

Contemporary Issues - 1

IR/India World

① Foreign policy agenda for the new government

Foreign policy is based on a country's long term national interests and takes into account both domestic and external factors. Strategic interests of a country do not change when governments change but the style of functioning and inter-se priorities in foreign policy undergo changes. Hence elements of continuity and change can be expected in the new government's foreign policy.

Achievements and shortcomings

Undoubtedly, there have been a number of achievements to India's foreign policy in the last few years. India's engagement with the rest of the world has increased substantially. Its relations with major powers are better than before. Even in the neighbourhood, bilateral ties are on the upswing despite many problems. In the extended neighbourhood, India's Look East Policy has been a reasonable success. India is now beginning to focus on new areas like Africa and Latin America. The Indian Ocean is the new area of attention for Indian foreign policy makers. Maritime and energy security have received attention. Public diplomacy has been strengthened. India today has visibility at the global and regional levels with many countries wanting to forge deeper ties of friendship and cooperation with India. In fact there is increasing demand from regional countries for India to play a more pro-active role. India is regarded as a non-threatening but reluctant and shy power not ready to play its role.

Yet many weaknesses have been revealed. Resources for conducting an active foreign policy have been limited. Lack of political consensus on key foreign policy issues has been a bane of Indian foreign policy. Foreign policy decision making processes have been slow to respond to the emerging opportunities. India's diplomacy lacks the depth required for a robust diplomacy in emerging areas like energy, cyber, space, economy etc. Ad-hocism is evident in many areas of foreign policy like military diplomacy where no long term strategy is visible. There are serious shortcomings in coordination among different ministries, departments and agencies involved in the implementation of foreign policy.

Indian government has been shy to explain its foreign policy through official White Papers and concept documents. As a result there is lack of clarity about the principles and goals which guide India's foreign policy. The foreign policy is not linked with any national security strategy, which the government has not been able to articulate.

Agenda for the new government

The new government could continue implementing the positive aspects of foreign policy and upgrade and reinvigorate it in different areas. It could also explore whether some breakthroughs can be achieved in relations with Pakistan and China.

These could be included in the foreign policy agenda of the new government.

1. Articulate a National Security Strategy and a Foreign Policy Concept outlining the principles and goals of Indian foreign policy.

2. Provide more human and financial resources for foreign policy and diplomacy. Current allocations for MEA (Rs 11,000 cr) are too meagre and inadequate for an effective foreign policy.
3. Pay attention to India's development partnerships, particularly the developing countries. Development Partnerships should be the key tool for foreign policy. Greater synergy and timely implementation is essential for credibility.
4. Be on the look for new opportunities to enhance India's engagement with other countries and beef up its presence in strategic regions. Follow a combination of strategic and commercial approaches rather than strictly commercial approaches. (Example: India should move quickly in capitalising the strategic opportunities in Iran through the development of Chabahar port and investments in Chabahar free Trade Zone. Similar opportunities await in other regions too.). Private sector should be involved in foreign policy initiatives wherever possible.
5. Get political and domestic consensus on foreign policy issues but ensure that the central government retains the right to formulate and conduct its foreign policy in best national interest. Institutionalise the meetings between the MEA and state governments on critical foreign policy issues.
6. Improve relations with neighbours as first priority. High level political exchanges and visits should become more frequent. Adopt a regional cooperative security approach on security issues. Encourage regional cooperation within the framework of SAARC and BIMSTEC by taking a lead role. Revive both by greater investments.
7. India should look for breakthroughs in ties with China and Pakistan countries but should be cautious in its approach. Gestures of friendship and cooperation should be appropriately responded to but Pakistan should clearly know India's red lines particularly with regard to terrorism. China should not be allowed to take India for granted. Asymmetries in capabilities between India and China should be reduced. It should develop comprehensive national strength to deal with these countries.
8. Deepen and broad base ties with the GCC countries. Energy cooperation, trade and investment, welfare of Indian citizens working in the Gulf region are obviously important, but expand these relations to cover newer areas like food security. Attract investment from the Gulf countries into Indian agro-food sector.
9. Given the growing Chinese assertiveness in the region, India may deepen its ties with ASEAN countries even further through deeper economic integration, enhanced connectivity and defence cooperation.
10. Strengthen relations with Japan which is looking for new partnerships, particularly in the area of security cooperation. Deeper India-Japan relations not directed against any country, could be game changer for India.
11. Pay special attention to maritime cooperation in India's foreign policy. In the Asia-Pacific, the US, China, Japan, South Korea and Russia are key countries. India has independent relations with them. India's relations should be independent of US rebalancing policy.
12. Impart fresh stimulus to Indo-US ties which are levelling off is required. Attention should be paid to economic, technological and defence cooperation issues.
13. Deepening of relations with Russia must continue. Russia-US ties are under strain on Ukraine and there is talk of increasing sanctions against Russia. Avoid joining sanctions against Russia. India must steer clear of getting entangled into Russia-US tensions. Russia has appreciated India's position.

14. Special attention should be paid to non traditional security issues like energy, maritime, food, space and cyber security issues. Indian diplomacy must develop depth in these areas by involving experts.
15. Defence and diplomacy must go hand in hand. The defence component of diplomacy must be strengthened. The MEA should set up a defence diplomacy division to synergise better with the MOD.
16. Use economic diplomacy to bolster India's economic growth. Economic diplomacy must become the centre piece of India's over all foreign policy. The new economic order driven by globalisation and technology requires a fresh look at how foreign policy is perceived. India should carefully monitor the implications of Trans pacific Partnership (TPP) and then decide whether it would like to join the negotiations. So far India has been reticent.
17. India need not give up its no-first use nuclear doctrine but at the same time it should strengthen its command and control systems. Some details should be made public to generate confidence. The focus on universal nuclear disarmament must continue.
18. Indian foreign policy must leverage the presence of huge Indian diaspora as well Indian nationals working abroad. The MEA and MOIA should work together to evolve a viable diaspora policy. India should also have out-of-area contingency plans to ensure that the safety conflict prone zones are addressed in the time of emergencies of millions of Indians working in conflict zones.
19. India must enhance substantially its investment in strategic thinking by encouraging the growth of think tanks, security curricula in universities and new methodologies of analysis. This will help develop capabilities to decipher the countries of emerging world order and its implications for India.
20. India must harness its culture and soft power to meet the objectives of foreign policy. India's cultural diplomacy is weak and need a thorough overhaul.

Conclusion

India has unprecedented opportunity to follow a foreign policy to meet its developmental aspirations and security needs, both of which are complementary. Sustained economic growth is essential for India to follow a proactive foreign policy. India's foreign policy must be backed by domestic consensus and all round capabilities including strategic thinking. More resources and a proactive mindset would be required for this purpose. For effective implementation better synergy among government ministries, departments, and agencies swill be required. Foreign policy making should be a whole-of-government approach in which non-governmental stake holders as well States will play an important role.

