

Year: 2023, Volume:2, Issue:4

ISSN: 2583-6811 (Online)



JOURNAL OF CONTEMPORARY POLITICS



**Department of Political Science
Bangalore University**

Journal of Contemporary Politics

Official Publication of Bangalore University
October – December 2023, Volume 2, Issue 4

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Original Article

The Gambit of Geopolitics in the Indo-Pacific: A Critical Analysis

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 12.11.2023

Accepted 22.12.2023

Published 28.12.2023

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[https://doi.org/](https://doi.org/10.53989/jcp.v2i4.6.chetan)

10.53989/jcp.v2i4.6.chetan



ABSTRACT

Geopolitics is essential in understanding global dynamics, economic and resource considerations, cultural interlinkages, global governance for common humanitarian causes, foreign policy, diplomacy and security. Today, geopolitics as a concept transcends temporality and ventures into technological innovations, interdependence, demographic shifts, transnational threats, and involvement of non-state actors. The emergence of the Indo-Pacific as a geopolitical construct is accompanied by the nations' quest to establish themselves in prominent positions in the region. India, too, is not alien to this quest. India's geopolitical move from its neighbourhood to the Indo-Pacific hence becomes a critical point of analysis in the nation's aspiration to become the regional leader. The evolution of geopolitics from a nation-state-centric paradigm of the 20th century to a multi-pivotal approach in the 21st century reflects the current highly interdependent global order. Nation-states shape their foreign policies based on internal and external factors, with the Indo-Pacific region assuming increasing significance, particularly concerning maritime interests, both developmental and strategic. Historically, India has played a prominent role in the Indian Ocean region, contributing significantly to global trade and cultural diffusion. Over time, the land borders assumed priority over the maritime space. However, the shared yet contesting interests in the region with various nation-states competing for their claims, the attention returned to the seas. These competing claims and claimants in the region highlight the vitality of India to have a stringent and proactive foreign and maritime security policy – for the region and in the region. This research delves into the evolving discourse of geopolitics, particularly in the Indo-Pacific construct, and its intersection with maritime security. By analysing India's strategic viewpoint, particularly its maritime strategy, through scholarly and official sources, this paper aims to elucidate the critical linkages between geopolitics and maritime security. Ultimately, it seeks to underscore India's role as a key agenda-setter in the region.

Keywords: Geopolitics; IndoPacific; Maritime Security; Security Dilemma

INTRODUCTION

The orchestration of nation-states to bolster security and influence in the international system using geography is imperative to sustain. Geopolitics, defined as the study of the effects of geography on international politics and the relationships between nation-states, plays a pivotal role in determining the strategic interests and interactions of nation-states. It is the theory of political events integrated into their geographical setting. 'Geopolitik' intends to and should become the "geographic conscience of the state"¹.

The concept of Geopolitics can be seen in action by nation-states to maximise national interest. Hence, invariably, geopolitics and security become intricately interlinked

aspects that are paramount in fostering strategic culture among nation-states, thereby shaping the global landscape. Security, as a central component of national interest, encompasses not just military capacity but also economic, political, and environmental dimensions. Security includes the measures taken by states to safeguard their sovereignty, territorial integrity, and national interests against threats.

The emerging region of geopolitical significance, the Indo-Pacific, is of vital interest to the nation-states, especially China, India, Japan, Australia, and the United States of America (USA). The nation-states in the region work towards their 'shared interest' of creating a free, open, interconnected, prosperous, secure, stable, and resilient Indo-Pacific region and are yet to define a comprehensive



rule-based international order that can strengthen their role in the region. While doing so, each nation-state shapes the security landscape of the region and of all the parties involved in the region. It is in this background that India, too, makes its moves. Thus, it is imperative that the changing geopolitics and the subsequent change in maritime security scenarios are traced. India's outlook of the seas is a part of these changing scenarios.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Methods

This study employs a qualitative research approach to explore the intricate dynamics of geopolitics and maritime security in the Indo-Pacific region. Specifically, we use textual and contextual analyses of relevant scholarship, official statements, and government reports to delve into the nuances of the concepts within their political, geographical and historical contexts.

UNPACKING THE MEANING, DEFINITION, AND UNDERSTANDING OF GEOPOLITICS

The discourse surrounding geopolitics has persistently been a focal point since its conceptualisation within the realm of International Relations. The initiation of this discourse on geopolitics can be traced back to Carl Ritter's work, which involved the systematic examination of the interplay between human interactions, geographical positioning, and political system and practices¹. In the following subsections, we will see the evolution of geopolitics during the wars – World War I, World War II, and the Cold War and in the post-Cold War world order.

The Wars and Geopolitics

The inception of 'World Island' and within it a single great political authority, Heartland, a construct of Halford J. Mackinder in 1904, resulted in further growth of the discourse. His claims that the Columbian Epoch (1500-1900), which was characterised by leverage of navies, was transiting towards leveraging land, strongly arguing that it is the 'natural seat of power'^{1,2}. The term 'geopolitics' was first introduced by Rudolf J Kjellen, emphasising the influence of geographical influence on politics and, subsequently, its influence on policies added to the chain of discourse on the term². Where he defined geopolitics as "the study of the state as a geographical organism or a phenomenon in space", indicating that the nation-states of the time understood and looked at leveraging the "space by colonisation, amalgamation or conquest"^{1,2}. In his scholarly exposition delineating the evolutionary trajectory of the term 'geopolitics,' Charles Hagan elucidates a crucial distinction between political geography and geopolitics. While Political Geography concerns itself with historical

and factual accounts of the changes surrounding the state, geopolitics observes and speculates on the influence of geography on the political events and political decisions of the state².

Karl Haushofer contends that "geopolitics formulates the scientific foundation of the art of political transactions in the struggle for existence of political living forms on the living space of the earth." This assertion posits geopolitics as a scholarly framework that elucidates the principles governing the intricate interplay between political actors and their territories, thereby contributing substantively to the understanding of geopolitical dynamics and strategic decision-making in the pursuit of security and influence on the global ecosystem. The conversation of optimising geopolitics started after World War I as a means of restoration to of lost glory of Germany by harnessing its geography to become self-sufficient. Hagan contributes to the discourse, writing that any nation-state is looking at "an ultimate goal of world organisation based on domination and not on cooperation between equal states." Explicitly characterising geopolitics as a "contemporary rationalisation of power politics," Hagan contends that it offers solace to scholars advocating for democracy and the establishment of a peaceful world order. This perspective underscores the nuanced and strategic dimensions inherent in geopolitical discourse, aligning with broader debates on political ideologies and international relations.

