

Year: 2023, Volume:2, Issue:1

ISSN: 2583-6811 (Online)



JOURNAL OF CONTEMPORARY POLITICS



**Department of Political Science
Bangalore University**

Journal of Contemporary Politics

Official Publication of Bangalore University

January – March 2023, Volume 2, Issue 1

PATRON

Prof. Dr. Jayakara S M
Vice-Chancellor
Bangalore University, Bengaluru

Shri Sheik Latheef, K.A.S
Registrar
Bangalore University, Bengaluru

EDITOR IN CHIEF

Dr. S. Y. Surendra Kumar
Professor, Department of Political Science
Bangalore University, Bengaluru, India

EDITORIAL BOARD MEMBERS

Dr. Veena Devi
Professor
Department of Political Science
Bangalore University, Bengaluru,
India

Dr. Rumki Basu
Former Head, Centre for Public
Policy and Governance
Institute of Social Science, New
Delhi

Dr. D. Jeevan Kumar
Honorary Professor, Karnataka State
Rural Development and Panchayat Raj
University, Gadag, Karnataka

Dr. Muzaffar Assadi
Professor
Department of Political Science,
University of Mysore, Mysuru,
Karnataka

Dr. Jonathan Schwartz
Professor
Department of Political Science &
International Relations
State University of New York,
New Paltz

Dr. M.H. Ilias
Professor
School of Gandhian Thought and
Development Studies
M.G. University, Kottayam

Dr. K M. Sajad Ibrahim
Professor
Department of Political Science
University of Kerala, Trivandrum

Dr. G.D.R.U. Abeyrathne
Professor
Department of Political Science
University of Peradeniya
Sri Lanka

Dr. Alok Kumar Gupta
Associate Professor
Department of Political Science
Central University of Jharkhand,
Ranchi

Dr. Manoharan. N
Director, Centre for East Asian
Studies Christ University
Bengaluru

Dr. Jabin T. Jacob
Associate Professor
Department of International
Relations and Governance Studies
School of Humanities and Social
Sciences, Shiv Nadar University
Delhi NCR

Dr. Avinash Anil Godbole
Associate Professor, International
Relations and China Studies
O. P. Jindal Global University
Sonipat

Dr. Chetan Singai
Dean, School of Law, Governance &
Public Policy, Academic Lead,
Chanakya University, Bengaluru

Prof. Sandeep Shastri
Director - Academics
NITTE Education Trust, Kothanur,
Bengaluru

Dr. M.J. Vinod
Professor, Department of
International studies, Political
Science & History, School of Social
Science, Christ University,
Bengaluru-560029, India

Dr. M. Narasimhamurthy
Professor
Department of Political Science
Bangalore University, Bengaluru
India

Dr. Sanjeev Kumar H M
Professor
Department of Political Science
University of Delhi, Delhi

Dr. Adluri Subramanyam Raju
Professor
Centre for South Asian Studies,
Pondicherry University
Pondicherry

Dr. Manisha Priyam
Professor
Education Policy,
National University of Educational
Planning and Administration
(NIEPA), New Delhi

Dr. Rahul Tripathi
Professor
Department of Political Science
Goa University, Goa

Dr. T. G. Suresh
Associate Professor
Centre for Political Studies
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi

Dr. Mayilvaganan
Associate Professor
National Institute for Advance Studies
Bengaluru

Dr. Manisha Madhava
Associate Professor
Department of Political Science
SNDT Women University
Mumbai

Dr. Harsha. S
Associate Professor
Department of Political Science
Assam University, Silchar

Dr. Uma Purushothaman
Assistant Professor
Department of International Studies &
Politics, Central University of Kerala
Kasaragod

MANAGING EDITOR

Dr. B R Radhakrishna
Librarian
Bengaluru University

Journal of Contemporary Politics

Official Publication of Bangalore University

January – March 2023, Volume 2, Issue 1

TABLE OF CONTENTS

RESEARCH ARTICLES

- 1. China's Consensus Hegemony Approach and its Engagement with South Asia**
Dhruv Ashok, Joshy M Paul, Venugopal B Menon 01 - 14
- 2. The Limits of India's Soft Power in South Asia**
S Y Surendra Kumar..... 15 - 25
- 3. An Assessment of India's Foreign Policy Under PM Modi**
Joyati Bhattacharya..... 26 - 30
- 4. Caught in the Crossfire: Myanmarese Refugees in India**
Priyanca Mathur 31 - 36
- 5. Imperatives of Judicial Reforms in Israel: An Analytical Perspective**
Alok Kumar Gupta 1, Honey Raj 37 - 44



Original Article

China's Consensus Hegemony Approach and its Engagement with South Asia

Dhruv Ashok¹, Joshy M Paul², Venugopal B Menon^{3,*}¹PhD Scholar, International Studies, Christ (Deemed to Be) University, Bangalore, Karnataka, India²Assistant Professor, Department of International Studies and History, Christ University, Bangalore, Karnataka, India³Former Professor, Department of International Studies and History, Christ University, Bangalore, Karnataka, India

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 16.01.2023

Revised 06.03.2023

Accepted 18.03.2023

Published 28.03.2023

* Corresponding author.

Venugopal B Menon

venubmenon@gmail.com<https://doi.org/>[10.53989/jcp.v2i1_5_menon](https://doi.org/10.53989/jcp.v2i1_5_menon)

ABSTRACT

China has enhanced its friendly engagement with South Asia in recent times, especially India. For the emergence of China as a great power in Asia, it wants to avoid any sort of resistance from regional countries and in this pursuance China considers India could be the hindrance. China is recently increasing diplomatic and economic engagement with the South Asian countries, after it has successfully implemented its 'feel-good' diplomacy in Central Asia and Southeast Asia. China's diplomatic initiative is based on Gramsci's 'consensus' theory approach by embracing the regional countries through cooperation and consensus in order to ensure that no one should oppose its supremacy in Asia.

Keywords: China; Hegemony; South Asia; Consensus

INTRODUCTION

One of the major developments in Chinese President Xi Jinping's foreign policy is that China is increasingly seen engaged with South Asia region, especially India. By the dawn of the 21st century Beijing has started a well calibrated approach to enhance its status and prestige across Asia. Its growing economic and military power, expanding political influence, distinctive diplomatic voice, and increasing involvement in regional multilateral institutions are key developments in Asian affairs¹. At the same time, it wants to convince the international community that China's 'peaceful' rise would not create instability in the region rather accommodating the regional countries' 'interests' in the pursuit of China's emergence as a great power. It wants to project that it is a constructive partner, a careful

listener, and a non-threatening regional power. Indeed, China has successfully convinced the world that in spite of its distinctive political system and ideology it can get along with other countries based on shared interests². Beijing is gradually shedding the identity of historical victim as it has been used fervently in the past to rejuvenate nationalist sentiment that might lead to revisionist tendency of the state. Instead, Beijing is pursuing cooperative approach in its bilateral and multilateral foreign policy positions, which could enhance its prestige and power internationally. As realists argue, China seeks great power status, and that the ultimate aim of every great power is to maximize its share of world power and eventually dominate the system³.

One of the main developments of President Xi Jinping's foreign policy approach is a renewed focus towards its



neighbours⁴. Xi has articulated very clearly that China is a different economic power and it is going to use its economic capacity, built over the last 30 years, to create a new kind of Asian regional economic and security architecture⁵. It is important that to emerge as a great power it requires a favorable regional environment, at least in its immediate neighbourhood. The emergence of the United States as a great power and its endurance has largely been due to a favourable regional system in North Atlantic accepting its supremacy. Like the western Hemisphere for the US and Eastern Europe for the former Soviet Union, China necessarily needs a favourable regional system to enhance its global position. An economic consolidation in the Asia-Pacific region is not sufficient for China as it seeks to reformulate the world order, a political pre-eminence is necessary especially in the immediate neighbourhood. China envisions a new 'negotiated world order'⁶ in which it aims a hedging strategy of avoiding direct confrontation with the United States but preparing favourable conditions for China to shape its own order — a hierarchical order — in the longer-term in Asia.

In fact, China needs a peaceful neighbourhood at present, otherwise its long-term ambitions may suffer. Indeed, history and baggage of the cold war-centric security alliance system under the United States hinder China in creating a favorable environment in East Asia. However, it has relatively established a favourable regional system in Central and Southeast Asia and is pursuing no-confrontationist and 'consensus' building mechanism towards South Asia. Since Pakistan has become China's 'all weather' friend, and smaller countries like Nepal, Bangladesh, Maldives and Sri Lanka may swing to accommodate China's interest with economic assistance, India is the only nation in the region that may not be ready to accept Chinese supremacy in Asia. Beijing realizes that New Delhi is an important stakeholder not only in South Asia but a major power in the entire Indo-Pacific, so that without India's acceptance it will be difficult for China to become a great power. In this regard, China wants to ensure that its emergence as a great power should be accepted by India and for that it has begun to embrace New Delhi in recent times. It is seeking this power and prestige through the process of Gramscian 'consensus' theory mechanism, rather than the sheer military strength. It has realized that 'consensus' approach is the best possible solution to making friends in the region without compromising its 'core interests', and finally to establish a 'Chinese order' in Asia. In this regard this article explains China's approach to its neighbours through a 'consensus' theory mechanism of Gramsci.

GRAMSCIAN 'CONSENSUS' HEGEMONY AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

The theory of 'consensus' in international relations was applied by Marxist thinker Antonio Gramsci. He defined

hegemony through 'consensus' which is created by a combination of 'coercion and consent' exercised not merely by the civil society, but by the state as well⁷. The underlying premise of Gramscian hegemony is that hegemony of the dominant class is possible through 'consensus' over other classes. Consent, on Gramsci's reading, is created and recreated by the hegemony of the ruling class in a society. It is this hegemony that allows the moral, political, and cultural values of the dominant group to become widely dispersed throughout the society and to be accepted by subordinate groups and classes as their own. In short, consent is an invisible way of acceptance by the inferior class/groups of the dominance of the superior class. While 'consensus' is a mechanism the dominant class exercises to win over the subordinate class through concession and coercion so that the subordinates will not be able to resist the dominance of the hegemonic class. Through the 'consensus', conflict between dominant and subordinate classes will be avoided. For instance, in northern Europe, in the countries where capitalism had first become established, bourgeois hegemony was most complete. It necessarily involved concessions to subordinate classes in return for acquiescence in bourgeois leadership, concessions which could lead ultimately to forms of social democracy which preserve capitalism while making it more acceptable to workers and the petty bourgeois⁸. For Gramsci, leadership can be derived through the image of power as a centaur: half man, half beast, a necessary combination of consent and coercion. To the extent that the consensual aspect of power is in the forefront hegemony prevails. Coercion is always latent but is only applied in marginal, deviant cases. Hegemony is enough to ensure conformity of behavior in most people most of the time.

Gramsci's concept of hegemony through consent has also been applied in the international relations as the state has expanded the notion of power, though consensus as integral to state's policy to achieve hegemony by way of 'internationalising' of the state. At the international level, a dominant state effectively with and over, rather than against, underdeveloped or developing states establishes its hegemony by the existence or absence of coercion, and by the degree of legitimization by the regional system. Gramsci argues that "at the purely foreign policy level, great powers have relative freedom to determine their foreign policies in response to domestic interests; smaller powers have less autonomy. The economic life of subordinate nations is penetrated by and intertwined with that of powerful nations. This is further complicated by the existence within countries of structurally diverse regions which have distinctive patterns of relationship to external forces"⁸.

The hegemony is established by way of neoliberalism or hyper-liberalism as the trade concessions and investment opportunities marshal a convincing set of intellectual arguments to underpin dominant states material position



within a globalizing/regionalizing economy. The Gramscian inspired International Political Economy (IPE) sought to explain the combination of the state and market to exert influence of the stronger over the weaker states. Gramsci's ideas allow us to reconnect the individual to the state via the fundamental processes of alienation under capitalism⁹. As a neo-Marxist, Gramsci emphasized that exploitative political economy has been created through historical relations of class forces at particular moments of time. In the neoliberal perspective, the hegemony of a nation depends not only on its ability to organize consensus on problems related to the economic structure, but also on those problems of an extra economic nature. The problems themselves often depend on the relations of forces, that is, on the relative strength and organization of the fundamental forces. The hegemonic state induces the dependent one through the creation of common market or free trade agreements in order to accept its supremacy. It gives economic concessions to smaller countries and opens its market for them so that they get the benefits of the hegemon's large domestic market. In this pursuit the private firms which are connected to the government establishments become more influential in foreign policy mechanism. They get favourable access to resources abroad especially in developing countries so that these firms will become the engine of growth of the smaller countries. The transnational corporations have become the new agents of promoting dominant states' interests and win support of the political elites of the dependents ones. In the opinion of Cox, hegemony is achieved by consensual means, when a leading state sheds its immediate economic-corporate consciousness and universalizes its norms and values, thereby establishing a political and ethical harmony between dominant and subordinate states. A dominant states rules, but effectively with and over, rather than against, the peripheral region. Here we can measure the extent of hegemony by the absence of rivalry, and by the degree of legitimation which the regional countries accept and enjoy.

As per the Gramscian perspective, the contours of world order focuses on the social, political and economic power of an emergent transnational managerial class, and that has effected its own agenda within the context of a new and increasingly globalized world market. To follow Agnew and Corbridge's phrasing, the contours of this new hegemonic regime of transnational liberalism rest on the conditions of 'glocalization' and the attendant ideologies of neo-liberalism and market access economics⁸. At the same time, this hegemony largely as a one-directional power relationship: hegemony is fashioned by the dominant state on its own terms and then forced or imposed on inferior states. The inferior states in turn either resist such frontal assaults as best they can, or engross the interest of the dominant one and enjoy the benefit out of it.

Indeed, with the increasing nature of interdependence of regional economy through free-trade agreements and trade

concession, as well as creation of a single market, countries pursue higher degree common 'civil society' culture at the regional level. Gramsci's expanded notion of the state as a combination of political and civil society. To quote Konrad: "Political society includes the "public sphere" of government, administration and law and order, as well as security. Civil society includes those elements normally considered "private", such as free enterprise, political parties, Churches, trade unions, and so on"¹⁰. In this civil society, economic structure and political consent rooted in economic interdependence leads to hegemony by the stronger. Transposing Gramscian hegemony in international relations, Robert Cox argued that hegemony is as important for maintaining stability and continuity in the international system as it is at the domestic level¹¹. Hegemony of Gramsci is established not by coercive method, rather it would appear that, historically, to become hegemonic, a state would have to found and protect a world order which was universal in conception, i.e., not an order in which one state directly exploits others but an order which most other states (or at least those within reach of the hegemony) could find compatible with their interests.

The dominant state seeks to establish ideologically legitimate norms to promote its interests, while in doing so they co-opt the elites of the peripheral countries. It tries to make sure that its rules and norms are internationally recognized so that its objectives are legitimately acceptable to the regional countries. It employs 'mutually acceptable' solutions on various disputes pertaining to it, but will try to prevail on its interests and objectives over others. The dominant state takes care to secure the acquiescence of other states according to a hierarchy of powers within the inter-state structure of hegemony¹¹. In some cases, some second-rank countries are consulted first and their support is secured. The consent of at least some of the more peripheral countries is solicited. As Hobden and Wyn Jones point out, 'successive dominant powers have shaped a world order that suits their interests, and have done so not only as a result of their coercive capabilities, but also because they have managed to generate broad "consent" for that order even among those who are disadvantaged by it'⁷. Indeed, to establish hegemony states need to control transnational capital also. At the international level, global capitalism plays dominant role under the most powerful state- the United States. It is important that a close cooperation of political elites and international economic and political institutions is necessary to maintain hegemony.

Gramscianism is very much integral to critical theory which explains that hegemony can be established through the idea of 'free trade'⁸. The conventional theory of free trade argues that it benefits everybody and has been so widely accepted that it has attained a common sense's status. Yet the reality is that while 'free trade' is very much in the interest of the hegemon (which as the most efficient producer in the



global economy, can produce goods which are competitive in all markets, so long as they have access to them), its benefits for peripheral states and regions are less apparent⁷. Indeed, 'free trade' in many ways a hindrance to the less powerful countries' economic and social development. Gramscianism emphasizes that the degree to which a state can successfully produce and reproduce its hegemony is an indication of the extent of its power. The hegemonic state acquires maximum wealth and creates a favourable regional system through 'free trade' wherein it is the largest producer and consumer so that the peripheral countries are inextricably linked to it for their own survival. The success of the United States in gaining worldwide acceptance for neoliberalism suggests just how dominant the current hegemon has become.

Regional security frameworks are established to continue status quo so that powerful states would not be challenged. Regional powerful states will ensure that the regional economy is most suitable to its advantage with the support of other regional countries. They try to establish a neoliberal economic order which would benefit the hegemon as well as weaker ones. According to Joseph Nye, Jr., hegemony creates institutions to legitimize their power in the eyes of others. He further argues that hegemony can be established with soft power also. Instead of using its military and economic capabilities as hard power, a country may obtain desirable outcomes because other states 'want to follow it, admiring its values, emulating its example, aspiring to its level of prosperity and openness'¹². Following Gramsci's idea of cultural leadership, an attractive culture, ideology and institutions can serve as power maximizers. A favorable politico-economic surrounding environment provides a state levers to expand its influence to other regions as well. A hegemon will ensure that locally it is the most powerful state, while extending its acceptance to other regions through soft power. In a way China is seeking hegemony, a Gramscian model of 'consent and coercion' in Asia, and is expanding its soft-power influence to other parts of the world.

CHINA'S NEIGHBOURHOOD DIPLOMACY: A 'CONSENSUS' HEGEMONY APPROACH

Ever since the 'reform and opening' of China under Deng Xiaoping in the late 1970s, China started to expand its influence and refined its foreign policy with cooperation and engagement with the outside world. It became more active when China began to respond to the international criticism of the Tiananmen incident. Between 1988 and 1994, China normalized or established diplomatic relations with 18 countries, including post-Soviet new republics of Central Asia¹³. It further cultivated various levels of 'partnerships' to facilitate economic and security coordination to offset the United States' system of regional alliances. China's regional diplomacy was not just exploiting the post-cold war situation to overcome the Tiananmen fiasco, but was also a well calibrated approach of making China a recognized world

power.

By the second half of the 1990s China has reformulated its security concept more accommodative, rather than confrontationist aimed at sustained development¹⁴. Beijing initiated 'regional-security dialogue and cooperation at different levels, through various channels and in different forms', including the ARF and the Council for Security Cooperation in Asia and the Pacific (CSCAP)¹⁴. China began to engage with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and held a series of yearly meetings through the ASEAN plus China, Japan, and South Korea mechanism. In Central Asia, meanwhile, China led the establishment of the region's first multilateral group, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Medeiros and Fravel argue that "when opportunities for cooperation exist, Beijing will bring much more to the table than in the past. But these developments also may have another result that as and when China expands its influence and refines its diplomacy, it will also get better at protecting its own interests, even when they conflict with interest of others"¹³.

CHINA AND CENTRAL ASIA

In recent years, as China's rise gathered pace, it has established strategic partnerships with various regions which can be leveraged to help shape a more favourable political environment for Beijing. China's new strategic partnership policy started with settling border disputes with its western neighbours such as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Russia in a 'consensus' manner and it has sometimes done so on less-than-advantageous terms¹³. The partnership focused on the construction and maintenance of gas pipelines, which will be carrying central Asian gas to China 65 billion cubic meter per year by 2020 that would provide Beijing significant sway in the regional diplomacy¹⁵, are essential to China's energy security. The establishment of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in 2001 with China and its four western neighbours was a stepping stone in China's neighbourhood diplomacy and it is the only multilateral organization wherein China enjoys supreme position¹⁶. Importantly, Central Asian republics also got the advantage of China's good neighbourly policy as China became one of the major importer of Central Asian oil and gas and has been constructing oil refineries in Central Asia which will reduce their dependence on Russian oil¹⁷. Under the One Belt, One Road initiative, of which one arm is the Silk Road Economic Belt that will pass from China to Europe through Central Asia, China has promised to construct roads, railways, ports, and other infrastructure through the region with tens of billions of dollars' worth of investment¹⁸. China is pushing its financial institutions and banks to facilitate loans for various infrastructural projects to Chinese owned companies. With the Chinese money and physical presence, the One Belt, One Road initiative will further consolidate China's political and economic influence



through the Central Asia region. By participating actively in regional economic collaboration, China can strengthen both its economic links and political ties with the neighbouring region. With the withdrawal of the United States from Afghanistan and Russia's continuing economic woes, China is certainly going to win the 'great game' in Central Asia.

CHINA AND ASEAN

China has established friendly relationship with the South-east Asian countries since early 1990s. Its 'feel good' diplomacy has provided dividend for China to create a favorable regional system in its periphery. Beijing realizes that better economic and political relationship with Southeast Asian region could well serve to enhance China's leadership position in Asia. China used economic consideration for political advantage when it needed the most. Beijing showed magnanimity to the Southeast Asian elites when they faced serious economic crisis. When the East Asian financial crisis shook the region in 1997, Beijing did not devalue its currency, a move that might have caused additional pressure on Southeast Asian economies. Similarly, when China joined the World Trade Organization the elites of ASEAN feared that the entry of China into the WTO would push their products into competition with Chinese products for the same third-country market (the US, EU, and Japan) as both export many of the same products which will lead to loss of jobs as well as foreign direct investment. To alleviate such concern China reassured the Southeast Asian countries about its continued and long-term interest including its commitment to conclude ASEAN-China Free Trade Area (ACFTA). Without losing any opportunity, China signed ten bilateral agreements and a Framework Agreement on Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and an action plan at Phnom Penh in November 2002 that set concrete goals for regional integration, including signing of ASEAN-China Free Trade Area between China and the original six ASEAN members by 2010 which would be expanded with four new members by 2015¹⁹. The bilateral trade between China and ASEAN has increased by 8.3 percent year-on-year to \$480 billion in 2014, from \$78.28 billion in 2003, which is expected to reach \$1 trillion by 2020²⁰. The direct investment between the two sides has amounted to more than \$130 billion in 2014 and is expected to reach \$100 billion by 2020²⁰. Besides, the Maritime Silk Route (MSR) concept will help China establish its consolidation through 'consensus' way¹. Today, the Southeast Asian countries are unable to resist Beijing's aggressive proposition. It is gradually endorsing Beijing's hegemony, not by means of bandwagoning as argued by the realists, because Southeast Asian countries are not following Chinese position with

regard to other issues such as trade dispute or US role in the region. Rather, they accept Chinese hegemony in the region through 'consensus', although they want to resist it, but could not do so because of the interdependence and Chinese overall economic influence in the region.

CHINA AND EAST ASIA

Although China is the largest trading partner of Japan, political friction still continues between the two over the territorial dispute of Senkaku/diaoyu islands in the East China Sea. China's larger strategy is to push back the United States from the western Pacific to the outer periphery of the second island chain then only Beijing can emerge as a great power in the region (Clark). Since Japan has a highly sophisticated defense system compared with the Chinese, China employs low level naval skirmishes to assert its power and position in the region. At the same time China has embraced Japan for technology, capital and trade purposes, and Beijing is now using its comparative economic advantage to gain political purpose². As Yoshihara and Holmes²¹ argue Chinese leaders 'merge diplomacy, economic and trade incentives, low-key shows of naval and military force, and cultural influence into a comprehensive outreach program towards Japan to assert its position in East Asia.

CHINA'S 'CONSENSUS' APPROACH IN SOUTH ASIA

China has not been able to make any strategic inroads in South Asia, except in the case of Pakistan. It did make an attempt to get larger involvement in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, but that was short-lived only when unfriendly governments to India reigned in those countries. The unresolved Himalayan border dispute between India and China and the baggage of 1962 military skirmishes between the two still play a spoil-spot in the India-China relationship. China has never favored a comprehensive settlement in its six of China's 23 disputes; three cases over landmass, namely, India, Bhutan and Taiwan and three islands — Paracel, Spratly and Senkaku²². Besides, China's ambition for great power status and its military modernization is viewed in India's as long-term security threat. Similarly, China's political and military support to Pakistan is not only for Islamabad's national security consideration but its anti-India positions also. China has the tendency to propping up anti-India regimes to constrain India continuously in the South Asian regional security complex. At the same time Beijing has tried to create wedge between New Delhi and its neighbours by providing them financial and military support

¹China has committed to contributing \$50 billion to the AIIB of the planned \$100 billion USD in capital, \$40 billion in capital to the Silk Road Fund, and the Maritime Silk Road Bank hopes to attract 100 billion RMB (\$16 billion) in investment.

