merely a talk shop or losing its significance, but they forget to underline its successful advancement and implementation of its code of conduct and maintain peace in the region. The ASEAN is interrogated by saying that "the South China Sea dispute is a litmus test of ASEAN unity and its ability to maintain its self-assumed role in the driver's seat of regional affairs" (Zhao 2018:10). This test ASEAN would seek to mitigate or resolve with the cooperation of China. The ASEAN unity is the sole

driver behind the development and establishing peace in the South China Sea region.

The 'ASEAN centrality' is believed to have reinforced as members have strengthened their economic relationship and forging a partnership in order to secure the ASEAN soul.

Chinese Engagement

The South China Sea conflict cannot be understood without understanding China and its history—which as believed is crucial in the perception management of Chinese maritime policy in the region. It is clear that "due to geographical, historical and cultural reasons, the region has always been seen as a periphery (zhoubiandiqu) to which Beijing could exert its influence more effectively" (Chwee, 2005: 118). The maritime policy though over the last couple of decades has undergone a rapid transformation and seeking to adjust the unstable and changing scenarios. In China, it is being claimed that the colonial powers failed to design the clear boundary instead to give rising conflicts, such as the South China Sea. This is said that "China's territorial disputes with its neighbors in the South China Sea are left to history. Before the arrival of western powers, china was an empire. Territorial boundaries along China's frontiers were neither clearly drawn nor did they have any significance under the tributary system" (Zhao, 2018: 02). The Chinese perspective as far as South China Sea is concerned is widely influenced by its history, culture and law. Due to the rigidness of Chinese maritime policy during the Cold War, "China's interactions with ASEAN states were conducted solely on a bilateral basis and no institutionalized linkage was formally forged between China and the regional organization" (Chwee,

2005: 103). As mentioned above, the bipolar Cold War politics and the suspicious behavior of China throughout the Cold War restricted itself from engagement and diplomatic participation at organizational level.

However, this trend changed after the Cold War as the globalization and Chinese 'Open Door' policy stimulates other neighboring countries not merely for participation at political level but advancing economic relationship with them. Since then, "China's perceptions and policies toward multilateral institutions have been going through significant changes, from caution and suspicion to optimism and enthusiasm" (Chwee, 2005: 102). Therefore, China avoids direct military confrontation with the members of ASEAN over South China Sea. Here, it is imperative to underscore the rising economic dependence between China and the ASEAN that has opened up a new chapter in their history and influencing their political decision making and diplomacy as well.

Although, China has become soft on hard issues by influencing the decision in other countries as seen in the Belt and Road Forum (BRI) and on the peaceful resolution of South China Sea conflict, and "Beijing has indicated a willingness to seek a peaceful settlement and has participated in conference that have explored alternative solutions, including joint development of the region's natural resources" (Hyer, 1995: 34). This can be precisely seen in the changing approach of China which made it possible to think beyond the Cold War rivalry. Likewise, "China has, over the past two decades, made impressive overall progress towards improving relations with its Southeast Asian neighbours, mounting tensions over these competing claims threaten to undermine its charm offensive" (Raine, 2011: 69).

Conflict Prevention in South China Sea

The post Cold War period has been a witness of rising new trends and these trends are responsible to give emergence of conflict prevention. The concept of conflict prevention is a post Cold War phenomenon which is defined as a measure to mitigate the conflicts through exchange of information, early warning mechanism and confidence building measures. It is also the process by which early warning measures are deployed to prevent conflict and strengthen peace building. In the case of South China Sea, the ASEAN and China have been working on conflict preventive measures in order to stabilize the region. The 2002 Declaration on Conduct on South China Sea is a major milestone in it which precisely states that all the stakeholders would use peaceful means to solve conflicts like South China Sea. It is maintained that peace and stability in South China Sea is a successful efforts been made by the ASEAN organization and China. The DOC is considered an early warning deployment to maintain peace in South China Sea as it "promote a peaceful, friendly and harmonious environment in the South China Sea between ASEAN and China for the enhancement of peace, stability, economic growth and prosperity in the region" (DOC, 2002: 1).

It also seeks to "to protect its sovereignty, the declaration helps to preserve regional stability and a stable Sino-ASEAN relationship…also reduces the possibility for external powers to interfere in the disputes" (Chwee, 2005: 117). Nonetheless, "the DOC has provisions to govern the conduct of parties not in a prohibitive manner but in a more positive manner in that conduct of states is to aim to reduce the tensions of the territorial and jurisdictional disputes in the South China Sea" (Thao, 2003: 280). In other words, the DOC is not a legal binding measure but a

preventive measure to avoid direct military confrontation with the other countries in the region. Undoubtedly, it is the changing maritime policy of China which has accommodative arrangements to maintain peace. It is further contended that "reparticipation by China in the proceedings may be conducive to the creation of a positive atmosphere for cooperative settlement of the dispute in which China and the Philippines may be able to negotiate and consult to reach an agreement or consensus terminating the proceedings" (Mincai, 2014: 11).