The alternative debate that started at the same time as Rudolf Kjellen's leveraging of space, Alfred Thayer Mahan posited that achieving maritime supremacy is imperative for nation-states to secure a strategic advantage within the international system. Prior to World War I, with colonial nation-states holding power, the importance of the seas for economic gains was prominent. During this time, the Indo-Pacific, though the term was inexistence, contributed to the major trade portions. At the time of the World War I & II, the maritime space was exploited for security, concentrating on expansion of naval bases. It was during the Cold War 'Balance of Power'¹ game that the maritime space was utilised for naval exercises and show of strength, albeit, the Indo-Pacific was still dormant. The disintegration of the Soviet Union, for some scholars, meant the end of Geopolitics and saw the international system move towards development and economic growth, a step towards conceptualising Geoeconomics³.

Post Wars

As discussed above through the World War I, World War II and the Cold War, there has been an evolution in how

¹In an international system, Balance of Power Theory states that to minimise the growth of one nation-state as the sole power, the other nation-states enhance their powers. Traditionally, it was military power, but in the present day, the understanding of power encompasses more than military capabilities



nation-states construct geopolitics, i.e., from nation-state centric to a more globalised outlook. The end of Cold War marked the beginning of globalisation. The nation-states prioritised making their foreign policies around issues like free trade, climate change, and terrorism, which were set priorities by the Western countries that claimed their domination after the Cold War, thus enabling them to set the global order and functioning of the global institutions⁴. As a result of shifting geopolitical construct in the Post-Cold War era, the budget cuts on military spending and foreign aid during President Bill Clinton's administration due to the absence of any 'serious geopolitical challenges' were a move to benefit from the global economic system³.

However, such claims have been countered through assertion that the perceived decline of the term 'geopolitics' is unwarranted⁵. There is a contention that the concept remains operational, as evidenced by its continued deployment by nation-states, emphasising its enduring relevance in shaping the dynamics of the Knowledge-Power Interplay⁵. As a result of globalisation there is a shift from conventional nation-state centric foreign policies to foreign policies that promote regional and international organisations participation. It is arguable that there was a shift in outlook of Foreign Policies, from geopolitics to geoeconomics. Notably, the debate on 'absence of geopolitics' is unwarranted due to its ever-present nature with one such manifestation that is seen in the territorial disputes of South China Sea, calling for the need to understand the leverage that geopolitics has on security⁶.

GEOPOLITICS SHAPING SECURITY

Geopolitics can be understood as the assessment and utilisation of the geographic configurations of nation-states in international politics to play well using the 'balance of power game'. It encompasses the relationships between nation-states and plays a pivotal role in determining the strategic interests and policies of nation-states⁵. Colin Gray and Geoffrey Solan conceptualise that geopolitics can materialise in strategic conditioning of two kinds – defence and offence: the defence of locations that are vital for the strategic influence of the nation-state and utilisation of routes and locations that are in favour of attacking⁷.

Geopolitics is a term specifically referring to the geographical assumptions and understandings of world politics. Geopolitics can be considered the manifestation of a space-power interface, which competes to gain better influence in global affairs. The leveraging of the space power interface for the strategic interests of a nation-state demonstrates the relationship between geopolitics and security. The interaction between geopolitics and security is complex and dynamic. Their manifestations influence international relations, strategic decision-making, and the pursuit of national interests in the complex web of global politics. Geopolitics is about the crucial power to define danger

and about the ability to describe the world in ways that specify appropriate political behaviours in particular contexts to provide 'security' against those dangers. The power to construct a widespread understanding of the context is a crucial discursive task of geopolitics⁵. The rising Weaponisation² of Seas of in the Indo-Pacific is the manifestation of the interplay between geopolitics and security in the region.

In an international system with multiple regions acting as pivots³, India also needs to leverage its space holistically, including its maritime space. There is a burgeoning consensus that the Indian Ocean assumes paramount significance, with scholars such as Robert Kaplan, Saul B. Cohen, and Sanjay Chaturvedi asserting that it will persist as the primary theatre of world geopolitics in the twenty-first century².

INDO-PACIFIC: 'THE CENTRE OF GRAVITY'

The then Prime Minister Nehru in 1958 said, "...we cannot afford to be weak at sea..."; this shows that conventionally the Indian leadership has given prominence to bringing sea lane connectivity in Indian Ocean Region. The end of Cold war revamped India's outlook towards the seas and the region. This can be observed in the transition from India's Neighbourhood Policy of 1980's which looked at the nation-states in the east went through transition to 'Look East Policy' (1991) and now to 'Act East Policy' (2014)⁸⁻¹⁰.

Discussed below are subsections on India's position in Indian Ocean and its view point of the Indo-Pacific and the global actors in the region.

India's Position in the Indian Ocean

"The Indian Ocean Region is at the top of our policy priorities."

- Narendra Modi, Honourable Prime Minister of India¹¹

India is at the centre of the Indian Ocean. With its resources which are crucial for food security, energy security, and other needs of the littoral nation-states, and its prominence in global trade, the ocean today is more important than any other time in history. India, too, has refocused its view on the oceans with the changing contours of security in the region. With a coastline of about 7500 kilometres, the region is of supreme importance to India. India is involved in the region's trade, mineral resource extraction, traditional and non-traditional security and humanitarian assistance. The involvement of India accounts

²Weaponisation is a new trend of warfare where nation-states use culture and credit (finance), faith and famine, and fake news disinformation as new weapons. These wars are often unnoticed, undeclared, and unending. For example, nation-states weaponise humanitarian aid, medicines, and water, like the weaponisation of migrants in undeclared political conflicts. Galeotti, M. (2022). *The Weaponisation of Everything: A Field Guide to the New Way of War*. United Kingdom: Yale University Press.

³Pivots are centres in the international arena which are significant for their geographical leverage, economic and political strength, and natural resources.



for its national interest driven by the geopolitics of the region but also accounts for the 'shared interest' of other nation-states in the region – the role of Vishwaguru^{12,13}. Bolstering India's strength is its naval power; India currently has around 65,000 active personnel, a fleet strength of 295, 2 aircrafts carriers, 18 submarines, 2 of which are ballistic missile capable nuclear subs, more than 50 destroyers, frigates and corvettes, helicopter squadrons capable of anti-sub warfare, and 13 ports and terminals¹⁴.

The Asia Pacific Construct (APC) garnered significant global attention, notably exemplified by the United States's adoption of the 'Rebalancing Strategy,' commonly referred to as the 'Pivot to Asia Strategy,' and India's articulation of its 'Look East policy.' The intensity of focus heightened, notably with the advocacy and promotion of the Indo-Pacific Construct by nations such as Australia, India, Japan, and the United States. This geopolitical narrative has garnered recognition, given its richness in resources, from an expanded cohort of actors, including countries such as France and entities like the European Union. The collective acknowledgement of this emergent geopolitical construct underscores its growing prominence as a focal point within the international discourse and geopolitical considerations^{15,16}.