② Why Non-Alignment has greater relevance in Modi's India

With the Chinese foreign minister's June visit to New Delhi and interactions with the US president in the offing coupled with Prime Minister Modi's proposed visit to Japan have all infused a new dynamism in Indian foreign policy. Along with it has emerged a new momentum in India's neighbourhood with the renewed focus on revitalising the SAARC process. In the new context, however, have emerged questions on the efficacy of strategic autonomy and non-alignment in Indian foreign policy. There is a thinking that Modi needs to jettison the redundant policy of non-alignment that the UPA government professed in the post-Cold War garb of strategic autonomy.

However, prior to any re-thinking on India's foreign policy, it is necessary to shed the myopic and divisive categorization of Indian foreign policy into pro and anti-Nehruvian positions. Also, it is necessary to understand that in the present geo-political order where the US and China have distinctly emerged as rivals India has greater room for manoeuvrability. Further, India does not require playing the role of a swing power akin to China in the 1970s and 80s. The reason is germane to the altered nature of global politics. India does not confront the ideologically pitted Cold War politics of the US and the USSR. Further, in the deepening trends of globalization, the economies of the US and China is deeply entwined precluding strict division of the global politics along pro or anti-US axis. Furthermore, the countries like the US, Pakistan and China have now come around advocating a common mission to end terrorism and focussing on economic integration and common prosperity.

The global thrust on economic integration has certainly accrued greater space to India that the non-alignment actually stands for. It allows India to reach out to both the US and China without fear of taking sides and draw in the benefits from both of manufacturing, investments, trade and commerce. It has also enabled India to rope in Japan in developing its backward northeast region much to the irritation of the Chinese. In fact, both Japan and China are competing to strengthen economic ties with India. This gives India leverage to bargain for the best economic deals conducive to its national interest.

In this emerging geo-political order where there is a common synergy among nations on growth and development, India under Modi does not require to jettison the non-alignment principles but to focus on fulfilling the two goals of domestic economic reform and external stability underscored in the principle. Simply put, non-alignment is essentially a route to great power status - a strategy that is independent of external forces by prioritizing national interest and ensuring strategic maneuverability. In fact, China appropriated the same strategy in 1982 under Deng Xiaoping underlined in the 'independent foreign policy of peace' and which resonates predominantly its foreign policy today.

Indeed, Nehru had upheld the non-alignment to project India's great power aspirations. In fact, non-alignment was the only and best principle available to Nehru in the post-Independent India confronted with precarious domestic and external environment. Internally, India was confronted with settling the fate of some five-hundred odd princely states. Coupled with this, was the linguistic movements that shook the very fabric of the nation. With the Pakistani invasion on the northern frontiers, the question of Kashmir loomed large. Also, the establishment of a Communist regime in China followed by its invasion of Tibet created a grave situation in the north. Above all, the emergence of bipolar politics in the post-War era put India in a precarious situation. After the hard earned independence, Nehru's primary concern was economic rejuvenation to propel India to the ranks of a great power status. And for India's rise the preeminent necessity

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was peace in the external frontier. In this context, Nehru propagated non-alignment that gave freedom of action to pursue national rejuvenation. This rationale also drove him to join hands with China knowing fully well the irredentist aspirations of the newly emerged Communist government.

Clearly, non-alignment was born out of the difficult external and internal security conditions. However, this great power aspiration floundered on the 1962 debacle. This however, does not signal the failure of non-alignment. Rather, the quest for great power status failed because there was a disjuncture between theory and praxis. The weaknesses in the domestic front coupled with the external volatility of Cold War politics had derailed Nehru's great power vision. Today India is better positioned. It is the third largest economy in Asia and fourth in the world. Also, externally, India does not require to take sides and instead engage both the US and China. More importantly, there is an alignment today that was absent in Nehru's time between Modi's dream of making India strong and prosperous and the external environment wedded to the principles of growth and prosperity.

③ SAARC

In the history of regionalism, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) is a unique experiment. In terms of national profiles or superpower connections (till the end of the Cold War), it has few parallels in the world. Comprised of seven unequal states in terms of size, population, political system and development status -Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka on one extreme it has India, the second most populous country in the world (after China), and on the other, the Maldives, with a population of barely 200,000. Similarly, on one side it has such nuclear powers with large armed forces as India and Pakistan and on the other, small states like Bhutan and the Maldives, the combined military strength of which would not exceed the police force of New Delhi or Karachi. The position of Indonesia in ASEAN or that of Saudi Arabia in GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) can provide only a limited comparison in this regard. With regard to super power connections also, they were, during the Cold War, asymmetrical. India, although a non-Soviet bloc nation, had a record of three and a half decades of friendship and trust with the Kremlin. This contrasted glaringly with Pakistan, which was closely aligned to the US global strategy.

PROBLEMS BESETTING THE ORGANISATION

When SAARC was conceived as a regional organization the vision was clear: to make the region a thriving example of mutual cooperation, collective self reliance and peaceful coexistence. Acceleration of economic growth, the promotion of welfare of people and improvement in their quality of life has been the central objectives. Conscious efforts have been made to encourage economic cooperation and to exclude all contentious and bilateral issues. But the region is full of contradictions that broadly fall under two heads: divergent security interests and the Indo-centric nature of the region. Following problems can be identified as major obstacle in Function of SAARC.

Built in Contradictions

SAARC suffers from a built-in contradiction. India's disproportionately large size inhibits its neighbour's participation as equal partners, crucial in any cooperative endeavour. India accounts for 72 per cent of the region's area, 77 per cent of its population, and 78 percent of its GNP. Its armed forces account for about 50 per cent of the region's total armed strength and if one excludes Pakistan (which accounts for about 25 per cent), the ratio between India and the remaining five taken together would be nine to one.

Conflicting Security Perceptions

This gross disparity coupled with distrusts emanating from socio-historical reasons gives rise to conflicting security outlooks. Excepting Pakistan, India perceives no threat from any other country within the region. Threat to its security is actually extra-regional and in this context Pakistan's linkages with China assumes relevance. For others in the region (excluding Bhutan, whose foreign policy is more or less guided by India, and the Maldives, which is too small to protect itself without India's help, as the 1988 coup attempt showed), India itself is a threat, which can be faced only through extra-regional connections. This dichotomy in the region's perceptions and corresponding security doctrines cannot augur well for the SAARC.