In addition, as the gravity of world attention is moving towards Asia from Atlantic in 21st century scholars have also anticipated the potentials of conflicts as well over several issues, water is one of them. However, the ASEAN and China is committed "to consolidate and develop the friendship and cooperation existing between their people and governments with the view to promoting a 21st century-oriented partnership of good neighbourliness and mutual trust" (DOC, 2002: 1).

Opportunities

The peace and stability in South China Sea presents several opportunities in the relations of ASEAN and China. It is claimed that wars in the history of human kind have brought up disastrous results and taken back development. However, prevention of conflict is such a model through which progress can be maintained. As mentioned above, the subject could bring the ASEAN and China into a new hemisphere where lots of opportunities could be seen as follows: first, Economic development and progress as world has experienced over last couple of decades is an important domain in which the ASEAN

and China could work together if peace is not disturbed. Second, given the integration of world and people, social harmony among different ethnic diaspora is another major area where the ASEAN and China look their partnership. Providing the ethnic Chinese living in different parts of Southeast Asian region it would be a win win situation for both. "Development of new legal arrangements is a necessity. ASEAN and China should actively move forward to an ASEAN-China Code of Conduct or a similar binding agreement, which should contain guidelines for self-restrain, cooperation and the application of international law" (Thao & Amer, 2009: 344), as both are required to work together for a joint solution as force or military is not believed a fair measure to establish peace and development.

Conclusion

After a long study and investigation about conflict prevention in South China Sea and how the ASEAN and China are dealing with it with keeping the future and development in mind, it can be inferred that the world has transformed in which countries more are focusing on economic engagement and development than isolation as seen during the cold war period. This engagement could be demonstrated in the efforts of China and ASEAN conflict prevention techniques in South China Sea. Although the DOC is not legal binding document but they are in the process to make it for and seeking to work on other areas of subjects. It would be though win win situations to keep continue on forging and reinforcing relationship. Although, the members of ASEAN and China persistently believe in "mutual respect for the independence, sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity and national identity of all nations" (TAC 1976:2). Thus, it is proved

that as shown above China and ASEAN have entered into a new era which is quite different from the Cold War period. Providing the history and evolution of conflict prevention in South China Sea they make it clear that in a rising conflicts only peaceful measures would be utilized such as discussion, debates and so on.

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Book Reviews

Sharma, R. (2019). *Democracy on the Road*. New Delhi. India: Penguin 280 Pages.

Indian democracy is one of the largest and diverse in the world, which makes it more complex in nature. Elections in India are the most celebrated festival of democracy since independence. Over the years, the election process has changed, many leaders have elected and rejected, but an important thing which remained the same is the voters participation in the elections. The electoral system has been an important mechanism behind the success of the democratic regime in India. This book provides the understanding of changes evolved in Indian polls in the late 90s. It starts with the return of Shri A.B Vajpayee in 1998 and the loss of NDA in 2004. Rise of UPA and its fall in 2014 election due to the emergence of Modi wave has been dealt with in the text. On the other hand, it covers state polls. Caste alliances and complex electoral in U.P, Bihar and anti-incumbency in Rajasthan are the part of the discussion in the text. Author and his team covered the ground realities and behaviour of Indian voters through interviews and surveys conducted across the country. A glimpse of interviews and conversations with political leaders like Narendra Modi, Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi, Mayawati, Lalu Prasad Yadav and Nitish Kumar are providing the leader's insights about electoral behaviour. The way political parties in India tries to connect with diverse sections of voters is an important part of the analysis in the writing of the author. According to Mr Sharma, many factors play an important role in Indian elections but caste is the most important one. Caste realities are still dominating the Indian elections along with factors like religion, money spending,

development, price rise, corruption and welfarism. Development and performance of government sometimes suffer in front of caste and religious issues.

