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Original Article**Gun Laws and Gun Related Violence in the United States: Issues and Complexities****M J Vinod^{1,*}**¹Professor, Department of International Studies, Political Science and History, Christ (deemed to be) University, Bangalore, Karnataka, India

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INTRODUCTION

Gun related violence in the US is complicated, nuanced, emotional, politically toxic, culturally complex and highly polarizing. In short, it is one of the most intractable issues in American political and social life. The periodicity of the gun related tragedies seems to have resulted in a certain numbness, bereft of emotionalism and sensitivity. All that one sees are the lighting of candles, placing of flowers, and making emotional eulogies. This is necessary, but in no way compensates for the enormity of these tragedies. Over the past few decades, thousands of innocent lives, including young innocent children have been man slaughtered for no fault of theirs. Guns are now one of the leading causes for the death of children in the US. The state authorities have been virtually reduced to mute spectators, leaving many questions unanswered. Has individual freedom resulted in the freedom

to kill? Is gun ownership a right for all Americans or just a minor militia? Can lose gun laws be construed as institutionalized murder? These are some of the critical issues that need to be addressed.

Wide civilian ownership of firearms legally and/or illegally has been the primary cause for gun violence. The statistics emerging out of the Gun Violence Archive says it all. About a third of the adults in the US have guns. America has one of the highest levels of gun ownership and gun violence. Gun ownership and homicide rates are very high in the US. There is a link between ownership of guns and violence, which has been proved through various studies. The US ratio of firearms per 1000 residents stands at 120 followed by Yemen 52, Serbia 39, Montenegro 39, Uruguay 32 and Canada 32. Even more disconcerting is that of all the murders in the US, 60% were by firearms, compared to 31%



in Canada, 18% in Australia and 10% in the UK. In the US, there are 4.12 deaths per 100,000 which is forty times higher than the UK. On a per capita basis US gun related murders is thirty times that of the UK.

Studies have shown that jihadi terrorists get their guns largely through criminal connections, whereas the rightwing terrorists procure their guns through legal means using the internet and even assembling of firearms. In the European Union there are currently 25-million-gun owners, who together possess up to 80 million guns. Presently almost 6700 people die in the EU as a result of gun wounds every year (most of these being impulsive suicides), compared to approximately 47,000 deaths in the US. The majority of gun deaths are suicides.

Online sales and 'ghost guns' have added to the problem. Among those below the age of twenty, gun violence accounts for over 7% of the deaths in the US. There has been a historic spike in homicides in the US too, along with domestic violence, community violence and mass shootings. Unfortunately, many of these firearms have found their way into the hands of criminal groups and terrorists. In the US even background checks are not always needed to purchase a gun. This is the outcome of poor enforcement and legal loopholes. More guns in the US means more deaths (German Lopez, May 22, 2022)¹.

DEBATE OVER THE SECOND AMENDMENT

The right to own a gun is considered sacrosanct by many Americans, perhaps as long as one's own kith and kin are not the victims. In the early days of the American Republic firearms were considered essential. Militias existed since the early days of white settlement, as many colonies were almost in a permanent state of war. The Colonists had to protect themselves. The war with the Indians also forced them to become proficient in guns. After independence, the US Congress was authorized to even call the militias into national service.²

For most of American history, the Second amendment has remained as the uninterpreted relic of the founding era, until the *Heller v District of Columbia* judgment of the US Supreme Court, though the Court did not fully ban handguns. Gun ownership is rooted in the Second Amendment which states that, "A well-regulated militia being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed".³ However, the right to bear arms is not open-ended. Certain restrictions are laid out in the Gun Control Act of 1968.¹ Over the years many Gun Acts have not pulled through judicial review, like the Washington DC law that banned the carrying of banned handguns. This was one of the Courts first rulings on the Second Amendment in nearly seven

¹The Control Act of 1968 prohibits individuals under eighteen years of age, convicted criminals, the mentally disabled, dishonorably charge military personnel, and others from purchasing firearms.

decades.

Their argument is that the right to possess firearms is enshrined in the Second Amendment to the US Constitution. The roots of the Second Amendment can be traced to the rights of Englishmen to carry weapons for their self-defense. Later the Amendment referred to the right of the citizen militia to keep arms. It was primarily meant for small militias of those times and not necessarily for individuals to carry and unleash them in the manner they tragically do now. Moreover, much has changed, from the days of the musket to an AR-15.

Today the AR-15 is at the heart of the gun debate in the US. No weapon is as ubiquitous /controversial as the AR-15's. The rough estimate is that one in twenty Americans owns an AR-15. This works out to almost 6% of the population. It has become so popular for both sport and mass shootings, that some suggest that it should be christened as the 'national gun of the US'. Unfortunately, AR-15's has been used in 10 of the 15 deadliest mass shootings in the US since 2012.⁴ Its popularity has to do with its lightweight, accuracy and ease of use even by women and children. The weapons simplicity has tragically made it a favourite for mass shootings. Commercially it has resulted in a huge cash flow for the gun sellers.

The core of the argument opposing gun control or "restrictionism" as Lester Hunt puts it is that "it is rights based". In that sense, the right of self-defense is empowered. Hunt argues that guns make people feel like responsible citizens. (David De Grazia and Lester Hunt: 2016)⁵. The counter argument is that gun ownership makes the lives of people more insecure. The right 'not to be shot' is a counter to those who perceive possession of guns as rights-based.

The Second amendment is perhaps one of the most controversial, volatile and misunderstood provision of the US Bill of Rights. The present debate according to Michael Waldman was a backlash to the liberal 1960s and the resurgence of libertarianism.⁶ Though the Second amendment states that "the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed", yet it needs to be contextualized and qualified. Neither is it sacrosanct. Earlier the justification for guns were dual, viz., for self-defense and defense against a tyrannical government. Now the focus seems to be self-defense. If so many guns are required for self-defense, then it does not reflect well on American state and society. In this context, guns are both the problem and the solution. Ironically and tragically, the Second Amendment has made the US the world leader in mass shootings.

In *Hellner v District of Columbia* (2008), four justices of the US Supreme Court ruled that the right to bear arms made sense only in the context of a "well-regulated militia" of the 18th century. Justice John Paul Stevens in this case contended that the Second amendment cannot be construed as a fundamental right to self-defense. However, based on a



5-4 verdict, a majority of the judges argued for the possession of firearms in self-defense. The case had to do with the 1976 District of Columbia's ban on gun ownership and their registration. Justice Stephen Brayer argued that the District's law banning guns was consistent with the Second Amendment. Yet, the 2008 judgment also He argues that the comma in the Second Amendment of the Bill of rights ratified on December 15th, 1791 is the pivot point on which ideological wars have been waged, and lives hang in balance, upheld the right of individuals to possess guns.

Jim Beckerman suggests that the Second Amendment is all about a comma. The second Amendment states as follows: "a well-regulated militia being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed." He argues that the comma in the Second Amendment of the Bill of rights ratified on December 15th, 1791 is the pivot point on which ideological wars have been waged, and lives hang in balance. The question Beckerman raises is: what is the relationship between these two phrases on either side of this ambiguous punctuation mark? The issue is whether the right of the people to keep and bear arms is for the primary purpose of maintaining a militia? If that is so then the right to use firearms for hunting down people in public spaces with semi-automatic weapons is not guaranteed. The other issue is whether the Second Amendment should be interpreted to mean that, because the need for a well-regulated militia has established the need for guns, therefore guns of any kind and under any circumstances must remain legal under the Constitution.⁷ Hence according to him this has been the platform on which the pro and anti-gun lobby platforms have been waging war.

Under the present circumstances, the Second Amendment does not protect the right of children to go to school or citizens to go to malls and hospitals with confidence. As President Biden rightly pointed out it's an issue of both "conscience and common sense". Both seem to be lacking among the stakeholders and the NRA. Moreover, in terms of attitudes towards gun license, perceptions seem to vary on the basis of ethnicity, race, party, community and class. More Republicans possess guns than the Democrats. Gun owners must be made liable for misuse of their guns by them or others. Unfortunately, this is not happening and what is being unleashed on fellow Americans are almost akin to weapons of war. Americans seem to be caught between the devil and the deep sea when it comes to the right to own firearms on the one hand and the need for regulating firearms on the other.

LOBBYING BY THE NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION (NRA)

Since its creation in 1871 as a recreational group. The National Rifle Association (NRA) headquartered in Fairfax, Virginia is today one of the most powerful political and gun rights organizations in the US, with a membership of more

than five million. The NRA's lobbying arm is the Institute for Legislative Action which openly lobbies against gun control, by influencing public policy. In 1977, it created its own Political Action committee to fund lawmakers, mostly Republicans.⁸ The NRA has close ties with the multibillion-dollar firearms' industry in the US.

Its standard argument is that guns make the US a safer place. US civilians own almost 390 million guns. Lobbyists like the NRA, the Gun Owners of America (GOA) and the Second Amendment Foundation along with some of the lawmakers move heaven-and-earth to defend the Second Amendment in 'letter', though not in 'spirit'. One may recall that since the formation of the Political Action committee (PAC) in 1977, the NRA has been channeling funds to legislators. In 2020 the NRA spend close to \$250 million for lobbying against gun-control laws. It grades the Congressmen from A to F based on their levels of support for gun rights. Needless to say, the NRA has stakes in the multibillion-dollar firearms' industry. That the NRA continues to be unrelenting, is not a matter of surprise. Stephen Gutowski argues that the NRA creates "puppet politicians", who do nothing but lie and continue to take the NRA's dirty money.

In the 2016 Presidential elections, the NRA reportedly spent \$50 million in outside spending in support of Trump and six Republican Candidates for the Senate. Large numbers of TV ads were sponsored by the NRA. Perhaps former President Trump benefited the maximum. In 2017, he is reported to have told the NRA that "I will never let you down".⁹ Yes, he never let them down, in spite of all the mass shootings that took place during his tenure as President.

There was a time when the NRA was in favour of modest gun control measures rather than universal measures. In a major turnaround, the NRA is now in favour of 'Endless Carry' i.e., gun holders can carry their gun in public without a permit. The NRA has also influenced 23 states to pass 'Stand your Ground Laws'. This implies that gun owners do not have a duty to retreat before perceived threats, but may now 'stand their ground' and shoot first.¹⁰

Proponents of the Second Amendment have virtually become habitual in the southern states. The tragedy is that guns are not just being used for sport, hunting and self-defense but unfortunately even for manslaughter. Let's not forget everyday more than 110 Americans are killed due to gun-related violence. When the NRA dismissed the Uvalde massacre as "the act of a lone, deranged criminal" it has only compounded this depressing familiarity. Ironically, soon thereafter a three-day Convention of the NRA took place in Houston displaying 14 acres of the latest guns and gear. How strange that the NRA still contends that the solution to gun massacres is more guns. That seems to be a cruel joke and a contempt for life.