Henry Kissinger can better explain the significance of the Indo-Pacific and Power shift to the region. He argues in his work that "...the centre of gravity of world affairs has left the Atlantic and moved to the Pacific and Indian Oceans"¹⁷. This pivotal shift marks the conclusion of Western predominance and signals the ascendancy of non-Western nations, thereby fundamentally altering the global order. Notably, emerging powers such as India and China assume central roles as primary agents shaping this transformative paradigm^{17,18}. These rising powers will change the Indo-Pacific Region's landscape, giving birth to a new geopolitical construct – 'Indo-Pacific'. This construct, as underscored by Kissinger, not only serves as a testament to the changing nature of the world order but also encapsulates the heightened influence wielded by these rising powers in shaping regional dynamics.

India's Point of View of Indio-Pacific

The Indo-Pacific emerges as a strategic focal point for India, synergistically reinforcing its 'Look East' and 'Act East' policies. The heightened regional activity accompanying this geopolitical transition emphasises the substantive impact of the Indo-Pacific construct on India's strategic and diplomatic engagements in the Asian continent¹⁹. The conceptual transition from 'Asia Pacific' to 'Indo-Pacific' signifies a paradigmatic shift aimed at comprehensively encapsulating diverse sub-regions, encompassing the Eastern coast of Africa, the Indian Ocean Region, South East Asia, East Asia, Oceania, and the Western coast of the United States of America. The emergence of the geographical construct

indicates the power shift towards Asia "acknowledges the growing interconnectedness between developments in the Indian Ocean (IO) and the Pacific Ocean"¹⁸.

Underscoring India's geopolitical construct of the region is its vision of a 'Free, Open and Inclusive' Indo-Pacific. In weaving together India's Indo-Pacific fabric, the thread of South-East Asia fits at the centre of the two oceans. As highlighted by the Prime Minister in his 2018 Shangri-La address, "...Inclusiveness, openness and ASEAN centrality and unity [therefore] lie at the heart of the new Indo-Pacific. India does not see the Indo-Pacific Region as a strategy or as a club of limited members..." is thus at the crux of India's Indo-Pacific vision²⁰. The other organisations and groupings that are involved in bringing 'holistic stability'⁴ to the region are the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), Southern African Development Community (SADC), Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), East Asia Summit (EAS).

Global Actors: Claimants in the Indo-Pacific

Indo-Pacific is a theatre of actions and opportunities. Its primary claimants are Australia, China, India, Japan, Pacific Island Countries (PIC), and the United States of America. The claimants beyond the region are nation-states of the European Union. Australia with its strategic interests looks at the region as a 'Goeconomic' construct. Similarly, China, India, Japan, and the United States of America also emphasise on this 'Goeconomic' construct and claim to establish a 'rule-based order' in the region. Though geographically smaller in size, the Pacific Island Countries are equal claimants in the region²¹.

GEOPOLITICS & INDO-PACIFIC: RAMIFICATIONS ON SECURITY

The impact of geopolitics on security is due to various determinants from economic networks and resources richness in the region to dilemma associated with territorial conquests. These are discussed below.

The Economics Behind Influence and Challenges Associated

The Indo-Pacific accounts for 60% of the world's population and 60% of the world's GDP^{22,23}. Taking account of natural resources, the Indian Ocean constitutes 40% of the world's offshore oil production; fishing in the Indian Ocean alone adds to 15% of the world's total. The region also accounts for a large stock of minerals and rare earth metals¹².

⁴The holistic stability encompasses promoting security, peace, harmony, collaboration and cooperation.



Recognising the importance of this region, a Minilateral grouping, the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF) was formed between 14 partner countries (Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, the United States of America, and Vietnam) in May 2022. This framework aims to enhance inclusivity, sustainability, resilience, growth and development, cooperation, and peace in the region and amongst the partner countries. The partnership, at its launch, began negotiations on four pillars: Trade, Supply chains, Clean energy, decarbonisation and infrastructure, and Tax and anti-corruption^{24,25}.

The stakes involved in the region also bring along a lot of challenges, which are, securing the free passage of trade and energy, ensuring the sustainable and equitable exploitation of natural and mineral resources, terrorism, piracy and organised crimes, and managing humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations¹².

Revanchism in the South China Sea

The South China Sea and ASEAN regions are in the middle of the Indo-Pacific²⁰, “the confluence of two seas”²⁶. The issues in the South China Sea region majorly deal with territorial claims. China’s claim with respect to the nine-dash line⁵ has put itself in loggerheads with the ASEAN nation-states. Creation of new artificial islands, extending and militarising the existing islands have impacted the security portfolio of the region. These tensions in the region and China’s disregard for international arbitration, coupled with climate-related food security issues, marine ecosystem damage, and the increasing threat of water-level rise, have made the region volatile^{6,27,28}.

Sino-Indian Rapprochement: A Possibility or Impossibility

Indo-Pacific is the theatre of action and opportunities for both India and China. In rising as great powers, these two nation-states have been crossing paths in various instances. The repercussion of the same is spilt over in the waters of the Indo-Pacific. The ‘great game’ can be observed in traditional military spheres, the diplomatic sphere, as well as in the economic sphere. While the ‘great game’ manifests in various spheres, the geopolitical perception of the region shapes their actions and interactions in the region²⁹.

The recent scholarship on the region have found that relations between India and China are volatile and vulnerable. With their ever-expanding economies and widening geopolitical horizons, the bilateral relationship between the two rising Asian giants could be characterised more by competition than cooperation. These contesting interests

⁵The nine-dash line, also known as the eleven-dash line, is a visual representation of China’s disputed claims in the South China Sea.

have perennially made rapprochement difficult to achieve³⁰.

With the might of resources involved in the region and nation states’ race to claim and utilise these resources for advancement of their national interests, there is an explicit contestation in the region which have manifested in the form of territorial disputes and growing weaponisation in the region. This hint at an economic bearing to acts of security or insecurity in the region.

The perspectives discussed in the above sections focus on actors in this theatre of actions and opportunities. While the following sections will concentrate on their claims in the region.

ANALYSIS & DISCUSSION

As discussed in the sections above, the shift in geopolitics provides us with a perspective of a shift from territorial space to maritime space. Arguably, such the shift is witnessed with a shift from nation-state centric to a global systems approach. As a matter of fact, the compounding factors are not necessarily within the nation-states but also in the international ecosystem.

In this section we analyse the claims of the global claimants for the region which are leading the equation shift to Indo-Pacific and India’s Foreign Policy in the context of having the region as the centre of gravity in line with its maritime strategies.

GLOBAL OUTLOOK ON ‘INDO-PACIFIC’: THE COMPETING CLAIMS & CLAIMANTS IN THE INDOPACIFIC

Indo-Pacific is a field where multiple players with diverse ambitions are involved in the power game. The Australian outlook on Indo-Pacific is a zone of strategic interest ‘connecting the Indian and Pacific Ocean through South East Asia’. Australia looks at a pronounced strategic interest in the safeguarding of maritime trade routes, with a particular emphasis on the importation of crucial energy resources, especially petroleum and natural gas. This emphasises the centrality of secure and uninterrupted maritime trade flows in sustaining the economic vitality of the nation. Their strategic orientation aligns with the pursuit of economic opportunities for Australia in the southern Indo-Pacific region. They are looking at an intricate interplay between maritime security, trade dynamics, and economic opportunities in the context of the Indian Ocean and Indo-Pacific region³¹.