²When Japan detained captain of the Chinese trawler which collided with two Japanese coast guard vessels in the disputed area in 2010, Chinese government has blocked exports to Japan of a crucial category of minerals used in products like hybrid cars, wind turbines and guided missiles as a revenge for Japanese action.



whenever there was anti-India establishments at the helm in these countries. Its 'string of pearl' strategy was believed to contain Indian navy's manoeuvrability in the Indian Ocean²³. However, in recent times, Beijing is conspicuously enhancing bilateral cooperation with India and wants to convey that Beijing's emergence as a great power is not a threat to India. Rather, India could get the benefit of China's 'peaceful rise' thereby engrossing India in its effort to becoming a regional hegemon. This is because China's policy is to establish a 'consensus' mechanism in the relationship so that India's ability to oppose Beijing's emergence could be thwarted. Along with China's 'outward oriented' diplomacy in the 1990s, it has extended 'working and constructive partnership' approach to normalize its relationship with India²⁴. In accordance with Deng's modernization plan China was eager to hold talks with India for economic reasons, more eager than India was, and wanted to put border dispute as a peripheral matter for Beijing. The confidence building mechanisms started in the 1990s have been the main operational instrument to establish peace and tranquillity in the border. Den Xiaoping's proposed "package settlement" and "mutual accommodation" principle of the 1980s²⁴, is still a dominant aspect in the negotiation process to resolve the border dispute between the two countries. The bilateral Framework Agreement signed in 2005 states that both India and China must 'make meaningful and "mutually acceptable" adjustments to their respective positions on the boundary question so as to arrive at a package settlement to the boundary question'²⁵. Under the "package settlement" China wants to negotiate with India in the Eastern border, which include the status of the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh, without compromising on the Aksai Chin area of the western sector. Although India has encouraged an overall 'sectoral approach' resolving the border dispute, but finds difficulty in persuading China not to carry out any infrastructural development in the disputed area of Aksai Chin²⁶. Chinese option of a "package settlement" is similar to what it has adopted towards East China Sea and South China Sea dispute that whatever area China controls is unwilling to discuss, rather Beijing wants to negotiate the disputed territory controlled other countries.

China is unwilling to recognize Indian primacy in southern Asia- South Asia and its adjacent waterbed in the Indian Ocean which include Arabian Sea, Bay of Bengal and the south Indian Ocean region. India is, of course, a naturally the largest power in the region with its huge land mass and military prowess, especially in the naval domain, and New Delhi considers Indian Ocean as its 'strategic backyard'²⁷. China is well aware that, unlike in the western Pacific, it could never become a dominant player in the Indian Ocean region, so its policy is to preserve the vacuum intact and to establish a "legitimate" stake-holder position while containing India of its becoming a dominant power in the region. Until recently, China had employed a 'divide

and rule' policy towards the region by singling out India in South Asia by supporting anti-India establishments in the neighbouring countries. However, now India is considered as a friendly partner for most of the South Asian initiatives. In this purpose Beijing is courting a friendship with all the regional countries.

Pakistan already enjoys an 'all weather' friendly relationship with China and is getting sound financial support from Beijing, the latest being the Chinese offer of \$46 billion financial assistance for various infrastructural projects in Pakistan²⁸. Apart from propping Pakistan up against India to achieve strategic parity in South Asia, Beijing sought to establish permanent physical presence, under the so called name of 'string of pearls' at strategically important locations of Chittagong, Hambantota, and Gwaddar, drawing away Bangladesh and Sri Lanka from Indian influence. Beijing has attempted to influence Nepal through diplomatic and economic engagements, and has become an important partner for Nepal in recent times. A series of collaborative efforts have been made between the two in recent years such as: laying an optical fiber linking Kathmandu to Hong Kong Data Centre which is one of the two biggest global data centres in Asia, which will allow them to watch Chinese Publication, Radio, Film and Television for Nepalese citizens; China has recently inaugurated the first transport service to Nepal, a rail bus, 10-day journey from Lanzhou to Kathmandu; and a joint Nepal-China researcher team has begun hydrocarbon (petroleum and natural gas) exploration in Nepal²⁹. Nepal's recent overtures to China which, among other things, resulted in a historic transit treaty between the two countries that now allows Nepal to import goods from third countries via Chinese territories. China has seemed more comfortable making "suggestions" to Nepal. According to the joint Nepal-China statement issued during the visit of former Nepalese Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli to China in March 2016, China has agreed to upgrade two road links between Nepal and Tibet, pledged financial support to build an international airport at the tourist hub of Pokhara, agreed to extend the Chinese railway to Kathmandu and then to Lumbini, and given its nod to a long-term commercial oil deal³⁰. Up until now Nepal has imported all its fuel from India.

Similarly, during Begum Khaleda Zia administration in Bangladesh, China enjoyed unparalleled sway in Bangladesh's regional diplomacy³. China is now the biggest arms exporter to Bangladesh and Bangladesh armed forces are today equipped mostly with Chinese military hardware. Since 2010, Beijing has supplied Dhaka with five maritime patrol vessels, two corvettes, 44 tanks, and 16 fighter jets, as well as surface-to-air and anti-ship missiles³¹. China signed Defense Cooperation agreement with Bangladesh in December 2002- first such agreement ever signed by

³Begum Khaleda Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) was considered as anti-Indian political dispensation and has always pursued strong bondage with both Pakistan and China.



Bangladesh in its history³². Both countries are strengthening their military cooperation in recent times not only their cooperation in hardware exchanges but for training and military exchanges. China's PLA sends nearly as many delegations to Bangladesh each year as India does, and also provides training for Bangladeshi military personnel³¹. Although the current Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is close to New Delhi, but Beijing has grabbed every opportunity to court friendship with Hasina government of Bangladesh. Bangladesh features in the Belt and Road both as part of the overland component — via the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar economic corridor — and as a port hub for the Maritime Silk Road, with Chittagong as the hub port.

A majority of Chinese investments in Bangladesh have been in energy (8.1 billion dollars), transport (6.6 billion dollars), real estate (2.4 billion dollars), metals (2.1 billion dollars), utilities (8.7 billion dollars), and chemicals (400 billion dollars) sectors. According to The Daily Star, however, until June 2020, agreements for only seven projects worth 5.4 billion dollars had been signed with only 1.4 billion dollars disbursed. Including two earlier Chinese projects which are in progress, the nine projects have resulted in 1.8 billion dollars being disbursed by China. Recent examples of Chinese investments and projects in Bangladesh include the building of a new terminal and expanding the Sylhet Airport in 2019 by the Beijing Urban Construction Group. China will also play a key role in developing Bangladesh's first smart city and largest planned township in Purbachal, on the outskirts of Dhaka. The Chinese United Water Corporation, along with Bangladesh's United Delcot Water Ltd., will build a 72-million-dollar water distribution network in Purbachal under a Public-Private Partnership. It has been stated that this project does not come under the BRI.³³

In June 2020, the economic relations division of the Bangladesh government sought funds for nine new projects at an estimated cost of 6.4 billion dollars. The projects include the first phase of the Payra Sea Port, a bridge that will become one of the country's longest, linking the island district of Bhola with the city of Barisal, the Sheikh Hasina Institute of Information Technology, and upgrading the Barisal — Kuakata Highway. Chinese companies have also shown an interest in constructing and operating the proposed high-speed railway on the Dhaka — Chattogram route³³. Situation was similar in Sri Lanka when former President Mahindra Rajapaksa ruled the island nation and facilitated greater presence of China in the port sector, which Beijing considered crucial to continue its 'legitimate' presence in the region. The construction of Hambantota port with Chinese money and material and a private dock in Colombo port, built, controlled and run by a Chinese company—the China Merchants Holdings (international)- is a case in point³⁴. Recently, Sri Lanka is courting China for economic assistance in the reconstruction process ravaged by decades of civil war. After initial lull, when the new Srisena

administration came to power and later under Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe who was considered close to New Delhi, China sought to enhance cooperation with Sri Lanka which was fructified during the visit of Wickremesinghe to China in April 2016 and he has expressed Colombo's willingness to join the Chinese led One Belt One Road initiative³⁵. Similarly, China has continuously deployed its navy in the Indian Ocean from 2008 on an escort missions in anti-piracy operations in Gulf of Aden and Somalia under UN resolution. The naval deployment in the guise of anti piracy operation has been to project its power in the "far seas" operations. China had even mooted an idea of a division of the sea-lanes in the Indian Ocean being patrolled by international navies under Shared Awareness and De-Confliction (SHADE) group into separate national sectors³⁶, which would provide China a 'sovereign' region in the Indian Ocean water body.

Indeed, the increasing frequency of Chinese anti-piracy deployments and naval exercises, and Beijing's growing investments in maritime infrastructure projects, have established the Peoples Liberation Army-Navy (PLAN) as a major security player in the region. China's latest rapprochement with Sri Lanka is with the aim of retrieving the lost ground in the island nation as well as part of Beijing's larger Indian Ocean strategy.

Amidst the Covid-19 Pandemic in April 2021, China's Defense Minister General Wei Fenghe visited Sri Lanka to emphasize the growing military aspect of bilateral ties. During his visit, the Military Assistance Protocol was signed, the official website of the Chinese National Defense University Alumni Association of Sri Lanka was launched, and discussions took place on enhancing pragmatic military cooperation³³. During the 2022 Sri Lanka economic crisis China announced an "urgent emergency humanitarian aid" package of 200 million RMB (31 million US dollars) to Sri Lanka, extended through the China International Development Cooperation Agency. Also, China's Yunnan Province has announced a donation of 1.5 million RMB (230,000 US dollars) worth of food packages to Sri Lanka. Despite this humanitarian aid, China has maintained a silence on Sri Lanka's requests for debt rescheduling. On the other hand, there are reports that China has communicated its reservations about debt deferment to Sri Lanka, saying there is no such provision in their financial system³⁷.

Sri Lanka's financial dependence on China has led to security concerns for India as it can greatly bolster Chinese leverage to turn the Chinese use of Sri Lankan infrastructure for strategic-military purposes. The recent docking of the Chinese navy's scientific ship Yuan Wang 5 in Hambantota port and the allegations of Chinese tankers providing mid-sea logistical support to Chinese naval ships can be taken as an example³⁸. Along with Sri Lanka, China considers Maldives as an important strategic partner in the Maritime Silk Route initiative. Chinese President Xi Jinping chose



Maldives as his first country to visit South Asia, and during his tour in September 2014 he suggested that Malé will be “prepared to actively participate” in the Maritime Silk Road initiative of China³⁹. China is a major economic partner of Maldives, owes 70% of its external debt to China, making itself heavily dependent on Beijing's largesse⁴⁰. China is investing heavily in infrastructure projects in Maldives and is assisting the expansion the international airport as well as the Maldives China Friendship Bridge which will link the airport island with Male. China's view is that the investment and construction of ports in these countries not only serve its economic purpose but strategic interest also. China wants to wean away the island countries of Sri Lanka and Maldives from the ‘India-first’ foreign policy approach and making Beijing as a reliable partner for them in their necessity.

After President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih came to power in November 2018, the Maldivian government shifted tracks and was skeptical of China having run an election campaign that promised to root out corruption, constrain debts and restore the Maldives foreign relations. China's reputation in Maldives was further tarnished as Solih's Maldivian Democratic Party dubbed the Chinese government as enabler of the previous Maldivian president Abdulla Yameen's corruption and misuse of public funds. There were also reports of BRI projects being suspended, cancelled, or renegotiated along with the possibility of scrapping the Free Trade Agreement that was signed by Solih's predecessor Yameen³³.

Despite the criticism, new agreements and projects were signed by the Solih government with China in 2019 and 2020, which included developing an office complex in Hulhumale, an MOU between their foreign ministries on strengthening cooperation, and an agreement on Economic and Technical Cooperation. An agreement was also signed for the construction of an Olympic standard stadium to host the 11th Indian Ocean Island Games in 2023. With the Covid-19 Pandemic, China has also extended its health diplomacy by donating medical supplies, and vaccines, and helping the country with its relief efforts under the HSR³³.

CHINA'S DEFENSE ENGAGEMENT WITH INDIA

During the visit of the then Indian Defense Minister Pranab Mukherjee to China May/June 2006 and Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed between the two countries for the establishment of a mechanism to ensure frequent and regular exchanges between leaders and officials of the Defense Ministries and the armed forces of the two countries, in addition to developing an annual calendar for holding regular joint military exercises and training programs⁴¹. In pursuance of the spirit of the Confidence Building Mechanisms and defense cooperation, the first ever joint military exercise between China and India conducted in Kunming in Yunnan in 2007, followed by a week-long China-India joint anti-terrorists training exercise

code named ‘Hand-in-Hand’ at Belgaum in Karnataka in December 2008⁴². Subsequently, Indian Chief of Naval Staff attended the International Fleet Review 2009 at Qingdao from 21-24 April 2009. Indian participation included guided missile destroyers INS Mumbai and INS Ranveer, the guided missile corvette INS Khanjar and the tanker INS Jyoti⁴³. Followed by the India's naval participation in China, Chinese “Shenzhen” Missile Destroyer made port call at the Kochi port from 8-11 August 2009. The latest ‘Hand-in-Hand-2015’ exercise was conducted in October 2015 in Kunming, China. Indeed, the ‘Hand-in-Hand’ joint military exercise is an anti-terrorist training program rather than a full-fledged military exercise. The scope and importance of the military exercise is limited to the purpose of creating awareness about various mechanisms both countries have adopted for anti-terrorism operations.

On the other hand, Beijing is seeking more enhanced defense engagement with India in the maritime domain. For the first time ever India joined in a multilateral naval exercise with China, held at Qingdao with six other countries, including Pakistan, alongside the Western Pacific Naval Symposium (WPNS) in April 2014⁴⁴. Further, China wanted to increase its naval presence in the Indian Ocean region (IOR) in its effort to establish a ‘legitimate stakeholder’ in the region. For that purpose, Beijing conspicuously ensures that it doesn't want any confrontation with India nor to create any situation wherein India raises its objection to the Chinese presence in the region. At the same time, it carefully tries to allay India's concerns over increased Chinese naval activity in the Indian Ocean including docking of its submarines in different ports in the region.

In order to fructify this effort China has stepped up maritime cooperation and dialogue with India and other South Asian countries as Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying told in a media briefing that “China is willing to work with India and relevant countries to step up maritime cooperation and dialogue and to contribute constructively to peace and stability in the Indian Ocean region”⁴⁵. Chinese scholars like Wang Jisi argues that wooing India will, therefore, be China's long term endeavour in consonance with the PRC's “Look west” strategy which accords primacy to and rebalance ties with India⁴⁶. China tries to establish its presence in the Indian Ocean by courting India as ‘cooperative’ partner for non-traditional security cooperation mechanism so India would not oppose its naval deployment in the region through which its hegemony will make it acceptable for India. At the same time China wants to convey its message to the regional countries that India is not the lonely power whom they can depend on as and when any security crisis emerges in the region. In the first meeting of the International initiative on Ocean Escorts hosted by the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) at Nanjing in February 2012, China indicated that India and Japan were two countries with which China wanted to



increase exchanges and strengthen coordination of escort missions⁴⁷. China had clearly stated that improvement in the efficiency of international escort missions deployed in the fight against piracy can be achieved through greater exchange of intelligence, commander visits and joint escorts and exercises. To enhance Beijing's naval presence in the IOR it has extended the maritime silk route concept to the India Ocean also.

ECONOMIC COOPERATION

During Chinese President Xi's state visit to India in September 2014, both countries decided to explore new areas for economic cooperation under the rubric of Strategic Economic Dialogue (SED) in crosscutting fields including industrial investment, infrastructure development, high-tech industry, clean energy and sustainable urbanization, and also signed an agreement to establish two industrial parks in India. Further, President Xi committed an investment of \$20 billion in the next 5 years in "various industrial and infrastructure development projects"⁴⁸, even as the Chinese Consul General in Mumbai indicated an ambitious \$100 billion Chinese investment in India⁴³. The agreement to establish two industrial parks in India is aimed to partially offset the trade deficit accrued to the tune of about US \$40 billion dollars to India, which will encourage Chinese investments especially in the manufacturing sector as "an aspect of strategic and cooperative partnership"⁴⁹. When the Vice President visited Beijing, an MoU was signed to establish Special Economic Zone and National Investment and Manufacturing Zone to facilitate Chinese government grants while the conditionalities were lower than what are Chinese prevailing policy frameworks⁴³. China believes that the significant amount of Chinese investment and strategic economic partnership would reduce India's concern about the China "threat" perception.

The rejuvenation of economic investments, however, cannot be seen having positive impact in the trade arena. Sino-Indian bilateral trade crossed 10-billion-dollar mark nearly a decade back which was anticipated to touch the 100 billion mark by 2015 (Olla ply, 2014). However, it reached \$72 billion only in 2014-2015 from \$57 in 2010-2011 (Department of Commerce, 2012-13). China expects once the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) is signed, the gap will be filled. Although India still faces a huge trade deficit with China, New Delhi supported in creating of RCEP right from the beginning and participated in the negotiation. India believes the vitality of ASEAN in the Asian multilateralism needs to be maintained and that it will enhance India's "Act-East" policy towards the region. For China, New Delhi's participation in the RCEP is another opportunity to enhance economic engagement to reduce political mistrust. Since China is the largest economic partner of most of the RECP countries, Beijing could influence the overall regional integration process and

could curtail US' economic presence in the region. Beijing expects that RCEP would provide a China drive to regional economic integration, similar to the role US plays in the Western Hemisphere⁵⁰.

Similarly, Beijing employs greater cooperation with India at various multilateral fora which include BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), World Trade Organization and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)⁵¹. With the background of globalization and interdependence, the BRICS was expected to emerge as the world's principal "engine of new demand growth and spending power" in less than 40 years, when it was conceived in 2003⁵². Through the BRICS, these emerging economies have got an institutional mechanism to interact politically as well as economically and considered moving towards closer political union. Hempson-Jones⁵³ argues that China's participation in such intergovernmental organizations has softened its practice, and adopted a cooperative approach on various international issues. China also benefits from this cooperation by stabilizing its international environment, helping other developing countries, strengthening its identity as a developing country, coordinating its position with other BRICs to maximize leverage, and hiding in a group to avoid negative attention⁵⁴. Indeed, BRICS has facilitated to defuse the tension between China and India which emerges at bilateral level.

Polachek⁵⁵ argues that greater economic interaction with external actors will force the governments averse to exacerbating conflicts. States are dissuaded from initiating conflict with trade partners because of the resultant decrease in the economic gains derived from that relationship. The most favored nations status and other WTO mechanism such as Trade-Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Trade-Related Investment Measures (TRIMS) has imposed certain obligation on China that compelled to implement a certain degree of transparency in its action. China's increased interactions with WTO member countries has strengthened China's argument that its emergence will benefit all countries it cooperates with. Importantly, India and China are not competing on any of the areas that come under WTO primarily because the bilateral trade is less vital to the Chinese economy than to the Indian economy⁵⁶.

As a new emerging great power China seeks to create an alternative economic system parallel to US dominated western hemisphere but has not been successful so far. However, one institution it has partially become successful is in the case of Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) which is now considered as parallel to the World Bank. Importantly, as a China led Bank, Beijing has extended warm friendship to India in institutionalising the AIIB and offered the first Vice President post and membership at the Board of Governors⁵⁷. Being the second biggest shareholder after China, India is expected to receive the first loan worth \$500 million for renewable energy project⁵⁸. China believes



greater economic integration of India with Chinese led regional economic system would enforce New Delhi silently accept Chinese supremacy in Asia.

MARITIME SILK ROUTE: A NEW MANTRA FOR 'CONSENSUS' MECHANISM

Of late, contours of China's changed strategy towards the South Asia and the Indian Ocean region indicate a shift from containment to cooperation. The 'string of pearl' strategy received a lot of criticism, not only from India but the US and other countries about China's 'expansionist' power mind-set, although China has never accepted or validated the "string of pearls" theory. Similarly, the change of regime in both Bangladesh and Sri Lanka- India friendly Awami League under Sheikh Hasina, who came to power in Bangladesh in 2009 and got re-elected in 2014, while Rajapaksa was replaced by Srisena Maithripala and Ranil Wickramasinghe in Sri Lanka in 2014, who immediately rolled back some of the geopolitical concessions made by his predecessor to Beijing – has also forced Beijing to reformulate its strategy. All these developments have dented. China's earlier plan of 'containment' of India. Rather, China readily employs now the 'feel good factor' to South Asia and has extended the MSR concept to Indian Ocean region. China has extended a formal invitation for India to join the MSR during the 17th round of border talks held between the Special Representatives from both countries, Yang Jiechi from China and Indian National Security Adviser Shivshankar Menon in New Delhi in February 2014⁵⁹.

The Indian response was lukewarm, and certainly not one of immediate acceptance. But the Chinese Special representative deliberately communicated to the press as if India had accepted the invitation⁶⁰. In his address to the media, the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson elaborated the necessity of cooperation between India and China in MSR that "the purpose is to integrate all kinds of ongoing cooperation especially cooperation on connectivity in the spirit of (ancient) silk road so that they can connect with each other and promote each other and accelerate regional countries' common development"⁶¹. GaoZhenting, councillor, department of international economic affairs, China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that "we have a belief that China and India both placed the trail of silk roads and MSR, and we both have benefited from the (ancient) roads,"⁶². During Indian Vice President's Hamid Ansari's visit to Beijing in End-June 2014, China further made another unsuccessful attempt at getting India to sign-up the MSR⁵⁹. Beijing's renewed pitch for the construction of ports, logistical stations, storage facilities and free-trade zones in the Indian Ocean was again met with a passive response, while India sought concrete details on the project to help reach an early decision.

As an emerging power in Asia, however, India is considered as a major rival to China's emergence of a great

power in Asia. Beijing seeks to contain India's influence beyond the South Asian region, both economically and politically⁶³. Beijing outstripped India in acquiring energy resources in Central Asia and creates hurdles in Southeast Asia. Similarly, China provides covert and overt support to Islamabad in its attempt to acquire parity with New Delhi strategically. Beijing is highly critical of India's growing strategic partnership with both the US and Japan. India may not be part of US alliance system but the growing partnership will help India acquire advanced defense systems and technology from the US that will make India a formidable power in the region. Beijing wants to contain Indian influence in the Indian Ocean, as realists' argument that the emerging great power will contain others in different regions. Beijing is establishing 'dual use' infrastructure facilities in various countries in the Indian Ocean in its effort to expand its naval influence from the western Pacific to the Indian Ocean⁶⁴. Beijing attempts to constrain Indian navy's operational maneuverability in the Indian Ocean that India considers its own backyard.

INDIA-CHINA GEOPOLITICAL TENSIONS SINCE 2019

The military clash in Ladakh's Galwan Valley between the Indian and Chinese armies on June 15, 2020, which left at least twenty Indian army soldiers dead and an undisclosed number of Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) soldiers dead, has been the worst military standoff between the two regional powers in over 45 years. However, this military clash and the recent tensions between India and China along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) should not be seen in isolation and must be viewed in the context of the larger geopolitical issues between the two countries. In 2019, with the abrogation of Article 370 of the Indian constitution, the erstwhile Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir was bifurcated into the union territory of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh leading to tensions between India and China as China considers Ladakh to be the disputed territory⁶⁵. This marks the entry of geopolitics into question as China enjoys cordial relations with India's arch-rival Pakistan.

During the 1960's China became a major arms supplier to Pakistan. China's defense relationship with Pakistan further strengthened over the following decades. Under the 1963 Pakistan-China boundary agreement, Pakistan ceded the Shaksgam valley of Pakistan Occupied Kashmir to China. This became significant geopolitically as the Shaksgam valley provided China with a critical military route from Xinjiang through Tibet into Kashmir though the region remained under dispute with India. During the cold war and in the 1990s, China maintained a close relationship with Pakistan much to India's dismay. The Shaksgam valley route provides logistical and military access for China into Tibet. The start of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) a multi-billion-dollar project forming an integral part of China's Belt



and Road Initiative (BRI) in 2015 marked the strengthening of ties between China and Pakistan. The goal behind the project is to build a network of highways, railways, and pipelines that will connect China's easternmost landlocked region, Xinjiang, with the warm waters of the Arabian sea at Gwadar⁶⁵.