Problem of Diverse Political Culture

The diverse political culture of the region is also not conducive to cooperation. From the point of view of governmental systems operative in the region, there are four democracies (Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka), one military dictatorship (Pakistan), one monarchy (Bhutan), and one one-party presidential system (the Maldives). On the question of state-religion relationships, India, notwithstanding its being predominantly Hindu and of late witnessing an unprecedented Hindu militancy stands for secularism, while all the remaining six avoid declaring themselves as such. Bangladesh, the Maldives and Pakistan have an Islamic thrust; Bhutan and Sri Lanka, Buddhist; and Nepal, Hindu. With respect to structural linkages with the global system, which has indeed undergone massive change of late, there were two categories, broadly speaking. The first, in which India was included, had a fairly powerful capitalist class which had over the years developed stakes in both the world capitalist and socialist systems, though remaining independent of both. The other had deep structural linkages with the world capitalist system and the bourgeoisie there was largely comprador. Bangladesh, Maldives, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka belonged to this category. Bhutan's economy is largely Indo-centric. That of Nepal is both Indo-centric as well as developed market economies oriented. These systematic diversities led to divergent nation building strategies which tended to thrive at each other's expense rather than contribute to each other's gain.

In this context, India bears the brunt in more than one way. Situated at the core of the region, its boundary touches that of almost all the countries of SAARC while no two other members have common borders. As a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, and multi religious society, India offers all the countries in the region some connection to their ethnic, linguistic, or religious brotherhoods, while no two other countries have cross national ethnic populations visible enough to be of any consequence barring the notable exception of Bhutan and Sri Lanka. The 'Indo-centricity' of the problem often drags India into the region's ethnic strife, which it seldom relishes. At the same time, however, India has the opportunity to twist the arm of a recalcitrant neighbour to gain strategic concessions.

Indo-Pak Conflict

Insecurity, whether due to internal disorder or external conflict, has become the norm after 62 years of independence, and one cannot honestly say that the situation will radically change for the better in the foreseeable future. Military bureaucracies have become an entrenched component of the political order even where they have not taken it over; their civilian allies are numerous and powerful and outside powers have done precious little to ameliorate the situation." The problem, which could not be solved within the framework of the nationalist movement and which led to the partition of India in 1947, has continued to remain a threat to the region's stability. External dabbling within and around the region have further complicated the matter. India and Pakistan have fought three wars so far and have had many border skirmishes. At the moment they are engaged in a war of words over Kashmir. India alleges Pakistan's moral and material support to Kashmiri militants while Pakistan alleges human rights violation by the Indian government in Kashmir.

Main Problem: Absence of Required Political Thrust

The cumulative effect of the problem discussed above is the absence of a political thrust to make SAARC take bold strides. By shying away from 'bilateral and contentious' issues the organization deprives itself of the opportunity to deliberate on the most important questions that need to be addressed. This lack of confidence in each other has its ramifications in other fields. For example, inter-state trade is still minuscule. India is a potential supplier of industrial goods and services to almost all the South Asian states but they prefer to depend on the industrial West, Japan, and even China instead of India.

Problem of Resource Development

Another area in which progress is negligible is resource development. The Indian subcontinent's river system is such that if properly tapped, with the entire region in mind, it would do wonders in terms of development, affording irrigation, power generation, and drinking water.

PROSPECTS FOR SAARC

In his book *Cooperation and Conflict in South Asia* (1989), Partha Ghosh presented the view that although SAARC had been launched 'the domestic contradictions of the states would militate against making the associations an effective vehicle of regional cooperation.' He mentioned several broad systematic diversities and felt that unless they were removed, the future of SAARC was bleak. These diversities have been referred to above; viz form of government, state-religion interactions, structural linkages with the global system, nation-building strategies, and so on. The situation does not seem to have changed much. In the context of Indo-Pak relations it has worsened.

Inherent Positive Points of the Region

Given the historical context, topographic and demographic features, natural resource endowments and socio-cultural ethos, South Asia could be the most natural unit of cooperation and integration. There are certain inherent points with the region that must, however, be kept in mind. For example, the regional 'insecurity syndrome' as probably been overstated. South Asia is one of the world's least militarized regions.

The region, where 20 per cent of the world's population lives, accounts for only 1 per cent of the world's military expenditure. Other developing regions (excluding China) with comparable populations spend about 15 per cent of the global military expenditure.

If compared to the developed world, the region's record is even better. The developed world, which is proud to announce that there has not been any war on its soil since the Second World War, spends 80 per cent of the global military expenditure and is responsible for 97 per cent of the world's arms trade and 97 per cent of the global military R&D. South Asia's fiscal defence burden accounts for about 3 per cent of the region's GNP, which is higher than Latin America's remarkably low 1.2 per cent, but less than Africa's 3.2 per cent, and East Asia's 10.9 per cent. It is even lower than the overall developing world's 4.3 per cent.

The ongoing economic reforms triggered challenges have started drastically changing the political economy of regional cooperation in South Asia. Economic liberalization have tended to increasingly outclass political prejudices, inhibitions and are literally forcing South Asia to shed the old mind sets of latent hostility. The impact of internal schisms overflowing the regional vestiges is getting outweighed by the steady rise in the cost of non-cooperation. The very context and modalities of public policy making which were neither transparent nor accountable have begun to show more openness

Against this background, major macro issues like harmonisation of economic reforms with socio-political shift in paradigms in the region as a whole, the widening base of MNCs participation with a distinct slant on natural resource, technology and management and the ability and capability of the SAARC partners to withstand both endogenous and exogenous shocks and forge ahead towards a collective survival are the three fundamental challenges. The absorptive and the manoeuvring capacity of the SAARC partners would largely be determined by the approaches towards and consolidation of each area as they together represent a vast majority of the regional core competence.

④ Issues between India and Bangladesh

Bangladesh's geopolitical importance for India is due to - Bangladesh's location is a strategic wedge between mainland India and Northeastern seven states of the Indian Union. Each of these states is land-locked and has shorter route to the sea through Bangladesh. Currently, Kolkata port is used by these states for both domestic and imported cargo. Bangladesh is a natural pillar of "Look East Policy". A friendly Bangladesh that ensures no anti-India terror or insurgent activities can be carried out from its soil unlike in the past will substantially assist India in handling security problems in some of its restive north-east States. Importantly, a 'neutral' Bangladesh also ensures containment of an assertive China in this region, including along the strategic sea-lanes of the Bay of Bengal.

Further the navigable rivers in India's Northeast that could connect West Bengal or Orissa ports pass through Bangladesh. The only entry to and exit from the Northeastern region of India is through the Shiliguri Corridor that is close to the Chinese border and within striking distance of Bangladesh. The Shiliguri Corridor is the most sensitive 'choke point' for the Indian Union.

But unfortunately, there exist many contentious issues between the two countries. The issues are discussed as below:

(a) Water dispute

India and Bangladesh share 54 trans-boundary rivers, big and small. In 1996, the sharing of the Ganga waters was successfully agreed upon between the two nations. However, the major area of dispute has been India's construction and operation of the Farakka Barrage. The aim of construction of the Farakka Barrage was to increase the lean period flow of the Bhagirathi-Hooghly branch of Ganga to increase the water depth at the Kolkata port which was threatened by siltation. As irrigation withdrawals increased in Bangladesh, dispute arose between India and Bangladesh over the sharing of the lean season flow at Farakka. The inadequacy of water during the lean season to meet the assessed demands in the two countries is the root cause of the conflict.