NATURE OF THE CHALLENGE

The Americans killed in terrorist-related violence, perhaps pales in comparison to those who are made sacrificial lambs due to gun-related violence. Many researchers in the US have brought out the link between gun deaths and gun ownership in the US. A US war veteran who commanded the US and NATO forces in Iraq and Afghanistan lamented: "It is gut-wrenching to me that Americans today are more likely to experience gun violence than in many of the places to which I was deployed in the name of defending the nation".

Some of the ways to address this scourge is by insisting on more background checks, red flag laws (also termed Extreme Risk Protection Orders), exercising the right to confiscate guns if necessary and having a ban on assault rifles like AR-15's.¹¹ To estimate exactly the number of firearms in private hands is never easy in the US. One of the reasons is that an individual would need only one background check, even if multiple firearms are purchased. Moreover, it is difficult to account for purchase of firearms from private dealers, friends or even parents.¹² Additionally, there would be the challenge posed by uneven enforcement, even if a law is passed for this purpose. Establishing more gun-free zones like transport hubs, hospitals, government offices, educational institutions etc. need to be prioritized. The gun-rights activists argue that places with restrictive gun laws have witnessed crimes with the use of illegal arms. But this is no argument at all.

Banning assault rifles, defined as semi-automatic weapons, like AR-15's is necessary under the circumstances. Studies show that there are almost 20 million assault rifles in private hands today in the US. The problem is that several laws banning assault rifles face a variety of legal challenges across the country. Many cities and states have stepped in with their own laws in the absence of federal laws in this context. Such laws can take precedence depending on the context and the contingency. Critics argue that it is a violation of the due process. Stricter gun laws could reduce the possibility of gun violence and deaths. Changing the gun culture is sometimes as equally difficult as changing the laws. As long as the Congressmen look at gun control issues from a purely partisan and commercial perspective, rather than as a national issue, the problem will linger on.

In 2021, the Texas Governor signed a law permitting any person above the age of 18 years to openly carry a gun without license or training. If more guns will make Texas safer, the facts prove otherwise.¹³ Texas has one of the highest gun sales in the US as well as one of the highest gun-related death rates. Some of the deadliest mass shootings have taken place in Texas.

It has unfortunately been a story of more guns, more violence, more deaths, more eulogies and more debates. Gun-related violence has been a morally charged issue. Gun violence has and continues to be a complex issue with no easy solutions. The lack of a working consensus on the issue continues to baffle both America and the rest of the

world. Regardless of one's views on the Second Amendment, the recurring tragedies should be an eye-opener. Strict background checks, regulation of firearms and a ban on assault weapons seems to be the only way out.

Gun control legislation is not meant to confiscate guns from law-abiding citizens, but to ensure that it does not go into wrong hands. If not, it will only be a question of waiting for the next tragedy to unfold. In that sense the 'State' has become part of the problem rather than the solution. The problem is ingrained in US politics, culture, and law. The prospects for reform look bleak because of the overwhelming influence of the gun lobby. Mathew Lacombe argues that the NRA has "politically weaponized the gun owners". This is because of the NRA's cultivation of a distinct, politicised "gun owner social identity".¹⁴ This has been used by the NRA to mobilise mass political action on its behalf. Breaking the NRA's stranglehold on American democracy is never going to be an easy task, as it has a nationwide lobbying apparatus.¹⁵ But the fight must go on.

A spate of recent gun-related tragedies at Sandy Hook School and Rob Elementary School have renewed the call for repeal of the Second Amendment. The fact is that gun control is both a state and a federal issue. Moreover, the debate over gun laws has to do with the obligation of the American State to its people. Right to own a gun is now almost akin to a right to kill. Given its rabid misuse, the 18th century rationale is no longer justifiable. Rather, it is more a smokescreen for stake holders like the NRA and the lawmakers, to perpetuate the policy and the industry. The possibility of the US Congress passing a national Red Flag Law seems remote at this point of time, though it is the moral obligation of the State to make adequate safeguards. What is required is political will, backed up by raw common sense. It is time to stem the bloodshed. If not, America will continue to pay a heavy price for its exceptionalism and the "good guy with the gun" theory. After every high-profile mass shooting, the US gun debate is reignited. The debate has waxed and waned over the years. It all seems to be about political power, political muscle, money power and the Second Amendment being used as a convenient lever. Gun control has become one of the most contentious issues in American politics. The challenge is to strike an eclectic balance between individual freedom and the public good.

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Original Article

Formation of Informal Alliances in Indo-Pacific: Analyzing the Role of India

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ABSTRACT

The present world order is dominated by informal security, economic, cultural and strategic alliances across the regions. The Indo-Pacific region attracted the International community in the recent past due to the formation of informal alliances such as QUAD, AUKUS and IPEF. China's rise, which is seen as a threat to the existing World Order, has also helped the Indo-Pacific in getting the attention it long deserved. The presence of Informal Organizations or Informal 'Inter-Governmental' Organizations (IIGOs) plays a significant role in the region which still lacks a regional integration process. Internationally, the focus is mostly given to formal institutions, while the informal ones remain ignored because of their lower chance of enforcement. It needs to be understood that IIGOs can assist in the better and proper functioning of Formal Inter-Governmental Organizations (FIGOs), where the members are divided upon their national interests. In certain scenarios, they can also replace and transform into a formal organization. The presence of bilateral conflicts and lack of strong regional mechanisms in the Indo-Pacific region also led to the emergence of informal alliances based on mutual interests. This paper primarily focuses on the dynamics of informal alliances in the Indo-Pacific region and highlights India's interests.

Keywords: QUAD; AUKUS; IPEF; Belt and Road Initiative and Pacific Network

SIGNIFICANCE OF INDO-PACIFIC

The term 'Indo-Pacific' consists of the words 'Indo' and 'Pacific', referring to the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean. This region representing 38 nations, 44% of the global surface area, 65% of the world population, and 62% of global GDP got the attention it deserved only after 2011 when the US realized the Chinese threat to its power.¹ The 'Indo-Pacific' region has always been advantageous for trading and globalization due to the important sea-routes it has. This region accounts for 46% of the global merchandise trade; 70% of India's trade is carried out through this region, but the area started to seem strategically important only when

China launched its Belt and Road Initiative in 2013.² China had already gained the position of being the "biggest trading partner" for many of the major countries, and completion of the BRI would only fuel the Chinese dream of world domination.³ This has been the reason for the creation of the "Free and Open Indo-Pacific", which can rebalance China's influence in its region before it could go for the world.

THE INTER-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN INDO-PACIFIC

Inter-Governmental Organizations (IGOs) are institutions of three or more states which act as an instrument for their



member states to pursue any decided objective, though from a realistic point of view: these organizations exist only as a platform for the member states to further their national interests. The presence of an IGO is necessary not just for deliberating over any concerned issue, but also to represent its member's point of view on that issue.⁴

IGOs can be of different types based on several factors like membership eligibility, formality, functioning, etc. Based on formality, Inter-Governmental Organizations can be divided into Formal IGOs and Informal IGOs. Normally, when IGOs are discussed, those are the Formal IGOs or FIGOs, whereas the Informal IGOs (IIGOs) otherwise called Informal Organizations are not much talked about.

Formal IGOs (FIGOs) are formed by an internationally recognized treaty and have a permanent secretariat (Headquarters and staff), giving it a much higher legal characteristic; whereas the Informal IGOs (IIGOs) are formed due to a shared expectation in regards to a purpose rather than a binding agreement among a group of states who are participating in regularized meetings with no permanent institutions or staffs.⁵

Before discussing the informal IGOs and their needs in the Indo-Pacific one should look at the existing Formal Inter-Governmental Organizations (FIGOs), as they would help understand the development of the region and the priorities that have been set already. So, some of the Formal IGOs, which are present in the Indo-Pacific Region are SAARC, ASEAN, BIMSTEC, Pacific Islands Forum, etc.

The Association of South-East Asian Nations or ASEAN was created in 1967 to enhance economic, social and cultural development and to promote peace and stability in the region, i.e., South-East Asia.⁶ Similarly, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, i.e., SAARC, was established in 1985 to improve the economy, welfare and better quality of life, to promote mutual trust and enhance collaboration among the nations in the South Asian region in fields of science and technology.⁷ Meanwhile, the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation or the BIMSTEC was created in 1997 to act as a "bridge between South Asia and Southeast Asia", mostly in the economic dimension.⁸

The pattern that could be noticed from these three organizations is that all three FIGOs are representing only a part of Asia, rather than the entire continent. This makes one understand that the continent of Asia is divided internally. It is not like the culture of respect, the presence of social hierarchy or the wish to expand the economy is not present in all the Asian nations, the basic values shared among all the Asian nations are the same. Yet, the fact that there is no formal organization representing the entire continent, like that in Europe (European Union) and Africa (African Union) is astonishing.

NEED FOR INFORMAL INTER-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS (IIGOS)

The rise of IIGOs started in the post-Cold War Era when it was not fully clear who was going to be the new power on the international platform. IIGOs can play "a unique multi-faceted role as a flexible, open and transparent brainstorming and bridge-building forum for governments" as mentioned by WHO in regards to IFCS.⁹ It provides a mechanism which can be used by both strong as well as weak states to satisfy their demand and preferences. This feature fits perfectly with the Indo-Pacific region, where developed, developing as well as under-developed countries co-exist.⁵

The potential of the Indo-Pacific can be acknowledged by all, and it can be confirmed that India, China, Japan, the USA, and Australia are the big powers in the region, but still, there is a cloud of uncertainty present in the region which needs to be cleared.

First, exactly which countries are part of the Indo-Pacific? To the US, the Indo-Pacific region consists mostly of the nations in the Pacific Ocean, India being the only participant from the Indian Ocean. But, to China, it excludes the existence of the Indian Ocean as its focus mostly goes towards the South-East Asian nations along with the US and Australia. For India, the view of the Indo-Pacific looks different as well, as it considers some of the African and West Asian countries as part of this region along with the other nations present in the Pacific Ocean.⁸ Through the presence of an informal organization, this difference of opinion must be cleared out as it is critically important for all the key players to have a uniform opinion on which nations exist within this particular geo-political zone and which don't. Without a properly defined and accepted boundary, it would become difficult for the member nations to know which other nations they are dealing with. With this particular knowledge, the nations would be able to formulate their strategy better.

Secondly, different nations have different demands from the Indo-Pacific region. With the help of IIGOs, all these demands could be addressed adequately. For Example- China is looking to increase its influence in the regions by making a web of trading partners thus it is participating in SCO and is proposing the Belt and Road Initiative, whereas India, the USA, Japan, and Australia are looking to increase the security status of this region, which led to the formulation of QUAD.