CPEC also passes through the Pakistan administered part of Kashmir, which India claimed as an integral part of its territory. India has objected to the CPEC project for violating India's territorial integrity. Military cooperation between China and Pakistan continues and China may want to maintain close ties with Pakistan as a hedge against being surrounded by a hostile United States, Japan, and India in an unknown future⁶⁶. The tension between India and China is further fuelled by competition between the two, especially in South Asia. India sees itself as the dominant South Asian power and India sees China as challenging its regional dominance with China's investments and growing relationships with its neighbours like Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka. However, China does not see India as a primary threat or competitor when it comes to great power competition. Instead, it sees the United States as its main rival on the global stage. India has also been careful about entering into a formal strategic alliance with the United States against China and instead seeks to maintain its balance and strategic autonomy in its dealings with the United States as it does not want to antagonise China. India has also moved to strengthen its ties with the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) to support freedom of navigation in the Indo-Pacific region and conduct joint military drills with the United States of America's navies, Australia and Japan. Engaging with Quad serves two geostrategic goals of India. The first is countering China's aggressive behaviour on the border with India's assertiveness in the maritime domain. The second is for India to emerge as a net security provider in the region. As part of this strategy, India has also invited Australia to participate in the annual Malabar series of naval exercises in November 2020. India had not invited Australia since 2007 due to objections raised by China⁶⁵. Therefore, India in recent years has continued to pursue policies of cooperation with China while at same time seeking alliances to contain Chinese hegemony in South Asia and the wider Indo-Pacific region.

CORONAVIRUS AND THE LAB LEAK / BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS THEORY

In 1952 and 1984, the People's Republic of China signed the Protocol and Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) respectively. During the Second World War, China was the victim of countless biological attacks by Japan, leading to Beijing's future efforts to develop a stronger biodefense infrastructure and a biotechnology industry with substantial dual use capabilities that can be used for both biodefense and bioweapons. Because of China's experience

with biological attacks, Beijing maintains that it does not have an offensive biological program. However, despite these declarations many have suspected that China has maintained a biological weapons program since before the signing of BTWC.

The 2005 US State Department report identifies two facilities that have links to an offensive biological weapons program: The Chinese Ministry of Defense's Academy of Military Medical Sciences (AMMS) Institute of Microbiology and Epidemiology (IME) in Beijing, and the Lanzhou Institute of Biological Produces. China refutes the claims of the 2015 US State Department report and instead claims that the Chinese Ministry of Defense's Academy of Military Medical Sciences (AMMS) is a bio-defense facility while the Institute of Microbiology and Epidemiology (IME) is a vaccine production facility. In addition to these two central laboratories, US agencies estimated that there are at least 50 other laboratories and hospitals being used as biological weapons research facilities⁶⁷.

A US house investigation into the origins of Covid-19 has concluded that the virus may have been part of a Chinese biological research program when it was accidentally released from a laboratory in Wuhan⁶⁸. This investigation resulted in the publication of an interim report in 2022. This interim report contradicted the 2021 findings of the US intelligence community which was unable to comprehensively conclude the origins of Covid-19 as to whether it was result of a lab leak or it originated due to natural exposure to an infected animal (Unclassified Summary of origins of Covid-19, 2021). The 2022 interim report of the US House investigation by Republicans on the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence on the other hand noted "Based on our investigation involving a variety of public and non-public information, we conclude that there are indications that SARS-CoV-2 may have been tied to China's biological weapons research program and spilled over to the human population during a lab related incident at the Wuhan Institute of Virology" (Unclassified Summary of the Second Interim Report on the origins of the Covid-19 Pandemic, 2022). The report also notes "The Committee has not seen any indications that the Chinese military intentionally released SARS-CoV-2" (Unclassified Summary of the Second Interim Report on the origins of the Covid-19 Pandemic, 2022).

The 2022 interim report also alleged that the US intelligence community had withheld information from the US Congress and downplayed the possibility of Covid-19 being linked to Chinese Bio-weapon. Thus, the debate around whether Covid-19 was leaked from the Wuhan lab deliberately or by accident remains hotly debated in the global arena. If the allegation that Covid-19 virus was leaked from the Wuhan lab deliberately as part of a bioweapons strategy to harm its adversaries' economies, it could damage the credibility of China in the international community



and its image as a rising power. However, epidemiologists strongly argue that Covid-19 was not a human-manipulated strain, and hence, cannot be a “genetic weapon”⁶⁹. At this juncture of building itself as a world power using a bioweapon to deliberately damage the economies of its adversaries such as the United States seems to be too far fetched given how closely integrated China's economy is with the United States and the rest of the world.

However, the possibility of an accidental lab leak cannot be ruled out as China is not new to lab leaks. The SARS leak in 2004 from the Chinese Centre for Disease Control and Prevention; and the brucellosis outbreak from an accident at Lanzhou Veterinary Research Institute in 2019 are a few examples⁶⁹. After the present Covid-19 Pandemic, the fact that the Chinese leadership has been emphasizing increasing lab safety gives credence to this theory⁷⁰. China on the other hand has rejected US allegations of Covid-19 originating from a lab leak in Wuhan. China in February 2023 strongly responded to the US Federal Bureau of Investigation's claim that Covid-19 originated from a lab leak in China. The Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning stated “Byrehashing the lab theory the US will not succeed in discrediting China, and instead, it will only hurt its credibility”. She further added “We urge the US to respect science and facts, stop turning origin tracing into something about politics and intelligence, and stop disrupting social solidarity and origins cooperation”.

Hence, from this response it can be said that the Chinese government wants to counter narratives that it views as being aimed at tarnishing China's international image as it knows that if it is internationally accepted that Covid-19 outbreak was due to an accidental lab leak or it was deliberately employed as a biological weapon for political and economic gains then it could result in China facing severe sanctions as well as demands from several countries for reparations for the economic and human losses caused by the Covid-19 Pandemic. Such an outcome could also obstruct China's quest for hegemony through consensus as it could give its adversaries like the United States and India an opportunity to undermine the confidence of other countries in developing world about China's sincerity as an economic partner.

CONCLUSION

China, in recent times, has enhanced cooperation with India with a view that New Delhi must not be a spoil-spot in its pursuance of its being a great power. At the same time China wants to make sure that its hegemony is to be accepted through ‘consensus’ manner. The new confident China that has shed its victimized mind-set to rejuvenate nationalist fervour, is seeking parity with the United States. To emerge as another great power on equal terms with the United States. For this, Beijing requires a favourable regional system like the western Hemisphere for

the US. China is currently pursuing to create such system in its neighbourhood. No other power, including Russia, is contesting for influence with China, not even in its backyard Central Asia. It has already made successful inroads into Southeast Asia and deftly divided the so called ASEAN, at least over the territorial dispute in the South China Sea, while asserting its position and enforcing other parties to accept it. Gramscian notion of ‘coercion and consent’ perhaps best explains China's changing strategies to achieve its objective in Southeast Asia.

On the contrary, China has adopted a ‘consent’ approach only in South Asia to win support of the regional countries its ambition to emerge as great power. Unlike in Southeast Asia, South Asia has India which is a formidable single power with vast maritime interest. India has been warming up with the United States while preserving its principled policy of ‘strategic autonomy’ which is going to be a major obstacle for China, especially in the maritime domain. Peace and tranquility has almost been established in the Himalayan border area while a final resolution of this unsettled border dispute has been procrastinated by Beijing should it resolve on Chinese terms. Today China wants to become a major maritime power in Asia and there has always been some sort of major power vacuum in the Indian Ocean region. At the deeper level China's policy is to contain India from emerging as a dominant power in the IOR until China is able to project its naval power in the Indian Ocean. In both the cases China is seeking to apply friendly and ‘consensus’ approach to India so that its forays into the Indian Ocean will not be obstructed. Similarly, India must not assert its position to seek supremacy in the Indian Ocean waters although India is the predominant littoral naval power in the IOR. In a way, China could achieve establishing its hegemony in Asia without antagonising its immediate regional rival India.

REFERENCES

1. Shambaugh D. China Engages Asia: Reshaping the Regional Order. *International Security*. 2005;29(3):64–99. Available from: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4137556>.
2. Jisi W. China's Search for a Grand Strategy: A Rising Great Power Finds Its Way. *Foreign Affairs*. 2011;90(2):68–79. Available from: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25800458>.
3. Mearsheimer JJ. China's Unpeaceful Rise. *Current History*. 2006;105(690):160–162. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1525/curh.2006.105.690.160>.
4. chung Chang-Liao N. China's New Foreign Policy under Xi Jinping. *Asian Security*. 2016;12(2):82–91. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14799855.2016.1183195>.
5. Godbole A. China's Asia Strategy under President Xi Jinping. *Strategic Analysis*. 2015;39(3):298–302. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09700161.2015.1022321>.
6. Schweller RL, Pu X. After Unipolarity: China's Visions of International Order in an Era of U.S. Decline. *International Security*. 2011;36(1):41–72. Available from: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41289688>.
7. Hobden S, Jones RW. Marxist theories of international relations. In: Baylis J, Smith S, Owens P, editors. *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations*. London, UK: Oxford University Press. 2008;p. 144–158.



8. Cox RW. Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory. *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*. 1981;10(2):126–155. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/03058298810100020501>.
9. Germain RD, Kenny M. Engaging Gramsci: International Relations Theory and the New Gramscians. *Review of International Studies*. 1998;24(1):3–21. Available from: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20097503>.
10. Konrad A. Theorizing Realist and Gramscian Hegemony. 2012. Available from: <https://www.e-ir.info/pdf/26267>.
11. Cox RW. Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations: An Essay in Method. *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*. 1983;12(2):162–175. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/03058298830120020701>.
12. Joseph S Nye J. Limits of American Power. *Political Science Quarterly*. 2002-2003;117(4):545–559. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.2307/798134>.
13. Medeiros ES, Fravel MT. China's New Diplomacy. *Foreign Affairs*. 2003;82(6):22–35. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.2307/20033754>.
14. Thayer CA. China's 'New Security Concept' and Southeast Asia. In: Lovell DW, editor. *Asia-Pacific Security*. ANU Press. 2013;p. 89–107. Available from: <https://press.anu.edu.au/publications/asia-pacific-security>.
15. Ratner M, Nelson GM, Lawrence SV. China's Natural Gas: Uncertainty for Markets. 2016. Available from: <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/row/R44483.pdf>.
16. Sheives K. China Turns West: Beijing's Contemporary Strategy towards Central Asia. *Pacific Affairs*. 2006;79(2):205–224. Available from: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40022689>.
17. Rickleton C. China's energy footprint in Central Asia. 2014. Available from: <https://chinadialogue.net/en/energy/7165-china-s-energy-footprint-in-central-asia/>.
18. The United States in Central Asia: Going, going.... 2013. Available from: <https://www.economist.com/asia/2013/12/05/going-going>.
19. De Santis H. The Dragon and the Tigers: China and Asian Regionalism. *World Policy Journal*. 2005;22(2):23–36. Available from: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40209960>.
20. Mo FFZ. China to deepen ties with ASEAN by upgrading free trade agreement. 2015. Available from: https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/bizchina/2015-09/19/content_21923409.htm.
21. Yoshihara T, Holmes JR. China's Energy-Driven 'Soft Power'. *Orbis*. 2008;52(1):123–137. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.orbis.2007.10.007>.
22. Paul JM. Territorial Dispute in the East China Sea and its Effects on China-Japan Relations. *Maritime Affairs*. 2008;4(1):1–28.
23. Singh A. A 'PLA-N' for Chinese maritime bases in the Indian Ocean. *PacNet*. 2015;7:1–2. Available from: <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/188138/Pac1507.pdf>.
24. Menon VB. India-China Relations: Critical issues. In: Harshe R, editor. *Engaging the world*. New Delhi, India. Orient Blackswan. 2004;p. 157–167.
25. Agreement between the Government of the Republic of India and the Government of the People's Republic of China on the Political Parameters and Guiding Principles for the Settlement of the India-China Boundary Question. 2005. Available from: <http://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/6534/Agreement+between+the+Government+of+the+Republic+of+India+and+the+Government+of+the+Peoples+Republic+of+China+on+the+Political+Parameters+and+Guiding+Principles+for+the+Settlement+of+the+IndiaChina+Boundary+Question>.
26. Panda JP. Future of India-China Boundary: Leadership Holds the Key? *Strategic Analysis*. 2015;39(3):287–292. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09700161.2015.1022319>.
27. Malik MJ. India and China Bound to Collide. In: Kumaraswamy PR, editor. *Security Beyond Survival: Essays for K. Subrahmanyam*. New Delhi, India. Sage. 2004;p. 127–166.
28. China to unveil \$46bn investment in Pakistan during visit by Xi Jinping. 2015. Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/20/china-to-unveil-46bn-investment-in-pakistan-during-visit-by-xi-jinping>.
29. Haegeland HE. Nepal's Pivot to China May Be Too Late. 2016. Available from: <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/nepals-pivot-china-may-be-too-late-16285>.
30. Ghimire Y. Next Door Nepal — China is welcome, India is not. 2016. Available from: <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/k-p-sharma-oli-nepal-india-relations-china-is-welcome-2768662/>.
31. Tiezzi S. China, Bangladesh Pledge Deeper Military Cooperation. 2015. Available from: <https://thediomat.com/2015/12/china-bangladesh-pledge-deeper-military-cooperation/>.
32. Goud S, Mookherjee M. *China in Indian Ocean Region*. New Delhi, India. Allied Publishers. 2015.
33. Roy-Chaudhury S. The China Factor : Beijing's Expanding Engagement in Sri Lanka, Maldives , Bangladesh , and Myanmar. K W Publishers Pvt Ltd. 2022.
34. Singh A. China's 'Maritime Bases' in the IOR: A Chronicle of Dominance Foretold. *Strategic Analysis*. 2015;39(3):293–297. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09700161.2015.1022320>.
35. Mushtaq M. Sri Lanka backs China's One Road, One Belt plan. 2016. Available from: <https://asiatimes.com/2016/04/sri-lanka-backs-chinas-one-road-one-belt-plan/>.
36. Weitz R. Priorities and Challenges in China's Naval Deployment in the Horn of Africa. *China Brief*. 2009;9(24). Available from: <https://jamestown.org/program/priorities-and-challenges-in-chinas-naval-deployment-in-the-horn-of-africa/#.V4zJR1L7%20AdU>.
37. Chansoria M. Sri Lanka's Economic Crisis Leads to Strategic Gains for Beijing. 2022. Available from: <https://japan-forward.com/sri-lankas-economic-crisis-leads-to-strategic-gains-for-beijing/>.
38. Devi A. China's Inevitable Role in Post-Crisis Sri Lanka: India's Geopolitical Concern. 2023. Available from: <https://thegeopolitics.com/chinas-inevitable-role-in-post-crisis-sri-lanka-indias-geopolitical-concern/>.
39. Kondapalli S. Maritime Silk Road: Increasing Chinese Inroads into the Maldives. 2014. Available from: http://www.ipcs.org/comm_select.php?articleNo=4735.
40. Parashar S. China may build port in southern Maldives. 2016. Available from: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/china-may-build-port-in-southern-maldives/articleshow/51771171.cms>.
41. Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of India and the Ministry of National Defence of the People's Republic of China for Exchanges and Cooperation in the field of Defence. 2006. Available from: https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/6169/Memorandum_of_Understanding_between_the_Ministry_of_Defence_of_the_Republic_of_India_and_the_Ministry_of_National_Defence_of_the_Peoples_Republic_of_C.
42. China, India to hold joint anti-terror military exercise. 2008. Available from: <https://www.indiatoday.in/latest-headlines/story/china-india-to-hold-joint-anti-terror-military-exercise-34574-2008-12-04>.
43. Das RN. India-China Relations 2014: Engagement amidst Security Dilemma. *World Focus*. 2014;(419). Available from: https://www.worldfocus.in/current_issue?key=402&val=India%E2%80%99s-Foreign-Policy--Annual-Issue-%28Series-2%29.
44. Singh A. China's Maritime Silk Route: Implications for India. 2014. Available from: http://www.idsai.in/idsacomments/ChinasMaritimeSilkRoute_AbhijitSingh_160714.
45. China Wants Maritime Cooperation With India in Indian Ocean. 2015. Available from: <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/china-wants-maritime-cooperation-with-india-in-indian-ocean-780298>.
46. Rajan DS. The Unfolding China's Indian Ocean Strategy. 2014. Available from: <http://www.southasiananalysis.org/node/1455>.
47. Krishnan A. China wants to partner India in piracy fight. 2012. Available from: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/china-wants-to-partner-india-in-piracy-fight/article2925049.ece>.
48. Joint Statement between the Republic of India and the People's Republic of China on Building a Closer Developmental Partnership. 2014. Available from: <http://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/24022>.
49. India moves to set up industrial parks with China. 2014. Available from: <http://in.reuters.com/article/india-china-investment-idINKBN0F028R20140625>.



50. Chang GG. TPP vs. RCEP: America and China Battle for Control of Pacific Trade. 2015. Available from: <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/tpv-vs-rcep-america-china-battle-control-pacific-trade-14021>.
51. Gupta AK, Wang H. China and India: Greater Economic Integration. 2009. Available from: <https://www.chinabusinessreview.com/china-and-india-greater-economic-integration/>.
52. and LEA. The BRICs Countries (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) as Analytical Category: Mirage or Insight? *Asian Perspective*. 2007;31(4):7–42. Available from: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42704607>.
53. Hempson-Jones JS. The Evolution of China's Engagement with International Governmental Organizations: Toward a Liberal Foreign Policy? . *Asian Survey*. 2005;45(5):702–721. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1525/as.2005.45.5.702>.
54. Glosny MA. China and the BRICs: A Real (but Limited) Partnership in a Unipolar World. *Polity*. 2010;42(1):100–129. Available from: <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/epdf/10.1057/pol.2009.14>.
55. Polachek SW. Conflict and Trade. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*. 1980;24(1):55–78. Available from: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/173934>.
56. Rusko CJ, Sasikumar K. India and China: From Trade to Peace? *Asian Perspective*. 2007;31(4):99–123. Available from: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42704610>.
57. India elected to Board of Directors of China-backed AIIB. 2016. Available from: <https://www.thehindu.com/business/Industry/India-elected-to-Board-of-Directors-of-China-backed-AIIB/article14003289.ece>.
58. China-led AIIB eyes first loans to India. 2016. Available from: <http://in.reuters.com/article/asia-aiib-india-idINKCN0WX0T3>.
59. Panda A. China Invites India To The 'Maritime Silk Road'. 2014. Available from: <https://thediplomat.com/2014/02/china-invites-india-to-the-maritime-silk-road/>.
60. Singh ZD. Indian Perceptions of China's Maritime Silk Road Idea. *Journal of Defence Studies*. 2014;8(4):133–148. Available from: https://www.idsa.in/system/files/jds/jds_8_4_2014_zorawardaulsetsingh.pdf.
61. China Invites India to Join its Maritime Silk Road Initiative.. 2014. Available from: <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/infrastructure/china-invites-india-to-join-its-maritime-silk-road-initiative/articleshow/30400642.cms?from=mdr>.
62. Varma KJM. Back China invites India to join its ambitious Silk Road projects. 2014. Available from: <https://www.livemint.com/Politics/RdNju00h5TUhAkeRzCW52H/China-invites-India-to-join-its-ambitious-Silk-Road-projects.html>.
63. Randol S. How to Approach the Elephant: Chinese Perceptions of India in the Twenty-first Century. *Asian Affairs: An American Review*. 2008;34(4):211–226. Available from: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/30172674>.
64. Yung CD, Rustici R, Devary S, Lin J. Not an Idea We Have to Shun": Chinese Overseas Basing Requirements in the 21st Century. In: Saunders PC, editor. *China Strategic Perspectives*. No. 7; Washington, D.C., USA. National Defense University Press. 2014;p. 1–72. Available from: <https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/stratperspective/china/ChinaPerspectives-7.pdf>.
65. Rafi MA. The Geopolitics of the China-India Conflict. After the border clash. 2020. Available from: <https://www.ispionline.it/en/publication/geopolitics-china-india-conflict-26957>.
66. Lal R. *Understanding China and India : Security Implications for the United States and the World*. Greenwood. 2006.
67. Pfluke C. Biohazard: A Look at China's Biological Capabilities and the Recent Coronavirus Outbreak. 2020. Available from: <https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/Wild-Blue-Yonder/Article-Display/Article/2094603/biohazard-a-look-at-chinas-biological-capabilities-and-the-recent-coronavirus-o/>.
68. Nava V. House GOP report claims COVID may be linked to Chinese bioweapons program. 2022. Available from: <https://nypost.com/2022/12/14/gop-report-claims-covid-may-be-linked-to-chinese-bioweapons-program/>.
69. Manoharan N. The origin theories around Covid. 2023. Available from: <https://www.deccanherald.com/opinion/in-perspective/the-origin-theories-around-covid-1197527.html>.
70. Faberov S. China slams COVID lab-leak theory, accuses FBI of 'politicizing' issue. 2023. Available from: <https://nypost.com/2023/03/01/china-hits-out-at-fbis-covid-lab-leak-theory/>.





Original Article

The Limits of India's Soft Power in South Asia

S Y Surendra Kumar^{1,*}¹Professor, Department of Political Science, Bangalore University, Bengaluru, Karnataka, India

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 02-02-2023

Revised 26-02-2023

Accepted 22-03-2023

Published 27-03-2023

* Corresponding author.

S Y Surendra Kumar

surendradps@bub.ernet.in

[https://doi.org/](https://doi.org/10.53989/jcp.v2i1_1_surendra)

10.53989/jcp.v2i1_1_surendra



ABSTRACT

Since its independence, India could count itself among the few nations with strong cards in the arena of soft power like its culture, civilisation, democratic credentials, secular values, pluralistic society, professional expertise, free media, independent judiciary, dynamic civil society and so on. Ironically, India did not use this soft power strategy rigorously to achieve its national interest. In the 1990s, India has been pro-active in pursuing its soft power strategy than ever before to achieve its strategic interest. India, to a certain extent, has been successful in strengthening its ties with Southeast Asia, Africa, US and European countries through its soft power tools like promotion of culture, support towards democracy and involvement with the diaspora, increasing aid and investment and so on. However, India's soft power strategy in South Asia had mixed results. In this context, the article attempts to identify the need for India to engage in more such tactics rather than hard power in South Asia. India's plans to use soft power in South Asia and its limitations in achieving her foreign policy objectives in the region will be critically analysed too.

Keywords: Soft Power; India; South Asia; Diaspora; Democracy; Tourism

SOFT POWER IN TRANSITION

The key writings on international relations have been dominated or are centred around 'power politics,' making the discourses hard power-centric.¹ As a result, realist and neo-realist theorists have always emphasised on the need to augment military strength to expand national authority. Proponents of neo-liberalism and constructivism, however, suggest an alternative vision of power derived from a more "intangible and enlightened source and positive image in world affairs, that makes a nation attractive to other nations". Peter Katzenstein argues that both neo-realists and neo-liberals emphasised more on physical capabilities, institution and State, ignoring influential factors such as collective identities and cultures of society.² Following a similar line of argument, the liberal institutional scholars underlined soft power as an essential source of statecraft.³ Since then,

the term soft power has been gaining popularity amongst policymakers and academicians across the globe.