The Bangladesh government feels that the reduction in flow caused damage to agriculture, industry and ecology in the basin in Bangladesh. Because of the inability of the concerned governments to come to any lasting agreement over the last few decades on sharing the river water, this problem has grown and now it is also viewed as a case of upstream-downstream dispute.

The other reason for water dispute is Teesta River - which has its source in Sikkim - flows through the northern part of West Bengal in India before entering Bangladesh, where after crossing through about 45km of irrigable land, merges with the Brahmaputra River (or Jamuna when it enters Bangladesh). In 1983, an ad-hoc water sharing agreement was reached between India and Bangladesh, whereby both countries were allocated 39% and 36% of the water flow respectively. The new bilateral treaty expands upon this agreement by proposing an equal allo-

cation of the Teesta River. However, the deal fell through when the then newly elected Chief Minister of West Bengal, Ms. Mamata Banerjee, refused to approve the treaty, fearing that the loss of higher volume of water to the lower riparian would cause problems in the northern region of state, especially during drier months.

Construction of the Tipaimukh Dam is another contentious issue between India and Bangladesh. Tipaimukh Dam is a hydel power project proposed on the river Barak in Manipur. Bangladesh's objection is that it would have adverse ecological effects in its eastern Sylhet district. In spite of India's reiteration that no dam would be constructed overlooking Bangladesh's objections, the controversy is far from over.

The popular arguments in Bangladesh against the Tipaimukh project are:

- India should not decide what is good for people of Bangladesh without taking them into confidence;
- No study has been undertaken in Bangladesh to assess the impact of the ecosystems that exist and depend on the natural flow of the water in Surma-Kusiyara-Meghna and their tributaries.

India and Bangladesh have agreed on a joint study group to examine the points raised by Bangladesh.

(b) Boundary Dispute

India's land border with Bangladesh as per the Ministry of Defence is 4351 km. running through five states, viz., West Bengal (2217kms), Assam (262 kms), Meghalaya (443kms), Tripura (856 kms) and Mizoram (318 kms), including nearly 781 kms of riverine border. The border traverses through 25 districts.

The border is used as a route for smuggling livestock, food items, medicines and drugs from India to Bangladesh. Moreover, illegal immigrants from Bangladesh cross the border to India in search of improving their lives. Because of a large number of illegal immigrants crossing from Bangladesh into India, a controversial shoot-on-sight policy has been enforced by the Indian border patrols. This policy was initiated with reports of violence between the illegal migrants and Indian soldiers. The border has also witnessed occasional skirmishes between the Indian Border Security Force and the Border Guards Bangladesh, most notably in 2001.

Maritime border

While Bangladesh, having concave coastlines, delimits its sea border southward from the edge of its land boundary, India stretches its claim southeast wards, covering around thousands of miles in the Bay of Bengal. Due to competing claims of the two countries, delimitation of the sea boundary and determining Bangladesh's exclusive economic zones have remained unresolved. Moreover, in terms of determining the continental shelf, the presence of the Andamans and Nicobar Islands puts India, in a favourable position.

Territorial Waters

The issue of demarcating territorial waters led to serious differences between the two countries. Questions of ownership over a new born island known as South Talpatty in Bangladesh and New Moore/ Purbasha in India spotted by a satellite picture in 1975 in the estuary of Haribhanga River on the border of the two countries has been a source of contention since its discovery. In order to settle the above dispute Bangladesh proposed sending a joint Indo-Bangladesh team to determine the flow of channels of the river on the basis of existing International Law of the Sea. But the Indian counterpart sent forces to establish claims by stationing naval troops on the island in 1981. After initial resentment by Bangladesh, India agreed to resolve the issue through negotiations. Till now the sovereignty over the island

nation remains undecided, and recent reports of the press and media suggests that Bangladesh views India with suspicion in its activities over the disputed piece of landmass on the breast of an international water.

(c) Illegal Migration

Illegal migration appears in the eastern and north-eastern parts of the country from neighbouring Bangladesh, threat to India's internal security, from Bangladesh is impacted on communal, political, social and economic tensions and conflicts in several areas of the northeast of India. The most affected states are West Bengal, Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Bihar, and Tripura, although migrants "have spread too far off states like Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Delhi." Although the exact figure is not known, it is estimated that there are about 15-20 million Bangladeshis staying illegally in India.

The National Investigation Agency has found links with Pakistan in rackets engaged in printing and smuggling

Security concerns

Insurgency has been playing the role in straining relations of India with Bangladesh. North-east India has been facing insurgency since 1956 due to feelings of ethnic separatism among its inhabitants. ISI is operating from Bangladesh, supporting the insurgents in the North east India. National Liberation of Tripura (NLFT), Liberation Front of Assam(ULFA) and National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFM) are major insurgent groups in Northeast India. There are some indications that ULFA has several lucrative income generating Projects in Bangladesh to sustain its insurgency activities in India.

Drug Trafficking

Bangladesh is increasingly being used as a transit point by drug dealers and the drug mafia, which dispatches heroin and opium from Burma, and other countries of the golden triangle, to different destinations. As a result, Bangladesh's Department of Narcotics Control has come under the scanner several times and invited criticism. Bangladesh has become the prime transit route for trafficking heroin to Europe from Southeast Asia, according to a report from the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) 2007 annual report. INCB notes that the most common methods and routes for smuggling heroin into Bangladesh are by courier from Pakistan, commercial vehicles and trains from India, and via sea through the Bay of Bengal or overland by truck or public transport from Burma.

(d) Trade and Investment

Bangladesh is an important trading partner for India. The two-way trade in FY 2011-2012 was US\$5.242 billion with India's exports to Bangladesh accounting for US\$4.743 billion and imports US\$0.498 million.

The trade deficit with India is frequently highlighted by Bangladesh as a major contentious issue. Trade deficit for Bangladesh is more than \$4 billion. For long, Bangladesh has been urging India to reduce this gap by lifting the tariff barriers as they were a major impediment to the growth of Bangladesh's exports to India. Responding to Bangladesh's concern, in November 2011, India granted duty free access to all products, except 10 tobacco and liquor items from Bangladesh which amounts 30% of Bangladesh export. As much as 98 per cent of Bangladesh products now enjoy zero duty benefits in the Indian market. Bangladesh's exports to India are expected to cross \$1 billion in 2012.

However, Bangladesh is now urging India to remove all non-tariff barriers (NTBs) as it views NTBs as the major obstacles to its export growth. Some of these barriers are: laboratory

test for every consignment of food products, cosmetics, and leather and textile products; delay in getting test results; imposition of state tax; packaging requirement, anti-dumping and countervailing duties; inadequate infrastructure facilities such as warehousing, trans-shipment yard, parking yard and; connecting roads at land customs stations of India. To encourage exports from Bangladesh, India must move proactively to provide facilities of customs and testing at the border check posts.