Thirdly, what exactly is the future of the region? China, the USA, Japan, Australia, South Korea, and India have already laid down various strategies on what to do in the region, but more often than not, these strategies clash with one another and threaten other nations' interests and security. In this type of situation, it becomes difficult to predict which strategy would become successful and which would not. For example, - The Free and Open Indo-Pacific was created as an opposition to China's Belt and Road Initiative.³



This point leads us to the fourth question: Who exactly is going to be the 'big-power' in this region? Whose strategy is going to be successful, in formulating the new World Order? Being part of informal organizations, the member nations can lobby for their strategy. In this manner, the strategy can gain support from other member nations and can increase the success rate of its implementation, without letting the non-member nations (who made opposing strategy) know. The member nations being part of the same IIGO can anticipate each other's motives and prepare better policies to further their national interest, without facing many obstacles from others. IIGOs also serve as a platform for the member nations to reconcile the differences present amongst themselves, so that they can formulate strong alliances to achieve their common interest.

Thus, the presence of any Informal Inter-Governmental Organizations would help the nations present in gaining more clarity while making new alliances, trading off information, and in the process gathering more information. Through this the nations cannot just spontaneously participate in the dynamic politics but can also predict its course, further modifying its action to have a better power position in the region.

Other than that, the IIGOs can also help solve conflicts between its members without letting the opposition or enemy alliance know about the problems that they might be facing internally.

WHY ARE THE ORGANIZATIONS USING 'INFORMAL' STATUS?

One might say that these functions could be performed in a formal organization as well, but the responsibility and cost of negotiation in a formal organization are very high. Formal organizations are obliged to entertain the media and announce their activities and progress to the public. Hence, there is a high possibility of the opposition using this publicly announced information in their favour, to formulate consequent strategies. However, this is unlikely to happen in informal ones as the member-states have control over the flow of inside information.⁵ Further, the IIGOs can also formulate various collective strategies without having the legal responsibility and accountability to go through the plan. This lack of accountability and low chance of actual enforcement encourages the states to freely propose their ideas, which allows other member-states to predict individual states' approaches towards the matter being deliberated upon.

In the Indo-Pacific, these features play a significant role due to the contemporary geo-political developments happening in the region. The US and its allies have identified China as the aggressor in the Indo-Pacific region, which is trying to challenge the existing rule-based world order. Yet, one could undeniably agree upon the trade relations and economic dependency that China shares with the

countries in the region. Surprisingly, China is the largest trading partner for Japan, South Korea and Taiwan, who are considered to be major US allies in the region.¹⁰ The contemporary world order is rather unpredictable as one could only wonder if the US would succeed in maintaining its status quo. The probability of China formulating a new world order also cannot be denied- especially after its intense economic growth in the past decades. China uses its economic prowess to invest in infrastructure projects abroad. In December 2022, Chinese Direct Investment abroad increased by USD 44.2 billion compared to the previous quarter.¹¹ Currently, China forms the largest trading partner with more than 120 countries. These figures indicate China's strengthening position in the contemporary scenario. Most countries are worried about engaging in activities that might provoke China's direct aggression towards them. Therefore, the 'informality' of an organization creates a 'grey zone' where members can engage without bearing the responsibility of taking any definite action.

Vabulas and Sindal in their paper, Informal Intergovernmental Organization have mentioned how IIGOs can assist a FIGO in their functioning. They stated how the presence of IIGOs can help in centralized coordination and the process of agenda setting.⁵

The formal Organizations in the Indo-Pacific, like SAARC, ASEAN and BIMSTEC have already proven their failure in regulating and solving conflicts in the Indo-Pacific. Examples- are the disputes over several islands, the ongoing nuclear proliferation, the ongoing South-China Sea Dispute, etc in East Asia; and the multiple instances of economic and political crisis and cross-border terrorism in South Asia. This proves the need for informal organizations that would approach the disputes from a different angle and would help the countries cooperate better in settling them.

IIGOs create their alliances based on the common needs of their members and once a FIGO is formulated, each alliance could represent their common needs in a more structured manner. This would make discussions over the issues better, thereby helping the FIGOs function more easily and efficiently.

INDIA AND THE EXISTING INFORMAL ORGANIZATIONS IN INDO-PACIFIC

The biggest IIGO which is present in the Indo-Pacific is none other than the QUAD (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue), which is being promoted by Japanese Prime Minister Abe since 2006 who advocated for the development of a 'Pacific Network' within Japan, India, USA and Australia to strengthen the cooperation between the big and emerging powers in the Indian and the Pacific Ocean.³ The QUAD is meant to look after issues like maritime security, trade, economic cooperation, cyberspace and internet governance, airspace and outer space, the rule of law in conflict areas, in providing humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.¹²



Being part of the QUAD nations has been beneficial to India, as it not only shares common interests with other QUAD members but the organization also tries to uphold rules and regulations in the region. The network created by the QUAD helps India connect with other regions in the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean which is beneficial for its trading relations. In 2020, the organization also brought in nations like South Korea, New Zealand and Vietnam and formulated QUAD+ to discuss on matter of COVID-19 and increase the organization's importance.

Other than QUAD, the other informal organization which is getting enough attention is AUKUS, where the USA is planning to provide Australia with submarines with nuking facilities as a means of strengthening the region.¹² This organization in particular is beneficial as well as a threat to India. By providing nuclear submarines to Australia, the security of the region would increase which could help India in defending itself against China's maritime power. But on the other side, this can also end up provoking China and the possibility of another arms race could be anticipated. Further, the presence of foreign submarines in Indian water could decrease India's influence in its neighbourhood.¹³

Five Eyes, an intelligence organization, whose origin can be traced back to 1941, during the Second World War and played a significant role in transferring information during the Cold War has also decided to focus on Indo-Pacific. After the end of the Cold War, Five Eyes shifted its focus to terrorism issues and later on China, thus it wanted powers like India, Japan and South Korea to join hands for sharing intelligence information and maintain peace in the region. Later, India and Japan joined the Five Eyes in 2020, whose original members were the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.¹⁴

The US recently launched the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) for better economic cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, to ensure free and fair trade and promote sustainable and inclusive economic growth. The framework has started with fourteen original members from the Indo-Pacific region which represents 40% of the global economy.¹⁵ India in particular has taken a non-anticipatory stance. It has joined three out of four pillars of the organization namely- supply chains, clean economy and fair economy. India has opted out of the 'Trade' Pillar stating its concern that IPEF could "discriminate against the developing nations".¹⁶

The US has formed this body as a way to tackle China's growing economic influence, it is to be kept in mind that for the other members- China and not the US is their biggest trading partner. Thus, the ambitious plan which was prepared might never come to fruition.

CONCLUSION

From this paper, one does realize the importance and need of informal organizations. But the most difficult part is to

keep them alive. It is easy to create an IIGO but difficult to keep it sustaining. Due to its low binding mechanism, it is very easy for a state to not fulfill its promises and leave the organization, which affects the health of the entire organization. Till now, we have seen the failure of various IIGOs, QUAD 1.0 was a failure (which was then replaced by QUAD 2.0)¹⁷ and recently USA announced its inability to provide Australia with nuclear submarines- the reason for AUKUS's formation.¹⁸

Furthermore, it can be seen that only a handful of countries are part of these IIGOs, the member list of all the IIGOs seems synonymous. But, the Indo-Pacific is not made of these nations only. Many of the small nations like the Federated States of Micronesia, Papua New Guinea, and the Marshall Islands are ignored from this grand Indo-Pacific strategy. It not just hurts the sentiments of these nations but also risks development in the region as it asks for cooperation from all the countries.

The region has seen multiple failures of Formal Organizations as well. SAARC couldn't help its member-states to solve any conflict amongst themselves. The same goes for ASEAN as well who couldn't do anything during the Rohingya Refugee Crisis or the recent Myanmar Coup. These failures only highlight how divided the entire region is and how inefficient the organizations are.

To make the Indo-Pacific more organized and strategically strong, more emphasis needs to be given to the IIGOs. The IIGOs in the region have to be more interactive with each other and need to cooperate with the FIGOs that are present. In that way only, both the FIGOs and IIGOs can exist together, being able to function efficiently. The IIGOs are usually not kept in check by the media or any other civil society organization. This is the reason why they often blend into the background and are forgotten by people, even though the base of the alliance is formed and nurtured here. IIGOs can act as a branch of FIGO and at a later stage can also turn into a formal organization, which is why monitoring them from an early stage is a good alternative to just focusing on the FIGOs.

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Original Article

War Against the Tamil Tigers: How Did Sri Lanka Win?

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ABSTRACT

The final Eelam War that was fought during 2006 to 2009, the Sri Lankan State for the first time in the history witnessed the crystallisation of the trends in favour of it against the Tamil tigers or LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, also known as Tamil Tigers). With gradual liberation of north and eastern territory first that were under the clutches of LTTE for long and later dislodging Tigers' command control, in three years' timeline the Sri Lankan Armed Forces (SLAF) annihilated the Tigers entirely in May 2009. The victory of the SLAF brought three decade long armed conflict to an end that caused the death of over 100,000 and displacement of millions. While noticing the progress of the security forces and the way things unfolded, the pertinent questions that arise are: How did the Mahinda Rajapaksa government won the war? Was there a game plan with the government since the beginning of Eelam War IV? If so, what was that strategy? If not, how did they go ahead? Although there was no explicit publicly pronounced strategy by the Sri Lankan government for dislodging the Tigers but it appears their evolved game plan was broadly centered around ten points. They were: one, winning local constituency support; two, silence critics; three, build strong military, four, entice Karuna, five, shed conventional military methods; six, shrivel Tigers territories; seven, keep in loop but deter India; eight, diplomatic neutralise West; nine, curb Tigers's international network; and finally, liquidate Tigers' top leadership. The paper analyzes these aspects in details in this paper.

Keywords: Sri Lanka; LTTE; Tamil Tigers; Eelam; Rajapaksa

INTRODUCTION

Sri Lanka, by and large, was one of the countries that were in limelight often, thanks to the protracted conflict between ethnic minority Tamils and majority Sinhalese. Either the war between the parties or violence or peace talks or the migration of affected Tamil population to India and western countries as refugees had captured the headlines of the global media, which sustained the public interest on Sri Lanka.