Against the backdrop of scholars like E.H. Carr (1939) who stressed on 'power over opinion,' Gramsci (1988) on 'cultural hegemony,' Bourdieu (1989) on 'symbolic power' and Foucault (2000) on 'disciplinary power' thereby highlighting on the need for both material and non-material power resources,⁴ Joseph S Nye, an American scholar, formulated the concept of soft power "when one country gets other countries to do what it wants" (1990).⁵ He explained that the over-emphasis on military force as the key factor in determining power relations diverts one from looking into other factors like technology, education, economic growth. In 2006, he further elaborated that "power is the ability to alter the behaviour of others to get what you want, and there are three ways to do that: coercion (sticks), payment (carrots) and attraction (soft power)".⁶



The definition of soft power and its features have expanded over the years. Joshua Kurlantzick provides a broader definition: "anything outside the military and security realm, including not only popular culture and public diplomacy, but also more coercive economic and diplomatic levers, like aid and investment and participation in multilateral organisation".⁷ For G. Lee soft power is "to construct the preferences and images of self and others through symbolic resources that lead to behavioural changes of others".⁸ Thus, Lee attempts to use resources to separate hard and soft power. Huang and Ding (2006) proposed economic prosperity rather than cultural diversity as the core of soft power. Hymans (2009) argues that consensual, cooperative and peaceful policies are the essence of the soft power.^{9,10}

Joseph S. Nye identified culture, values, and foreign policies as the core of soft power, however, other aspects such as economics, politics, development assistance, transnational investment, and peace keeping operations have been also vital soft power tools.⁶ Moreover, the Rapid Growth Markets Soft Power Index Report (2012) identified 13 variables of soft power, which is classified into three categories - global image (popularity globally), global integrity (respect for its own citizen and respect for other neighbour), and global integration (country's interconnectivity with the rest of the world).¹¹ Similarly, the Portland's The Global Ranking on Soft Power Index (2023), which was first launched in 2015 with the framework of soft power analysis included government, digital, culture, enterprise, engagement, education and so on. As per the 2023 report, US, UK and Germany tops the list of 100 countries with a score of 62.2, followed by Japan and China, and UAE entered the top 10, as first nations from Middle East. India made marginal progress to 29th Rank (earlier 28th).¹² Thus, soft power has emerged as a key concept in international relation studies.

In the process, soft power has emerged as a vital tool to achieve foreign policy goals. The reason for this is the fundamental differences between soft and hard power: (a) soft power is more human (b) the hard power can be measured and easier to be used¹³ (c) hard power uses coercion to get things done (d) soft power enables a change of behaviour in others without competition or conflict, using persuasion and attraction (e) soft power takes long time to materialise, but useful as effective instruments to attain the goals of the state (f) transnational issues such as climate change, poverty, hunger, plight of refugees and so on can be better addressed through soft rather than hard power.

With regard to the limitations in the effectiveness of soft power, scholars like Ogoura, Gallarotti and Bilgin reiterate about the "difficulties in measuring soft power, obscurity in the differentiation between hard and soft power".¹⁴ Moreover, historian Niall Ferguson emphasises that soft power is too soft, i.e., in the case of Islamic countries, though

kids enjoy US products and culture, the latter do not enhance their love towards the US.¹⁵ Thus, no country can fully rely on the success of soft power alone.

INDIA'S SOFT POWER

As one of the oldest civilisation, a land of spirituality, spices, gold, diamond, languages, and a country where religions like Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism have originated, India has been a soft power since ages. Dalai Lama attests these traits by observing, "India's long tradition of religious tolerance can be a role model for rest of the world".¹⁶ Post-independence India consolidated its position as a soft power further in the global arena by its leadership over the third world; anti-colonial history; non-alignment policy; commitment to nuclear disarmament; and being a pluralistic, non-violent and peaceful democracy.

Ironically, in recent times, the upholding of Hindu culture at the cost of religious minorities, including instances of lynching (particularly Muslims/Dalits), increasing number of caste and gender-based violence, restriction of foreign funds for selected NGOs (primarily Christians), implementation of Citizenship Amendment Act 2019 and National Register of Citizens (NRC), which are not necessarily inclusive policies and undermine human rights, have been detrimental to India's image at the international arena.

Nevertheless, India's democratic institutions, vibrant civil society, multi-ethnic society and polity, secularism, pluralism, large English-speaking population and IT professional, rich handicrafts, Yoga, Ayurveda, and so on, illustrates the utility of India's tools of soft power worldwide. Australian Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, observed, "India's non-threatening posture to the international community is a key factor in Australia's decision to sell uranium for India's nuclear power reactors".¹⁷ In addition, we need to remember India's role in the maintenance of peace and harmony in the world through the contributions of icons like Mahatma Gandhi towards non-violence and non-cooperation movement; B.R. Ambedkar for empowering the marginalised communities; Jawaharlal Nehru for Non-Alignment and pan Asian solidarity; Rabindranath Tagore for his thoughts on nationalism; Mother Teresa for being the messiah of the underprivileged and so on.

India's folk culture, classical and modern music and dance, Bollywood, television shows are gaining popularity in the West and the East in general and amongst the Indian diaspora, in particular. The Indian television serials (Hindi and regional language) have larger audience in South Asia and Southeast Asia. Bollywood movies, along with movies of other languages like Tamil and Telugu, have moved beyond South Asia in terms of its reach. Moreover, Bollywood produces the highest number of films [than Hollywood] and has worldwide releases in the US, UK, South Asia, Southeast Asia, Central Asia and Middle East. At the same time, India is emerging as one of the popular film shooting



destination for Hollywood films like *Slumdog Millionaire*, *Million Dollar Arm*, *The Hundred Foot Journey*, *Life of Pi*, *Mission Impossible-IV* and so on.¹⁸ Hence, to a certain extent, Indian movies have boosted Indian tourism, created jobs and provided revenues for the economy.

Indian cuisines like the Italian, Japanese and Chinese have made their mark globally, particularly in the UK, the US, Thailand, South Korea, Germany, France and Japan.¹⁹ The most popular Indian cuisine are chicken tikka masala, biryani, kababs, chaat, samosa and other South Indian dishes. In the UK, in 2001, chicken tikka masala was recognised as the British national food. There are more than 10,000 Indian curry houses, involving more than 70,000 staff; the Indian food industry is worth billions of pounds in the UK.¹⁶ However, it is a known fact that most of the Indian restaurants are run/owned by the Bangladeshi diaspora (mostly belonging to Sylhet). Similar is the case in the US, as majority of the Indian restaurants in New York are owned by Bangladeshis. Nevertheless, from time to time, successive governments have organised international events to showcase and promote Indian music, food and movies; the 'Festivals of India Abroad', as arranged by the Ministry of Culture, Government of India, deploys India's soft power strategy to strengthen bilateral and multilateral ties.

TRANSFORMATION OF SOFT POWER POLICY

Since independence, successive governments of India despite efforts to incorporate soft power effectively in its foreign policy, have failed to maximise soft power potentials to strengthen bilateral ties with immediate and extended neighbours, and enhance India's image globally. Publications on the relevance, importance and utility of soft power in foreign policy, remains insignificant as well. In this regard, Harish Pant, argues that although previous (prior to Modi's regime) Indian governments "understood and recognised the value of soft power to further India's foreign policy goals, ... attempts have been largely ad hoc".²⁰ On a similar note, Shashi Tharoor aptly stated that the "goodwill for India abroad has largely been generated in an unplanned manner. It does not have the capacity to accentuate soft power through public diplomacy, by which a government seeks to influence public attitude in a manner that they become supportive of its foreign policy and national interest".²¹

Nevertheless, the rigorous push for soft power in its foreign policy began since the 1990s due to the economic crisis of 1991; collapse of the Soviet Union, which was India's reliable partner since its independence; and the end of a bipolar world, leading to a unipolar world, dominated by the US. Moreover, as Ian Hall argues, since the beginning of early 2000s, Indian public diplomacy also saw changes like reaching out to the diaspora, wooing and building foreign business interest, increasing foreign aid and development programmes, showcasing brand India, and utility of new social media to reach out to the younger generations.²² Since

then, consecutive governments have been deploying and capitalising on soft power tools.

Apart from this, successive governments also have brought about structural changes and ensured soft power as a critical component of India's foreign policy. For instance, in 2006, under the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), the Public Diplomacy Division was established with four officials, along with a joint secretary and around 40 supporting staff, with a budget of US\$5 million.²³ Since then, the MEA has more than 3.75 million followers on Twitter (Jan 2021), 2.15 million on Face book (Jan 2022) and about more than a million viewers on YouTube.²⁴ The MEA is also making use of social media platforms by uploading lectures, videos and pictures in YouTube, Instagram, linkedin, Facebook page and other channels. Although these efforts have boosted India's image, in what way it has benefitted its foreign policy objectives remains to be seen. However, in February 2020, the MEA unveiled its plans to reforms further and one of the key components was to rebrand the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) as a soft power vehicle of the government.²⁵

In recent times, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been successful in effectively using the social media; he has more than 50 million followers on Twitter and prior to his visit to Beijing, China (May 2015), he used public diplomacy in a way, projecting soft power, to connect with Chinese citizens through Sina Weibo. Modi has always addressed the Indian diaspora during his foreign visit, hosting foreign leaders in different locations in India like Xi Jinping and Donald Trump in Gujarat, Shinzo Abe in Varanasi. Moreover, Modi government's flagship programmes like Make in India, Digital India, First Development India (FDI), make use of the Indian culture.²⁶ In addition, he has been successful in initiating the International Yoga day (21 June) as declared by the UN. The new policy initiatives like Act East Policy, Neighbourhood First policy, connecting Central Asia and Africa have been imbedded with soft power strategy.

As India has been able to use its soft power strategy to achieve its foreign policy goals reasonably well, it is important to understand her soft power policy towards South Asia and the extent to which the bilateral ties have strengthened and her image in the region has boosted.

INDIA'S SOFT POWER IN SOUTH ASIA

Though there has been strong historical and cultural links between India and South Asia, since the 1990s the successive governments in India emphasised on incorporating the region in India's foreign policy calculations and extend soft power to achieve the foreign policy goals. The reasons using soft power actively can be identified as: India's growth and prosperity is considered to be connected with the development of the region {South Asian}. A significant policy initiative towards the neighbours was proposed by the then Prime Minister I.K. Gujral, whose 'Gujral Doctrine'



(1997) emphasised the need for India to engage with South Asian countries on a 'non-reciprocity' principle. Former Prime Minister A. B. Vajpayee reached out to Pakistan and even attempted to resolve the longstanding bilateral disputes. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh went one step forward and stated, "We can choose our friends but not our neighbours,"²⁷ and his 'Neighbourhood policy' gave South Asia the much-needed priority in India's foreign policy.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is no different in this regard, as he rightly pointed out: "a nation's destiny is linked to its neighbourhood,"²⁸ and came up with Neighbourhood First policy; Modi made a unique gesture by inviting all the heads of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) governments for his swearing-in ceremony on 26 May 2014. Moreover, Modi also undertook bilateral visits to Nepal (after 17 years), Sri Lanka (after a decade), and subsequently a short visit to Pakistan followed by full-fledged visits to Afghanistan, Bangladesh and the Maldives. The Modi government has also inspired other countries to advance friendship and cooperation with their neighbours. At the same time, India demonstrated that while extending soft power, she has refrained from using hard power in dealing with neighbours (except Pakistan and China), which has helped to strengthen the ties with her neighbours.

Second, despite giving due importance, India has not been successful in sustaining its ties with most of the countries in the region. For instance, except India's ties with Bhutan and Afghanistan, its relations with Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Maldives and Sri Lanka have remained unstable. Moreover, the bilateral ties are also affected due to the frequent political instability in our neighbours. In this regard, S. D. Muni summarises India's approach towards its neighbours as "lack of balanced political perspective; the power differentials; India's economic clout; extra regional powers and mindset, diplomatic styles and personalities".²⁹

Third, rather than pushing soft power, India relied more on hard power till the end of the twentieth century as evident from her military intervention in the internal affairs of Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, exertion of economic pressures on Nepal, Maldives and Bhutan and her decision to hold virtually no talks with Pakistan. Such policies have damaged India's image in the region considerably. Fourth, China's increasing influence—strategic, political, military, economic - in the region and also usage of its soft power had really compelled India to rethink its strategy and about the need to deploy more soft power to counter China's footprints.

Hence, the Indian government has been using certain soft power tools, as discussed subsequently, thereby trying to engage with her neighbouring countries positively.

Tourism

Tourism is one of the vital tools for promoting India's soft power, as it tends to connect people and several religious places. Portland's "The Soft Power 30": a global ranking of

soft power in its report (2018) uses tourism an indicator of soft power in addition to music and sporting power.³⁰ In this regard, India has lots of religious places and cultural monuments, including places of worship like mosques, temples, Gurdwara, which are known for its magnificent art and architecture. Subsequently, the beautiful wildlife sanctuary, deserts, waterfalls, jungles and so on, continues to attract millions of tourists from abroad. In 2002, the Union Ministry of Tourism introduced the 'Incredible India' campaign to promote India as a tourist destination.

The tourism sector received a further boost with the creation of the exclusive Ministry of AYUSH in November 2014, to develop and propagate the AYUSH system of health care including Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Naturopathy, Siddha and Homeopathy. In March 2018, the 'Incredible India 2.0' campaign was launched, which aimed at a "shift from generic promotion undertaken across the world to market-specific promotion plans and content creations".³¹ Subsequent, government initiatives include tax refunds for foreign tourists and the launch of Dekho Apna Desh webinars as part of the Incredible India campaign in April 2020.

As a result of these measures and initiatives, India is successful in attracting a large number of tourists across the globe and the total international tourist arrival is 6.33 million (2020) with a good annual growth rate, but it slow down (-76.9%) due to Covid-19 pandemic. Post-Covid period, India received 6.19 million foreign tourists during 2022 (1.52 million in 2021).³² The tourist from SAARC countries is increasing and according to the Ministry of Tourism, it constitutes around 20-25 per cent of the total tourist arrivals to India (2020), of which tourist from Bangladesh constitute 20.01 per cent (first position) and Sri Lanka 2.50 per cent (tenth position). The key factor for attracting more South Asian tourist is geographical proximity, affordability, reduced visa barriers, mobility (bus and flight) and cultural affiliations. Majority of the tourists from the region visited for religious, medical and leisure purposes.

To attract more tourists from the South and Southeast Asia, the government has been pushing for the 'Buddhist Circuit' and Buddha Express (Indian railways' Mahaparinirvan express), to connect the Buddhist destinations in the states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh, with the intention to attract the Buddhist from neighbouring countries such as Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bhutan. The Ministry of Tourism has also produced two films 'The Land of Buddha' and 'Following the Path of Buddha'. In addition, the government has conducted events such as the Fifth International Buddhist Conclave (2016) at Varanasi, which was attended by 240 delegates from 39 countries and 'Buddhism in Twenty-first Century' (2017) at Rajgir. India also organised Two-day Global Buddhist Summit in April 2023.



At the same time, according to the FICCI Report 2019, medical tourism is expected to touch US \$9 billion by 2020 and the major source of visitors for this form of tourism is from the Middle East, Southeast Asia and South Asian nations, the majority of whom come from Bangladesh.³³ In this regard, Modi government has made attempts to use tourism as a vital soft power tool to deepen the ties with South Asian countries. Although the tourism ministry is attempting to attract more Buddhist followers from the region, little efforts are made to promote the core values of Buddhism like equality, non-violence, discussion and dialogue and righteous conduct. At the same time, Buddhism diplomacy is targeted mainly towards Japan, Southeast Asia and the west but in the process Buddhists from Bhutan and Sri Lanka are also attracted.

Strengthening Democracy

India, being the largest democracy in world and also successful in sustaining the democratic norms, continues to be the model for many countries turning to democracy, particularly in Asia and Africa. This was well articulated by the former prime minister of India, Manmohan Singh, at the UN General Assembly (UNGA) in 2011 “a democratic, plural and secular India can contribute to tolerance and peaceful co-existence among nation”. Apparently, India do not have any doctrine on ‘democracy’, but continues to support any democratic movement in the region, particularly encouraging inclusive democracy.

Thus, from time to time, India has always extended support to South Asian countries like Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Maldives, Afghanistan and so on. It has also provided necessary support/assistance for the establishment of democracy like Panchayat Raj in Nepal and Bangladesh and pushed for inclusive democracy in Sri Lanka and Bhutan. India has also been pro-active in strengthening democracy in Afghanistan by constructing Afghan Parliament, providing the expertise in drafting its constitution, sending observers for the conduct of free and fair elections and so on. Several delegates from the SAARC countries have visited India to understand the constitution and functioning of Elections Commission of India.

India is also the founding member of United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF) in 2005 and has contributed around US\$ 32 million (as of 2022) and is the Fourth largest contributor to UNDEF and a recipient of the funds. India has contributed US\$150,000 for the year 2022.³⁴ Although India is an active member of UNDEF, it is not as pro-active as the US in exporting democracy around the world. The reason for this is explained by S. D. Muni: India's main intention has been to campaign and isolate both Pakistan and China by using democracy, rather than export democracy.³⁵ Ironically, according to the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) 2021, Democracy Index, India despite being the largest democracy is ranked 46, perhaps due to the ‘erosion

of civil liberties’, thereby making it ‘flawed democracy’ and is classified as flawed Democracy”, along with US, France, Belgium and Brazil.³⁶ Thus, India's democratic credential has taken a back seat in recent times. Nevertheless, India's commitment to democracy and its sustenance has been a vital soft power tool in the enhancement of its global image.

ICCR and ICWA

In the initial years of India's independence, the Nehru government was only concerned with tracking Indian citizens abroad. However, in 1950, the government established the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), to “establish, revive, and strengthen cultural relations and mutual understanding between India and other countries”.³⁷ Since then, it has set up more than 40 cultural centres, which are working under the respective Indian mission and has also established 93 chairs of Indian studies at various universities aboard with some deputed Indian academicians/scholars. Moreover, it also provides scholarships to foreign students, willing to study in India. As of August 2022, it offers more than 3900 scholarships under 21 scholarship schemes to students from 190 countries. Prior to independence, the government had established Indian Council for World Affairs (ICWA) in 1943, aimed to “promote India's relations with other countries through study, research, discussion, lectures exchange of ideas and information with other organisation within and outside India”. Since then, the ICWA has emerged as one of the leading think-tanks in promoting research and organising seminar/conferences both within India and aboard. Thus, both ICCR and ICWA are contributing significantly to India's soft power strategy.

Although, both ICCR and ICWA was not necessarily targeted towards South Asia, over the decades, the region has significantly benefited. For instance, the ICCR has sponsored Indian chairs in Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bangladesh. It also has cultural centres in Colombo (1998), Kabul and Kathmandu (2007), Dhaka and Thimpu (2010) and Male in 2011. Thus, India has culture centres in all the SAARC countries, except Pakistan. The centres have facilities like library and information; offers courses and conducts classes on yoga, Indian dance and music. It is also responsible for conducting/organising cultural events, film and food festival, seminar and workshops. In addition, ICCR has been providing scholarships for SAARC students to pursue their studies in India. Scholarships are not provided to Pakistani students due to the prolonged unstable Indo-Pak ties. The ICCR awards annually thousands of scholarships, of which the majority goes to SAARC countries, particularly to Afghanistan in recent times.

Aid and Assistance

Although since independence, India was the aid receiver, in the past few decades, it has also emerged as key provider



of foreign aid and assistance to South Asian and African countries and beyond. It allocated approximately US\$ 1.14 billion in the 2019-2020 budget, with an increase of 26 per cent (US\$ 0.95 billion) compared to the 2018-2019 budget.³⁸ The major aid goes to Bhutan and Indian littoral states like Mauritius, Maldives and Seychelles, and few African states. However, the 2022-2023 union budget has allocated 2 billion cr to Afghanistan, which is being under the control of Taliban regime (August 2021)

Generally, India gives aid/grant and concessional Line of Credit (LoC) to South Asian and African nations with the aim to ensure mutual interests and benefits. Most of Indian foreign aid goes to SAARC countries, followed by the African nations. Apparently, the largest aid recipient in the last decade in South Asia includes Bhutan (approx US\$ 4.61 billion), Afghanistan (approx US\$ 0.69 billion), Nepal (approx US\$ 0.59 billion), Sri Lanka (approx US\$ 0.33 billion) and the Maldives (approx US\$ 0.26 billion). In February 2022, Sri Lankan government signed an agreement, which under negotiation since August 2021, was finalised with India for US\$ 500 million credit line to overcome its present financial and energy crisis.³⁹ India is key regional donor to Afghanistan and had contributed around US\$ 3 billion towards the Afghan Parliament, Salma dam, highway to Iran's Chabbahar port and so on. India's developmental assistance to six neighbouring countries - Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka in South Asia over the last four fiscal years amounted to be US\$ 3014 million. Most of the projects undertaken under economic assistance are focussed in South Asia; since 2014, 167 assistance projects worth 14,393 million rupees were undertaken and 60 per cent have been completed.⁴⁰

Some of the significant development projects undertaken by India in the region, includes the Raxaul-Kathmandu rail link and the 900MW hydropower project in Tumlingtar. When Nepal was hit by earth quake in 2015, India extended 1.6 billion aid for rebuilding earthquake-hit houses and other buildings.⁴¹ Moreover, the transnational petroleum pipeline of 69km from Bihar to Nepal was launched in September 2019 to enhance the energy security of the region and cut down transit cost. At the Fifth Nepal-India Joint Commission (set up in 1997, the Indian government offered US\$ 2 billion to Nepal (August 2019) for various infrastructure projects.⁴² In January 2020, the Prime Ministers of both countries launched the second integrated check post at Jogbani-Biratnagar, which were to be built with Indian assistance to improve trade and people-to-people contacts. The notable projects of India Maldives include Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital; faculty of engineering and technology, Institute for Security and Law Enforcement Studies; India-Maldives friendship of Hospitality and Tourism Studies; in December 2019, the Modi government extended US\$1.4 billion assistance to the Maldives.

The development projects in Sri Lanka include the restoration of Jaffna library; construction of Omanthai-Jaffna railway line (US\$ 800), Kanaksenthurai port and harbour Pallai Airport and 50,000 houses for war-displaced people. In May 2019, the Sri Lankan government signed a deal with India and Japan to develop deep Sea Container Terminal or East Container Terminal in Colombo port.⁴³ During the official visit (November 2019) by President Gotabaya Rajapakse to New Delhi, India announced US\$400 million Line of Credit for infrastructure and around US\$50 million to fight terrorism in Sri Lanka. With Bangladesh, in October 2017, India extended US\$ 4.5 billion of Line of Credit for its infrastructure and social sector development and again gave US\$500 million Line of Credit in April 2019.⁴⁴

In October 2019, both the governments inaugurated three new projects (in New Delhi)— import LPG from Bangladesh, Vivekananda Bhavan at Ram Krishna Mission in Dhaka and Bangladesh-India professional institute at the Institute of Engineers in Khulna in Bangladesh. India's aid and assistance programme to Afghanistan has been a significant show of soft power with the focus on humanitarian assistance, infrastructure, community, education and capacity development projects. Some of the infrastructure projects include Zaranj-Delaram highway, Pul-e-Khumri transmission line and the restoration of telecommunication facilities in most of the provinces.⁴⁵

Humanitarian Diplomacy — The first responder

Given that the South Asian region is vulnerable to natural calamities, India's humanitarian assistance is largely directed towards the South Asia. Moreover, India continues to be the first responder to all the humanitarian disasters (natural/man-made) that have happened in the region like 2004 Tsunami in Sri Lanka and Maldives, earthquake in Pakistan (2003) and Nepal (2015), floods and cyclone in Bangladesh (2007) and Sri Lanka (2003 & 2016), civil war in Sri Lanka and Nepal, refugee crisis in Bangladesh (2017) and Sri Lanka (2009), water crisis in Maldives (2014), drought in Afghanistan (2018) and so on.⁴⁶ The key reasons for India being the first responder in the region are its geographical proximity, unconditional commitment towards humanitarian assistance and aid, and adequate infrastructure and expertise in carrying out the operations, mainly bilateral. In addition, India intends to deepen the bilateral ties and strengthen its claim as a regional and global power. Overall, to a certain extent, India has been able to deploy critical soft power tools to reach out to the neighbours and enhance its influence in the region.

India's neighbours continue to regard her as a 'big/elder brother' and look forward to the 'India first policy'. However, India's relations with her neighbours have witnessed ups and downs, and irritants have intensified in the recent times. In addition, according to Pew Global Attitudes Survey



2012, both Pakistan and China's perceptions of India were declining since 2006–2012. Though Afghanistan and Bhutan thought positively about India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka complained of trust deficit and Pakistan and Nepal was critical of India's hegemonic disposition, acting like a big brother.⁴⁷ Although the survey was conducted in 2012, such perceptions among our neighbours do not seem to have changed even now. In this context, the question arises why India's soft power towards South Asia is not successful in achieving its foreign policy objectives.

LIMITATIONS

India's soft power strategy in South Asia is not free from limitations, which have curtailed the former in achieving its foreign policy goals vis-à-vis its neighbours.

ICCR and ICWA: Ignoring the region?