(e) Transit

India has been urging Bangladesh to provide rail and road transit to connect with its north-eastern states. Technically speaking, the issue of transit was resolved in 1972 when both sides agreed on a mutually beneficial arrangement for the use of their waterways, railways and roadways for commerce between two countries and for passage of goods to places in one country through the territory of the other. Inland water transit has been functional, but the rail and road transit is still waiting to be operational.

Bangladesh's initial reluctance to granting India rail and road transit was on the grounds that transit facility once given was difficult to take back and such a facility may encourage terrorism and insurgency.

Conclusion

India-Bangladesh relations have more than an academic strategic content. In the long run, India's national interests primarily lie towards and beyond its eastern flanks to South East Asia and the new geographical and strategic construct namely Indo-Pacific Asia. India thus needs to strengthen the various regional groupings in this region like the ASEAN and the BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation). Importantly, they should work together to resolve all the issues.

The following steps should be taken to improve relation between India and Bangladesh.

- (a) Agreement on water sharing should be given priority. Early resolution of the Teesta issue is necessary.
- (b) India should give prominence to the ratification of land boundary agreement.
- (c) Security cooperation between the two countries has been good. But there is need for institutionalizing this cooperation so that it does not remain restricted to the tenure of a particular government in either country. In this regard, a beginning could be made by signing the bilateral extradition treaty.
- (d) Connectivity should be given top most priority. Both the countries should work together to operationalise it.
- (e) There is need for addressing the issue of illegal migration. In this regard innovative measures should be taken to resolve the problem, being extra careful to ensure that illegal migrants do not acquire voting rights and Indian nationality.
- (f) People-to-people contact needs to be encouraged; hence liberal visa system should be put in place.
- (g) Trade relationship has improved significantly between the two countries. India has provided zero duty access of Bangladeshi products thereby addressing the tariff related issue to a great extent. The two countries should now consider an agreement on non-tariff barriers.
- (h) Indian investment should be encouraged in Bangladesh through visits of trade delegations, trade fairs, and bilateral assurances on protection of the interests of potential investors.

- (i) Progress can be made by cooperating on common challenges like disaster management, food and energy security.
- (j) Greater involvement of people and wider public debate on foreign policy issues will discourage conspiracy theories and distrust.
- (k) A greater level of people-to-people contact should be encouraged.
- (l) Implement the no-firing policy fully. Ensure accountability to ensure that the image of India as an enemy ceases to exist.
- (m) Fencing needs to be completed speedily and monitored effectively. This would create misgivings but also ensure that Bangladesh knows that India means business. The state governments and the Indian border forces seem receptive to such an idea.
- (n) India and Bangladesh need to strengthen their military ties. They are being revived after a long gap but much more can be done in terms of increasing visits, contacts at various levels as well as by selling military hardware. Apart from initiating joint exercises, India should consider the China model of gifting hardware in the initial instance, and offer technical expertise that Bangladeshi military is in need of. They have to be weaned away from Pakistan and China. There can be no overnight successes but sustained efforts are essential.

⑤ **Delimitation of Indo-Bangladesh Maritime Boundary**

In a landmark judgment, the Hague-based Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) has awarded Bangladesh an area of 19,467 sq km, four-fifths of the total area of 25,602 sq km disputed maritime boundary in the Bay of Bengal with India on July 7. The UN Tribunal's award has clearly delineated the course of maritime boundary line between India and Bangladesh in the territorial sea, Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and continental shelf within and beyond 200 nautical miles (nm). Now, Bangladesh's maritime boundary has been extended by 118,813 sq km comprising 12 nm of territorial sea and an EEZ extending up to 200 nm into the high seas. In addition, the ruling acknowledged Bangladesh's sovereign rights of undersea resources in the continental shelf extending as far as 345 nm in the high seas, taking Chittagong coast as the base line.

The verdict has been broadly accepted by both the countries as a positive development for further consolidation of friendly relations especially given the geo-strategic/political significance of greater Indian Ocean region and South Asian sub-region. Moreover, the award has wide security and economic implications not only for India and Bangladesh but also for the entire Bay of Bengal region. Some are of the opinion that the ruling could provide impetus for the new Indian government to ratify the Land Boundary Agreement and reach an understanding on sharing the waters of the Teesta river with Bangladesh.

The verdict would contribute towards establishing strategic partnerships among the nations sharing borders in the Bay. The award is expected to have positive impact on emerging multi-lateral forum like BIMSTEC. It may be noted that India has already settled its maritime borders with Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Thailand. Similarly, Bangladesh's maritime issues with Myanmar are resolved. The PCA award assumes strategic significance against the backdrop of China's close ties with Bangladesh and the Asian giant's growing interests and activities in the Bay region for which India is worried. Now the settlement of maritime disputes between India and Bangladesh may have a restraining influence on the expansionist designs of China.

Both the countries have accepted the award as it will open the door for exploration of oil and gas in the Bay-the site of huge energy reserves. International legal experts have hailed the tribunal's encouragement to parties to exercise their sovereign rights and perform their duties under the convention with due regard to the rights of the other. The award mentions that it is for India for India and Bangladesh to determine the measures they consider appropriate, including through the conclusion of further agreements or the creation of a cooperative arrangement. The tribunal in its award has noted, "...The sovereign rights of coastal states, and therefore the maritime boundaries between them, must be determined with precision to allow for development and investment".

The award has huge economic significance for a small state like Bangladesh. It has cleared the obstacles for Dhaka to open up its waters for foreign firms to explore and exploit hydrocarbons in the Bay. So long, Bangladesh's maritime dispute with India is believed to have deterred many international petroleum companies to invest in the sea-blocks previously offered by it. The ruling has confirmed Bangladesh's right to exploit the potentially rich waters in the Bay region. The United Nations Convention of Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) gives a nation 12 nm of territorial control and ensures sovereign rights to explore, exploit and manage natural resources with 200 nm of EEZ. The Awami League government is about to take measures for proper utilisation of resources in the sea areas obtained through the ruling. Reports suggest that the Foreign Ministry is organising an international workshop titled "Blue Economy" from September 1 in this direction.

The economic prospects of the Bay region have increased enormously after Myanmar and India discovered huge natural gas deposits beneath the sea. It is reported that Myanmar discovered 7 trillion cubic feet of hydrocarbon deposits in the region. This was followed by India's discovery of another 100 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. This prompted Bangladesh-a nation with limited resource base and high demand of energy, to search for offshore energy resources. In 2008, Bangladesh government divided its claimed territorial sea and EEZ into 28 sea-blocks and leased them to multinational companies to meet its growing energy needs. But Bangladesh was eventually compelled to suspend exploration as both India and Myanmar objected to it. Successive discoveries of massive natural gas have made the delimitation of maritime boundary all the more significant. Economically, Bangladesh is a major gainer. Now, Dhaka is in a position to invite foreign companies to explore oil and gas resources in its maritime zones. It would definitely help Bangladesh to compensate gas shortages in its gas turbine-run industries and plants and contribute to the country's economic development. India's ONGC stands a good chance to win lucrative contracts in Bangladeshi offshore gas and oil fields.