The successive regimes at Colombo were adopting strategy of war and peace talks in dealing with the dominant Tamil group, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The first phase of war, known as 'Eelam War I' was fought during 1983–1987, began with the LTTE's fatal assault on Sri Lanka army near Thirunelveli in Jaffna District, killing

13 army personnel in July 1983. Subsequently, there was a ceasefire with the intervention of India for the duration of 1987 to 1990. However, the change in Sri Lanka's domestic political landscape in the end of 1980s obligated India to withdraw its peacekeeping forces from the island. As a result, Eelam War II (1990–1995) broke out with the massacre of about 600 surrendered policemen by the LTTE in the Eastern Province on 11 June 1990. While the warring parties agreed for ceasefire in January 1995, the subsequent negotiations were unproductive, as a result, the Eelam War III (1995–2002) commenced with the LTTE blowing up two Navy gunboats, SLNS Sooraya and SLNS Ranasuru on 19 April 1995.

Later on 22 February 2002, the Sri Lankan Government under Ranil Wickremesinghe and the LTTE signed the



Ceasefire Agreement (CFA), which was facilitated by the Royal Norwegian Government. Part of it, the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was worked out, which brought truce between the two parties. The Scandinavian countries monitored it. In addition, the Oslo Declaration was signed on 25 November 2002 by the Sri Lankan Government and the LTTE in the presence of Mr. Richard Armitage, U.S. Deputy Secretary of State, Ms. Claire Short, UK Secretary of State, Mr. Yasuji Akashi, Japan Special Envoy and Mr. Jan Petersen, Norwegian Foreign Minister. Both the LTTE and the Sri Lankan Government agreed to explore a political solution founded on the principle of internal self-determination in areas of historical habitation of the Tamil-speaking people, based on a federal structure within a united Sri Lanka.¹

Meanwhile, in November 2005, Mahinda Rajapaksa won the Presidential election and with this there were fissures in CFA and peace talks between two sides. In line with his poll promises during the campaign that if he was elected to power, he will not recognise Tamil homeland or right to self-rule for Tamil areas as well will not agree to federal solution and continuing international mediation, Rajapaksa opted for war over negotiations when the LTTE seized Mavil Aru sluice gate. Thus, Eelam War IV started in 2006 and went on till 2009.

The paper focuses on the final phase war where much significant developments took place that necessitated detailed analysis. In fact, not only the observers but even the common public who are aware of the developments in Sri Lanka were pondering about: How does Sri Lanka under Rajapaksa dislodge the LTTE in 2009 whereas the previous regimes failed? Was there a game plan with the Sri Lankan government under Rajapaksa? If so, what was that strategy? What are the factors that contributed for the government's success against the LTTE?

THE BEGINNING — MAVIL ARU CRISIS

The approaches of the government at Colombo and the LTTE began hardened gradually after Mahinda Rajapaksa became President in November 2005. Incidentally, it became clear that the Rajapaksa government's main intent was to take on the LTTE militarily instead of continuing the peace talk that was facilitated by Norway between the earlier Ranil Wickremesinghe government and the Tamil Tigers. The Rajapaksa government's unwillingness to concede what the LTTE demanded in peace talks and the then President Rajapaksa electoral alliance with the hardline parties like JVP (Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna) had apparently contributed for the government pro-war choice. [The LTTE has consistently demanded a separate Tamil homeland whereas the Sinhalese dominated governments were not even willing to devolve minimal powers to the Tamils. After the 2002 CFA the LTTE has shown willingness to accept autonomy in a notionally united Sri Lanka. Its

proposal for an Interim Self Governing Authority (ISGA) was summarily rejected by the political establishment].

Yet, it appears that there was no clear strategy with the then President Rajapaksa about how to go ahead militarily when CFA was in force. But, with the closure of Mavil Aru waterway sluice gate by Tigers in July 2006, the Rajapaksa regime had an opportunity to pursue military means. [The standoff over the Maavilaru waterway in Trincomalee district appears to begin with the closure of sluice gate by Tamils living in LTTE-controlled areas of Muttur East-Eechchilampattu on 22 July 2006 with the LTTE protesting against the reported insensitivity of the Sri Lankan government in addressing the drinking water problem of Tamils at Eachchilampattu. The blockade of the water canal stopped the flow of water to some 30,000 acres of ripe paddy fields and 60,000 people in nearby Sinhala settlements. The issue got aggravated when the Sri Lankan government began using military force to settle the issue]. Significantly, with the success at Mavil Aru, the government seems to have convinced itself of the efficacy of force in settling the issue instead of entering into negotiation with rebels amid the clandestine support from the breakaway Tiger group under Vinayagamorthy Muralitharan alias Colonel Karuna Amman or Karuna. Notably, with the adopted military approach rewarding the SLAF with the first success against the LTTE after CFA at Mavil Aru, thereafter, the government went ahead with its gradually drawn up multi-pronged game plan that was devised from time to time. The prominent strategies that evolved by the Mahinda Rajapaksa government which contributed for the military success against the Tigers are discussed in the subsequent sections.

DECODING SRI LANKAN STRATEGIES

Winning Local Constituency

The Rajapaksa government's foremost strategy was to win the local audience, especially Sinhalese and international community on its side to isolate and dislodge Tigers. Domestically Rajapaksa regime was successful in advancing and capitalising the national sentiments of the majority Sinhalese on its war against the LTTE. Rajapaksa's pro-Sinhala rural image and considerable support from the Sinhala hardliners — JVP, Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU) — and Buddhist cleric helped him to win the majority Sinhalese. In fact, the LTTE's violent behaviour—the closing of Mavil Aru water way and air attacks on Colombo—gave a measure of credibility to the Rajapaksa government's justification for progressing with the war and gaining the local support. Significantly, a whopping 84% of the Sri Lankans had then approved the war strategy of the government, according to the opinion poll conducted by National Peace Council. [The National Peace Council (NPC) along with the MARGA Institute in Sri Lanka conducted the poll]. The public disillusionment of LTTE's suicide attacks on



senior Sri Lankan officials, including the defence secretary and places like Katunayake airport too provided credibility to the government's justification for military approach.²

Further, the then President Rajapaksa went ahead with agenda of gaining popular Sinhalese support through launching large scale recruitment for security forces apart from hiking pay for public sector and government employees. About 40 percent of top jobs that were filled had gone to the rural Sinhala segment of the population.³ These measures consolidated his support base where the benefitted southern Sinhalese stood loyal to his government's military approaches. Also, to demonstrate to the local constituency that he is keen on bringing development, Rajapaksa went ahead with the signing of deals with China on mega development projects like Hambantota Port and Hambantota Airport.

Politically, he created a jumbo cabinet by bringing in all the parties and independent members through either splitting the opposition parties or wooing many. This helped to ensure political stability. Mahinda Rajapaksa's determination as a political leader and the head of the security forces to go on with the battle till the military objectives were completely attained aided the defence forces' nuanced planning and war tactics. For instance, even after facing debacle like the Muhamalai where 120 soldiers were killed by the LTTE in just one day on 23 April 2008, he went ahead with bold decisions to pursue military means. Reportedly, he was part of the entire decision-making by personally attending all the security related council meetings every Wednesday. He posted his brothers and other family members in key positions, particularly, Gotabaya Rajapaksa as defence secretary; Basil Rajapaksa as political trouble-shooter, which helped to withstood enormous political pressure.

Silence Critics

While focused on winning the Sinhala population's support, the Rajapaksa made every effort to silence the critics and opposition parties who were against his policy through various means including adopting intimidation. This to an extent contributed for the government's uninterrupted 'peace through war strategy'.⁴ Particularly, he nudged the local media to cease the flood of negative reporting on the military operation and civilian casualties. Further, 'white van syndrome,' what is popularly called for a series of abductions and murders of critics such as media persons that allegedly includes Sunday Leader Editor Lasantha Wickrematunge that took place during the Eelam War IV are the case in point. Colombo Telegraph cites Amnesty International and reports that at least 15 journalists and media workers have been killed and 30 seriously injured since January 2006 to 2012.⁵ Apparently, white van without number plates' would come and then people vanish afterwards without mostly any tracing. Report states that it

was carried out in accordance with the orders of Gotabaya Rajapaksa, the former Secretary of the Ministry of Defence.⁶ In fact, Gotabaya Rajapaksa in his interview to Daily Mirror acknowledges prevalence of white vans to "take in" suspects by the intelligence agencies.⁷

Also, Rajapaksa regime used all means to silence the voice of civil society groups by imposing new regulations⁸ in an effort to monitor and block any outflow of information of local condition to the outside world through them. The Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) that operated in the North and East of Sri Lanka was asked to leave or downgrade its staffs.⁹ The Sri Lankan Government's increased scrutiny and regulation on the humanitarian agencies through the established Parliamentary Select Committee and Presidential Task Force such as inquire into the activities of the NGOs and visa issuance for the foreigners were some cases in point.¹⁰

Build Strong Military

With gradual success in the military operations from Mavil Aru, the Rajapaksa regime understandably realised they need to increase the force strength to overpower the Tigers who were facing shortages of youth recruits in the Eastern Province. Consequently, his government made vigorous recruitment drives during the Eelam War IV; targeting 'patriotic' Sinhalese bachelors in Southern Sri Lanka aged 18-26. For instance, the Sri Lankan Ministry of Defence sent out campaign message such as, "young patriots — come join with our armed forces and be a part of a winning team."¹¹ Incidentally, in order to facilitate the rapid recruitment process, the qualification requirements were tweaked so that even with the lowest possible level one can join the army. Special walk-in interviews too were exclusively conducted in Sinhalese areas.

This was essential as the Sri Lankan military had an authorised strength of 120,000 personnel in 2005,¹² but losses in combat and desertion¹³ has kept operational strength much lesser than the above, according to news reports. To meet the LTTE's challenge, the Sri Lankan Army rapidly bolstered its strength up to 200,000 in 2009 with the Light Infantry, Sinha, Gemunu, Gajaba, Vijayaba units and the Sri Lanka National Guard absorbing most of the fresh recruits.¹⁴ The armoury and artillery, too, were boosted; this gave an unprecedented firepower for the SLAF. The Mechanized Infantry Brigade, Special Presidential Guard and Civil Defence Force (a new paramilitary unit from the East) were created newly within the army. Similarly, with the alleged Sri Lankan Muslims who speak Tamil were enrolled in the Army's special unit¹⁵ for surveillance activities. On 13 January 2009, Lt. Gen. Sarath Fonseka, the then Army Commander declared that "today the Army is strong with 180,000 personnel, whereas a few years ago, we had just 116,000 people. We elevated ourselves not just with man power but with well trained, sharp and skilled



professionals.”¹⁶

Ultimately, Rajapaksa regime strengthens its firepower by going for vigorous arms procurement.¹⁷ Tamil Net report dated 22 January 2005 claimed that the Sri Lankan Government had a defence deal with Iran through its USD 150 million credit line.¹⁸ Similarly, the Sri Lanka had several defence agreements with China including those for the supply of modern radar and large quantities of ammunition.¹⁹ As per Jane's Defence Weekly, Sri Lanka signed a confidential amount of about USD 37.6 million deals with China's Poly Technologies in April 2007 for ammunition and ordnance for the Army and Navy such as 120 mm mortar shells (70,000 rounds priced at USD10.4 million), 152 mm artillery shells (68,000 worth USD 20 million) and 81 mm high-explosive mortar bombs (50,000 priced USD 3.7 million), 14.5 mm cartridges (100,000 nos.), and RPG-7 rockets (2,000 nos.). Similarly, China National Electronics Import Export Corp provided JY11 3D radar for USD 5 million.