Similarly, Japan aims to play a leadership role in the Indo-Pacific through, Regional economic integration; Infrastructure cooperation- keeping the Chinese in check and being wary of their ‘debt trap’. Developing the Blue Dot Network (BDN), a certification platform to promote quality infrastructure; Energy Security - energy mix strategy that includes diversifying energy sources; Strengthening security



cooperation for regional stability³².

The PIC collectively express apprehension regarding a paradigm shift in geostrategic dynamics within the region, manifested through a framework encapsulated within the overarching concept of the 'Indo-Pacific' where they see extreme competition and cooperation³³.

The nation-states beyond the Indo-Pacific region are actively claiming to have stakes in the region, the European Union is one such. The Union is looking at a region that can uphold the rule-based international order while cooperating towards 'shared interest'³⁴. The nation-states that have an interest in the region aim to bolster maritime security, capacity building, joint exercises, and human resource exchanges.

While there is specific interest among nation-states of the region for geopolitical gains, it is also to be noted that the nation-states beyond the region equally have 'shared interest' for the region, making geopolitics have a global outlook.

DID THE EQUATION SHIFT TO INDO-PACIFIC?

Yes, it did shift to the Indo-Pacific. The Age of Anxiety and Anger that started as a reaction to globalisation is 'for real' and is here. People and nation-states are insecure about access to resources, both natural and mineral. The fear of resource shortage among Western nation-states is quite evident, and the Indo-Pacific region, unexplored and untouched, is the region under the radar. Another reason behind the shifting equations in global power is due to a significant contribution to the global economy and population by Asian giants, especially China and India.

For a long period of time, the Indo-Pacific was quiet and absent of any activity, which surely gave room for China to increase its sphere of influence through active infrastructure build-up and a substantial rise in island assets in the region. This paced progression is a threat that has added to the insecurity of the nation-states, small and big, in the Indo-Pacific. Hegemony in the region is unwarranted and unwelcomed, and it has, beyond doubt, made other historically influential and sovereign nation-states pay heed to the activity in the Indo-Pacific. The historically peaceful and stable region is not peaceful anymore due to the increased 'shared interests' by nation-states taking the trajectory of competition. It can be positively said that the region is comparatively more peaceful than the Central and West Asian regions, which is expected to be more beneficial and reduce the cost of military expenditure for the nation-states that have a stake in the Indo-Pacific region^{35,36}.

The traditional 'balance of power theory' established by the 'power-political question' of territory, military power, and sphere of influence is back in the region. And lest we forget, the win-win game⁶ employed by nations is slowly transitioning to a zero-sum game⁷. The claims that Walter

Russel Mead made in 2014 that geopolitics has returned with the 'revenge of revisionist powers'⁸ are standing true³⁶.

All of these factors cumulatively suggest that in the last one decade, there is an emergence of India as a prominent regional leader in the Indo-Pacific, especially its active role through G20 leadership, vaccine diplomacy and many such initiatives. There are claims that the substantive shift in India's Foreign Policy towards Indo-Pacific is a result of western interest and China's rise. However, India has been aware of its maritime potential since its independence and even before³⁷. Hence there are more compelling reasons why India is looking at maritime space and also a global outlook for the region.

In the subsequent section, we analyse the reasons for India's explicit interests in maritime space.

INDIA'S VIEW OF THE SHIFTING EQUATION OF ITS MARITIME STRATEGY

Indian and Pacific Oceans demand attention by the competing claims and claimants as discussed in the above sections. This highlights the vitality of India to have a stringent and proactive foreign and maritime security policy – for the region and in the region.

Transitioning from the Fringes to the Core

India looks at the Indo-Pacific as a region of positive cooperation and collaboration. To build such an ecosystem in the region, a comprehensive Indo-Pacific Action Plan is imperative. The region, with its well-known geopolitical challenges, needs the nation-states to work collectively to build maritime capacity, infrastructure and personnel. India, with the aim of building a 'Free, Open and Inclusive' region, needs to assume a role in strengthening and unifying the nation-states in the region. This involves building strategic partnerships with major nation-states like the USA, Japan, and Australia, as well as small island nations and groupings such as ASEAN in the Indo-Pacific. India can become the 'main player' by promoting the idea of inclusivity and ensuring that nation-states, irrespective of their power, are heard in the forums or organisations in the region. Domains like space, cyber security, maritime security, health, climate change and disaster management need to take the forefront in these forums, and India can play a role in doing so. India can also act as the bridge in unifying all the organisations, institutions, and groupings that are presently stressing the faultlines in the region. With the declaration of the role of regional leader, India has assumed the responsibility of regional stabiliser: transitioning from fringes to core.

The idea for the above figure is from the Minister of External Affairs, S Jaishankar's book *The India Way*. The figure discusses the maritime security strategy for India

⁶A situation where all the nation-states involved are benefitted.

⁷A situation where one nation-state gains while the other loses.

⁸Revisionist states/powers seek to undermine established order to increase their power and prestige in the international system.



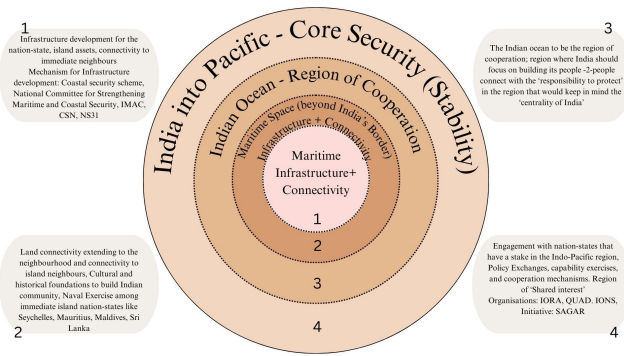


Fig. 1: Author's Illustration

in the Indo-Pacific Region. To achieve a larger goal of maritime security of not just in the region but also globally, the interplay of the concentric circles (1,2,3,4) become imperative. The figure brings out the necessity to secure hinterland infrastructure, to build effective sea lanes of communication and collaborations and cooperations in the region³⁷.

The maritime security strategy for India is one that stems from the ambition of being the “Indo-Pacific Net Security Provider”³⁸. Such a target involves building capacities and capabilities at different levels for various purposes. The attempt, however, starts at home. Building of maritime infrastructure and connectivity. This essentially involves enhancing hinterland connectivity, coastal infrastructure, connectivity to immediate neighbours and island assets. Coastal infrastructure can be viewed in two categories: development and security. The revitalisation of the Coastal Security Scheme (CSS) to involve the Navy, Cost Guard and the Marine Police, Information Management and Analysis Centre (IMAC), and National Command Control Communications and Intelligence Network (NC3I) are examples of security infrastructure enhancement. Development infrastructure accounts for the development of ports, for example, Sagarmala and Project Unnati³⁹ where the major ports of India are being rebuilt¹³.