India is also happy with the ruling and considers it as a diplomatic breakthrough for various reasons. Among other gains, the verdict has recognised India's sovereignty over New Moore island and received nearly 6000 sq km of the contested zone where the island had once existed. India's discovery of natural gas in 2006 took place in a creek which is situated about 50 km south of the mouth of the Hariabhanga river within the contested zone. The lingering maritime dispute stood in the way of exploration of hydrocarbons in the Bay region. Several petroleum companies had been reluctant to undertake exploration in the disputed area and a few of them even withdrew after making initial investments. Such as in December, 2013, Australian firm Santos withdrew from two sea-blocks citing security and maritime dispute with Bangladesh. Now India's policy makers could chalk out a long-term strategy for the economic development of the Bay region. To realise its goals, New Delhi may forge bilateral or multilateral partnerships under the framework of sub-regional grouping like BIMSTEC. It will be interesting to watch how the Modi government, which emphasises on productive relationships with the neighbours, responds to the new opportunity offered by the recent award.

The verdict is also good news for millions of fishermen in both the countries. The amicable settlement has opened up vast sea areas which were not available to them in the last four decades. Moreover, both the countries could enhance cooperation in the conservation of the rich bio-diversity of the Sunderbans. By clearly delineating the maritime boundary between the two nations, the verdict could help boosting coastal and maritime security in the region. Before the award, both India and Bangladesh could not undertake cooperative measures due to the vexed problem. The verdict has now cleared the hurdles of strengthening security in the maritime front. Furthermore, precise demarcation of maritime boundary would assist in preventing the cases of transgression by fishermen of both countries. The PCA award is really a "win-win" situation for both the countries, as described by the Bangladesh foreign minister, if they follow it up with concrete action.



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⑥ India and Bhutan relations

The basis for bilateral relations between India and Bhutan is formed by the Indo-Bhutan Treaty of 1949, which provides for, among others, "perpetual peace and friendship, free trade and commerce and equal justice to each other's citizens." The much speculated Article 2 in the Treaty, in principle, calls for Bhutan to seek India's advice in external matters, while India pledges non-interference in Bhutan's internal affairs.

Whereas, formal bilateral relations between Bhutan and India, were established in January 1968 with the appointment of a special officer of the Government of India to Bhutan. The India House (Embassy of India in Bhutan) was inaugurated on May 14, 1968 and Resident Representatives were exchanged in 1971. Ambassadorial level relations began with the upgrading of residents to embassies in 1978.

India and Bhutan have long shared a 'special' relationship signified by their treaty of friendship first signed in 1949 and later revised in 2007. The updated India-Bhutan Friendship Treaty not only reflects the contemporary nature of relationship but also lays the foundation for their future development in the 21st century. Amongst others, the Treaty provides for perpetual peace and friendship, free trade and commerce, and equal justice to each other's citizens. It places the two countries on a substantially more equal footing with both sides agreeing to "cooperate closely with each other on issues relating to their national interests" instead of Bhutan being "guided" by India "in regard to its external relations."

This was seen to provide greater freedom for Bhutan to manage its sovereignty and external relations. In 2008, welcoming Bhutan's move towards democracy, India also allowed 16 entry and exit points for Bhutanese trade with other countries (excluding China).

Areas of Cooperation

By the early half of the 20th century, developments in the Himalayan region prompted Bhutan to re-evaluate the usefulness of its isolationist policy. The geopolitical scene in the entire Himalayan region and Indian sub-continent underwent great change following the proclamation of the People's Republic of China in 1949 and the takeover of Tibet by the People's Liberation Army in 1950. These events, plus the presence of Chinese troops near Bhutan's border, the annexation of Bhutanese enclaves in Tibet and Chinese led Bhutan to develop its lines of communications with India became an urgent necessity. Consequently, Bhutan was more inclined to develop relations with India, and the process of socio-economic development began thereafter with Indian assistance. For India's own security too, the stability of Himalayan states falling within its strategic interest was a crucial factor to consider.

The important areas of cooperation are discussed as below:

- (a) Mutually beneficial economic inter-linkages between India and Bhutan have been an important element in bilateral relations. India continues to be the largest trade and development partner of Bhutan. Planned development efforts in Bhutan began in the early 1960s. The First Five Year Plan (FYP) of Bhutan was launched in 1961. Since then, India has been extending financial assistance to Bhutan's FYPs. So far, nine Five Year Plans of Bhutan have been completed.
- (b) Some of the major projects in Bhutan carried out with Indian assistance in the past include 1020 MW Tala Hydroelectric Project, 336 MW Chukha Hydroelectric Project, 60 MW Kurichhu Hydroelectric Project, Penden Cement Plant, Paro Airport, Bhutan Broadcasting Station, Major Highways, Electricity Transmission and Distribution System, Indo-Bhutan Microwave Link, Exploration of Mineral Resources, and Survey and Mapping
- (c) Bilateral cooperation in the hydropower sector has been carried forward with the formal inauguration of the 60 MW Kurichhu Hydroelectric project in April 2006, and commissioning of the 170 MW first unit of 1020 TALA Hydroelectric Project in July 2006. All six units have been commissioned by end March 2007. GOI has agreed to provide assistance to Bhutan in developing the hydropower sector and to purchase at least 10,000 MW of power from Bhutan by 2020.
- (d) Currently, the major items of exports from Bhutan to India are electricity (from Tala, Chukha and Kurichhu Hydroelectric Project), base metals and articles, minerals, vegetable fat and oils, alcoholic beverages, chemicals, cement, timber and wood products, cardamom, fruit products, potatoes, oranges and apples, raw silk, plastic and rubber products. Major exports from India to Bhutan are petroleum products, mineral products, base metals and articles, machinery, automobiles & spares, vegetable, nuts, spices, processed food and animal products, chemicals, wood, plastic and rubber.
- (e) The Agreement on Trade and Commerce also provides for duty free transit of Bhutanese merchandise for trade with third countries. Sixteen exit/entry points in India identified in the Protocol for Bhutan's third country.
- (f) GoI has extended a standby credit facility of Rs 1000 crore to RGoB to help Bhutan overcome the rupee liquidity crunch. Under this Facility, Government of India provides credit to Royal Government of Bhutan at a concessional interest rate of 5% per annum. The facility is valid for 5 years.