Although, successive governments have made efforts to use ICCR as a soft power tool to project its image, but with regard to South Asia, it is still lacking. For instance, the ICCR has 69 chairs of Indian studies at various universities abroad, but in the South Asia region, it has only three chairs in Dhaka University (Bangladesh) and one at University of Kelaniya, Colombo (Sri Lanka).⁴⁸ Under the distinguished visitors' programme, since February 2015–September 2019, only six were awarded to this region—Nepal (1) Maldives (1) and Bangladesh (4). Even in the case of academic visitors' programme there had been only 13 visitors since 2017 of which none were from South Asia.⁴⁹ Moreover, foreign students coming through ICCR scholarship are mainly from Nepal, Bhutan and Afghanistan, and very few are awarded to the remaining SAARC countries.⁵⁰ Thus, the ICCR key policies and programmes are often targeted towards the US and EU. Nevertheless, the ICCR needs to give priority to the South Asian region, since it important for a country like India to project its image and strengthen people-to-people contact with its neighbours.

From time to time, the ICWA has conducted several seminars/conferences/workshops on the theme concerning South Asia, and also has invited speakers from SAARC countries to participate at academic events in India, but has not organised much joint programmes/events with SAARC countries to promote academic and research works/networks. Although most ICCR programmes are generally targeted towards the West and few to the South Asian region, nevertheless, it is vital for ICCR to also give priority to the South Asian region, if it intends to emerge as a major power. Thus, both ICCR and ICWA need to give priority to the region to achieve India's foreign policy goals.

Lack of infrastructure

India is attracting more and more foreign tourists in the recent times, but it needs to be more proactive in terms

of marketing and promotions, establishing connectivity and upgrading tourist spots to boost India's tourism sector and India's global image further. Apparently, India is planning to set up a regional tourist office in China on a similar line and the same can be done in all SAARC countries.⁵¹ Buddhist temples, shrines and landmarks need to be equipped with adequate infrastructure, washrooms, petrol pumps, eateries, safety measures (bomb blast in 2013 and 2018) and tourist-friendly sign boards like the use of Sinhala language sign at Buddhist tourist places, to make these places more tourist-friendly. At the same time, the Buddhist circuit can also be expanded to north-east India, particularly Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim, which has a tourist share of less than 0.03 and 0.18 per cent respectively.⁵² In addition, India has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with ASEAN, and one the objectives have been to augment tourism; similar MOUs can be worked out with the SAARC nations. Thus, lot more needs to be done to ensure tourism remains a vital tool to boost India's soft power in the region.

The Neglected Diaspora

India's diaspora is the largest in the world, with two-thirds of them living in Europe or Asia. Over the decades, the diaspora population has been increasing. As per the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA), in 2012, there were more than 21 million Indians living in 205 countries around the world (Mohan and Chauhan 2015: 4), but by December 2018, the Indian diaspora has spread to 208 countries and the strength is around 32,100,340, with 13,459,195 Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) and 18,683,645 People of Indian Origin (PIOs) (MEA 2020). The government has also merged two cards issued to the PIO and Overseas Citizen of India in 2002 and 2005, offering dual citizenship and, in recent times, have issued them Aadhar cards as well. In addition, unlike the earlier governments, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is being pro-active in engaging with the diaspora. Thus, the diaspora has emerged as one of the vital tools in shaping India's foreign policy.

The diaspora is vital not just from remittance and economic point of view, but to a certain extent they uphold the Indian culture and tradition, like they follow and adhere to their norms, values, culture and prefer their own cuisine, observe national festivals and watch Indian movies, in way boosting India's image abroad. In South Asia, the Indian diaspora are fewer in number, but can be a vital soft power tool.

The diaspora population in the region is more than 8 lakhs, but the successive government have not given due importance, as it gives to its diaspora in the West. The reasons could be that the diaspora are not politically influential in the host countries and most of them being unskilled and semi-skilled labourers, are also socially and economically weaker, which gives them less scope in contributing to India's national interest. As a result, Prime Minister Modi,



Table 1: Indian Diaspora in South Asia (as of December 2020)

Country	NRI	PIOs	Overseas Indians
Afghanistan	3,087	19	3106
Bangladesh	10,385	9	10,391
Bhutan	60,000	0	60,000
Maldives	25,000	108	25,108
Nepal	600,000	0	600,000
Sri Lanka	14,000	1,600,000	1,614,000
Pakistan	—	—	—
		Total	8,59,605

Source: MEA 2021

who has always addressed the Indian diaspora during his foreign visits, has not done even one rally in the region.

At the same time, neither are the successive Indian government gestures encouraging for the diaspora. For instance, the major share of the recipients of the Pravasi Bhartiya Samman Award (PBSA), which is the highest honour given to overseas Indians since 2003, until 2015 has gone to residents of the US, Europe, Southeast Asia, but the recipients from South Asia is just one (of 179) from Sri Lanka (2011); in 2019 of the 30 PBSA awards, only one recipient was from Bhutan and similar is scenario in 2021, with only one recipient from Maldives.⁵³ Hence, the government needs to make sincere efforts to hold rallies to address the diaspora in the region; identify eligible NRI/PIO from the region for awards; and organise Regional Pravasi Bhartiya Divas (PBD) to engage with the diaspora, so that India can strengthen her ties with host countries.

On a weak wicket

Although, India continues to inspire her neighbours as a democratic country, she lacks in other fronts. In the UN Human Development Index 2022 her rank is 132 and in the 2021 Democracy Index, as prepared by the Economic Intelligence Unit, her rank is 46 (was 39 in 2012), with a score of 6.90, due to the erosion of civil liberties in India.⁵⁴ Moreover, excessive use of hard power (police and arms) in the Naxal-affected areas, northeast region and J&K, violence against minorities and women and caste discriminations, have hurt India's image across the globe as well as in the region.

This is aptly pointed out by a well-known academician C. Rajamohan that the Modi government's efforts towards the projection of soft power has taken a hit due to "free run to groups that seek to anchor India's rich cultural inheritance on a narrow and religious basis and inflect India's democratic culture with the virus of majoritarianism".⁵⁵ In addition, revoking of Article 370 and implementation of Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019 by the Modi government have led to severe criticism not only from the US, EU, but also within the region. For instance, apart from Pakistan, Bangladesh's

prime minister called the CAA as "unnecessary", and former President of Afghanistan Hamid Karzia urged the Indian government to treat all minorities equally. Although the Modi government has argued that revoking of Article 370 and implementation of CAA are part of internal affairs, it contradicts itself by inviting foreign delegates to visit J&K and also attempting to convince the governments of the western countries on these two issues. Hence, in this scenario, it has become difficult for India to harp on her soft power tools like tolerance, human rights and freedom. Moreover, celebrating the UN International Yoga day has been welcomed across the globe, the issue of concern remains in "Promoting yoga at huge cost and repackaging political Hinduism in the form palatable to the world., and increasing commoditisation of yoga and deviations from original teachings".⁵⁶

Delay in completing Projects

Although, India has undertaken several development projects, there has been a prolonged delay in the execution of some of the vital ones, which has affected India's push for soft power in the region. For example, the Rampal Power plant (a.k.a. Maitri), a 50–50 joint venture with Bangladesh's state-owned Power Development Board and India's National Thermal Power Corporation was signed in 2010, and supposed to be completed by 2016, but as of now only 60 per cent of the project has been completed.⁵⁷ On the contrary, the China signed an MOU in 2014 on Payra Power Plant with Bangladesh and the construction began in 2017; it is operational from January 2020. Thus, to a certain extent there remains a wide gap between India and China's completion of projects in the neighbouring countries.

It has been more than a decade that India had promised assistance to build the Nepal Police Academy, but it has yet to take off; the Transnational Petroleum Pipeline was proposed in 1986 and concluded only during Prime Minister Modi's visit to Nepal in 2014 and finally launched in September 2019. In April 2019, Bhutan signed the tariff protocol with India for the output of Mangdechhu hydroelectric project, which is a 720MW run-of-river power plant; it was funded by India and was initiated in 2010, but concluded only in 2019.⁵⁸ The slow implementation of overseas projects was highlighted by India's Parliamentary Standing Committee on MEA, the ministry has been 'doing little' in projecting India's soft power. But the reasons cited by MEA was lack of funds, need to spend much on administration rather than on overseas projects and failure of other ministries like culture and tourism in projecting India's soft power.⁵⁹

At the same time, the delay is not just from the Indian side, but also from the host countries. For instance, in some of the highway and power projects, Nepal government is struggling to acquire land. In October 2018, Prime Minister Modi directed the Sri Lankan Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe to expedite the Indo-Sri Lanka projects



which were signed in 2017; the key projects included LNG terminal in Kerawalapitiya, near Colombo; Solar Power Plant in Sampur, Oil Tank Farm in Trincomalee and Container terminal in Colombo port.⁶⁰ Moreover, due to change of regimes, political instability and economic slowdown has also delayed projects. Hence, there remains a yawning gap between signing and implementation of projects, which curtails India's push for soft power.

Is India successful in exerting influence?

Apparently, the deploying of soft power is to exert influence, but in India's case it is mixed baggage of success. Despite India being successful in pushing soft power in the region, it is yet to exert influence in getting what it wants. For instance, in the case of Sri Lanka, the demand for devolution of powers in the northeast region remains a distant dream and Sri Lanka continues to tilt towards China at the cost of India. Both the countries are yet to successfully negotiate the Economic and Technology Agreement (ETCA), which goes beyond trade-in goods, to include services, investment and technical cooperation. Although the Memorandum of Cooperation (MOC) on joint development of East Container Terminal (ECT) project at the Colombo Port was signed by Sri Lanka, India and Japan in 2019, Mahinida Rajapakse's government is yet to take a final decision on implementing the project.

Bhutan is always regarded as a close ally of India, but it is reluctant to sign the Motor Vehicle Agreement (MVA) since 2015, under the Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal (BBIN), despite India's request. Now Bhutan, for the first time, has imposed Visa fees for Indian tourist, i.e., levying a daily ₹1,200 (US\$ 17) fee (Sustainable Development Fee) for regional tourists since July 2020. In spite of the goodwill for India in Afghanistan, the latter's strategic and security concerns remain unaddressed. In Nepal, the plight of the Madeshi community and the playing of the China card continue to be a concern for India. Subsequently, Nepal's new political map which included territories of Kalapani, Lipulekh and Limpiadhura (335 sq km), as claimed by India as well, on 2 November 2019, has been a major issue that remains unresolved in the bilateral ties. India and Pakistan's ties are presently at an all-time low; unilateral and tit-for-tat actions are now a common scenario; without high commissioners, diplomatic activities have shut down and the Indian government's decision to reduce the staff strength in the Pakistan High Commission in New Delhi by 50 per cent has hit new low owing to bilateral ties. Moreover, owing to 'no talks' since 2015, India has withdrawn MFN to Pakistan, though there has been ceasefire violations and Pakistan has been building up more troops across borders, escalating tensions on both sides of the border. The deepening of the ties between the Maldives and Bangladesh with China at the cost of India, indicates the limitations of India soft policy.

Thus, many of India's foreign policy goals are not achieved, despite the push for soft power in the region. In addition, Christian Wagner highlights the limitation of India's default and defensive soft power, which does not promote its political model abroad and uses it to attract foreign investors rather than exert influence elsewhere.⁶¹ On a similar note, David Malone, states "defensiveness of the government in the use of India's soft power".⁶²

In a nutshell, India's soft power strategy in the region is yet to contribute significantly in deepening her ties with her neighbours. At the same time, India's commitment and enthusiasm in deploying its soft power tools in the US, EU and Southeast Asian region, is not visible in the South Asian region. Joseph S. Nye emphasises on the need for "Smart power" and states that "it is a mistake to rely on hard power or soft power alone, the best situation is when the two are effectively combined as smart power". In this regard, India has to come up with a broader soft power policy, exclusively for the region with the focus on building infrastructure, attracting more tourists across the region, utilising the diaspora as strategic assets (including PIO), effective use of public diplomacy, adhering to the policy of non-interference and more importantly putting its own house in order on human right issues. Interestingly, at this juncture, there is greater need for deploying India's soft power tools in Pakistan to improve the bilateral ties, as it is a gateway towards growth and prosperity of region in general and the world in particular.

REFERENCES

1. Giulio M, Gallarotti. Smar Power: Definitions, Importance and Effectiveness. *Journal of Strategic Studies*. 2015;38(3):245–281. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2014.1002912>.
2. Haynes J. Religion and Foreign Policy Making in the USA, India and Iran: towards a research agenda. *Third World Quarterly*. 2008;29(1):143–165. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436590701739668>.
3. Wilson EJ. Hard Power, Soft Power, Smart Power. *The Annals of the American Academy of Poetical and Social Science*. 2008;616(1):110–124. Available from: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25097997>.
4. Lee G. A Soft Power Approach to the Korean Wave. *The Review of Korean Studies*. 2009;12(2):123.
5. and JSN. Soft power. *Foreign Policy, Autumn*. 1990;(80):165.
6. Nye JS. Get Smart: Combining Hard and Soft Power. *Joseph S Nye (2009), "Get Smart: Combining Hard and Soft Power, Foreign* . 2009;88(4):161.
7. Kurlantzick J. Charm Offensive: How China Soft Power is Transforming the World. Yale University Press. 2007.
8. Lee G. The Clash of Soft Powers Between China and Japan: Synergy and Dilemmas at the Six-Party Talks. *Asian Perspective*. 2010;34(2):113–139.
9. Huang Y, Ding S. Dragon's underbelly: An analysis of China's soft power. *East Asia*. 2006;23(4):22–44.
10. Hymans J. India's Soft Power and Vulnerability. *India Review*. 2009;8(3):234–265.
11. Kayani AS, Karim A, and RQ. Comparative Study of Soft Power in South Asia: India and Pakistan". *Journal of Contemporary Studies*. 2017;6(1):4–5. Available from: <https://jcs.ndu.edu.pk/site/article/view/79>.
12. For more details see Global Soft Power Index. 2023. Available from: <https://softpower.brandfinance.com/2023/globalsoftpowerindex>.



13. and SMLH. Diplomacy and Image-building; India rides on its Soft Power. *ORF Issue Brief*. 2016;(163):2. Available from: <https://www.orfonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/IB-163.pdf>.
14. Vasilevskytte S. Discussing soft power theory after Nye: The Case of Geun Lee's theoretical approach. .
15. "India's Soft Power push: Just following a Fad?. 2018. Available from: <https://www.livemint.com/Opinion/JU8gsI713CuUuvMgD8GUrM/Indias-soft-power-push-just-following-a-fad.html>.
16. Aurobinda MD. From a Latent to a Strong Soft Power? The Evolution of India's Cultural Diplomacy. *Palgrave Communications* . 2016;p. 4.
17. Tendon A. Transforming the Unbound Elephant to the Loveable Asian Hulk: Why is Modi Leveraging India's Soft Power? *The Round Table*. 2016;105:57–65. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00358533.2015.1126956>.
18. Film Industry in India to hit \$3.7 billion by 2020. 2017. Available from: <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/media/entertainment/media/film-industry-in-india-to-hit-3-7-billion-by-2020-says-report/articleshow/60998458.cms?from=mdr>.
19. Indian Food fourth most Popular in the World, A Study of Cuisine Trade finds. 2019. Available from: <https://theprint.in/world/indian-food-fourth-most-popular-in-the-world-a-study-of-cuisine-trade-finds/283119/>.
20. and HVP. India's Soft Power Strategy. 2015.
21. Tharoor S. Indian Strategic Power: Soft. 2011. Available from: https://www.huffpost.com/entry/indian-strategic-power-so_b_207785.
22. Hall I. Understanding of India's Soft Power dynamics. *Asian Review of Social Sciences*. 2012;52(6):1103.
23. Kugiel P. India's soft Power in South Asia. *International Studies*. 2012;49(3 & 4):360.
24. Ministry of External Affairs. Social Media Followers. 2022. Available from: <https://meadashboard.gov.in/indicators/89>.
25. Haidar S. Foreign Secretary unveils major MEA revamp. 2020.
26. Vrmani A. Recalibrating India's Foreign Policy. 2014.
27. Patnaik N. We can choose our friends...not our neighbours. 2006. Available from: www.economictimes.indiatimes.com/articleshow/1933715.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst.
28. Das A. India's Neighbourhood Policy: Challenge and Prospects. *Jindal Journal of International Affairs*. 2019;4(1):19.
29. Muni SD. Problem Areas in India's Neighbourhood Policy. *South Asian Survey*. 2003;10(2):187–188.
30. Bhonsale M. Religious Tourism as Soft Power: Strengthening India's Outreach to Southeast Asia. *ORF Special Report* . 2019;p. 5.
31. Press Information Bureau, Government of India. Incredible India 2.0 campaign launched to Promote Tourism: Sh. K. J. Alphon. Press Information Bureau, Government of India. 2018. Available from: <https://pib.gov.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=176966>.
32. Ministry of Tourism, Government of India. Indian Tourism Statistics: At A Glance. 2021. Available from: <https://tourism.gov.in/sites/default/files/2021-09/English%20Tourism%202021.Alsousehttps://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1914516>.
33. Indian Medical Tourism market expected to touch \$9 billion by 2020: Report. 2019.
34. Ministry of External Affairs , Government of India (2019), "India and UN: UN democracy fund. 2019.
35. Muni SD. India's Foreign Policy The Democracy Dimension. New Delhi. Foundation Books. 2009.
36. India Falls to 53st position in EIU's Democracy Index. 2021. Available from: <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/india-falls-to-53rd-position-in-eius-democracy-index-dubbed-as-flawed-democracy/articleshow/80665859.cms>.
37. ICCR, Government of India. . Available from: <https://iccr.gov.in/iccr-scholarship/indian-council-cultural-relations-scholarship>.
38. Shukla A. Budget 2019: India Redirect Foreign Aid to Indian Ocean countries. *Business Standard*. 2019. Available from: https://www.business-standard.com/budget/article/budget-2019-india-redirects-foreign-aid-to-indian-ocean-countries-119070800030_1.html.
39. Press Trust of India. Sri Lanka to sign \$500 million credit line with India. 2022. Available from: <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/sri-lanka-to-sign-500-million-credit-line-with-india-today/articleshow/89299009.cms>.
40. and SSP. India's Policy Response to China's Investment and Aid to Nepal, Sri Lanka and Maldives: Challenges and Prospects. *Strategic Analysis*. 2019;43(3):240–259. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09700161.2019.1616372>.
41. India Extends Rs.1.6bn aid to Nepal for Rebuilding Earthquake-hit Houses. 2019. Available from: <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/india-extends-rs-16-billion-aid-to-nepal-for-rebuilding-earthquake-hit-houses/article27764441.ece>.
42. India Provides Rs.233 cr financial aid to Nepal for infrastructure projects. 2019. Available from: <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/india-provides-rs-233-crore-financial-aid-to-nepal-for-infrastructure-projects/articleshow/70774519.cms?from=mdr>.
43. Sri Lanka Port Deal with India, Japan. . Available from: <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/sri-lanka-signs-port-deal-with-india-japan/articleshow/69547981.cms?from=mdr>.
44. India Extends \$4.5 billion loan to Bangladesh. 2017. Available from: <https://www.livemint.com/Politics/PJNGy9mN1sOLFqVTKKd15L/Bangladesh-signs-45-billion-loan-deal-with-India.html>.
45. Pairecha N, Tourangham M. India's Development Aid to Afghanistan: Does Afghanistan Need what India Gives?. 2018. Available from: <https://thediplomat.com/2018/11/indias-development-aid-to-afghanistan-does-afghanistan-need-what-india-gives/>.
46. Chakradeo S. Neighbourhood first responder: India's Humanitarian Assistance and disaster relief. *Brookings Policy Brief*. 2020;p. 10–12.
47. Mukherjee R. The False Promise of India's Soft Power. *Geopolitics, History and International Relations*. 2014;6(1):51.
48. Iccr G, India O, ICCR, Government of India . Introduction: Indian Chairs Abroad. 2019. Available from: <https://iccr.gov.in/online-form/chairs/introduction>.
49. List of Academic Visitors Programme. 2019. Available from: <https://iccr.gov.in/cultural/list-of-avp>.
50. Shah SH, Hasnat H, Rosefelde S. 2017.
51. Bonanza for Foreign Tourist visiting India in 2020. 2020. Available from: <https://www.deccanherald.com/national/bonanza-for-foreign-tourists-visiting-india-in-2020-789857.html>.
52. Ministry of Tourism, Government of India. 2019.
53. Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Awards 2003-2015. 2015. Available from: <http://mea.gov.in/images/pdf/pbsa-awardees-2003-15.pdf>.
54. The index is based on electoral process, pluralism, functioning of government, political participation, political, culture, and civil liberties. 2023. Available from: <https://www.undp.org/india/press-releases/india-ranks-132-human-development-index-global-development-stalls>.
55. Rajamohan C. Modi's Diplomacy: Yoga, Democracy and Soft Power. 2014.
56. Mazumdar A. India's Soft Power Diplomacy under the Modi Administration: Buddhism, Diaspora and Yoga. *Asian Affairs*. 2018;49(3):468–491.
57. Bangladesh: Why India should fast-track development projects. *South Asia Weekly Report*. 2010;13(4). Available from: <https://www.orfonline.org/research/south-asia-weekly-report-60781/>.
58. India -Bhutan finalised Rs.4.5kcr Mangdecchu Hydro project. 2019. Available from: <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/energy/power/india-bhutan-finalized-rs-4-5k-crore-mangdecchu-hydro-projects-power-tariff-protocol/articleshow/69041251.cms?from=mdr>.
59. Parliamentary panel 'unhappy over MEA projection of India as soft power. 2016. Available from: <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/parliament-panel-unhappy-over-mea-projection-of-india-as-soft-power/articleshow/51110825.cms?from=mdr>.
60. Sri Lankan projects delayed, PM Modi tells Ranil Wickremesinghe. 2018. Available from: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/meeting-between-prime-minister-narendra-modi-and-sri-lankan-prime-minister-ranil-wickremesinghe/article25271952.ece>.



61. Wagner C. India's Soft Power: Prospects and Limitations. *India Quarterly*. 2010;66(4):333–342. Available from: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/45073139>.
62. Malone D. Soft Power in Indian Foreign Policy. *Economic and Political Weekly*. 2011;46(36):35–39. Available from: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41719935>.





Original Article

An Assessment of India's Foreign Policy Under PM Modi

Joyati Bhattacharya^{1,*}¹Professor, Political Science, Assam University, Silchar, 788011, Assam, India

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 29.03.2023

Revised 15.04.2023

Accepted 25.04.2023

Published 28.04.2023

* Corresponding author.

Joyati Bhattacharya

joyati09@gmail.com[https://doi.org/](https://doi.org/10.53989/jcp.v2i1_3_joyati)

10.53989/jcp.v2i1_3_joyati



ABSTRACT

India's foreign policy has evolved amidst numerous constraints and experienced many ups and downs in the process of its fruition to the present stage. In the years following the independence, India had to steer its foreign policy against the high wave of the Cold war. India's bid to retain its independence in foreign affairs had often led India to compromise its strategic interests against Pakistan and China. Dynamics of the Cold war severed India's relations with the West and reduced its foreign policy more or less to a 'peace diplomacy'. The inbuilt idealism of India's foreign policy was often perceived by the West as weakness. Nonetheless, India's foreign policy has come a long way since the time of the Cold war and has been transformed to a self-reliant and dynamic policy to deal with the existing and forthcoming challenges of the international politics. However, the response of India's foreign policy has been most perceptible, decisive and coercive during the tenure of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. This paper attempts to outline the shift in the style of functioning of India's Foreign Policy under PM Modi while analyzing the secondary sources only.

Keywords: Peace Diplomacy; Act East; SAARC; QUAD; Cold War; Kashmir; WTO

INTRODUCTION

During the time of Narendra Modi's election campaign in the year 2014, foreign policy was hardly mentioned in his election speeches. Nevertheless, a year after his resounding victory, which gave India its first majority government in nearly three decades, Prime Minister Modi has emerged as one of the most effective Indian leaders when it comes to foreign affairs. With a considerable list of foreign policy "firsts" on his agenda at the onset of his term as prime minister, Narendra Modi emphasised India's strong commitment to its neighbours while forging alliances with other important nations. He was the first Prime Minister of India who showed the prudence to invite SAARC leaders to his swearing-in ceremony. He also happened to be the first Indian Prime Minister who invited and hosted an American president at Republic Day celebrations; the first to travel

to Nepal, a neighbouring country, on an official basis; the first to call for "peace, stability, solidarity, and order" in the oceans, outer space, and cyberspace; and the first to state that India must take the lead in the fight against climate change and take initiative to reverse the process of climate degeneration. Modi faced challenges in his attempt to refocus and realign India's foreign policy priorities. It is said that 'foreign policy of a country is determined by the times in which it is conducted. It is influenced by its history and its geographical position. The recent past colours a country's collective consciousness. Where you are on the map makes a great deal of difference in interacting with the world just as your own view of your position in the world does¹. Thus, with the constraints of the space and time, Narendra Modi induced an element of resilience and flexibility not exactly in nature but in the style and framework of conducting India's foreign policy.