To take this one step ahead, infrastructure and connectivity are to be developed in the region beyond the immediate neighbourhood; this is done through the development of multimodal infrastructure³⁷. Examples of these are the Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal (BBIN) multilateral multimodal project, The Kaladaan Multimodal project, the Sittwe Port and Hinterland connectivity project, and the Trilateral Highway Project between India, Myanmar, and Thailand. The desire to be the net security provider involves the influence in the larger circle, beyond neighbours of neighbours.

The oneness of the Indian Ocean Community is central to the ambition but also aligned with the shared goal of regional cooperation. This cooperation is driven by efforts of quick humanitarian assistance and disaster relief for freedom

of navigation and commerce, strategic partnerships, and naval capabilities to secure the maritime commons^{13,37}. India's oneness strategy has Project Mausam at its centre concentrating on “understanding how the knowledge and manipulation of the monsoon winds has shaped interactions across the Indian Ocean and led to the spread of shared knowledge systems, traditions, technologies and ideas along maritime routes”⁴⁰.

Finally, the larger cooperation in the region is required for the peace and development in the region. This involves capability engagement parties to the region, which is far from India's borders³⁷. For example, engagements with Australia, the United States of America, Japan, etc. A few initiatives that can be discussed here are the Theatre Level Readiness and Operational Exercise (TROPEX), the Malabar Exercise, the Security and Growth for All in Region (SAGAR) initiative, etc.

CONCLUSION

The emergence of Indo-Pacific as a geopolitical construct is no doubt achieved a prominent position as a result of compelling and compounding factors amongst the nation-states across the globe in general and India's neighbourhood, in particular. In this paper, the shift from nation state centric to global systems approach in understanding the geopolitics in the Indo-pacific region has been critically analysed.

The analysis illustrates the significance of maritime strategies from India's vantage point in bolstering its geopolitical capacity and capability in the region especially the shift in the dynamics between China and USA. It is in this context, it is interesting to note that such shifts claim to be a derivative of the western interests and China's rising power as described in literature in the domain of international relations and security studies. As a matter of fact, India's attention toward the region and its bolstering maritime capabilities are not primarily because of China's rising power but also due to the factor of enhancing access to rich resources. However, there is limited analysis or exposition regarding India's construct of geopolitical significance of the Indo-Pacific in the recent times, especially in advancing its maritime strategies. This study can be an effective case to understand the changing orientation of geopolitics, i.e., from land to sea and from a single pivot to multiple pivots.

In this line, the analysis further illustrates that India has witnessed a transition from the fringes to the core in terms of taking actions in the region. Arguably, the perspective of leadership on the region and leveraging of maritime space evolved through time but the region and the maritime space themselves retained prominence. The influence on Foreign Policies decisions of the nation-states on the region accounted not just the domestic politics and the national interest but also the external factors such as the action and



interest of other nation-states in the region. However, this analysis is an outcome of literature from secondary data sources and could provide better insights of New Delhi's evolving vantage points and shifting gravities by gaining access through primary data sources at the helm of Foreign Policy making.

Since, at the centre of Delhi's changing worldview lies its retreat to the oceans, there is a need for comprehensive maritime strategy depicting India's larger strategic culture. This is reflective of the 'Net Security Provider' that India aims to be through 'protection of global supply chains, avoiding deeper regional tensions and exploitation of blue economy' which involves holistic security approach.

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Original Article

Role of Villages and Villagers in Mitigating Climate Change: Need for Re-Culturing Livelihood and Unscientific Practices

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 12.09.2023

Accepted 23.12.2023

Published 28.12.2023

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10.53989/jcp.v2i4.rajesh



ABSTRACT

In the phase of global climate change, the role of villages and rural populations is increasingly recognized as both critical and complex. This paper explores the potential for villages and villagers to significantly contribute to climate change mitigation by transforming livelihoods and abandoning unscientific practices. It is argued that rural areas hold traditional ecological knowledge and practices that, if re-cultured and updated with scientific insights, could lead to substantial reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and enhance local resilience to climate impacts. The paper first examines the existing agricultural methods, energy use, and waste management practices prevalent in villages that contribute to environmental degradation and climate change. It then outlines the socio-cultural, educational, and economic barriers that hinder the adoption of more sustainable practices. Drawing on diverse case studies, we highlight how innovative policies at local, national, and international levels can support the necessary transitions. It proposes a multi-faceted approach to re-culture village livelihoods, integrating traditional wisdom with modern technologies and sustainable practices. The paper discusses the importance of policy interventions sensitive to local contexts, including the decentralization of governance, financial incentives for sustainable practices, investment in renewable energy, and the strengthening of village institutions. Furthermore, we stress the imperative of embedding climate change education within villages to foster behavioral change and empower villagers to participate in climate action actively. Our analysis concludes that villages, through re-cultured livelihoods and scientifically informed practices, can become dynamic frontiers in the global effort to mitigate climate change. Policy reforms are vital to catalyze this transition.

Keywords: Climate change mitigation; Traditional ecological knowledge; Sustainable practices; Rural practices; Policy interventions; Socio-cultural interventions; Education

INTRODUCTION

Global warming and climate change are the two terms that are in vogue both in academics and in policy formulation in almost all parts of the world. Several summits, conferences, congregations, and deliberations are being conducted to mitigate this world's temperature increase. The logic of reducing it to modern industry and the urban phenomenon is undoubtedly understandable. But, the factors of climatic variation, earth's internal factors, and external factors of cosmic energy or even the planet's aging could also be probable factors. Undoubtedly, urban-based industries are the identified causal factors of global warming, but is that all? Nevertheless, most of the population still resides in rural areas, and rural agglomeration and activities have hardly been debated. Climate change is a reason, and the

changed situation is the reality. Global, regional, and local challenges are changing rapidly. Many times, we do not need to follow Western and dominant models. Many local experiments and success stories have sustained all-weather tests. While contextualizing the issue in India as space and geopolitical location, it's time for a change. We are debating whether to go forward or backward, which is a significant concern. Development is essential, but at what and at whose cost? With the Indian population crossing 1.5 billion and 65% of the total population still residing in rural areas and dependent on agriculture & allied activities, there are many chances to bring significant change in India. Most of the rural population depends on the old and existing lifestyle patterns, and there are many opportunities to bring change to that. Heat, human performance, and occupational health



are critical for assessing global climate change impacts¹.