- (g) Besides trade, Indian involvement extends into many other areas of Bhutan's private and public sector activities. In the area of Foreign Direct Investment, Bhutan has so far pursued a conservative policy, and the first and only foreign investor in Bhutan for almost two decades since 1971 was the State Bank of India (SBI). The SBI has worked in collaboration with the Bank of Bhutan (BOB) since its identification as partner in management and share holding in the capital of BOB, in addition to imparting banking expertise.
- (h) In addition, Indian nationals operate a range of small-scale trading and service activities on licenses issued by the Ministry of Trade and Industry in Bhutan. Such ventures include small shops trading in a variety of products like grocery, auto parts and furniture, as well as scrap dealers, distribution and dealership agencies.
- (i) There is close bilateral cooperation in the educational and cultural fields between India and Bhutan. India provides technical expertise and services of specialists to Bhutan in various fields. Government of India scholarships are granted to Bhutanese students at undergraduate and postgraduate levels every year in Indian Institutions of higher learning. Currently, there are more than 800 Bhutanese students studying in India under these two schemes.
- (j) The institutional cooperation has been formalised through signing of an MoU between the two Election Commissions. Several teams of officials from the Election Commission of Bhutan including Dzongdas (District Collectors) and Dzongkhag (district) officials have visited India to observe various state and local elections. India has extended full assistance to Bhutan in formulating its election laws.
- (k) In the international fora too, India and Bhutan can be seen to be supportive of each other. While Bhutan has not always voted identically with India on every issue, thereby expressing its own choices, it has maintained a consistent pattern of support to India on many occasions and significant issues.

Problem areas:

- (a) Up until the 1990s, Bhutan has enjoyed more or less protected status in its trade relations with India. With economic liberalization on the rise in India, however, Bhutan is facing a gradual loss of this status, and unless Bhutanese industries are able to remain competitive they could lose their market share in the increasingly open market in India. Bhutan has already felt the impact of the reform in India's subsidy policies that has resulted in a gradual phasing out of subsidies and a decrease in its budget for assistance to Bhutan. Bhutan will also have to face the effects that would be brought on by India gradually moving toward privatizing its power, petroleum and other traditional public sectors.
- (b) The issue of increasing the price of electricity generated from Bhutan's Chukha hydropower project may become another bone of contention between India and its Himalayan neighbour. While the tariff revision from the 336 megawatts (MW) project is long due, it has now emerged that India's foreign ministry in 2007 had said prices will not be raised till 2016 and after that, a protocol established for the Tala hydropower project will follow. According to the protocol agreed between the two countries for Chukha, the power tariff revision is to happen every four years and will include the increase in the operations and maintenance charges.
- (c) Over the last decade or so, the illicit establishment of camps by the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), National Democratic Front of Bodos (NDFB) and the Kamtapuri Liberation Organization (KLO) militant outfits in the dense jungles of south-east Bhutan has been a matter of great concern and security threat for Bhutan. In addition to hampering businesses and the implementation of development activities in many parts of the country, the

presence of these militants was a potential cause of affecting the friendly relations enjoyed by Bhutan and India.

- (d) Recently Bhutanese leader had expressed willingness to establish diplomatic ties with China. Bhutan for example, has had a one-China policy and Chinese representatives were invited to the coronations of both the former and current kings. Chinese relation with Bhutan, where it is enhancing its economic, military and infrastructural footprints will have grave serious strategic implications for India. Two other issues are of importance. China is rapidly developing road infrastructure opposite the Chumbi Valley including plans to extend railway network from Lhasa to Zangmu, as well as Shigatse and possibly to Yadong at the opening of the Chumbi Valley. These developments point to Chinese attempts at upgradation of operational posture. So, in the event of hostilities it is unlikely that China will respect Bhutanese neutrality. The defence of Bhutan therefore is irrevocably linked to the defence of India.

⑦ Recommendations for improving relationship with Nepal

- India needs to formulate a comprehensive and long-term Nepal policy. Shaping of perceptions should be an integral part of this strategy. Instead of playing favourites amongst the political parties, India should engage with all of them and with other stake holders like the Army and civil society.
- India has to resist the temptation to micro-manage Nepalese politics. It is too messy to do so and the outcome will be just the opposite of the one that it desires. It will take considerable time for Nepal's democracy to stabilize and its leaders to start thinking of the country before them.
- Conventional security certainly cannot be the sole basis of India-Nepal relations. Therefore, the 1950 Treaty should be revisited to not only address Nepal's concerns but also to include India's concerns about non-conventional threats that have emerged in recent years.
- One cannot erase the anti-India sentiment in Nepal; however, this can be minimised considerably. Firstly, India has to identify the anti-India forces and engage them. These elements are also present within the Nepal Army. Secondly, India should try to correct the perception through a Track-II dialogue with Nepal, which should extend beyond Kathmandu. India's 26 pension paying camps across Nepal should be utilised for this purpose. A special emphasis should be given to the Terai region to counter Chinese influence in the region. Thirdly, India should highlight its developmental activities in Nepal.
- Surveys by academic and non-governmental organisations should be commissioned to identify projects-both small and large- which most people want to be implemented. Only those projects which find public acceptance must be taken up. We need to connect to Kathmandu via rail and run special trains till Raxaul or Gorakhpur (Nautanwa-Sunouli) for people visiting Nepal. That will generate goodwill for India and strengthen people-to-people contacts further.
- In case of hydro-cooperation, it should make a beginning with low-risk, quick-yield, less-controversial projects. Gradually, medium-size hydro-electric projects can also be started. Participation of the private sector in hydro-power development and power trading should be encouraged, and finance can be mobilized jointly by involving the private sectors of both countries.
- Closing the border is an impractical proposition due to the nature of the terrain and the likely, adverse, public reaction on both sides of the border. However, given the emerging

security situation, there is a need for regulation of the border due to the prevailing political and economic situation in Nepal and the costs involved. Therefore, the capacity of the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) needs to be enhanced for effective patrolling and regulation.

In terms of infrastructure, there is an urgent need for developing motorable border roads in most, if not all sectors, to facilitate bike patrolling by the SSB; India could also reduce the distance between SSB posts (presently there is one post at every 10-15 km), provide lighting facilities in sensitive areas, watch-towers every kilometre, and fencing of some sections of the border which are not being used for cultural, economic and social purposes.

- India should undertake capacity building programmes- commando training, intelligence gathering, supply of terrorist tracking modern equipments, etc.-with the Nepal armed and civil police for aviation security and for dealing with trans-border criminals.
- Besides continuing to undertake big projects which are in the pipeline, e.g., hydro-power projects, transmission lines, construction of roads and bridges, etc., there is immediate need to give a fresh look at the likely dividends from cooperation in new sectors.

From the business point of view, growth of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Nepal has better prospects for balanced growth that can favourably impact on the middle and lower population strata.

- Extension of educational facilities on the Indian pattern should be considered as a long-term strategy. This will help mould young minds to be inclined towards India in the long run. Both academic and vocational institutions should be facilitated.
- India must engage all the factions of Maoists at the political level to get them away from China. Along with engaging the Maoists, India should re-engage with the Nepal Army.