Pakistan too reportedly supplied a range of hardware, including the multi-barrel rocket launchers, Heckler and Koch G3 rifle (manufactured under license by POF) and 120mm heavy mortars.²⁰ The military hardware was also allegedly procured from Ukraine and Israel for the SLAF to considerably improve its operations.

These procured arms and India, China and Pakistan's special military training assistance had tremendous impact on the SLAF and its military victory against LTTE as it not only contributed for the modernisation of security forces but also helped to progress with the war with superior firepower.

Entice Karuna

While engaged in winning Sinhalese population in the South, the Rajapaksa's administration focused on enticing Karuna faction to secure their support in the Eastern Province primarily and the Northern Province subsequently. Apparently, the Sri Lankan Government's reading is that the former LTTE commander Karuna could be won as he had to protect himself against the LTTE and its chief Prabhakaran for breaking the organisation. As anticipated, Karuna switched his loyalty to the Rajapaksa government for his endurance protection and this certainly added value to government's goal.²¹ Incidentally, Karuna's allegiance to the Rajapaksa government not only gave the government safeguard but also in gaining political status where he was permitted to maintain his armed group's forces and subsequently his political faction Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Pulihal (TVMP) become an alliance partner of ruling United People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA) of Rajapaksa in the Eastern Province.²² In short, Karuna's TVMP ensured that the LTTE weekend with no substantially recruitment from the Eastern Province apart from sharing precise intelligence on the former boss and his strategies.

Shed Conventional Military Methods

The Rajapaksa regime through the Army Commander Gen. Fonseka conceived the military strategy that abandoned the conventional military tactics to match the Tigers' guerrilla tactics and strategies. Foremost, getting rid of the traditional war strategies gave a benefit for military to fight the LTTE on a multiple frontline. Second, Sri Lankan Police Special Task Force (PSTF) and a small Deep Penetrating Units (DPU) were deployed along with the Army in conflict zones. Three, Naval and Air Forces personnel were entirely deployed in support of the ground operations at the Northern and Eastern Provinces.

A small Tamil speaking Eastern Tamils of Karuna group and Muslims who are familiar with the terrain and landscape were apparently used to their advantage in their attacks. The increased numerical strength and fire power of the SLAF aided in launching surprise ambushes and raids and sabotage of a vulnerable target.

Interestingly, the Sri Lankan Army espoused an offensive approach, whereas, the LTTE adopted defensive approach owing to significant challenges of new recruitments and earlier huge losses in the 2004 Tsunami. Evidently, even before the beginning of final phase of war in 2006, the then President Chandrika Kumaratunga's on 30 December 2004 said "the threat of war is remoter (sic) than on December 25 (the day before the Tsunami) because the LTTE has suffered heavy casualties, if not anything else."²³ In her assessment the LTTE had lost almost all its main naval bases on the North-eastern coastal belt and elucidate that the casualties in LTTE as "very high."

Also, the breakup of eastern commanding faction by the Karuna and subsequent dearth of new recruitments for the Tigers had put it in defensive mode. Evidently the validation of above assertion was confirmed by the reclusive Colonel Karuna in his interview to the BBC's Colombo correspondent Roland Buerk where he candidly stated "by leaving the LTTE, they have lost 70% of their fighting capacity."²⁴

Shrivel Tigers holdings

The Sri Lankan government's priority under Rajapaksa as president was to win militarily first, then to talk about political question later on its own terms. Hence, the then President Rajapaksa was keen to shrivel territory's that were under Tigers control in order to force the political solution on his own term after major battle gain. In line, the Rajapaksa government moved forward with military option when Tigers blocked the Mavil Aru water canal near Muttur on 21 July 2006. The Tigers' misconstrue provided opportunity for the government to move ahead with its plan to test its capability against the LTTE. With the triumph in Mavil Aru, government designed plan to liberate the Eastern Province first from the clutches of the LTTE, thereby, weakening its



ability to operate and regroup in the eastern part of the island.

In accordance, the security forces carried out a pre-emptive assault and captured Muttur on 5 August 2006, Sampur on 4 September 2006, [Another reason for launching offensive at Sampur was that the Sri Lankan government concern about the strategically crucial navy base in Trincomalee which was reportedly under grave threat from LTTE's Sampur base, induced to launch offensive and captured it. This was the first ever territorial change in Sri Lanka after the 2002 CFA] Vaharai on 19 January 2007 and Thoppigala—the last pocket of influence of the Tigers in the East—on 11 July 2007. In accomplishing this, the government adeptly roped in the Karuna faction; indeed, the military victories in the East are largely credited to the inputs provided by the Karuna faction about LTTE tactics.

As the government achieved its objective in the East, in early 2008 it devised a chart to bring about a democratic set up before moving to northern front. This move becomes necessary for the government to effectively nullify the international community criticism and pacify the local Tamils. Accordingly, a democratic administration headed by Chief Minister Sivanesanathurai Chanthirakanthan alias Pillaiyan of TMVP was set up. The TMVP was rewarded in keeping with government's concern to ward off Tigers' regrouping as well to instil and draw Eastern Tamils confidence on Rajapaksa government. A former terrorist group leader giving up arms and successfully entering the mainstream politics and embracing democracy in a meaningful way in Eastern Province was demonstrated as a good example to the domestic and international audience.

With victory in the East, SLAF under Rajapaksa formulated its ensuing military strategies on the Northern front. Accordingly, few important stratagems that were adopted are:

- Clear A9 Highway
- Operations from West to East - deny access to western sea
- Operate Navy and Air Force concurrently

Clear A9 highway

After liberating the East, the government set its focus on clearing A9 highway. The strategy was to get land access to Jaffna that can facilitate troop's movement as well as to cut off the comfort of Tigers' funds generation through tax and their movement. In consistent with the above plan, Sri Lankan government closed A9 highway at Muhamalai in August 2006.²⁵ The closing of A9 highway was the biggest loss for the LTTE as the revenue that it got through toll tax reduced considerably that was one of the important source of domestic finance for sustaining the Tigers. Incidentally, while the sealing off A9 highway affected the population and essential service movement, government continued the blockade.

Operations from West to East

As far as the north is concerned, the SLAF military tactics was that it will move from the West of the island i.e. Mannar, Vavuniya, & Jaffna towards the Eastern areas of Mullaitivu and Killinochchi which was evident through the operations took place from 2007 to 2009. The two most important objectives of this tactics was to deny the western sea access to the LTTE and thereby averting their escape to Tamil Nadu and next, also, can prevent the fleeing of affected Tamils to India as refugees, which could flare up political momentum in Tamil Nadu against Colombo.

The 57th Division of the Sri Lankan Army on March 2007 marched from Vavuniya to Killinochchi, while 58th Division launched its operations from the Silavathura area in Mannar to Killinochchi through the annexed Poonaryn. Equally, the 53rd and 55th Divisions of the Army consolidated Elephant Pass and Chalai and moved towards Killinochchi.²⁶ On 2nd January 2009, Killinochchi, the de-facto administrative and political capital of the LTTE was captured by Sri Lanka Army. It was a big blow to the Tigers' mobility. Contrary, the occupation of Killinochchi enabled the government to re-establish its control over a vital highway linking the northern Jaffna peninsula with the rest of the country.²⁷ The LTTE was left out with small territory of Mullaitivu, where they retreated along the northeastern coastal district.

Operate Navy and Air Force concurrently

The triumphed government determined to continue its operation as per the devised strategy through using Navy and Air Force to deny access to the Tigers and in inflicting damage to the LTTE strong base Mullaitivu while the military's DPU permeated into Forward Defence Lines (FDL) in Mullaitivu. Sri Lankan Government on 25th January 2009 made it publicly that its troops had entered Mullaitivu, the last major rebel bastion. With this the LTTE was confined to a small area, between Vishwamadhu and Puthukkudiyiruppu. Finally, on 18 May 2009 the Sri Lankan Government declared that the LTTE was defeated at Vellamullivaikal, near Nanthikadal lagoon and its chief Prabhakaran was killed. This brought Eelam War IV in particular and protracted armed conflict in general to an end.

Keep in loop but deter India

Sri Lanka quiet sure that while focused on domestic factors it is the India factor that could make influence in the course of battle outcome for the Colombo's efforts. In line, the Rajapaksa Government even as kept engaging New Delhi, it deterred proactive approaches of India by bringing in China card strategically. In a sense, Sri Lanka listen to India's concern on war and proposed ceasefire options and even received Indian delegation and engaged at top political leadership level but continued its arms procurement and engagement with China, Pakistan and other countries. By



means of placing higher demand for lethal weapons to New Delhi, Sri Lanka also put India on back foot as the latter can't cater to the Colombo's need and hence, advocated their need for approaching China and Pakistan. It was like 'give us the weapons that we need or please keep away, we can find help elsewhere.'

The long-standing Indian policy of ensuring welfare of minority Sri Lankan Tamil community along with the reminder of assassination of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi by the alleged LTTE members kept India in catch-22 situation. The Rajapaksa regime skilfully used this predicament of India to their favour. It was because Rajapaksas realized that keeping India aligned to Colombo's military objectives in its battle against the LTTE was important and doesn't want any sort of repetition of 1987 episode. As expected, tactful India who cannot supply everything that Colombo asked but provided some weapons, training and intelligence sharing and kept away from engaging the LTTE messengers.

In fact, it was the India's tactful support that contributed for the Sri Lanka's success against the LTTE.²⁸ While there was uneasiness between New Delhi and Colombo on various issues time to time such as Sri Lanka's military cooperation with Pakistan and China to human rights, it was the India's silence and diplomatic approval of the Sri Lanka's stratagem that aided the SLAF advancement in dislodging the LTTE leadership.