Diversity in India does not allow one party to dominate the whole country which provides space for the coalition and alliance politics in India. Realities of sub-national identities can be seen as major national parties such as the BJP and INC do not enjoy their hold in all the parts of the country. These parties do not enjoy the large support in South India as they enjoy in North India. Politics in South India is dominated by the issues of language and identity. Fear of domination of Hindi language is very sensitive in the South, as regional parties exploit these issues to manage their support base in the South. In the state elections voter think about the local issues rather than national issues. In the view of Ruchir Sharma, 2014 election was won by BJP due to the strong leadership of Mr. Narendra Modi as a large section of young voter found him more deserving candidate than Rahul Gandhi. Author do not find difficult competition for Mr. Modi in coming years due to weak opposition. Voters are thinking of Lok Sabha election in presidential terms as they are voting for Mr. Modi more than the BJP. Concluding remark of the writer shows India is a thriving democracy because the electoral process in India doesn't get influence from external factors. Ruchir Sharma also appreciates the maturity of opposition in handling defeat. It is an appreciating attempt to understand the changing nature of electoral process of India.

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Tiwari, R.K. (2019). *Political Parties, Party Manifestos and Election in India, 1909-2014*. South Asia Edition: Routledge.

The book by R.K Tiwari is a lucidly presented analysis of evolution of electoral system in pre- and post-independence India. It deals with evolution of electoral process and manifestos. It is definitely a major contribution for political scientists and informed readers/researchers who wish to get an insight details about the dynamics of electoral politics and party manifestos in Indian politics. The book studies the electoral Polity in mainly two phases: nation building process in Pre-Independence era (evolution and growth of electoral system) and Post Independent India (Parties and its manifestos- A comparative assessment). The book is broadly divided into four chapters discussing evolution of idea of nation building, constitutional reforms, electoral system, political parties and elections before independence, Lok Sabha elections and a comparative analysis of party manifestos of national parties. The unit of analysis is primarily Election Manifesto. R.K Tiwari in his book has adopted qualitative methodology doing historical comparativist study of manifestos, content analysis and archival study. The party manifestos have been analysed by the content analysis methodology and most of the materials were obtained from secondary sources. The author further goes in archive to trace out how the manifestos have evolved over the period of time for example the size of the manifestos of political parties between 1952 and 1967 varied from 3 to 24 pages, from 1971 and 1984 it went up to 8-48 pages, and thereafter it went up to 79 pages. We see increase in size of manifesto from 1971 and it is largely attributed due to their coverage of large number of issues while also providing a detailed

analysis and corrective action on each of the issues. Tiwari seeks to examine the ideas, concerns and issues which political parties advocate in their manifestos. He mainly covers the national parties like BJP, INC, CPI and CPI(M) in his work. However, he does not discuss the manifestos of small regional parties, regional issues have been ignored and left out by the author. It would have been better if author would have considered and analysed the manifestos of regional parties because the national and state subjects varies, the issues are also different for people when it comes to the state and national election, their voting pattern also changes. Author fails to distinguish between the state issues and national issues and somehow merges the two. In analysing the manifestos, the book does not provide election-wise cataloguing of the party manifestos. The elections for that underwent after independence doesn't find a mention in the book. Tiwari's defining work in the form of "Political *Parties, Party Manifestos and elections in India, 1909-2014"* remains an effective, essential and decent contribution to the field of Indian electoral politics and the study of manifestos. However, I have some of the criticism and my own reservation regarding the way author has approached to this book. The majority of the section is attributed to the portion of Political party's manifestos thereby not doing justice to the title of the book itself. The second point of contestation which I want to make with author is the way by which he has explored and examined the core issues and the stand of parties on dealing with those core issues. It would've been a better comprehensive study had author done the election-wise study; dealing all elections separately. In this book author simply took some of the core socio-economic issues and has

proposed the stand of various parties on the issues. Neither the book deals with the implementation part nor does it examine how far parties were able to achieve to their proposed manifestos. The stand of parties on various issues as discussed in the book is somewhat pretty vague and difficult for reader to go through as the author is not as specific as he should've been. Have core electoral issues remained the same since the time of independence or has it changed is what author should've engaged with in his work but unfortunately this part has also not been dealt with. Third point of disagreement is with the leaving out of regional political parties, their manifestos, their vision and stand on national issues as in the era of coalition government the regional players have much more to say in decision making process thereby, the study of author seems to be limited in his approach. It was also hard to find coherency between the chapters of the book. Nevertheless, this book provides a comprehensive understanding of the electoral polity its evolution and growth, a journey with a nuanced understanding of the different stations of Indian democracy, discussing Constituent assembly debates on constitutional provisions and comparative analysis of election manifestos of national parties. So far in the study of Indian politics, there was very less emphasis on party manifesto and it was a marginalised section, this book will certainly create enthusiasm among the researchers and draw them close to doing comparative research in this domain.

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