⑧ Why does Indian fisherman often run into problem in Indian Ocean?

In a goodwill gesture towards the new PM, Narendra Modi, Pakistan has freed 151 Indian fishermen while Sri Lanka ordered the release of all detained Indian fishermen on the eve of the swearing-in ceremony of Prime Minister. Most of these prisoners are poor Indian fishermen who were arrested and brought for trespassing into Pakistani territorial waters.

Previous releases:

In March, Rajapaksa had ordered the release of arrested fishermen after India abstained from voting on an anti-Sri Lanka motion at the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva.

India was one of the 12 nations that abstained from voting on the UNHRC resolution, which prescribed an international probe into Sri Lanka's alleged rights abuses.

Last year in August, Pakistan had released around 337 Indian prisoners from jails. Later on Diwali also, 15 Indian fishermen were released as a goodwill gesture. However, many questions remain answered for the Indian fisherman's trouble in high sea.

Issues of fisherman in the sea water:

The issue of fishermen straying in each other's territorial waters has come as a potential irritant in the bilateral relations between the neighbouring states. Indian fishermen are usually arrested on charges of trespassing. A total of 600 fishermen from India - all from Tamil Nadu - were arrested by the Sri Lankan Navy in 2013, a sharp increase compared to the last few years.

The issues are discussed as follows:

India and Sri-Lanka

- (A) There is no well defined boundary line between the two nations.
- (B) **Territorial waters overlap in some areas:** Maritime border between the two countries is about 400 kilometres spreading along three different areas: the Bay of Bengal in the north, the Palk Bay and the Gulf of Mannar in the centre and the Indian Ocean in the south. In the Palk Bay region, distances between the coasts of the two countries varies between 16 and 45 kms. This means territorial waters of each country in some areas strays into the others if 12 nautical mile criteria is strictly applied.
- (C) **LTTE issue has raised vigilance:** The issue of fishermen came to existence with the emergence of violent ethnic conflict between the Tamil militants and the Sri Lankan government in the mid 1980s. Increased vigilance by the Sri Lankan Navy to check intermittent flow of Tamil refugees into India and flow of arms and supplies to Tamil militant groups made fishing difficult and risky. Due to these fishermen from both nations suffered.
- (D) **Security concerns:** The monitoring is still on which aimed at preventing possible return of LTTE cadres, who fled from the island during the height of the conflict in 2009, to revive the insurgency all over again.

Thus the Indian fishermen, who thus far enjoyed monopoly of resource-rich waters, have now got competitors in massive numbers. At times, this leads to confrontations between the two fishing communities and in turn drawing intervention of either of naval forces. The main complaint of Sri Lankan fishermen has been against Indian mechanised trawlers that indulge in pair, mid-water, pelagic, and bottom trawling severely damaging marine resources and the sea bed. Ironically, most of the trawlers from Tamil Nadu are owned by merchant capitalists from non-fishing and other social backgrounds. The entry of 'outsiders' has not only threatened the local customary laws of fishing communities, but also turned several traditional fishermen from owners to labourers. Trawler sector in Tamil Nadu is also politically influential and financially sound making it more obdurate to solutions that could cut down its profit margins.

- (E) **Historical perspective:** Both Indian and Sri Lankan fishermen have been fishing into Palk Bay area for centuries. Problem emerged only after a maritime agreement was signed by India and Sri Lanka in 1974. In fact, initially the 1974 border agreement did not affect fishing on either sides of the border. In 1976, through an exchange of letter, both India and Sri Lanka agreed to stop fishing in each other's waters. However, the agreement could not stop the fishermen from fishing in these waters, as fishermen know no boundary. They go wherever they can get maximum number of catch. They, knowingly or unknowingly, often violate the International Maritime Boundary Lines in search of a good catch, at times at great personal risk.

Both India and Sri Lankan fishermen have been known for entering into each other's waters. However, cases of arrest of Sri Lankan fishermen by Indian authorities are comparatively less since they mostly fish in the high seas by using multi-day crafts. On the other hand, due to the dearth of multi-day fishing capability, Indian fishermen cannot shift their fishing effort from the Palk Bay area to the offshore areas of the Indian waters or way beyond the continental shelf. Therefore, Indian fishermen have no other option but to fish into the Sri Lankan waters. While for the Sri Lankan authorities protecting their maritime boundary is important, for the Indian fishermen the priority is of securing their livelihood.

It is noteworthy that despite the signing of maritime boundary agreements, fishermen communities of both the countries continued their fishing in the Palk Bay area peacefully until the Eelam war broke out in 1983. Nonetheless, after the end of War in 2009, the Sri Lankan fishermen have been raising their objection to Indian fishermen fishing in their waters.

Thus, the main problem with Indian fishermen is that a large number of them are dependent on fishing in Sri Lankan waters, which is prohibited by the 1976 Maritime Boundary Agreement. Also, a large number of Indian fishermen are dependent on trawling which is banned in Sri Lanka.

India and Pakistan:

The practice of apprehending each other's fishermen, along with their boats, has been followed by Pakistani and Indian forces since the time of the partition. The Maritime Security Agency (MSA) of Pakistan is responsible for the arrest of Indian fishermen when they reportedly enter Pakistani waters while for India, the Coast Guard, Border Security Force (BSF), Customs or the Indian navy does the same to Pakistani fishermen.

Most trespassing is common to Pakistani and Indian fishermen operating along the coastline of the Indian state of Gujarat and the Pakistani province of Sindh. Most violations occur due to the absence of a physical boundary between the nations. The problem is aggravated by the dispute over the Sir Creek in Kutch and the failure to officially determine the maritime boundary between the two nations. Most local fishermen possess no navigational tools and are unable or incapable of determine their location by longitudes or latitudes.

Further the punishment for crossing into the other country's water by fishing boats may be imprisonment for a few months but due to the hostility between the establishments/ruling classes of these countries, the fishermen languish for years in detention centers even after completing their imprisonment.

Steps taken:

The Indian government has undertaken a census of fishermen, preparing a database of information on fishermen and their boats to be used for more effective monitoring of fishing activities. The Indian Coast Guard has also begun installing tracking devices in fishing boats operating in the waters, developed by the ISRO, the tracking device has the ability to send out alerts for fires on board, a sinking vessel, a medical emergency and when the boat is apprehended by another country.

Possible solutions:

- (a) Avoid shooting incidents due to "mistaken identity", 'coordinated patrolling' between marine forces
- (b) Developing fish farming extensively in Indian waters would prevent its fishermen from venturing into other waters in search of a 'big catch'.
- (c) India can also consider leasing fishing blocks, especially those identified as 'surplus total available catch', from Sri Lanka.
- (d) To preserve marine resources, impose strict and complete ban on mechanized trawlers.
- (e) Proper fisheries resource management.
- (f) Educate the Indian fishermen to keep to the Indian side in the high sea.



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