Gotabaya Rajapaksa acknowledged this in this statement "the manner in which President Rajapaksa tackled India was a key factor of our military success. We knew that only India influences us militarily. India is a huge power in our neighbourhood and our proximity to Tamil Nadu with 60 million Tamils sensitive to what's going on in Sri Lanka made the situation extremely complex for us. We knew that while other countries could or would resort to economic sanctions, only India had the power to militarily influence the course of our war operations. So it is to the credit of President Rajapaksa that he was successful in keeping New Delhi aligned with Colombo's military objectives."²⁹

Managing Tamil Nadu Factor

The Colombo was aware of New Delhi's sensitive to the concerns of Tamil Nadu government and its coalition partner, the DMK's regard to civilian casualties in war, hence, then President Rajapaksa regime ensured that they will always resemble amenable to the New Delhi's view while on ground it could differ. For instance, on 27 April 2009 when the then Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M Karunanidhi of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) went on a sudden fast at the Anna Memorial in Chennai demanding ending of the Sri Lankan offensive in the North, the Rajapaksa regime immediately announced that it is ceasing the combat operations and shelling. As a result, the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister ended his fast in six hours' time.³⁰ This was a classic

example of Rajapaksa regime diplomatic tactics with India and towards Tamil Nadu.

Neutralize West

While kept India in loop, the Rajapaksa regime disengaged the service of Norway and other western powers in Sri Lanka by making it clear that they are not interested in progressing with peace talks. Sri Lanka also indicted that Norway and the EU were supporting the Tigers through CFA and peace talks³¹ as a reason for snubbing the mediators.

Sri Lanka was successful in advocating the danger of giving breathing space to the Tigers who had generally used it only for regrouping and continuing the conflict, which the Western government began acknowledging with the silence of India, close neighbour. Brian Stewart states that "there was consensus that anything that ended Sri Lanka's brutal, on-and-off-again civil war would be far better than letting the conflict continue,"³² which produced hundreds of thousands of refugees so far.

Curb Tigers' International Network

The Sri Lankan government put its energy and effort relentlessly to get LTTE proscribed internationally by taking the fight against LTTE as part of the global war on terrorism. In fact, the Rajapaksa government successfully used the 'terrorism' card effectively in the changed global scenario after 2001 September attack at New York. The narration of Tigers' that they are freedom fighters who are fighting for the liberation against Sinhalese oppressive domestic regimes didn't succeed much in 2005 afterwards as the world has increasingly tightened their approach towards groups that employed terrorist means. Sri Lanka believed that there is a necessity to counter LTTE propaganda and activities internationally to achieve its strategy locally.

The LTTE that was proscribed over the years by countries like India (1992) and the U.S. (1997) with the list of assassination of two heads of state straightforwardly fitted into the Colombo's narration in appealing the Western countries. As a result, the Sri Lankan government under Rajapaksa was able to curb the Tigers' international network that was deemed as lifeline of rebels. The LTTE's network from Canada to Australia that engaged in fund-raising, weapons purchase, narcotics dealing, and credit card frauds, etc. were brought under the surveillance and gradually confiscation of the money and materials by various countries. The U.S.,³³ Canada,³⁴ UK,³⁵ France, Italy and many others have arrested and prosecuted LTTE agents. Consequently, the Tigers funding and activities had suffered tremendously. As a result, the Sri Lanka succeeded in isolating the LTTE diplomatically and financially and thereby curtailed its \$200 million per year fund-raising network.³⁶ The draining of funding and global diplomatic support eroded its combat potential.



Mission Mullaitivu - Liquidate LTTE leadership

The Sri Lankan government's decision to pursue military strategies was clear since 2006 but apparently the Rajapaksa government didn't have a plan of eliminating the LTTE leadership at first. This objective was stepped-up with the pace of the triumph by Sri Lanka Army. While the LTTE's principal negotiator, S.P. Tamilselvan, was killed on November 2007 in an air raid, the fall of Killinochchi and then Mullaitivu boosted the Rajapaksa's buoyancy that they can certainly liquidate the LTTE chief Prabhakaran. That's why Sri Lankan Government didn't agree for ceasefire demand of the LTTE or of India that came from Tamil Nadu in 2008-2009 periods. In the end, the LTTE chief was announced as dead by the Sri Lankan government on 18 May 2009³⁷ through its operation.

INFERENCE

The decoding of Sri Lankan Government's strategy against the LTTE, the pertinent question that arises is, was there a clear strategy when Mahinda Rajapaksa was elected in 2005? Simple straight answer looks, 'No.' But, apparently, the Army got a green signal to plan its future battle approach by looking into its past battle experiences. As a result, Sri Lankan Army studied all its previous war operations such as Eelam War I (1976-1987), Vadamarachchi Operation, Eelam War II (1990-1995), Operation Sea Breeze, Operation Thrividha Balaya, Operation Balavegaya I, II, Eelam War III (1995-2002), Operation Riviresa, Operation Jayasikurui, Operation Rivibala, Operation Ranagosa, Operation Rivikirana, and Operation Kihinira I, II, III/IV, V/VI, VII, VIII, IX. This exercise aided the Army to arrive at conclusive reasons for their previous failures and helped in identifying the 'slip-up'.

The constant defensive military approaches, meagre military personnel, vast desertion of soldiers, inadequate firepower (arms and ammunition), and dearth of human intelligence (scarcity of Tamil informers) are some of the supposed finding of the study. The lack of strong political backing too could be one of the identified judgments it appears that.

Consequently, the Sri Lankan Army must have gone ahead with drawing up a multi-pronged approach for combating Tiger when it received strong political backing from Mahinda Rajapaksa. As a reason even when the Sri Lankan Government came under criticism of disregarding Tamil civilian and employed military force "bluntly and brutally," the Army was not called back from its operations. The Rajapaksa regime's conviction was that military victory should have achieved before looking up at peace talk or political solution. Their diplomatic tactics of keeping India in loop but deter it and employing LTTE's 'terrorism' card with Western nations paved way for navigating the geopolitical dimension successfully.

In short, the Rajapaksa regime got the strategy right from the time of Mavil Aru to the Mullaitivu operation, which

is today hailed as the best counter-insurgency or counter-terrorism strategy by them.

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Royists of Karnataka

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“Radicalism thinks in terms neither of nation nor of class, its concern is man, it conceives freedom as freedom of the individual. The individual should not lose his identity in the collective ego of the nation or of the class. The Nation–State, in practice, makes no greater concession to the concept of individual freedom than the Class –State of the Communists and also of the socialists. And no modern democratic state has yet outgrown nationalist collectivism”

These were the profound utterances of Manabendra Nath Roy (1887-1954) as a political thinker of modern India and a Radical Humanist extraordinaire. Humanism was receiving widespread public attention in the West through such publications as A Humanist Manifesto in 1933, which talked of a new 'religion' that would replace all other religions based on allegations of supernatural powers. It outlined the vignettes of a worldwide egalitarian society based on voluntary mutual cooperation. But there was

another non -European visionary who had provided a perspicacious exegesis of 'humanism'. Unbeknownst to most Westerners, 'humanism' was proceeding on a parallel track in India, largely due to the efforts of philosopher and political activist M. N Roy. He integrated Radicalism with Scientific Humanism or New Humanism. His political and intellectual credos were founded on reason and morality and not on any dogma. Roy's basic premise was that in any revolutionary social philosophy, sovereignty of man must be recognized. He was of the view that neither Capitalism nor Parliamentary system could solve the problems of mankind. For him, New Humanism, reconciling social organization and individual freedom was the only alternative. Roy's philosophy of Radical Humanism is considered to be his most important contribution to Indian democracy. Roy was vehemently critical of Parliamentary democracy and reiterated that “Parliamentary democracy, the government for



the people can hardly be a government of the people, because the majority in power still rules by law and not by conscience. In order to make the common man realize that he has a unique place as a sovereign, a foundation of organized local democracies must be laid.”¹

The Radical Humanist, the journal which was formerly published as Independent India, was the instrument of Radical Humanist Movement in India. Founded in 1937 by M.N Roy, it was a weekly journal of international affairs that also focused on humanism and the humanist movement in India and abroad. M.N Roy was the journal's founder editor, and he was also the journal's long-standing editor. The journal published articles, comments, notes, reports, news, book reviews and correspondences. Prominent writers and thinkers contributed to this journal. The journal has an illustrious legacy of editors starting from M.N Roy and his wife Ellen Roy, Sib Narayan Ray, Vasant B Karnik, Amritlal Bhikku Shah, Govind Parekh, V.M Tarkunde, R.A Jahgirdar, G.R Dalvi, R.M Pal, Mahipal Singh and Rekha Saraswat. As Dr Innaiah Narisetti points out in his Foreword to the Selections from Radical Humanist Volume-I, April 1970 to December 2005, selected, compiled and edited by Mahi Pal Singh, published by the Indian Renaissance Institute (E-version published on 6th April 2019) “One great thing about The Radical Humanist is that despite facing an uphill task and financial crisis, it has never stopped. It has never compromised on human values, ethical norms, and above all freedom.”

M. N Roy's social philosophy of Radical Humanism had a tremendous appeal to many exponents of civil liberties and democratic freedom among the intelligentsia in Karnataka. Interestingly many of them were academics, activists and creative writers. Foremost among them was Gowrish Kaikini (1912-2002) the father of eminent Kannada writer Dr Jayant Kaikini, who wrote under several pseudonyms as 'Vaishwanara', 'Gourishankara', 'Aduge Bhatta' and 'GVK'. As a Litterateur, Gowrish Kaikini authored several books which exemplified the spirit of radical humanism. Notable among them were Navamanavathavada, Nasthika Mattu Devaru, Manovignanada Roopureshegalu and Satyarthi. 'Belaku' was a magazine that he edited exclusively to showcase radical humanist writings. But this world view seemed to pervade his entire oeuvre and the corpus of his writings. In keeping with the credos of Roy, Kaikini wrote for several local newspapers and magazines as he believed that these needed to be strengthened to fortify the democratic fabric. Some of them were Janasevaka, Sirsi Samachara, Munnade, Nagarika, Jeevottama, Grama Jeevana, Nudi Jenu, Sahachara, Samanvaya, Rayabhari, Sugunamala. Besides writing columns for these local newspapers and weekly magazines, he was famous for his columns in mainstream newspapers and magazines like Udayavani, Samyukta Karnataka, Karmaveera, Kasthuri, Tayinaadu, Prajawani, Kannada Prabha etc. In the words

of his son Jayant Kaikini, his father Gowrish Kaikini has penned more than 12,000 pages. Dr M.G Hegde has made a herculean effort to collect, compile and edit the works of Gowrish Kaikini but a revaluation and re-appraisal of his radical humanist prose is something that has not been undertaken so far and translation of some of his finest writings into English is the need of the hour.