EVOLUTION OF INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY

India's foreign policy has evolved through number of phases to attain its present dimension. The personality of Jawaharlal Nehru has deep imprints in the nature of India's foreign policy. The domestic context in which India's Foreign Policy was formulated was influenced by the paroxysm of transforming a so called agrarian and feudal country into a stable political democracy, initiate economic development and maintain its secular credential, particularly after the partition of India on the basis of two-nation theory. The international context was far more well-defined not just for India but for many other countries which incidentally were liberated and attained statehood in the middle of the twentieth century and sometime later. For all these countries the major challenge was to effectively navigate the difficult terrain of Cold War politics to pursue their national interests in the international arena. Thus, the foreign policy of India was mired with certain predicaments either in the domestic front or in external domain since the inception of India as a nation-state. External dynamics often influence the internal scenario of a country. India was no exception to that. India's endeavour to neutralize and stay away from the Cold War politics further worsened the situation for India in the global scenario. There was Pakistan which was in a constant pursuit to counterbalance its power disparity with India. China was the real elephant in the room. Nehru's effort to make every possible concession to Chinese to bring them on board failed to yield any dividend for India. There was the burning issue of Kashmir which brought the Cold War to the doorstep of the Indian sub-continent. Above all, the Western bloc led by the United States was deeply upset by India's determination to not to fall in line with the western camp. Despite his resolve to retain India's freedom in external affairs, Nehru mostly failed to explore the ways and means to counter the challenges besides the principle of non-alignment. The code of Non-alignment was no doubt a noble tool in a given situation but was not comprehensive enough to resist the U.S. doctrine of forging military alliances in Asia, China's aggressive gesture and Pakistan's constant diplomatic manoeuvring to destabilize and weaken India. Obviously, India seemed vulnerable and poorly adjusted to the world that was decided mainly by the rules of the Cold War. 'As states become economically and militarily more powerful, they not only seek greater global influence over international political and economic institutions and the behaviour of other states in consonance with their rising capabilities, but they are also more capable of expanding their interests by changing the established order'². But in case of India the reverse was underway and India appeared to lack the drive to change the status quo. However, India's vast size, diverse geography, its venerable traditions and culture was acting against any outright compromise of India's foreign policy orientation even at such delicate circumstance of world politics.

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

The most notable change that India's foreign policy has undergone in recent past is the change of perception. Foreign policy today is an instrument to pursue India's national interests irrespective of the policy orientation and concerns of the countries across the board. This pragmatic aspect of conducting foreign relations was mostly missing in India's foreign policy for a long time since independence. India was always hesitant to take a bold stand at the expense of the interests of other nations. Nehru and Nehruvians were not able to cope with the dilemmas the external powers and Nehru's policies created for the advancement of Indian vital interests. Nehru's policies facilitated the interests of the external powers, because Nehru's frame of reference was driven by the parameters of policies and interests of external powers and external ideologies that were not to India's advantage³. Thus, it may be argued that the lofty ideological inclination of India's foreign policy has undergone sea change without having compromised the basic principles of India's foreign policy. Narendra Modi has not recklessly opted for a different course besides being inducing a muscular element in India's foreign policy framework. In the greater interests of India and his profound respect to the legacy of the freedom movement, Modi continued the path already laid out in treading the exterior dealings of India. However, he has tweaked India's external dealings here and there and adjusted it to serve India's national interests most proficiently. India's foreign policy now seems to be far more responsive to India's interests than it was under preceding regimes. Immediately after assuming office of the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi charted out his preferences in foreign affairs just as any decisive leader would have done. At first instance he set the priority on the neighboring states in South Asia, particularly with whom India has no security issues. India's regionalism has transcended beyond South Asia in a substantive and effective note due to his pragmatism and far sight and it is seeking closer cooperation with the states in the South East Asia and the East. In his endeavor to intensify India's regional domain, he rechristened the 'Look East' Policy of the previous governments to the 'Act East' policy. Modi's Act East policy is primarily action oriented and focuses on the development of infrastructure as the key to enhance India's global status and economy. India is pursuing deeper strategic ties with the US, Japan, and Australia and in the process of geo-balancing between the US and China, India seemed to have drawn closer to the US and other western allies. But such developments in India's external outreach and approach did not, however, impact the time tested friendship of India and Russia. India maintained its firm neutrality and remained resilient in its stand in the ongoing Russia-Ukraine Crisis. Instead, by choosing not to vote against Russia at the UN, New Delhi not only did a careful balancing of its foreign policy but also successfully reiterated the tenacity of India's foreign policy to deal with



adversity. A similar stand was adopted by New Delhi in last November when it decided to abstain from voting on the resolution of the UNHRC against Iran. The resolution denounced atrocities perpetrated by the Iranian government on peaceful protester who are fighting for their right for wearing 'hijab'. 'Two weeks later, on November 16, the UNGA's third committee voted on a draft resolution that referred to the death of Masha Amini and urged Iranian officials to "cease the use of excessive force against peaceful protesters, including women and children". India had voted no⁴. India's distancing yet again from the internal affair was warranted by its economic interests. Iran is the second largest supplier of crude oil to India. India happens to be one of the largest foreign investors in Iran's oil and gas industry. Visibly, India preferred not to disturb its ties with Iran at the face of internal domestic turmoil in the country. Thus, India's foreign policy today is a unique blend of idealism and realism that serves India's national interests optimally without infringing its long standing record of a responsible peace loving state.

MODI'S ACHIEVEMENTS

In case of a neutral analysis, foreign policy is surely an aspect in which Modi deserves accolade. For example, there was lot of skepticism with India's recent stand in Russia-Ukraine crisis. But more than a year down the lane, India succeeded to prevail over its decision. Nevertheless, India's stand towards Russia was not bereft of India's long standing concern and reverence for international peace and territorial integrity of a nation. India constantly provided humanitarian aid to Ukraine, raised its voice to call off the war and tried to mediate to bring to an end further escalation of the standoff between the two countries. It was indeed a spectacular diplomatic victory for India 'that Putin said he had ordered Russian soldiers "to ensure the safe exit of Indian nationals from the armed conflict zone and their return to their homeland," according to a Kremlin statement⁵. Just as India understands the importance of Russia in expanding its footprints in the west-dominated global sphere, in neutralizing critical voices against India and above all in balancing China, it also recognizes the importance to build proximity with the U.S, Japan, and Australia to attract lucrative global investments, protect the sea lanes in the Indo-pacific and demoralize China. During the tenure of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, India was already moving towards the Quad, but it took him a while to recognize the threat that China posed. Due to the PLA's intrusions into India in the summer of 2020, the two Asian neighbours engaged in a brief military conflict. Any reluctance Indian leaders and foreign policy experts had on joining the Quad quickly evaporated given China's misadventure in India's vicinity. Since 2020, Chinese incursions into Ladakh, China's repetitive attempts to encroach Indian territory and its smart strategy to encircle India in its neighborhood are major

issues for concern for India. In such a scenario it was a calculated move for the Modi government to join the quad and India opted for it judiciously. The Government of India in the recent past had taken number of decisive steps whenever there was the question of India's national interest. Article 370 was scrapped and Kashmir was liberated from foreign intervention once and for all. Initial hiccups over the abrogation of the Article 370 were also handled proficiently by the government. China's attempt to internalize the issue on behalf of Pakistan was also diffused by India's smart diplomacy. India's military modernization has been speeded up in rapid scale. Just after Modi assumed his office as the Prime Minister, India witnessed the laying of its first missile tracking and first surveillance ship. In 2016, the agreement for Rafale Combat Jets was signed between India and France. The agreement was signed with Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) in 2021 for 83 Tejas Combat Aircrafts. Apart from acquisition of sophisticated weapons, Narendra Modi's emphasis on 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' has intensified the partnership between DRDO and private sector to indigenize India's defense requirement. Under the leadership of PM Modi India carried out surgical strikes across the border, both in the east and west, to demonstrate its willingness to go beyond the conventional methods to safeguard India's national interests. Balakot Airstrike has shown the world that India is no longer a country which will procrastinate to take decision during the trying times that concerns India's security. During the COVID outbreak, India had set a record of exemplary management which many so called developed and industrialized countries could not showcase despite their huge prowess on science, technology and medical infrastructure. India not only developed its own vaccine in record time and vaccinated its billion plus population but also exported 65 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines to more than 100 countries across the globe, which earned it the name of the 'Pharmacy of the world'. India's role during the COVID outbreak was just not a charitable diplomatic gesture but also a humanitarian move which reflected India's commitment to the humanity at large. Modi government while forging lasting relationships with foreign nations for mutual growth and development also showed extraordinary skill in evacuating people stranded in faraway places. In 2021, India evacuated its citizens stuck in Taliban controlled Afghanistan after the Taliban overthrew the US-backed government and took control of the country. Before that, the Indian government rescued more than 4,500 Indians and 960 foreigners from war-ravaged Yemen in 2015. India also rescued 46 nurses from ISIS captivity in Iraq in 2014. In 2022, thousands of students have been rescued from war-torn Ukraine. Such moves amount to huge diplomatic success of India's foreign policy even in the assessment of a detractor of PM Modi. In nutshell, India's foreign policy has succeeded substantially to achieve its target under Modi. Modi's economic priorities which



are often reflected in his 'economic diplomacy' have earned India the fame of a potential investment destination. 'The PM has mooted three 'T' - trade, tourist and technology-to boost Indian economic diplomacy. The proposal aims to use India's overseas missions and embassies as tools to increase exports from the country⁶. Modi also took a strong position on the WTO in favour of developing countries like India. India stood strong for its MSMEs, farmers & fishermen. The voice of the poor and the vulnerable was strengthened globally by India's stand at the WTO. The handling of COVID 19 besides having delicate bilateral negotiations with countries across the board and internal economic reforms are issues of positive reception for India's Foreign Policy. Modi also showed utmost skill in connecting with the Indian Diasporas in all the places that he visited and accelerating their pace of engagement to the economy of the country. Chairmanship of G20 is one more feather in India's foreign policy. Under the leadership of PM Modi, India has grown to assert its territorial integrity in the face of mounting Chinese aggression. Beijing could no longer execute its evil plans of discreetly expanding its frontiers without facing tough resistance from India.

MODI'S CHALLENGES

However, there is no end to challenge in foreign policy. For PM Modi, major challenge will be to contain China primarily in its neighborhood. India's regional security outlook is shaped by China to a large extent. So far, there is no progress in the protracted boundary dispute between India and China. Persistent misadventure of China in India's border regions including the recent attempt of incursion in the Tawang region of Arunachal Pradesh further reiterates that any break-through in border dispute between the two countries is a remote possibility. Deadlock on issues, such as, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) are also likely to endure. While the Modi government has been consistently firm in dealing with Pakistan, consistent Chinese support to Pakistan further complicates India's regional security situation. Thus, managing the rise of China has been a significant policy challenge for most countries in Asia and particularly to India. India needs to accelerate the pace of completion of projects under its Act East Policy, forge closer ties with the US, deepen its relationship with India's time tested partners like Russia and Japan and bring in internal balances by building indigenous defense capabilities. No choice by itself will be a full proof strategy to contain China. Nonetheless, the objective should be to supplement one strategy with the other to end up with a fruitful outcome in favour of India. 'With regard to its wider regional strategic outlook, India's engagement with the Indo-Pacific region seems to be guided by "maximising convergence and minimizing divergence" vis-à-vis both its partners and rivals. New Delhi's delicate handling of the US and China, and fostering stronger ties with Japan, Australia, Russia,

France, and the ASEAN region clearly demonstrates a new boldness and discipline in respect of its regional positioning and protecting its policy maneuverability to meet its strategic and diplomatic objectives⁷. Besides, India needs to ensure favorable dealings in global bodies like the WTO, sustain the Quad alliance without infringing India's interests in the long run, to transform India from a lucrative investment destination to a truly self-reliant and exporting country, to preserve India's constitutional values and ethos and also to counter the West's repetitive strategy to project India as a jingoistic state. The onus to maintain India's internal cohesion also rests with PM Modi lest it does not derail India's current foreign policy endeavor.

CONCLUSION

Let us not be guided by the fact that foreign policy is determined only by economic compulsions and realistic calculations of national interests of a nation state. A leader's vision and conviction are also important constituents that shape the foreign policy and change the destiny of a nation. Currently, India's foreign policy seems to be moving in the right direction to find a firm ground for India in the global space. The element of leadership seemed to have influenced India's foreign policy perceptibly in the recent past. What have changed under Mr. PM Modi have been the pace of implementation and the style of dealing with the fellow members. A 'New Panchsheel' formula was evolved to deepen and widen India's foreign policy engagement. 'Modi's foreign policy agenda has been pursued along the broad if vague lines set out in the BJP's election manifesto, which outlined three priority areas for action: improving India's international ties with key states (especially in East Asia) in ways that will aid its economic development; bolstering India's security with regard to both Pakistan and China; and leveraging India's 'soft power' in the West and the developing world to increase New Delhi's global standing and influence⁸. The silver lining is that there is no deviation from the priorities set out at the moment.

Funding

No funding was received to assist with the preparation of this manuscript.

Statements and Declarations

The author has no relevant financial or non-financial interests to disclose.

REFERENCES

1. Dutt VP. India's Foreign Policy since Independence. 1st ed. India. National Book Trust. 2007.



2. Kapur A. *India - From Regional to World Power*. London, UK. Routledge. 2006. Available from: <https://www.routledge.com/India---From-Regional-to-World-Power/Kapur/p/book/9780415448024>.
3. Pant HV, Indian V. *Indian Foreign Policy in a Unipolar World*. London, UK. Routledge. 2020. Available from: <https://www.routledge.com/Indian-Foreign-Policy-in-a-Unipolar-World/Pant/p/book/9780415843065>.
4. Govt's Dilemma: India Govt abstains on UNHRC Resolution on anti-Hijab Protesters to show its Support to Iran. 2022.
5. Putin, Modi discuss plight of Indian students trapped in Ukraine. 2022. Available from: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/3/3/putin-modi-discuss-plight-indian-students-trapped-ukraine>.
6. Prime Minister Narendra Modi pitches '3 T strategy' to boost economic diplomacy. 2020. Available from: <https://www.businesstoday.in/latest/economy-politics/story/prime-minister-narendra-modi-moots-3-t-strategies-boost-exports-243488-2020-01-22>.
7. Hashmi S. Modi 2.0 and India's Regional Security Outlook. In: Huisken R, editor. *CSCAP Regional Security Outlook 2020*. CSCAP. 2019;p. 20. Available from: <http://www.cscap.org/uploads/cscap%202020%20v3.pdf>.
8. Hall I. Is a 'Modi doctrine' emerging in Indian foreign policy? *Australian Journal of International Affairs*. 2015;69(3):247-252. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10357718.2014.1000263>.





Original Article

Caught in the Crossfire: Myanmarese Refugees in India

Priyanca Mathur^{1,*}

¹Head and Associate Professor, Centre for Research in Social Sciences and Education (CeRSSE), Jain (Deemed-to-be) University, Bengaluru, Karnataka, India

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 09.01.2023

Revised 25.02.2023

Accepted 13.03.2023

Published 25.03.2023

* *Corresponding author.*

Priyanca Mathur

mv.priyanca@jainuniversity.ac.in

<https://doi.org/>

[10.53989/jcp.v2i1_2_priyanca](https://doi.org/10.53989/jcp.v2i1_2_priyanca)



INTRODUCTION

The political violence that spread across Myanmar post the coup of February 1st, 2021 has compelled nearly 60,000 Myanmarese nationals to flee across the border into Indian soil. Old ethnic kinship ties (Kuki-Chin) and porosity of the international border shared with India's north-eastern states has facilitated this cross-border displacement. Legally, Myanmarese refugees continue to inhabit a grey area. Besides, the current scenario in the state of Manipur post the riots of May 4th 2023 onward has left refugees more at risk sandwiched between the warring Meitei and Kukis there.¹ While peace amongst all ethnic and religious groups is the need of the hour, the heightened vulnerability of refugees

within this civil war must not be ignored.

The author was part of a research project that mapped the protection needs of recent arrivals from Myanmar in Mizoram, Manipur and Delhi.² The geographical diversity of India as the host country greatly impacts the rights conditions of the Myanmarese refugees as the political context of each state is unique. Delhi, being the national capital, is the seat of Central government, and is ruled by the same party in power as in the state of Manipur. Both these sites have shown not as much a welcoming attitude towards refugees as Mizoram, which is hosting the biggest load. Thus, the political context at the state and regional level determines

¹For more details see EPW commentary <https://www.epw.in/journal/2023/19/comment/unfolding-manipur-riots.html>

²This article is an extract from an International Research Project of ASDP and APPRN that looked into the protection needs of Myanmarese Refugees in India conducted by the author. The author would like to acknowledge the research assistance of Ananya Kundu and Roshni Sharma.



the access to basic needs and services — while Delhi provides freedom of movement, Manipur is its complete opposite where first priority is to stay away from the public glare and hidden amongst their ethnic community. Meanwhile, Mizoram, stands out as the only state with an open receptive policy towards Myanmarese refugees, with every household, village and city also contributing towards their welfare.

Informal protection networks largely have become the safe space and place-to-go-to for all kinds of assistance. Community and faith-based organisations have contributed more towards refugee welfare than any state or national government, barring Mizoram. The regional difference in formal and informal protection mechanisms in (and not in) place is stark. In the absence of national refugee law or policy in India, the formal protection space that exists in positive judicial decisions and legal advocacy groups must be expanded. All state governments need to be sensitised to the principles in international humanitarian law on non-refoulement and against forced detention/deportation.

The absence of exit permits for Myanmarese refugees and lack of access to North East (NE) India for United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) India leaves refugees facing the severe challenge of travelling to UNHCR Delhi for access to documentation and formal refugee-status determination. Protection risks and needs of refugees spotlight access to safe shelter and reliable documentation. Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), Community-Based Organisations (CBOs), Women's Groups and faith-based organisations working with refugees at the grassroots need financial and resource support. Refugee women need access to sexual and gender based violence survivor support and nearly all respondents we spoke to require mental health support, given their trauma at having to flee their homeland amidst violence. Right to livelihood, right to education and right to health-care — without discrimination — should be provided to all refugees given their right to a basic human life with dignity, irrespective of which geographical location they are in.

In India, the intersectionality of the local, state and national levels reveals complete lack of awareness of the regional and international refugee protection regimes. Greater collaboration and synergy amongst all stakeholders to bring in more sensitisation towards the marginalised reality of refugee lives fleeing for life from Myanmar in the region is needed.

LEGAL BACKGROUND

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has estimated that the number of forcibly displaced persons in the world will reach 117.2 million in 2023¹. It also stated that 89.3 million people had been forcibly displaced globally due to conflict, human rights violations and persecution by the end of 2021, with an estimated 11.3 million in Asia alone². In such a scenario, it is woeful that the refugee

protection laws remain inadequate in South Asia with majority of the countries being neither signatories to either the 1951 Refugee Convention nor its 1967 Protocol.³

Despite this India has continued to serve as a safe haven for thousands of refugees since it gained independence in 1947³. But unlike other non-signatory countries, India has no domestic law or policy applicable for refugees. The absence of a suitable legislation means that India arbitrarily deals with refugees on a case-to-case basis, dependent on prevalent political contexts, motivations of the political party in power, and socio-cultural factors⁴. Refugees are governed under The Foreigners Act, 1946, which is meant for foreigners voluntarily entering India — two completely different categories. The use of this Act on refugees ensures that there is no space to understand and address the unique vulnerabilities that refugees face. India can, at any point, label a certain group of refugees as “illegal immigrants” or treat them as defaulters under this Act. They can also deport any “foreign citizen” based on the government’s discretion⁵. Myanmarese refugees have been at the receiving end of this offensive behaviour from Indian authorities.

The cases of asylum seekers are shared between the Indian government and the UNHCR, with the former managing the greater share of the load. The Government of India (GoI) directly manages refugees arriving from its neighbouring states, mostly from Tibet and Sri Lanka; while UNHCR is mandated to provide documentation and determine refugee status for people arriving from non-neighbouring countries including Myanmar. Refugees from Myanmar fall into this grey zone, one that leads to significant protection gaps and impacts the lived experiences of refugees. There is a long-standing history of migration between India and Myanmar (then known as Burma), going back to colonial times. India has, in the past, provided refuge to migrants from Myanmar, including political figures. However, the post 2021 coup influx of refugees in India from Myanmar has met with apathy and resistance. India has cited concerns around national security to put greater restrictions in place⁶. This has consequently put the fate of vulnerable refugee communities or persecuted groups from Myanmar at stake, who till now, had perceived India as a safe option for asylum

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Prior to 1947 a large number of Indians moved to Myanmar (then Burma) in search of work and business opportunities. However, Myanmar’s volatile socio-political conditions post-independence including military coups and ethnic conflict led to mass out-migration of not just settled Indians but also Myanmar nationals who fled military regimes and

³They are signatories to a number of other international conventions that contain protections like CRC, CAT, ICCPR etc. It is often argued that South Asian states’ rejection of international protocols stems from the fear that interventions by international agencies, coming in of humanitarian aid in refugee situations, etc. would gravely undermine their sovereignty, while also drawing unnecessary scrutiny to their internal situation.



political crackdowns. Many ethnic minorities and tribals also took refuge in India 1988 onward, to escape poverty and persecution⁷. They stayed in the North Eastern region of India where four states, viz., Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, and Manipur, share a 1643 km long border with Myanmar, which has facilitated the movement of people between both countries. Over the decades, due to lack of infrastructure, job opportunities and resources in the North East, Myanmarese refugees have migrated northwards to the capital city of Delhi, undertaking odd jobs to make a living. In Delhi, those who are having the UNHCR refugee card as the only form of identification, has meant that they can only get access to work in the informal sector, where income is low, unstable, and there is little or no social security⁸. Even within these limited spaces, they have been attacks and abuse. In the past, women from refugee groups have reported experiencing sexual harassment by co-workers and locals, both, within and outside the workplace⁹. This has led to further marginalisation and spatial exclusion of refugee groups within urban city spaces like New Delhi¹⁰.

The persecution of ethnic minorities in Myanmar based on religious differences led to the two major refugee crises in the past decade - the Rohingya crisis, and the post-military coup exodus. Extensive scholarship already exists on the Rohingya refugee crisis which reached its peak in 2017, the year of the largest exodus due to the repression and brutal violence perpetrated by the military against the minority community of Rohingya Muslims living in the Rakhine state.⁴ It intensified in August 2017, when a deadly crackdown by the military led to the mass exodus of thousands of Rohingyas into neighbouring countries, seeking refuge¹¹. The recent second wave of refugees from Myanmar arrived after the 2021 military coup in the country. The National League for Democracy (NLD) led by Aung San Suu Kyi had secured a landslide victory in the general elections in Myanmar in November 2020. However, on 1st February 2021, Myanmarese military seized power after making claims of electoral fraud and voter irregularities, which the election observer organisations asserted to be completely false (Domestic Election Observer Organizations, 2021). NLD's key leaders, including Aung San Suu Kyi, were detained on that day after raids were carried out in their homes.⁵

⁴For more details see <https://www.unrefugees.org/news/rohingya-refugee-crisis-explained/#:~:text=The%20Rohingya%20have%20suffered%20decades,to%20seek%20refuge%20in%20Bangladesh>

⁵After this, the military declared Myanmar to be in a state of emergency for a year and handed over power to the Chief of Army, Min Aung Hlaing (Reuters, 2021). The military brought about multiple charges against Suu Kyi and other NLD leaders, including breach of COVID-19 protocols during the election campaigns in 2020, corruption, violating the Official Secrets Act, etc. The coup led to large-scale protests all across Myanmar, with people coming together to demand that the junta relinquish power and restore the democratic government. On the other hand, civil society groups, activists, journalists, former parliamentarians, leaders of ethnic minority, etc. came together to form a shadow government (National Unity Government — NUG) (Maizland, L., & Kurlantzick, J. (2022) 'Myanmar's Troubled History:

The military responded by cracking down on protesters and committing severe atrocities. The junta killed protesters, forcefully disappeared hundreds of people, tortured and raped people in custody over the next several months¹². In the North Western and Western part of Myanmar, which lie close to the Indian border, the People's Defence Forces (PDF) which were created to protect people from military violence, clashed with Myanmar's military¹³. Violence also spread to major cities like Mandalay and Yangon. The army burnt homes, cut off electricity, internet and food supply, and shot at those fleeing¹⁴. Caught between the crossfire, people started fleeing to the neighbouring Thailand and India to save themselves. In India, refugees entered mainly through Manipur and Mizoram, both having porous borders with Myanmar. The UNHCR estimates that 53,500 Myanmarese refugees have entered India via Mizoram and Manipur⁶, between February 2021 and May 2023¹⁵.