This paper aims to understand life, livelihood, and routine patterns. These will help decode them to various impacts and influences on the local and global challenges. However, global warming and climate change are severe matters of concern at the larger systems, yet they matter regarding scalable changes. Rural society, rural eco-system, and rural machinery significantly impact all social, economic, political, and climatic systems. Age-old livelihood patterns need to be studied: 1. To understand the then need and differentiate it from today's need. 2. Need was critical for numerical, economic, resource use, political, and cultural available knowledge.

Production of heat through crops, use, misuse, and abuse of cropping patterns, creation of waste and consumption, overutilization of resources, and livelihood are visible aspects of village economy and heat or cold generating mechanisms. Even more meaningful or bad practices could need to be understood from a larger perspective. This is not only required to protect the far-away people, but their self-protection is essential as nature is testing now and then everyone without any exceptions.

All these sectors have activities that continuously impact climate, temperature, nature, and, ultimately, global warming. Large and small cities are undoubtedly red spots on the temperature radar. Equally potential are the rural and village settlements, which spread throughout the country into nooks and corners of the geographical spaces. This, at times, can be independently and collectively, and either singly or cumulatively, can add to global warming.

Villages are crucial in mitigating climate change, and a sociological perspective can provide valuable insights into the dynamics at play. Sociologists examine the collective behavior of communities, the impact of social norms, and the structures of societies that can both hinder and facilitate climate action.

About Cultural and Social Norms in Adaptation Strategies, Sociologists recognize that social and cultural factors influence adaptation to climate change. Nielsen and Reenberg's study on Northern Burkina Faso illustrates how local culture, including factors such as ethnicity, gender roles, and traditional practices, can act as barriers to adopting successful adaptation strategies, such as labor migration and female economic engagement². Empowerment and Collaboration in Climate Planning are areas of sociological research that emphasize the importance of personalizing the climate change experience and bringing diverse voices into the conversation³ underline the success of a neighborhood-based model that builds trust and social capital, ensuring that residents' adaptation policies are relevant to and owned³.

Traditional knowledge and innovations are vital in creating resilient agricultural practices and sustainable resource management. While understanding the Integrating Traditional Knowledge with Modern Techniques, sociolo-

gists note the significance of this integration for empowering village economies and enabling them to contribute to climate mitigation effectively. Innovation in approach is essential to redress the present challenges, and the bottom-up approach to climate action could be one such actionable plan. Village-level initiatives can provide a bottom-up approach to climate change mitigation. By engaging and empowering local communities, as seen in the Village Adoption Scheme in India, residents can utilize existing resources toward sustainable practices, creating models that other regions can replicate⁴.

Impactful village-centric studies and understanding have been seldom explored, and for sustained impact, Education for Long-Term Sustainability is the best alternative. Amrita SeRVe's project in Sadivayal village underscores the importance of environmental education, particularly among children, to instill the importance of sustainable practices from a young age. Teaching children about the broader impacts of their actions on the environment ensures the perpetuation of sustainable behaviors⁵.

On a global scale, villages reflect localized versions of larger societal dynamics, and thus, their involvement in climate action reflects wider participation in sustainability efforts. Using a sociological lens to evaluate and address these efforts, strategies can become more inclusive, culturally sensitive, and effective in mobilizing communities toward mitigating climate change.

Villages and villagers play a crucial role in combating climate change. Their way of life, traditional knowledge, and sustainable daily life practices notably impact the environment². As we delve into the understanding of the role of villages in mitigating climate change, it becomes evident that re-culturing livelihoods and addressing unscientific practices are essential for fostering sustainable solutions. This article explores the critical contributions of villages and villagers in the fight against climate change and the need to re-culture livelihoods and practices for a more sustainable future⁶. Human adaptation to climate change is a complex process influenced by factors beyond economic and technological development^{2,5}. The literature on climate change adaptation increasingly recognizes the significant impact of factors like class, gender, and culture in the decision-making of adaptation strategies at the local level.

Renewable energy: Should it be learned from urbanites or the village itself? Villages and villagers' role in mitigating climate change extends beyond their economic and technological development. They have a unique knowledge of their local ecosystems and can employ sustainable practices in agriculture, forestry, water management, and energy production.

Significant progress has been achieved in developing scientific principles and tools for adapting to climate change through science-management partnerships that emphasize education, vulnerability assessment, and the creation of



adaptation strategies and tactics. However, the impact of climate change and the need for mitigation go beyond technological and economic aspects. Villages and villagers deeply connect with their natural surroundings and often rely on natural resources for their livelihoods. Their sustainable practices and traditional knowledge can mitigate climate change by 1. Conserving and protecting natural resources, such as rain forests, reserve forests, and water bodies, which act as carbon sinks and help regulate the climate.

Nature-based solutions, such as agroforestry and sustainable farming practices, reduce carbon emissions and enhance biodiversity. We are implementing renewable energy solutions, like solar power and biogas from Gobar, to decrease fossil fuel dependency and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Using these sustainable energy sources can help create a cleaner environment and a more sustainable future for future generations. Investing in renewable energy technologies can also lead to job creation and economic growth in the green energy sector. We must continue to prioritize and support the transition to renewable energy to mitigate the impacts of climate change and ensure a healthier planet for all.

They are promoting community-led initiatives that focus on waste management, recycling, and reducing carbon footprints in daily life. Villages and villagers can play a crucial role in mitigating climate change through their traditional practices and cultural values. They can act as stewards of the environment and promote sustainable lifestyles by preserving local biodiversity, practicing organic farming, promoting traditional knowledge and wisdom, and embracing alternative forms of energy. Villages and villagers have a unique connection with their natural environment, which provides them with a deep understanding of the ecosystems on which they rely for their livelihoods. This ancestral wisdom, transmitted over generations, offers valuable insight into sustainable practices that can help mitigate the effects of climate change. Villages can act as guardians of these vital carbon sinks by preserving and protecting natural resources such as forests and water bodies, contributing to climate regulation and biodiversity preservation.

Moreover, adopting nature-based solutions, including agroforestry and sustainable farming practices, not only reduces carbon emissions but also fosters biodiversity, creating resilient ecosystems better equipped to withstand the effects of climate change. Promoting renewable energy solutions, such as solar power and biogas, reduces reliance on fossil fuels and significantly decreases greenhouse gas emissions, making a tangible impact on mitigating climate change at the local level.

Additionally, community-led initiatives focusing on waste management, recycling, and reducing carbon footprints in daily life demonstrate the commitment of

villages and villagers to sustainable living. By embracing traditional practices and cultural values, villages can be role models for sustainable lifestyles, promoting organic farming, conventional wisdom, and alternative energy sources. Through these efforts, villages and villagers can contribute significantly to global efforts to mitigate climate change, demonstrating their crucial role in creating a more sustainable future.

While villages and villagers can play a significant role in mitigating climate change, some barriers need to be considered. One of the opposing arguments to the crucial role of villages and villagers in mitigating climate change is the challenge of limited resources and access to modern technology. In numerous rural areas, particularly in developing nations, villages frequently need more infrastructure and resources to adopt renewable energy solutions and sustainable practices fully. The initial investment required to switch to renewable energy sources, like solar power or biogas, can be unaffordable for villages with restricted financial resources.