Badekkila Krishna Bhat, a freedom fighter and a pleader from Bhadravathi in Shimoga district was another dyed-in-the-wool Royist, radical humanist who tirelessly wrote for many newspapers like Karmaveera, Tayinaadu, Prapancha etc. He also had a prolific literary output. He translated M N Roy's book into Kannada as Navamanavathavada which was published by M N Roy Centenary Committee, presided over by late S R Bommai, who was then the chief minister of Karnataka in 1987. B. Krishna Bhat also authored a unique life sketch of M N Roy titled Amoolya Chethana in 1989² published by Kannada Sangha of St Philomena College, Puttur in Dakshina Kannada. This publication was the first of its kind in South Canara. M.N Roy's life was marked by many exciting adventures. It was an exceedingly colourful life of a revolutionary and in his lyrical Kannada prose B. Krishna Bhat delineates the valiant struggles of Roy, dodging the British, giving the slip to the police, eluding them and masterminding the conflux of insurrectionary revolutionaries within and out of Bengal, the ingenious ways through which Roy generated the funds for these operations and his herculean efforts to obtain weapons in order to successfully execute his rebellious operations. These exploits of M.N Roy would give anyone an adrenaline rush according to B. Krishna Bhat. Besides these two works Krishna Bhat also wrote a unique intellectual biography of M N Roy in 1987 published by IBH Prakashana³. In this biography, Krishna Bhat describes Roy as a veritable human missile, who crisscrossed continents with ease, leaving his footprints wherever he travelled, endeavoring to impart a new twist to the destinies of the nations he visited.

Krishna Bhat recounts in flawless Kannada prose how Roy established a new political party in Mexico, thereby inspiring Lenin. Roy also had the rare opportunity of rubbing shoulders with Russian revolutionaries like Vladimir Lenin, Trotsky and Borodin. For Krishna Bhat, Roy was a visionary who had arrived as the harbinger of a refreshingly new and an invigorating world view that would resuscitate the world tottering on the brink of tumultuous political upheavals. Hailed as a saint among the revolutionaries, in his biography, Krishna Bhat admirably traces the trajectories and vicissitudes of Roy's life, his gradual evolution from extremism into humanism.

In another unique work titled Nagarikathe,⁴ his disquisitions on the evolution of humanism, B. Krishna Bhat acknowledges his indebtedness to Roy, leaning substantially towards Roy's ideologies as he outlines the saga of the human civilization and western rationalism Krishna Bhat also



published his views on the philosophy of materialism in his work *Bhautika Darshana* in 1987⁵. His work *Communism—Ninne, Indu Matthu Naale* (1972)⁶ was hailed as a great work on the nature and evolution of communism in which he had forecast the breakdown of communism.

The two eminent novelists of Navya movement in Kannada literature, Yashwant Chittal and Shanthinath Desai were also deeply influenced by the radical humanist credos of Roy and their creative works engaged deeply with the conflict of the present age as between totalitarianism and democracy, between the all devouring collective ego- nation or class and the individual struggling for freedom which Roy so lucidly discussed in his “Constitution of Free India — a draft” published by Radical Democratic party, Delhi in 1946.

A re-narration of the critical perceptions of these writers through an intellectual biography, elucidating their world views supplemented by English translations of their writings would vouchsafe exciting insights into how the philosophy of radical humanism made its inroads into the Kannada

heartland and would be an important contribution to the intellectual and cultural history of the evolution of political philosophy of Radical Humanism in Karnataka. It could fill the void in the realm of intellectual biographies of ideologues who engaged with humanist philosophy and made it intelligible to the general readership in Kannada.

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Original Article

Media as A Catalyst of Conflict

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INTRODUCTION

... I say to you: that we are in a battle, and more than half of this battle is taking place in the battlefield of the media. And we are in a media battle for the hearts and minds of our Umma.

Ayman al Zawahiri, (2005)

In this era of technology and globalization, the role of the media as a catalyst of change has been widely appreciated. But, while the media has been hailed for empowering the masses, it has also been brought under the scanner for instigating political movements around the globe. The media has been regarded as the fourth estate to the three tier bureaucratic system that acts as a means of checks and balances. The efficacy of this public watchdog will be

examined through this paper.

The media consists of all institutions that produce and distribute all forms of knowledge, information and entertainment. The mass character of the media is attributed to the large and undifferentiated audience that has the ability to shape attitudes, values and perceptions. In a democracy the government uses different modes of communication to legitimize its actions which is intertwined in social and political relations. The role of the media is to pass ideas, information and attitudes from person to person by negotiating consent between people. In democracy a sophisticated and complex process of communication operates. The paper also attempts to analyze the complex role of communication exercised through the mass media in a democratic society.



Although the media comes off as the biggest critique of every act or event, it faces its own share of criticism for covering the truth or exposing too much of it. The news media is central to every nation's economic, cultural, political and social well-being. Global news media plays an important role in building bridges between countries as consumers over the world rise in unanimity today to all global issues, helping foster the spirit of a global community.

With globalization and commercialization of the media, governments and capitalists have often used the media as a platform to further their own propaganda model. In Section II the role of media in institutionalizing the masses will be elucidated by critiquing the limited nature of media. When the wealthy and powerful use the media solely for profit motives, it becomes a tool to manufacture their required consent as opposed to providing a fair platform for dialogue. A fundamental question that is still widely debated is how much of the truth should the media reveal? The effects of disclosing too much information can be productive and counter-productive at times, and the same will be examined in Section III. The media also tends to make blatant assertions, accusations and assumptions while passing moral judgments against members of the public. Be it the Aarushi Talwar case, Sunanda Pushkar, or Sheena Bora, the media has not hesitated in declaring a person guilty to appease the public and render road side justice. Media trials and the shaming culture over social media have not always produced the desired results as discussed in Section IV of the paper.

MANUFACTURING CONSENT

The media bridges the information asymmetry between the State and the masses. An individual acquires knowledge and an understanding of the society and politics from what they read in the newspapers, magazines, "see on the television and hear on radio and through the new media called internet." The media thus plays an important role in moulding public opinion in the society. The media as a separate institution driven by its own interests, practices, norms and values plays an integral role in paving way for new ideologies that shape the society. The media therefore is an indissoluble part of the contexts, messages and relationships that creates and gives shape to politics and public life.¹

In every liberal democracy the media plays an integral role as the freedom of speech and expression is extended to the press and the media acts as a counter balance to keep the spirit of the democracy in check. The successful democracy promotes media in order to:

- Foster public debate and political engagement
- Act as a public watchdog
- Redistribute power and political influence
- Serve as a mechanism to strengthen democratic institutions

- Promote education by providing a public forum for meaningful and serious debate
- Widen access to information
- Facilitate political and social activism.

The complexity of modern public life and the difficulty of comprehending the role of media in reproducing public life arise from the plethora and interconnectedness of various communicative modes.¹

The news media is no longer an independent body, as it is majorly controlled by wealthy businessmen and politicians. The independent voice of free speech today has no financial or social backing whatsoever. Post the 1991 New Economic Policy, even the media sector faced privatization and globalization and there was de facto regulation of the media sector by the Indian government.² The competition in the media industry has led to the dilution in the standard of journalism, as news channels are driven by TRP ratings, popular votes and profits, then a social welfare motive. The commercial incentives in media have diluted professional commitment. The trend has increased with globalization and neo liberal policies. Today the media is accused of creating "commercial homogenous theme parks" through consumerism and by subverting the rich diverse cultures of the world.

The propaganda model of media is controlled largely by the political and economic giants who seek to hide their true intentions through the scrutiny of public opinion. Most biased choices arise from pre-selection of right-thinking people, internalized preconceptions and adaptation of personnel to constraints of ownership, organization, market and political power.³ Mass opinions are being manufactured, while curbing all space for individual freedom. The inequality of power and wealth limits the nature of media critique. News filters are run through the hands of those in power, which subjects media to the brunt of the capitalistic market. The media filters the information and concentrates on few issues and subjects that lead the public to view those issues as more important than other issues.⁴ Such filters are based on the priorities that those in power seek to establish in society and that which gets the TRP ratings to soar. Most news on social and judicial activism is saved for the smaller columns where advertisements don't brighten up the back pages. What do the masses really want to know? The role of the media from a watchdog has been reduced to that of a lapdog.

Media advertisements were also a prime factor that facilitated the propaganda model of the media. The competition in seeking revenue through advertisements had led to commercialization of the media sector. Soon no independent newspaper could compete in the market without advertisement support that lead to the death of various newspapers like The Herald, News Chronicle, The Sunday Citizen, etc.³ In the case of some big newspapers, revenue from advertising constitutes as much as 60 % of total



revenue. The top 15 advertisers account for three fourth of advertising revenue of newspapers and television channels. Except for Dabur, Tata, Bajaj and Videocon, all other top advertisers belong to multinational category. There has been a wave of foreign brands recently - all giving a big boost to media as well as consumerism.⁵ Even Doordarshan's programming today is based on the guiding formula and criteria promoted by foreign-dominated agencies having their interest in big corporate. Companies that pay handsomely for advertisements act as a good source of revenue. Soon corporate start to gain leverage over the media and seek to manipulate the news to give good reviews to cover up for any possible criticism that might tarnish their image. The link between power, money and imagery can be subtly read between the lines.

The mass media promote democracy by widening the distribution of power to the public. The media has the capacity to significantly enlarge access to information and opportunities for exchange of information. The media uses the public to facilitate a means of dialogue and gauging what the public opinion is. The exposure to the news media is a routine activity. The media would cease to exist without the everyday involvement of the public.

It was a general belief that media was bereft from politics and corruption. However, with the involvement of political heads in the ownership and commercialization of the media, corruption has become rampant. The State has overstepped its power into the fourth independent estate. The tussle of political power in Indian news can be best witnessed in Tamil Nadu. The two leading TV news channels in the state belong to the two biggest political parties – DMK and AIDMK. The TV channels Sun TV and Jaya TV are used by either party when in power in furtherance of their political agenda. The ideology of each party is reflected through their very own news outlet that provides them with a platform to reach out to the public at their own convenience, while rising as a bigger political candidate than the other. The current Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2015 has also identified the potential that the news media has to influence the masses, and uses his weekly show 'Mann Ki Baat' to reach out to the masses. Such political propaganda is used to justify the policies of the government and gain popular consent through the media.

However, in recent times questions have been raised on whether the media can act as a genuine custodian of democracy? Critiques have questioned mass media's democratic credentials and some even arguing that they are capable of undermining the spirit of the democracy by manufacturing consent. For example, Chomsky has examined the degree to which the mass media can subvert democracy by mobilizing support for imperialist foreign policy goals.³ The complex web of politics and media has its primary focus on "image" and strategy at the expense of covering substantive issues. Such trends create a symbiotic

relationship between the media and the political elite with vested interests that ultimately curbs the freedom of press. This exposes how politics uses media and how media covers the political world. The mass media is becoming a classic example of "power without responsibility."⁶

The role of the media in policy decisions is certainly questionable. The media has often been used as a platform to instill faith in a certain ideology or decision by glorification of the possible outcomes. The US justified its 'war or terrorism' claiming an imminent threat from Saddam Hussain's supposed Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD). Years of war and conflict can often be justified and glorified through the media much like the United States of America continues to do. The media are grappling to keep up with the proxy wars and the diplomatic relations that the US shares with other nations while maintain a neutral stance. The media is merely a puppet that countries use as an illusion to create 'friendly' international relations. The strings are controlled by the politicians, while the masses watch as mute spectators. Where is the ray of light out of this falsity if the media cannot step up to reveal the truth?