SEEKING ASYLUM IN INDIA

The first wave of refugees, post-coup, started arriving in India from March 2021 through the North-East region. In this wave, refugees mostly consisted of students, teachers, activists, anti-coup protesters, lawmakers, civil servants, defected police, and army personnel. The majority of refugees were ethnic Chins, Kachins, and Karens. Reports highlighted that the impact of the army operations was most strongly felt in Chin State, Sagaing, and Kachin, which house the armed groups that were fighting the military junta for the longest time. As a result, maximum displacement took place in these regions¹⁶.

Mizoram, which shares a 510 km-long unfenced border with Myanmar, was the first state to receive refugees. Refugees, mainly from Chin-Kuki ethnic groups, also crossed over to Manipur through the 398 km-long border to enter Moreh. The GoI had issued a notice in February 2021, asking the Assam Rifles to stay alert and work towards preventing any possible movement of refugees from Myanmar to India. On 27th February, the Government of Mizoram put forth a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to ensure the smooth facilitation of refugees from Myanmar. On 9th March, Biren Singh, the Chief Minister (CM) of Manipur declared that he and his government were ready to welcome and offer assistance to any refugee who entered India to save themselves from the violence unleashing in Myanmar¹⁷.

However, on 10th March 2021, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) of India sent out two advisory letters to four North Eastern states sharing borders with Myanmar — Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Mizoram,

Coups, Military Rule, and Ethnic Conflict'. Council on Foreign Relations. Available at <https://www.cfr.org/backgroundunder/myanmar-history-coup-military-rule-ethnic-conflict-rohingya>.

⁶Link to the regional report - <https://reporting.unhcr.org/document/4813>



warning the Secretaries of the states of a possible influx of refugees coming in from Myanmar through the porous borders. The advisory stated that the state governments and union territories had no power to assign refugee status to any foreigner entering India; the country is not a signatory to the Refugee Convention 1951 or 1967 protocol and as a result, has no obligation to provide asylum¹⁸. The MHA also directed law enforcement agencies to identify illegal migrants and deport them¹⁹.

In response to this advisory, CM Biren Singh of Manipur took a complete turn from his previous promise, and the Government of Manipur, which has the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in power (the same party which holds power in the central government in New Delhi) asked its Deputy Commissioners not to open camps or offer food and shelter to refugees entering the state. The government instructed authorities to politely turn away refugees from the border²⁰. This order arrived at the time when the Ambassador of Myanmar to the United Nations issued an appeal to the Government of India, asking them to provide refuge to those fleeing Myanmar on humanitarian grounds²¹. A few days later, the Manipur government retracted its order suspecting public disapproval but it continued to maintain its stance against the refugee influx. Community groups in Manipur who share the same ethnic identity and ancestry with the refugees came forward to help, providing food, shelter and medical aid²². However, refugees entering Manipur continued facing detentions and arrests.⁷

On the other hand, Mizoram's Chief Minister, Zoramthanga, firmly rejected the Centre's advisory and called it unacceptable. He heads the Mizo National Front Party. He argued that the Chin community in Myanmar and Mizos share ethnic ties and have had close relations since the time of pre-independence. Therefore, they could not overlook this humanitarian crisis²³. In the parliament, he urged the GoI to provide aid to help the refugees in these critical times²⁴. Local NGOs, community groups, churches, international humanitarian organizations, and even few refugees came together to assist those coming into Mizoram by offering shelter, food and medical assistance. The Government of Mizoram started issuing temporary identity cards to the refugees²⁵. Relief work and refugee aid in Mizoram and Manipur have depended upon donations, fundraisers, funding from the church. In September 2021, attacks on a military camp in a village in Myanmar near Thingsai (the village closest to the border near Mizoram), led to a new wave of refugees entering Mizoram¹⁷.

With continued violence and crackdowns by the junta in Myanmar, the influx of refugees into India has continued, putting a strain on the limited resources available to the North East states. In a meeting with the Indian Prime Minister in July 2021, Chief Minister Zoramthanga said that

⁷Since January 2023, more than 170 refugees from Myanmar have been arrested and/or detained in Manipur. For more details see <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/refugees-03172023161746.html>

the task of providing aid to refugees in Mizoram amidst rising cases of COVID-19 had put great financial strain on the state government²⁶. The North Eastern states in India already lack sufficient infrastructure like proper roadways, hospitals, colleges, etc. Towns and villages in the border region are even more cut-off from the existing infrastructure, which is mostly concentrated in the capital cities. The refugee influx in the past two years has put further strain on their limited resources. Shortage in medical assistance has been most strongly felt. Refugees in camps in Mizoram said they needed water, more than anything else. Additionally, dismal living conditions, lack of access to sanitation, clean drinking water and adequate food has led to a surge of diseases and medical concerns within the refugee camps. NGOs, refugee doctors, etc. have set up camps to provide medical aid. However, with rising demand, their services have fallen short. The Chins being unable to communicate in local Mizo language has created greater hurdles in accessing aid and resources²⁷.

In May 2021, seven Myanmar nationals, including journalists, legislators and anti-coup activists were given passage from Manipur and Mizoram to New Delhi to appear before the UNHCR to seek refugee cards. This happened after the Manipur High Court gave its judgment, making a clear distinction between illegal migrants and refugees who have sought asylum to escape violence and persecution in their own countries. The court extended them interim protection under Article 21 of the Indian Constitution that guarantees right to life and liberty¹⁸. As conflict and violence rages on in Myanmar, the number of Myanmarese refugees entering Delhi are expected to increase and more and more refugees will start moving out of the North East in search of work and sustenance. With little hope of situations improving back home, refugees have started moving towards mainland Indian cities like Delhi, in search of work and resources. But New Delhi's diplomatic relations with the military junta ensure that their welcome will be less than warm. Till date, 5,092 individuals have approached UNHCR for registration in New Delhi, since February 2021¹⁵. In May 2022, Indian authorities even deported a Myanmar national from Moreh in Manipur²⁸.

GROWING DISTRESS AND APATHY

On the other hand, growing numbers of Chin and Kuki refugees in Manipur have ignited the fear of changes in Manipur's existing culture and demography amidst some tribal groups. Non-Kuki groups have also alleged that the refugees have taken over the hills and started encroaching upon the limited resources in the region, taking over the rights of the locals to government schemes and aid. As a response, civil society groups, including the Coordination Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI), and Unified Naga Council (UNC) have come together to demand a National Register for Citizens (NRC) practice in Manipur



that can distinguish Indian nationals from the refugees and remove the latter²⁹. BJP Rajya Sabha MP and titular King of Manipur, Maharaja Leishemba Sanajaoba, also raised this issue at the parliament, asking the Government of India to fence the Manipur-Myanmar border to prevent refugees from entering the State³⁰.

INDIA'S STANCE AND SECURITY CONCERNS

Ever since the coup took place, India has maintained a cautious stance in relation to its diplomatic ties with Myanmar. India, for the past decades, has maintained an amiable relationship with the military in Myanmar. Although other countries have looked towards India to help restore democracy in Myanmar, India has maintained a soft approach towards the military junta mainly because it sees it as a partner in countering insurgency in the border regions of both countries¹³. India had condemned the coup in 2021 and raised concerns over military crackdowns and violence, but made a clear declaration that refugees fleeing the violence in Myanmar were not welcome in the country³¹. India also was part of the 8 countries that attended a military parade in Myanmar on 27th March 2021, just two months after the coup³².

The Government of India has also reportedly sold arms to the military junta³³. New Delhi also cancelled permissions for peaceful protests against the violence perpetrated by the junta in Myanmar. In November 2021, after the Indian Foreign Secretary's two-day visit to Myanmar, the Ministry of External Affairs issued a press release that explained that India had discussed infrastructure development, border security, etc. with the military government. It made no mention of India's hope for Myanmar to return to its democratic government³⁴. India's diplomatic relations with the junta can be ascribed to its security concerns and desire to ensure that the border region in the North East remains peaceful, unlike its disputes with China and Pakistan in the north. India's stance is also based on its economic interests of projects in Myanmar- Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport Project (which runs through the Myanmar states of Chin and Rakhine); the Trilateral Highway Project (which is supposed to extend from India to Thailand); and accessing rich natural resources in the country which are mostly situated in areas controlled by armed ethnic militias³⁵.

CONCLUSION

However, such a stance will hurt India's interests in the long run. Continued violence in Myanmar will continue to displace people, which will increase refugee influx in India. Additionally, the projects that India hopes to implement have to go through the North Eastern states of Manipur and Mizoram – areas where insurgency and violence has only increased since the coup in Myanmar. This is especially

pertinent due to the presence of the PLA (People's Liberation Army) and ZRA (Zomi Revolutionary Army) in Manipur. PLA and ZRA are part of the many Chin armed insurgent groups fighting for dominance in Myanmar. They have been accused of weakening the resistance to military junta in Myanmar and siding with the latter³⁶. The murder of an army officer, his family, and four other officers in Manipur in November 2021 by the PLA and Manipur Naga People's Front is an example of such concerns³⁷.

Despite not being a signatory to the Refugee Convention and Protocol, India has ratified other international human rights instruments like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), among others, which provide some protection to refugee groups in India. Under these obligations, India cannot mistreat or deport its refugees. Amidst growing Hindu nationalism in India under the Bharatiya Janata Party, the Indian government's refugee response has become increasingly exclusionary. Refugee issues have served as a key election point since 2014 and anti-refugee rhetoric has infiltrated all forms of discussions and media³⁸. It is, therefore, crucial that the Government of India is pushed to build a national refugee policy that can ensure uniformity and transparency in its treatment of refugees³⁹.

REFERENCES

1. Global Appeal 2023. UNHCR Global Focus. 2023. Available from: <https://reporting.unhcr.org/globalappeal2023>.
2. 'Asia and the Pacific Regional Trends - Forced Displacement 2021'. UNHCR data portal. 2022. Available from: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/94372>.
3. Samaddar R. Refugees and the State: Practices of Asylum and Care in India, 1947 - 2000. Samaddar R, editor; India. SAGE Publications. 2003.
4. Khosla M. The Geopolitics of India's Refugee Policy. 2022. Available from: <https://southasianvoices.org/the-geopolitics-of-indias-refugee-policy/>.
5. Bhalla A. The need for refugee law in India. Bar and Bench. 2022. Available from: <https://www.barandbench.com/columns/the-need-for-refugee-law-in-india-for-indian-citizens>.
6. India Report. UNHCR. 2011. Available from: <https://www.unhcr.org/4cd96e919.pdf>.
7. The Returnees and the Refugees: Migration from Burma. In: Samaddar R, editor. Refugees and the State: Practices of Asylum and Care in India, 1947-2000. 2003.
8. Bhuyan A. Delhi's little Burma. Business Standard. 2013. Available from: https://www.business-standard.com/article/beyond-business/delhi-s-little-burma-113111400885_1.html.
9. Nandi J. Burmese refugees demand a life in Delhi. 2014. Available from: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/delhi/burmese-refugees-demand-a-life-in-delhi/articleshow/44831815.cms>.
10. Field J, Tiwari AD, Mookherjee Y. Self-reliance as a Concept and a Spatial Practice for Urban Refugees: Reflections from Delhi, India. *Journal of Refugee Studies*. 2020;33(1):167-188. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fez050>.
11. Sandhu K, Sebastian M. Rohingya and CAA: What is India's refugee policy?. 2022. Available from: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-62573446>.
12. Myanmar: Coup Leads to Crimes Against Humanity. 2021. Available from: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/07/31/myanmar-coup-leads-crimes-against-humanity>.



13. Ambarkhane S, Gathia SV. Over a Year Later, Myanmar's Military Coup Threatens India's National Security. 2022. Available from: <https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/05/over-year-later-myanmars-military-coup-threatens-indias-national-security>.
14. Wee S. Thousands Flee Myanmar for India Amid Fears of a Growing Refugee Crisis. 2021. Available from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/19/world/asia/myanmar-refugees-india.html>.
15. UNHCR Regional Bureau For Asia And Pacific (RBAP) Myanmar Emergency Update. UNHCR. 2023. Available from: <https://reporting.unhcr.org/document/4813>.
16. Bhattacharjee K. Treat our people as refugees: Myanmar's democracy leader urges Government of India. 2022. Available from: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/treat-our-people-as-refugees-myanmars-democracy-leader-urges-government-of-india/article66227432.ece>.
17. India: The Status of Refugees 2021. New Delhi, India. Rights and Risks Analysis Group. 2021.
18. Naqvi S. Myanmar: Don't allow migrants to cross, home ministry writes to border states. 2021. Available from: <https://www.eastmojo.com/mizoram/2021/03/11/myanmar-dont-allow-migrants-to-cross-home-ministry-writes-to-border-states/>.
19. Stop illegal influx from Myanmar, Centre tells northeastern States. 2021. Available from: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/stop-illegal-influx-from-myanmar-mha-tells-ne-states/article34054308.ece>.
20. Manipur government asks DCs to "politely turn away" Myanmar refugees, takes back order. 2021. Available from: <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/manipur-government-asks-dcs-to-politely-turn-away-myanmar-refugees-takes-back-order/articleshow/81754323.cms?from=mdr>.
21. Manipur govt withdraws earlier order to 'politely turn away' Myanmar refugees. 2021. Available from: <https://www.livemint.com/news/india/manipur-govt-withdraws-earlier-order-to-politely-turn-away-myanmar-refugees-11617084905271.html>.
22. Hangal N, Sitlou M. Manipuris Help Myanmar Refugees, Ignoring BJP Order To 'Politely' Turn Them Away. 2021. Available from: <https://article-14.com/post/manipuris-help-myanmar-refugees-ignoring-bjp-order-to-politely-turn-them-away>.
23. Karmakar S. Not acceptable to Mizoram: CM Zoramthanga writes to PM Modi on Myanmar refugees. 2021. Available from: <https://www.deccanherald.com/national/east-and-northeast/not-acceptable-to-mizoram-cm-zoramthanga-writes-to-pm-modi-on-myanmar-refugees-964309.html>.
24. How are Mizos dealing with Burmese refugees fleeing the coup?. 2021. Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I232zSkLJN8&t=76s>.
25. Choudhury A, Agarwala T. How Mizoram has set up a de facto asylum regime for Myanmar refugees. 2022. Available from: <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/how-mizoram-has-set-up-de-facto-asylum-regime-for-myanmar-refugees-8189791/>.
26. Chakraborty T. 'Financially Strained,' Mizoram CM Brings up Myanmar Refugee Crisis in Meeting With PM. 2021. Available from: <https://thewire.in/government/mizoram-cm-zoramthanga-pm-modi-myanmar-refugees-humanitarian-aid>.
27. Sitlou M. Mizoram's predicament over Myanmar refugees. 2022. Available from: <https://lifestyle.livemint.com/news/big-story/mizorams-predicament-over-myanmar-refugees-111664461046718.html>.
28. Myanmarese national deported. 2022. Available from: <https://www.ifp.co.in/manipur/myanmarese-national-deported>.
29. Matharu S. 'They're taking over our hills': Manipur groups want NRC to weed out Myanmar refugees. 2022. Available from: <https://theprint.in/features/theyre-taking-over-our-hills-manipur-groups-want-nrc-to-weed-out-myanmar-refugees/1002227/>.
30. Maharaja Sanajaoba urges India Government to resolve Indo-Myanmar Border Issue, complete fencing. 2022. Available from: <https://www.pothashang.in/2022/12/09/maharaja-sanajaoba-urges-india-government-to-resolve-indo-myanmar-border-issue-complete-fencing/>.
31. Min M. India's cautious approach to the military coup in Myanmar. 2022. Available from: <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2022/03/22/indias-cautious-approach-to-the-military-coup-in-myanmar/>.
32. Anand A. India attends military parade in Myanmar 2 months after coup. Why it's significant. 2021. Available from: <https://www.indiatoday.in/news-analysis/story/india-attends-military-parade-myanmar-months-after-coup-why-significant-1785075-2021-03-30>.
33. Indian Arms Exporter Ships Air-Defense Weapons to Myanmar's Junta. 2021. Available from: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/indian-arms-exporter-ships-air-defense-weapons-to-myanmars-junta.html>.
34. Rajagopalan R. India Engages Myanmar. 2022. Available from: <https://www.orfonline.org/research/india-engages-myanmar/>.
35. Martin M. Prime Minister Modi and Myanmar's Military Junta. 2021. Available from: <https://www.csis.org/analysis/prime-minister-modi-and-myanmars-military-junta>.
36. Sitlou M, Hanghal N. Insurgents from India add fuel to fire in Myanmar's restive north. 2022. Available from: <https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Myanmar-Crisis/Insurgents-from-India-add-fuel-to-fire-in-Myanmar-s-restive-north>.
37. Hangsing S, Tonsing S. Has Military Rule in Myanmar Affected India's 'Act East' Policy?. 2022. Available from: <https://thewire.in/south-asia/has-military-rule-in-myanmar-affected-indias-act-east-policy>.
38. Purayil MP. The Myanmar Coup and India's Refugee Policy. 2021. Available from: <https://southasianvoices.org/the-myanmar-coup-and-indias-refugee-policy/>.
39. Purayil MP, Purayil MP. India has a Responsibility towards Myanmar Refugees in India. *Economic and Political Weekly (Engage)*. 2022;57(49):1-17. Available from: <https://www.epw.in/engage/article/india-has-responsibility-towards-myanmar-refugees>.





Original Article

Imperatives of Judicial Reforms in Israel: An Analytical Perspective

Alok Kumar Gupta¹, Honey Raj^{2,*}¹Associate Professor, Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Central University of Jharkhand, Jharkhand, India²Research Scholar, Department of International Relations, Central University of Jharkhand, Jharkhand, India

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 12.02.2023

Revised 08.03.2023

Accepted 22.03.2023

Published 28.03.2023

* Corresponding author.

Honey Raj

honeylatest@gmail.com[https://doi.org/](https://doi.org/10.53989/jcp.v2i1_4_raj)

10.53989/jcp.v2i1_4_raj



ABSTRACT

Israel a parliamentary democracy proposed a spate of judicial reforms that led to wide protest across the country since the beginning of 2023. Israel's parliament approved the first pillar of Netanyahu's plan of overhauling country's judiciary in July 2023. Once again, the protests with clashes between people and police occurred. Israel has been facing tough protests almost from all sections of the polity and society. Government and the opposition, both had their own set of arguments towards the imperatives and nature of judicial reforms in Israel. Opponents goes to the extent of saying that proposed reforms will ruin the democratic ethos of the polity as a whole. Government, on the other hand, justifies the reforms as an endeavour to strike balance among the different organs of the Government like Executive, Legislative and Judiciary. Therefore, the ongoing tussle necessitates to explore and analyse the facts behind proposed reforms and their likely impacts upon the polity and politics of Israel. Hence, authors have attempted to analyse the political structure of Israel to present the issue in proper perspective.

Keywords: Judicial Reforms; Israel; Balance of Power; Attorney General; Legal System

INTRODUCTION

In 2023, Israel faced an unprecedented domestic crisis as the government's proposed reforms to the judicial system and its operations triggered a significant outcry. The protest increasingly escalated and the streets of Tel Aviv went full including many of the other towns and cities across the country. Protesters demanded from the Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to roll back the reforms. Undoubtedly, the political rivals spearheaded the protests cutting across political lines. Even the armed forces' personnel threaten to refuse to report for duty thereby threatening the security of the country.¹ Thus, the proposed judicial reforms sparked widespread protests and debates across the country as well as in other parts of the globe. The entire episode highlighted the need for a critical analysis of Israel's endeavors.

While the government and those who support they argue that the reforms are overdue, whereas those who oppose they say it would severely undermine democracy. Accordingly, the proposed reforms faced condemnation from various segments of Israeli society and expressions of concern from Jewish organizations worldwide. Judicial reforms are instrumental in shaping the legal system, ensuring the fair administration of justice, and upholding the rule of law. However, in politically charged environments, it is crucial to scrutinize the implications of reforms to assess their alignment with principles of judicial independence, transparency, and accountability.

Israel has embarked on a series of judicial reforms aimed at enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of its legal system. Prime Minister Netanyahu and his coalition partners believe that the reforms are crucial to address what



they see as an overly influential Israeli Supreme Court. They argue that these changes are necessary to ensure the government's ability to govern effectively is restored. They contend that the Court has encroached upon the authority of the legislative and executive branches, undermining the democratic process.²

However, amidst the public outcry and mass protests across the country, protesters expressed concerns about the potential consequences of these reforms on judicial independence, the separation of powers, and the erosion of public trust in the legal system. Critics argue that the reforms may unduly influence judicial decision-making, compromise the impartiality of judges, and undermine the fundamental principles that underpin a fair and robust judiciary. Those who were in support of the reforms argue that Israel's parliamentary system inherently aligns the legislative and executive branches, making the judiciary the primary check on potential legislative overreach. Concerns have been raised about the perceived self-perpetuating nature of the judiciary, with the legal establishment wielding significant influence over judicial appointments.

On the other hand, those who are critical of the proposed reforms warn that they could increase the control of the legislative branch and weaken the courts. The views on these reforms vary, with some perceiving them as a restoration of the balance that existed during the early years of Israel's existence. Therefore, there are arguments in favor as well as counter-arguments against the proposed reforms, which makes it imperative to discuss the same to arrive at comprehensive understanding of Israel's judicial reforms. It makes it imperative to critically analyze the provisions made and motivations behind them, as well as likely impact of the same on the political system and its functioning. This paper is an endeavor to critically examine the proposed judicial reforms, and evaluate their effects on the legal system. The paper also discusses the extent to which these reforms may contribute to a fair, transparent, and independent judiciary.

GOVERNMENT'S JUDICIAL REFORMS AND THE CONCERNS¹

- The reforms seek to diminish the Supreme Court's power to review and invalidate laws, enabling a simple majority vote in the Knesset to overturn court decisions.
- The government would gain more decisive authority in appointing judges, including those in the Supreme Court, by increasing its representation on the appointing committee.
- Under the proposed reforms, ministers would no longer be legally obligated to follow the guidance of their legal advisers, who currently operate under the guidance of the attorney general.

A recent development in Israel involved the passing of a reform by the Knesset, which effectively eliminated the authority of the Attorney General to declare a sitting Prime Minister unfit for office. There were speculations suggesting that this reform was possibly aimed at preventing such a declaration against Mr. Netanyahu, who was facing a trial on corruption charges, thereby raising concerns about potential conflicts of interest between the reforms and his ongoing legal proceedings. Thus, the proposed reforms smack of politically motivated rather than real need of the Israel polity. Accordingly, the subsequent section has dealt with in detail the imperatives of judicial reforms for Israel.

POLITICAL CONFLICT IN ISRAEL—THE BACKGROUND

Israel follows a parliamentary democracy, where the government's legitimacy depends on obtaining a majority in the Knesset, which is the country's Parliament. The government is formed through a coalition system, where various political parties join forces to create a ruling majority. This means that there is limited space for negotiations with the opposition due to the close relationship between the executive and legislative branches. However, it's worth mentioning that the judiciary functions independently from both the executive and legislative branches.