In addition, while traditional knowledge and cultural values are invaluable in promoting sustainable living, they may also hinder the adoption of modern scientific approaches to mitigating climate change. Resistance to Change and reluctance to embrace new technologies and practices can arise, particularly when firmly entrenched in traditional beliefs and customs.

Furthermore, the increasing pressures of population growth and urbanization can lead to encroachment on natural habitats and overexploitation of resources, undermining the efforts of villages and villagers to preserve their local ecosystems. As rural areas experience population growth and migration to urban centers, the traditional way of life and sustainable practices in villages may be at risk, diminishing their potential impact on climate change mitigation.

Despite these challenges, it is essential to recognize the significance of villages and villagers in combating climate change. While addressing the barriers and limitations they face, it is necessary to provide support in the form of technological and financial assistance, as well as education and awareness programs, to empower villages to overcome these challenges and continue their vital contributions to climate change mitigation. By acknowledging and addressing these opposing arguments, the role of villages and villagers in combating climate change can be further strengthened, leading to more comprehensive and practical solutions in global efforts to address climate change. The transformation of livelihood practices in rural areas can play a vital role in addressing and mitigating climate change. By adopting sustainable agriculture practices, supporting renewable energy sources, and investing in eco-friendly infrastructure, rural communities can substantially contribute to decreasing greenhouse gas emissions and enhancing resilience to



climate change impacts. This shift towards more climate-resilient livelihood practices benefits the environment and improves the well-being and livelihoods of rural populations.

Conceptual Framework

The concept of global warming and climate change has taken a severe turn recently. Most countries have pledged to act and perform very swiftly toward this. Some countries and low-laying regions will be affected the most quickly and, later, impact other areas. The thought was that global warming was only melting ice in both the north and south poles, increasing the sea level. However, the recent unprecedented rainfall all over the globe, including many parts of India, has given rise to a new concern that not only selected people and regions will be affected, but everybody is likely to be affected directly or indirectly. This has raised doubts about the logic of prediction of impact understanding and even the causal factors. The regression analyses of urban spaces and industries are visible. Still, hidden and not-so-visible parameters of the non-urban spaces and livelihood are affected, but this could also be the casual factor/s. This approach would enable many to conduct profound research and address concerns from other dimensions. Warming is not unidimensional; it is multidimensional: time factors, external factors like cosmic, aging of the planet, and many other aspects that are not in this research domain and limitations of the setup. Nevertheless, those aspects can be considered throughout the process.

Hence, it could be the dense population region, density, timing of people, production, consumption, livelihood, and lifestyle of urban spaces and areas. However, the missing factor on the other side of this coin is the rural space, time, livelihood, and related activities. If factors of concern are established, a more extensive study covering different parts of the country could be thought of later. It is necessary to understand the local and indigenous knowledge, which has been sustained for quite some time. Since they have been experimented with and are well established but have yet to be shared across the nation, it is essential to understand their presence, practice, and hidden aspects. Let's hope that the knowledge is still prevalent and used. Modern knowledge and commercial cropping patterns have marred the practice, and even knowledge as generations have passed without passing on the hidden meaning and agenda behind them.

Contextualisation

Apart from the 3 R's of literacy, the level of education in these two agglomerations, urban and rural, is significantly different. Especially concerning climate and global warming, many think they will not be affected, and hence, they need not bother about their contribution to the GW and CC; therefore, their participation in mitigating it is abysmal. However, as the saying goes, every drip counts; thus, every

step matters. Approximately 40% of the total population of developed countries and 80% of developing countries live in rural spaces, depending on agriculture/ allied activities. Though season, they contribute significantly. There is an urgent need to educate them from a different angle altogether. Our indigenous and Indian knowledge system has identified which vegetable and edible products produce heat or cold in our bodies after consumption and how to regulate them. The same knowledge must also be available to maintain or sustain temperature in a region's land, water, and air. Local knowledge and practices with deep connectivity with the culture and eco-system must be unearthed rather than borrowing ideas and practices from an 'acontextual' perspective. Many practices connected with the ground reality of our cultural ethos are not in practice but probably are prevalent in the memories and minds of existing older generations. If not now, we cannot see that aspects like the human genome and cultural genome are essential and connected to the roots and ground realities.

Objectives

There is a need to understand the ground reality; at times, there will be a need to induce some new practices and culture. Hence, the following aspects are explored;

1. To understand varieties of practices in agriculture and allied activities that accelerate or decelerate warming and climate change in that region.
2. To understand how cultural/practice mapping is embedded in their daily lives by warming or cooling the land, water, and air around them.
3. To understand how different regions and zones respond differently to the varied situations concerning natural challenges and how they are transmitted through generations.
4. To understand how villages have built their livelihood systems and an Integrated Nature Assimilation System beyond regular seasonal changes/challenges.
5. To understand the role of each vis-à-vis village as a community that knowingly or unknowingly contributes to global warming.

Generic to Specific

In broader terms, many known or unknown practices exist, and people have made them a part of their lives. One has to understand the generality of the matter and then synthesize it to specificities. Hence, many more broad ways of understanding reality will suffice for the study. The following are some more necessities for deliberations for further analyses.

a) To analyze the unique position of villages and villagers in the context of climate change and identify the potential they hold for significant contributions to climate mitigation efforts worldwide.



b) To examine the existing livelihood practices in villages that may contribute to or hinder efforts in combating climate change, focusing on understanding how 'unscientific practices' impact environmental sustainability.

c) To explore the concept of 're-culturing'—the transformative process of revising traditional village practices to be more environmentally conscious and climate-resilient.

d) To investigate the barriers that prevent adopting sustainable practices in rural areas, including sociocultural, economic, and structural challenges.

e) To identify and evaluate innovative strategies and policy interventions that support the transition towards sustainable living and farming practices among rural populations.

f) To propose a framework for empowering villagers to engage in climate action through educational initiatives, technology transfer, and capacity-building efforts.

g) To emphasize the importance of integrating indigenous knowledge with modern scientific approaches to create a holistic, culturally sensitive model of environmental stewardship.

h) To advocate for policy frameworks that incentivize the shift towards sustainable practices and reinforce the value systems that underpin these practices within village communities.

i) To emphasize the role of collaboration between villagers, local governments, NGOs, and the international community in scaling up successful climate action initiatives at the village level.

To contribute to the existing body of literature by providing empirical evidence of successful village-led climate mitigation initiatives and identifying avenues for future research.

The Rationale

1. **Local Impact on Global Challenge:** Villages play a vital role in the global ecosystem. As a significant portion of the global population resides in rural areas, understanding and leveraging their potential impact on climate change is critical for global mitigation strategies.