In the early 1900s when US invaded Nicaragua, the US media prominently covered the resulting bloodshed. The US government had won the war but was 4 weeks late on the schedule and the number of casualties of US soldiers and Nicaraguan civilians were extremely high. Many members of leading newspapers and news channels strongly opposed the US invasion and this reflected in their selective coverage. It seemed like the US government had won the war but lost out on popular public support of their own men who were devastated by the loss of their loved ones for a questionable cost. The American President summoned a meeting for the owners of leading media houses to control the escalating disaster that was no longer just military but also political.⁷ While justifying his extremely difficult decision to put an end to the violent communists in Nicaragua, he sought support from the American media in celebrating their 'win'. The opposition by the media personnel was in vain when the President used his power as the law maker to curb the Freedom of Press in the best interest of the nation. In the conflicting interests of the government and the public, the media is used as the tool to glorify the greater interest of the government either by will or by force. America's war on terrorism still continues. Many global media centers in the 21st century do critique and question the validity of the US invasions which has created a counter wave against the American superpower. However, the limited reach of this wave has failed to make it all the way to the shore.

As spectators and readers, when do we begin to see past mirage and start identifying the truth? As Daniel Hallin puts it, at the time of consensus the media are "consensus maintaining institutions" but when consensus breaks down, "they contribute to an accelerating expansion of the bounds of political debate."⁸ In a nutshell the media tends to defend



the status quo and “serves to mobilize support for the special interests that dominate the state and private activity”^{3,6}. The propagandistic role of democratic media is not in any way different from state controlled media under dictatorships and communist establishments. It seems fair to arrive at conclusion that often mainstream media are by and large establishment institutions. Even if they have the autonomy, they willingly wash their hands with the dirty politics or are forced to do so as in the above case.

BUILDING OR BREAKING BARRIERS?

We live in a country where the routine reality is gut wrenching, where on one side of the road you will find Asia's biggest slum and on the other side similar match box sized enclosures of corporate offices, where you will find inspiration amidst the disparity. What one chooses to seek out of this is largely reflected by the media. The news media can have a strengthening or a debilitating effect over an individual or a nation depending on how the media chooses to portray it. The purpose of the media is to inculcate a set of beliefs or value system while striving to maintain a neutral stance. However, the news media is being used to promote negative messages that are fueling conflicts across the globe.

Robert Picard⁹ in 1986 formulated a popular theory about how media coverage on terrorist activities leads to an increase in terrorism. Terrorism is fundamentally about influence. The aim of terrorists today is primarily to attract attention, and to appeal to the sentiments of people in order to emerge victorious. Irrespective of the bloodshed, if a terrorist attack gets wide media coverage, it would be considered a success. Although studies have shown that media coverage of a terrorist attack does not lead to an increase in terrorism, it triggers xenophobic sentiments and draws supporters towards a ‘greater cause’. A big question arises on who is actually responsible for the death, destruction and misery. The live coverage of the 26/11 siege in Mumbai by the media was highly criticized as it gave not only Indians but also possibly the masterminds of the attack a continuous update of the hostage situation. Moreover, post the 9/11 attack in the US and the 26/11 attack in India, the world has viewed Muslims through a dark veil of suspicion on account of the media trials.

Large political powers have long been criticized for manipulating the news to foster their own ideologies, in support of their own policies and even illicit acts. Governments and terrorist groups reach out to the hearts and minds of individuals to justify their illegal activities, be it an attack on a country or a civilian. The media is used to send out strong messages across the globe and to initiate a discussion to draw sympathy towards a particular cause. Post the 1990's a debate sparked the news about the ‘CNN effect’ and the ‘Al Jazeera effect’ which typically dealt with the effect of media in instigating political movements. The CNN effect studied the effect of media in formulation of foreign policies.

The impending terrorist threats in countries like Libya, Syria, Afghanistan, etc. led to military intervention from countries like US and France.

On the other hand, many scholars believe that the Al Jazeera effect triggered the Arab Uprising in 2010. The political heads of the Middle Eastern countries felt threatened by the criticism of their hegemony and the tyrannical rule by the Al Jazeera. The social journalism by Al Jazeera sparked a revolution in the Arabic peninsula. The uprising that broke out in Egypt was captured from radically different perspectives by the local media and by Al Jazeera. While the former aired a rosy picture of the Tahrir Square, the latter covered the violence and the bloodshed. Human tendency has become such that we reflect over the crisis of the moment depending on the stance that the news channels take. On one hand the covered up truth misleads the masses, on the other hand the truth is so dismal that it leaves a black mark for the rest of the world. The truth is often ambushed by contradicting views over a conflict, coupled with asymmetric information, which worsens the strife even more.

The stereotypes and misconceptions portrayed over the media have created a certain animosity between cultures. Africa is viewed as the land of poverty; Muslims are branded as terrorists; Americans as racists and off late Indians as rapists. When an event occurs, the role of the media is to provide an unbiased and fair reproduction of the material facts. A certain amount of detachment is always welcome to a journalist, and sensible reports are careful to cultivate a reputation for it.⁷ The journalist's selection of material facts plays an important role in factoring public stereotypes. For example, let's say a robbery took place last night. Along with the name, age and description of the thief if the news story also covers the nationality, color or race of the thief, it creates a certain stigma in the eyes of the society. The society will construe an added bias if he was described to a colored African Muslim. By this act of choosing material facts the reporter progresses from being the mere conduit of facts to being the determiner of their relevance. And that inevitably raises the question: relevance to what?

The negative portrayal of civilizations over the media is doing more to ignite a fire, than to put it off. The Indian Government recently banned a BBC documentary titled ‘India's Daughters’ on one of India's most horrifying rape cases. The Government justified the ban claiming that the documentary incited violence and that it portrayed Indians negatively. The line of reasoning adopted by the Government has been widely criticized, but it sadly had been proven to be true when an Indian was denied a job in Germany on the ground that he came from ‘a land of rapists’. Negative and unwanted outcomes such as this have time and again led to the question on whether the media has the right to portray situations in a way it has interpreted it? Or should the media remain objective when broadcasting news about such sensitive matters?



The choices that the media are forced to take are inevitable, but is the bias inevitable as well? The journalists are entitled to give their subjective opinions on issues, but these opinions are to be based on a set of objective set of facts. The facts cannot be tainted to suit the majority and popular perceptions as this partiality created a prejudice. It is essential for news reporters in their profession to strike a balance between garnering public opinion and creating an unnecessary conflict. While it might be difficult for the media not to pass a value judgment, it must also seek to uphold the spirit of the minority and protect the counter thesis on the other side of the debate.

MEDIA TRIALS

The media has been chastised for passing value judgments based on their own version of facts. Media trials have plagued the nation as readers tend to overlook the word 'alleged' that precedes a charge against a civilian. The media is undoubtedly seen as a custodian of justice, but does it have the power to take law and order into its own hands? With emerging social media, a new platform has been created to express one's opinion. This has had both positive and negative ramifications. Today a scared victim of a crime is more easily identified through social media as it is a more approachable platform to share one's trauma than knock the doors of the police in absolute vain. It has provided a platform for those trembling voices that have no recourse in law. This has resulted in a trend of public naming and shaming. But can this road side justice be justified or is it a mere rant of emotions that has counter-productive effects?

Media is considered to be the messenger who carries good, bad and ugly news to the reader but the media in some instances is turning out to be an anti-thesis to freedom of expression. Social media is full of choicest superlatives as it has become an arena for political debates and an easy avenue to pronounce quick judgments. It has become easy to outrage or shame a person or organization without caring to hear out the other side. Probably "Online public shaming is a useful and effective strategy for calling out unacceptable behavior when recourse to other remedies is tedious and time consuming but it leads to mob justice." The casualty is content quantitative and qualitative. The visual media is more a noisemaker with a spit and run approach. The media should be expending the space for inclusive news rather than becoming one-man judge and jury under the banner of freedom of expression camouflaging their commercial interests and connections.

Shashi Tharoor, a lawmaker and former minister, himself a victim of media blitz after his wife's death under mysterious circumstances last year that is under investigation, laments that India's "Fourth Estate serves simultaneously as witness, prosecutor, judge, jury and executioner. In ancient times, India put its accused through agni pariksha —

a trial by fire; today, we put them through a trial by media." ¹⁰

The Indian Supreme Court was faced with the grim question of drawing the line of freedom of speech and expression extended to the press during an ongoing trial. The court said it has evolved the constitutional doctrine of postponement as a preventive measure to avoid journalists being hauled up for contempt of court every now and then for prejudicing the accused and interfering in the administration of justice with their reports. It ruled that the order for postponement of reporting of trial proceedings would come under the reasonable restrictions imposed on right to free speech under Article 19(2) of the Indian Constitution. ¹¹

Today the only code that media follows seems to be "everything is fair in love and war and breaking news". This indicates the total commercialization of the news industry and the medium of expression is turning out to be a show of Media vs Media resulting in a no-holds barred parallel trial by the media. It is not only doing injustice to journalism in all its form, but is also fast emerging as a tool of vigilantism. It has pushed the media industry to the precipice of credibility. Thus, today the threat to the independence of the media is not only going to be from politics but also from within. Unless the Indian media reversed this trend the Indian media which is perhaps the most fearless and independent institutions in the world it would fail as an instrument that has the power to act as guardian of freedom of expression and liberty of the people.

CONCLUSION

In order to restore the credibility in the media as an industry, it needs regulation by media personnel themselves. Despite the influence of the other three tiers, the media needs to retain its stance as an independent tier that represents an objective view point of events, than act as a 'safety valve' for corporates or politicians to propagate their agenda. A balance needs to be struck between formulating opinions and imposing ideologies among the masses so as to facilitate an easier path towards a peace mechanism. The purpose of the media is to provide a platform for dialogue through bilateral communications and not unilateral disposition of viewpoints. The media also requires a lot more sensitivity in addressing issues relating to terrorism and cross border relations that adversely affect the global image of nations. Given the bounded rationality of the masses as a whole, the global media should strive to break, than create barriers between nations by building stereotypes. Every critique receives his share of negative flak.

The public is often gullible and unable to define the nature of power that media has been bestowed with and is not able to place its status and roles in the public life. This places the control in the hands of the media which determines what the public should think by controlling the way in which topics, events, issues and persons reveal themselves.



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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.

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