Due to the lack of a formal constitution, Israel depends on a set of Basic Laws that possess a distinct and quasi-constitutional standing. These Basic Laws outline fundamental principles and rights in Israeli society. In the 1990s, Aharon Barak, the President of the Israeli Supreme Court, played a key role in what was known as the "Constitutional Revolution." This revolution granted the court the power to review and potentially invalidate laws passed by the Knesset if they were found to contradict the Basic Laws. Since then, the Supreme Court has revoked 22 statutes and decisions made by the legislature, asserting its authority as the guardian of constitutional principles.³

In recent times, there has been an increasing discussion among specific politicians in Israel regarding the distribution of power and the perceived influence of the judiciary, particularly the Supreme Court, and the legal advisers of the government. These politicians argue that the judiciary has accumulated too much power, potentially overshadowing the roles and privileges of the other branches of government. They argue that this authority could potentially infringe upon the legislative and executive branches' ability to enact their agendas and make decisions independently. Critics often raise concerns about what they perceive as judicial activism, whereby the judiciary actively shapes policy and legislative decisions through its rulings. They argue that the Supreme Court, in particular, has exerted significant influence over sensitive and controversial issues, such as national security, land disputes, and the status of certain populations. This, according to critics, results in



the court assuming a quasi-legislative role that undermines the democratic process and limits the authority of elected representatives.

JUDICIAL SELECTION COMMITTEE

The procedure for choosing judges in Israel, which has been in use since 1953. It is governed by the Basic Law: Judiciary. According to this law, a Judicial Selection Committee is responsible for the appointment of judges throughout Israel. The committee comprises nine individuals, including the Minister of Justice, a government minister, the President of the Supreme Court, two more Supreme Court judges, two representatives from the Knesset (the Israeli parliament), and two representatives from the Israeli Bar Association. The structure of the Judicial Selection Committee is intended to maintain a combination of professional nominations and the inclusion of political influence in the selection process, thereby achieving a balanced approach. The inclusion of judges from the Supreme Court, representatives from the Knesset, and the Bar Association aims to incorporate diverse perspectives and prevent the concentration of power in a single entity.⁴

The JSC holds significant authority in the selection, advancement, and dismissal of judges in Israel. Its role is crucial in maintaining the independence and integrity of the judiciary. By involving multiple stakeholders, the JSC aims to ensure a fair and balanced approach to judicial appointments. In the 1990s, Israel experienced a significant shift in its judicial landscape, often referred to as a “constitutional revolution.” During this period, the Supreme Court of Israel witnessed a surge in its authority and a reevaluation of its role in relation to the other branches of government. These changes have had profound implications for the balance of power and the country’s democratic framework. One of the notable transformations during the constitutional revolution was the elimination of standing requirements for petitions against the government. The Supreme Court has ruled that every individual who petitions has the right to request that the government adheres to the law. This move aimed to enhance access to justice and ensure government accountability. Additionally, the Court narrowed the doctrine of non-justiciability, which deals with political questions, asserting that almost any government action or inaction can be assessed based on legal criteria. This expanded the Court’s jurisdiction and allowed for greater judicial review of governmental measures.⁵

The Court also adopted the “test of reasonableness,” which allowed it to reject government actions that didn’t consider important factors, relied on irrelevant reasons, or didn’t give enough importance to important factors. By using this test, the Court wanted to make sure that the government’s actions followed the law and safeguarded people’s rights. Furthermore, the Court interpreted the “Basic Laws” of 1992 in a manner that granted it the

power to invalidate legislation passed by the Knesset. This development strengthened the Court’s role as the ultimate arbiter of constitutionality in the country. Although the intention behind these reforms was to strengthen the safeguarding of human rights, maintain the rule of law, and improve governmental accountability, they have faced criticism as well. Critics argued that the Court’s increased power and its engagement with politically sensitive issues led to decisions that were perceived as politically motivated and out of touch with the right-leaning preferences of the Israeli public.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL - GOVERNMENT’S LEGAL ADVISOR

The role and responsibilities of the Attorney General in Israel.⁶

1. Legal Counsel: The Attorney General serves as legal counsel for the Israeli government and public authorities, providing guidance on various legal matters, including constitutional law, administrative law, and international law.

2. Political Neutrality: The office of the Attorney General maintains political neutrality, ensuring that individuals with strong political identities or known political activism are not appointed to the position.

3. Public Esteem and Respect: The Attorney General’s office enjoys widespread admiration from the public, government officials, the Knesset, and the Supreme Court due to its professionalism and unwavering dedication to upholding the rule of law.

4. Appointment and Tenure: The Attorney General is a civil servant appointed by the government based on the recommendation of the Minister of Justice. The specific duration of the appointment is not specified, and the process for removal from the office follows a similar procedure as the appointment.

5. Head of Prosecution: The Attorney General possesses the significant authority to determine whether to bring charges, initiate investigations, close cases, extend the detention of individuals under arrest, seek the removal of parliamentary immunity, and halt criminal proceedings. However, it is important to note that only the Supreme Court has the power to overturn the decisions made by the Attorney General.

6. Representation in Legal Proceedings: The Attorney General represents the State in all courts and tribunals, handling criminal, civil, and administrative cases. The State Attorney, acting under the Attorney General’s direction, carries out much of this responsibility.

7. Legal Advisor to the Government: Serving as the government’s legal counsel, the Attorney General provides guidance on legal matters to government officials, ministries, and public entities. They provide guidance on the interpretation of laws and appropriate legal procedures.



8. Legislative Guidance: The Attorney General plays a crucial role in ensuring adherence to the State's Basic Laws and appropriate procedures throughout the process of drafting and passing legislation. They advise the Division of Legislation in the Ministry of Justice and review government bills and private members' bills for consistency with existing laws and rights.

The Religious Zionist Party raises concerns regarding the functioning of the Attorney General in Israel, highlighting the following problems:⁷

1. Concentration of Power: The Party argues that the Attorney General holds significant power, and as the saying goes, "all powers tend to corrupt, absolute power corrupts absolutely." This concentration of power in a single individual raises concerns about the potential for abuse and undermines the principles of checks and balances.

2. Dual Role: The Attorney General's dual role as both a legal advisor and the representative of the government in court is seen as inherently problematic. While legal advice should not be binding, the Attorney General's position allows them to present the government's position in court. This creates a situation where failure to follow the Attorney General's advice can lead to adverse legal consequences for the government.

3. Lack of Government Representation: If the government's position does not align with the Attorney General's personal opinion or politics, they may choose not to present it in court, leaving the government without legal representation. This denies the government the opportunity to have its case heard, putting it at a disadvantage in legal proceedings.

4. Indictment Power: The Attorney General's authority to indict senior governmental officials raises concerns about potential misuse. There is a risk that punitive measures may be pursued against officials who do not align with the Attorney General's perspective, potentially undermining political independence and democratic principles.

5. Unchecked Authority: The Party argues that the Attorney General currently operates with a high level of autonomy, not being bound by any external factors. This unchecked authority gives rise to concerns about potential corruption and the erosion of democratic institutions.

PROPOSED JUDICIAL REFORM IN ISRAEL

It is in this backdrop of overriding Judicial powers of judiciary and the Attorney General that the government of Israel intended to inject reform to strike so called balance among the different organs of the government, i.e., Legislature, Executive and Judiciary. Accordingly, the judicial reforms that were proposed had four elements:

- the override clause,
- the removal of the reasonability test,
- changes in judicial appointments, and

- the role of legal advisers

The objective of these reforms was to reconfigure the distribution of power between the judiciary and the other branches of government. The aim was to address concerns about judicial activism and promote greater accountability and democratic checks and balances. The reforms have sparked debates and discussions regarding their potential impact on judicial independence, the rule of law, and the democratic functioning of the Israeli legal system. These four elements are therefore being discussed in detail to provide a comprehensive understanding about the same.

THE OVERRIDE CLAUSE⁸

In the absence of a formal constitution, Israel follows a framework of Basic Laws that delineate the division of powers among the government branches and safeguard specific human and civil rights. The suggestion of an "override clause" entails a proposal to allow the Knesset to enact laws that take precedence over a Basic Law.

This means that if a law infringes on human rights without sufficient justification, the Supreme Court can invalidate it as unconstitutional. However, with an override clause in place, the Knesset would have the power to re-enact the law despite the court's ruling, essentially disregarding the Basic Law's incompatibility. At present, when a law enacted by the Knesset contradicts a provision within a Basic Law, especially if it severely infringes upon human rights without adequate justification or proportionality, the Supreme Court holds the power to declare the law "unconstitutional" through its interpretation of the Basic Laws. In such instances, the court has the ability to invalidate the law, rendering it non-binding and ineffective.

THE REASONABILITY TEST⁹

Under proposed judicial reforms in Israel, one significant change involves the removal of the "reasonability test" that the Supreme Court currently applies when judging Knesset legislation, appointments, or other government decisions. The "reasonability test" refers to the court's assessment of whether a government action is reasonable or rational in light of the circumstances.

By eliminating the "reasonability test" the intention is to limit the Supreme Court's power to review and potentially overturn decisions made by the Knesset and the government. This means that even if a court finds a decision to be unreasonable or lacking in rationale, it will no longer have the authority to invalidate it on those grounds.

CHANGES IN JUDICIAL APPOINTMENTS

Two sets of proposals have been presented to modify the Judicial Selection Committee's composition in Israel. The first proposal, published on January 11, 2023 by Minister



of Justice Levin,¹⁰ and the second proposal, put forward by Knesset member Simcha Rothman,¹¹ Chair of the Constitution, Law, and Justice Committee, on January 18, 2023 share a common objective. The two proposals seek to change the composition of the committee, shifting it from being primarily comprised of legal professionals such as judges and lawyers to a committee under the control of the government coalition. These proposed changes have raised concerns about the potential shift in power dynamics and the impact on the independence of the judiciary.

Proposed Changes in Judicial Appointments in Israel are as follows:⁶

1. Composition of the Judicial Selection Committee:

- Minister of Justice Levin's proposal:
- The majority of members, who are currently legal professionals, would be replaced by government representatives.
- The committee's composition would comprise 11 individuals, which includes three Supreme Court justices, three government ministers, three members of the Knesset (two from the coalition and one from the opposition), and two public representatives.
- The ruling coalition would hold authority over seven out of the 11 members, granting them a majority that enables the appointment of justices to any court, including the Supreme Court.
- Knesset member Simcha Rothman's proposal:
- The Israel Bar Association's two representatives would be substituted by an additional government minister and an extra member of the Knesset.
- The committee's composition would include the chairperson of the Constitution, Law, and Justice Committee, one member from the coalition, and one member from the opposition.
- Changes would be made in the representation of the judiciary, where the president of the Supreme Court and two retired judges would be appointed by the minister of justice with the approval of the president of the Supreme Court.
- Depending on the appointment of a Supreme Court president who aligns with their ideological stances, the coalition could potentially hold control over eight out of the nine seats on the committee.

2. Selection of Supreme Court President:

- Minister of Justice Levin's proposal:
- The current seniority rule, where the longest-serving justice becomes the president, would be discarded.
- The president would be elected for a nonrenewable period of six years by the committee.
- Presidential candidates would no longer be mandated to have previous experience serving on the court.

THE ROLE OF LEGAL ADVISORS

The role of legal advisors are as follows:¹²

1. Legal advisors are responsible for providing the necessary legal support to ensure ministry policies are grounded in law.
2. They help the ministry implement its policies while ensuring compliance with legal boundaries and principles of good governance.
3. Legal advisors serve as gatekeepers, ensuring that the ministry operates within the law and adheres to established norms.
4. The appointment process for legal advisors should prioritize their ability to exercise independent judgment, separate from the influence of the ministry.
5. Independent judgment is crucial to enable legal advisors to apply their expertise effectively and impartially.
6. Their role is to balance the ministry's policy objectives with legal compliance and good governance standards.
7. Legal advisors act as gatekeepers within their ministries, ensuring adherence to the rule of law.
8. They play a vital role in maintaining legal compliance and serving as an "internal check" on the government.
9. The Attorney General oversees this system, with legal advisors acting as an extension of the Attorney General's office.
10. They have a responsibility to alert the Attorney General of potential issues or decisions requiring intervention.
11. This collaboration between legal advisors and the Attorney General helps ensure proper governance and upholds the rule of law.

Minister of Justice Yariv Levin recently unveiled his judicial reform package, which includes a plan to reduce the authority of government legal advisers in compelling the government to adhere to their legal stances. Levin argues that these proposed measures aim to rectify a democratic anomaly where crucial decisions in Israel are being made by individuals who were not elected.

The reforms aim to address concerns about important decisions being made by unelected officials. The draft bill states that legal advice from government legal advisers would not be binding on the government or ministers. The proposed reforms would allow the government and ministers to determine the legal position presented in court and choose their representatives before judicial bodies. The intention is to provide more autonomy to the government and ministers in legal matters without changing the overall legal framework in Israel.

PROponents OF THE JUDICIAL REFORM

Israel has experienced a shift towards the extreme right in its political landscape over the recent years. The far-right political party argue that there is an imbalance



between the judiciary and the executive and legislative branches. They contend that the judiciary is predominantly influenced by liberals and leftists, while the political climate has shifted towards the right. The government's objectives include granting extensive exemptions from military service to religious Jews and enacting a law that prevents the Prime Minister from being removed from office without authorization from the Knesset and Cabinet. However, there is concern that the Supreme Court might reject these plans unless the powers of the judiciary are restricted. Therefore, the right-wing parties view the existing judicial structure as an obstacle to their efforts to reshape the Israeli state.¹⁰

Proponents of judicial reform argue that:¹³

1. The process of appointing judges in Israel is distinctive when compared to other democratic nations. One notable aspect is the composition of the committee responsible for judge selection, which grants substantial authority to current judges and provides them with the ability to veto nominees they do not approve of. Under different political governments, the judges' side tends to vote together, resulting in judges having absolute control over appointments.
2. Advocates of the reform argue that the introduction of the override clause would result in improved representation of different segments of Israeli society and enhance public trust in the justice system.
3. Supporters assert that the Supreme Court has assumed unrestricted authority to invalidate laws passed by the Knesset, operating without sufficient checks and balances.
4. Advocates argue that the implementation of the override clause is essential to reinstate the equilibrium of power among the government branches and align Israel with other democratic nations.
5. They maintain that the Supreme Court should not hold ultimate decision-making power over policy issues and the determination of which rights should be classified as "Basic Law."
6. Supporters of the reform point out that the current system of legal advisors often leads to conflicts with ministers' agendas, hindering policy reforms.
7. They criticize the representation of the state's position in court, where the legal advisor sometimes contradicts the position of the office they represent.
8. Supporters question the use of the "Reasonability clause" and argue that it allows the courts to unjustly interfere in policy creation without proper legal justification.
9. They raise concerns about the court's authority to determine what is considered reasonable, and why a judge's opinion is considered superior to that of a government minister.

OPponents OF THE JUDICIAL REFORMS

Opposition leader Yair Lapid strongly condemns the government's proposed judicial reform plans, characterizing them as a drastic and detrimental transformation of the democratic system. Lapid argues that the reforms amount to an extreme regime change, likening it to canceling the principles enshrined in the Declaration of Independence and isolating Israel from the community of liberal nations. He asserts that these measures do not seek to improve democracy but rather to erode it, emphasizing that a true democracy cannot exist when a government is granted unchecked authority and eliminates essential checks and balances. In his view, such actions undermine the very foundations of democracy and compromise the principles that uphold a fair and just society.¹⁴

According to Attorney General Gali Baharav-Miara, the government's comprehensive proposals for substantial reforms to the legal and judicial system in Israel would grant the government almost unlimited power without establishing any safeguards for individual rights or for the democratic nature of the country. The Attorney General's Office emphasized that the proposed legislation, as communicated to Justice Minister Yariv Levin, would result in a fundamental alteration of the state's governance, undermining its democratic principles. The concerns raised suggest that the proposed reforms could have significant implications for the balance of power and the preservation of democratic values in Israel.¹⁵

The extensive overhaul of the legal and judicial system in Israel has generated widespread concern across various sectors, including finance, business, security, and academia. Critics argue that the proposed reforms go too far and would eliminate the only existing mechanism for checks and balances on the Israeli legislative branch. They express apprehension that the independence of the judiciary would be compromised, potentially undermining rights that are not protected by Israel's quasi-constitutional Basic Laws, such as minority rights and freedom of expression.

A February 2023 poll conducted by the 'Israel Democracy Institute' revealed that a minority of Israelis support the reforms, with the majority advocating for a compromise. Furthermore, a substantial number of individuals hold the view that the Supreme Court should preserve its authority to nullify laws and that the existing process of appointing judges should remain unaltered. Former Mossad chiefs have also voiced opposition to the reforms, emphasizing that the division over the issue is detrimental to Israeli security. Moreover, hundreds of reservists in the Israeli army have expressed their refusal to serve if the reforms are implemented, expressing concerns that the changes would diminish Israel's status as a full democracy.¹⁶



CONCLUSION

Democracies across the globe have been facing such imbalances in their polity and their different organs of government have been found at loggerheads. The organs of government have remained involved in one-upmanship contest since the commencement of politically organized society. The most obvious conflict that has been witnessed in most democracies are between the Parliamentary Executive and Judiciary. Even in case of India once the then Prime Minister Late Indira Gandhi had to advocate for committed judiciary and bureaucracy, as she found them truly conservative. She advocated for the simple reason that the judiciary being conservative was nullifying the most legislative proposals related to change in policy and institutions to put the country on right track of socio-economic development.

However, on most occasion such contestations have been ridden with vested interests and are found politically motivated. Reforms are the need of most polities to keep pace with the change in social, political, economic and cultural life of the people on account of development in science and technology and overall modernization. However, the reforms must be in consonance with the demand of the political system and not driven by vested interests of political leadership and political parties. Power politics has made it imperative for political parties to inject such changes in the institutional mechanisms that they are able to sustain themselves in power. Any reform driven by such vested interests and motivated by lust for power is detrimental to the entire political system including the very freedom of citizens.

Therefore, it is quite obvious that all the branches of governance i.e., Legislature, Executive and Judiciary etc. are required to keep reforming sometimes by way of legal interventions and sometimes adapting in their style of functioning according to the imperatives of social, economic, political and cultural modernization of the polity, as a whole. Israel too would need to reform its institutions but it must be done in right earnest, rather than be driven by power motive. Israeli political dispensation needs to weigh its reforms in terms of its impact on its citizens and other relevant institutions within their polity.

A critical analysis of Israel's judicial reforms reveals that most of the important institutions like Army, Judiciary itself, and its intelligence organization Mossad have revealed their reservations on the proposed reforms. It seems that the impact of proposed judicial reforms on the legal system are going to be detrimental to their freedom and independence of functioning. Hence, it is difficult to ensure that any modifications made with the judicial system is difficult to align with the principles of fairness, transparency, and an independent judiciary. By carefully evaluating the concerns raised by critics, such as compromises to judicial independence, the separation of powers, and the erosion of public trust, it is possible to make informed judgments about the reforms.

Hence, maintaining a balance between effective governance and upholding the principles of judicial independence, transparency, and accountability is of utmost importance. It is necessary to ensure that any reforms implemented do not undermine the rule of law or the integrity of the judiciary in Israel. A thorough and comprehensive evaluation of the proposed judicial reforms and their potential consequences, policymakers can make informed decisions that enhance the legal system and foster public confidence. Additionally, open and inclusive discussions involving stakeholders from various sectors of society can contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the implications of the reforms. The government may push for the necessary reforms taking the citizens in confidence through a nation-wide debate and discussion, to sound increasingly democratic. This would certainly enhance the acceptability towards genuine reforms.

Ultimately, the goal should be to establish a legal framework that safeguards the rule of law, promotes impartiality, and ensures equal access to justice for all individuals. Regular assessments, public discourse, and ongoing monitoring of the reforms will be essential to evaluate their effects and make necessary adjustments to maintain a fair, transparent, and independent judiciary in Israel.

REFERENCES

1. Berg R, News. Israel judicial reform: Why is there a crisis?. 2023. Available from: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-65086871>.
2. Stopler G. The Israeli Government's Proposed Judicial Reforms: An Attack on Israeli Democracy. 2023. Available from: <https://constitutionnet.org/news/israeli-governments-proposed-judicial-reforms-attack-israeli-democracy>.
3. Introduction to the 2023 Israeli Judicial Reform. 2023. Available from: <https://jjj.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Booklet-Judicial-Reform.pdf>.
4. The Judges Selection Committee. 2023. Also see Simant Tyagi, "Israel's Judicial Reform Bill: A Threat to Judicial Independence and Democracy?" Live Law, April 09, 2023. Available at: <https://www.livelaw.in/columns/israels-judicial-reform-bill-a-threat-to-judicial-independence-democracy-225849> (Retrieved on June 16, 2023). Available from: https://www.gov.il/en/departments/general/judicial_nominating_committee.
5. Cohen A, Shany Y. The Fight Over Judicial Appointments in Israel. 2023. Available from: <https://www.lawfaremedia.org/article/the-fight-over-judicial-appointments-in-israel>.
6. Israel Judicial Branch: The Attorney General. 2023. Available from: <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/israel-attorney-general-jewish-virtual-library>.
7. Judicial Reform . The Religious Zionist Party led by Bezalel Smotrich. 2023. Available from: <https://zionutdatit.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Judicial-Reform.pdf>.
8. Fuchs A. The Override Clause Explainer. 2022. Available from: <https://en.idi.org.il/articles/46387>.
9. Johny S. Explained- Why has Israel Paused the Judicial Reform Plan?. 2023. Available from: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/explained-why-has-israel-paused-the-judicial-reform-plan/article66689041.ece>.
10. Sharon J. Levin unveils bills to remove nearly all High Court's tools for government oversight. 2023. Available from: <https://www.timesofisrael.com/levin-unveils-bills-to-weaken-top-court-enable-laws-to-be-immune-to-judicial-review/>.



11. Keller-Lynn C. Knesset law panel chair seeks to expedite judicial upheaval, with some changes. 2023. Available from: <https://www.timesofisrael.com/knesset-law-panel-chair-seeks-to-expedite-judicial-upheaval-with-some-changes/>.
12. Lurie G, and DB. The Role of Legal Advisors - Explainer. 2023. Available from: <https://en.idi.org.il/articles/48989>.
13. Introduction to the 2023 Israeli Judicial Reform. 2023. Available from: <https://jij.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Booklet-Judicial-Reform.pdf>.
14. Lapid says judicial reform proposal is actually 'extreme regime change'. 2023. Available from: https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/lapid-says-judicial-reform-proposal-is-actually-extreme-regime-change/.
15. Sharon J. Attorney general: Judicial overhaul plan 'would give government unrestrained power' . 2023. Available from: <https://www.timesofisrael.com/attorney-general-judicial-overhaul-plan-would-give-government-unrestrained-power/>.
16. Gold H. A threat to democracy or much-needed reform? Israel's judicial overhaul explained. 2023. Available from: <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/03/25/middleeast/israel-judiciary-netanyahu-explainer-intl/index.html>.



ABOUT THE DEPARTMENT

The Department was established in July 1973 by Prof. K. H. Cheluva Raju, with the support of Dr. H. Narasimhaiah, the then Vice-Chancellor of Bangalore University. Dr. Cheluva Raju served as Professor and Chairman till 1987 and went on to become the Vice-Chancellor of Gulbarga University from 1987-1990. Since then, the department has had qualified faculty members, who have carried forward the legacy and values established by Prof. K. H. Cheluva Raju.

They include Prof. Narayana, Prof. R.L.M. Patil, Prof. M.G. Krishnan, Prof. P. S. Jayaramu, Prof. D. Jeevan Kumar, Prof. Sandeep Shastri, Prof. Meena Deshpande, Prof. M.J. Vinod and Prof. P. Ramanna.

Since its inception, the Department has promoted critical inquiry and exchange of ideas. It strives to remove barriers in higher education and motivate students in realizing their potential through creative spaces. It promotes inter-disciplinary research and tie-ups with civil society and industry, with the intention of facilitating placement of students.

Presently, the department consists of three Professors.

Prof. M. Narasimhamurthy

Prof. Veena Devi

Prof. S. Y. Surendra Kumar

At present there are 120 P.G. Students and 32 Ph.D. scholars (two foreign students) pursuing their studies.

Publisher Information

Department of Political Science

Bangalore University

Mysore Rd, Jnana Bharathi, Bengaluru, Karnataka 560056

Contact email: surendradps@bub.ernet.in

Phone: 080 22961731

Online publishing support contact

Scientific Research Solution Pvt. Ltd.

#208, Treasury Layout, Bogadi, Mysore-570026

Phone: +91-9845883696, Mail: info@sciresol.com

web: www.sciresol.com