2. **Sustainable Practices:** Many villages are repositories of traditional knowledge and sustainable land-use practices. Research is needed to highlight these practices, understand their impact on climate mitigation, and explore how they can be adapted and scaled up in different contexts.

3. **Transition Away from Unscientific Practices:** Unscientific and unsustainable practices contribute to environmental degradation in various rural areas. A study to analyze these practices, understand their origins, and develop methods to transform them sustainably is necessary.

4. **Educational and Behavioral Change:** Understanding how education and awareness among villagers about climate issues can drive behavioral change and the adoption of eco-friendly practices offers a pathway to profound societal

transformation toward sustainability.

5. **Barriers to Change:** Cultural, structural, and socioeconomic barriers to adopting sustainable village practices exist. A study that systematically identifies and proposes models to overcome these barriers can inform policy and grassroots initiatives.

6. **Policy and Empowerment:** This study would propose ways to empower villagers and integrate them into the broader climate action discourse by evaluating the effectiveness of current policy frameworks and identifying gaps.

7. **Technological and Social Innovation:** There is a need to explore how technology can support climate change mitigation in rural areas. This includes studying the implementation of innovative agricultural techniques, renewable energy solutions, and sustainable waste management systems.

8. **Collaborative Action:** The study aims to highlight the importance of multi-stakeholder collaboration, including the vital roles of NGOs, government bodies, and the villagers themselves in driving change.

9. **Adaptation and Mitigation Synergies:** Assessing how villagers' climate change adaptation efforts can simultaneously serve as mitigation strategies is crucial for creating dual-benefit solutions.

10. **Theoretical Contribution:** The proposed study intends to contribute to theoretical knowledge by linking sociological and environmental perspectives towards policy implications, offering a nuanced analysis of how societal transformations can support climate change mitigation.

In summary, the rationale for this study lies in harnessing the transformative potential of villages and villagers—a potential that, if tapped, could significantly support global efforts in mitigating the adverse effects of climate change.

Furthering the rationale and argument, climate change is evolutionary; however, human intervention can slow it down significantly. Urban spaces and modern, urbanized established have been brought under one roof to mitigate global warming through proper policies and programs both at international and national agencies with the government. However, the more significant chunk of the population, unaware of the policies and programs, are the victims of global warming and climate change. Indirectly, they are affected, and they contribute to this effect. The significant population, which is kept away from the changing pattern, needs to be made a stakeholder by understanding their lifestyles and patterns and by which we can access their role and percentage of contribution and, hence, decrease the same.

Due to their geographical and topographic advantages, the southern states have different logical connectivity and linkages but can contribute significantly. For logistic reasons, a comprehensive study focusing on different regions and clusters of states can provide a broader perspective of information and linkages.



Essential Policy level changes

a) Fostering Sustainable Agricultural Practices: Agricultural policies must incentivize climate-smart farming, including organic agriculture, permaculture, and agro-forestry, which can reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase carbon sequestration.

b) Supporting Renewable Energy Transition: Energy policies must facilitate the shift from fossil fuels to renewable sources such as solar, wind, and biogas in villages, ensuring energy security and reducing carbon footprints.

c) Promoting Local Employment: Economic policies can stimulate local economies by creating green jobs, thus reducing migration and allowing villagers to maintain sustainable livelihoods within their communities.

d) Enabling Access to Climate Finance: Financial policies should ensure villages can access funds for climate mitigation and adaptation projects, enabling them to invest in sustainable technologies and infrastructure.

e) Integrating Traditional Knowledge: Cultural policies can uphold and integrate indigenous and local knowledge systems with scientific research to create effective and culturally appropriate climate solutions.

f) Education and Capacity Building: Educational policies must prioritize environmental awareness, equipping villagers with the knowledge and skills to implement and maintain sustainable practices.

g) Building Resilience: Policies must focus on strengthening villages' resilience to climate impacts through infrastructure development, disaster risk reduction, and emergency response systems.

h) Enhancing Participation in Decision-Making: Governance policies should involve villages in planning and implementing climate-related policies to ensure that their needs and perspectives shape the interventions.

i) Incentivizing Technological Adoption: Policies should provide subsidies or tax incentives for adopting eco-friendly technologies like efficient irrigation systems, clean cookstoves, and sustainable waste management.

j) Strengthening Collaboration and Networking: Institution-building policies can support the creation of networks and platforms for knowledge exchange, collaboration, and peer-to-peer learning among villages on climate change matters.

These policy changes can empower villages and villagers to be active leaders in climate change mitigation, ultimately leading to a more sustainable and resilient future.

Implication

There is a sufficient movement of the population from rural areas to urban spaces. The research needs to shift from urban to rural spaces as the migration pattern was altered from pre- to post-corona. If we need to understand the

global pattern or establish and create new international trends, it is a matter of concern in the present situation. Policies have to be directional to our needs rather than the formulation of policies as per the requirements of others. If this paradigm shift is achieved, there will be a better scope to address multiple challenges, and climate change or 'global warming' will be just one of them. Hence, better methods and techniques can be used to control and manage probable climate change.

The main reason is that the urban culture, from factories to vehicles and then to industry, is moving toward villages. There is a significant probability of multiplying the urban spaces and cultures and, consequently, multiple warming spots. We need to learn from our mistakes and not repeat the errors. However, in the process of urbanization and while improving rural spaces, the unfortunate Western model of development and the Indian model of applying for programs, policies, infrastructure, and industry will be in a disaster. Policies must be seen from the new dimension and not further create disaster spaces and unmanageable warming areas.

Repeating the development model will be a disaster if it is not altered or arrested. New models of rural development and livelihood are essential now. This project work would enable policy formulation from present to/and future Bharath and rural India. It is necessary to note that India as a nation needs a new model for Bharath of development, if not following another but ingeniously developed model based on a self-sustainable, locally manageable model. Many schemes are launched, but a new model of integrated rural livelihood in the context of new development is a must to regulate the unnecessary pressure of migration.

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Original Article

India's Policy of De-hyphenation in an Emerging Multipolar World Order

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 14.11.2023

Accepted 18.12.2023

Published 26.12.2023

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10.53989/jcp.v2i4.23.17



ABSTRACT

This research article examines the transformation of India's foreign policy, particularly the policy of de-hyphenation in this emerging multipolar world order. In the post-Cold War period, the global power dynamics shifted significantly. The global order has moved away from a unipolar world dominated by a single superpower, namely the United States of America (USA), towards a more complex and diverse landscape of multi-polar world order. The beginning of the third decade of the 21st century has been marked by significant events such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the Russia-Ukraine war, the Israel-Palestine escalation, and the multiple conflicts between the United States and China in various fields. Moreover, the emergence of new alliance systems such as Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), BRICS, QUAD, I2U2 and more are contributing further to global power politics. In 2014, a political leadership shift occurred in India, which subsequently led to a paradigm shift in its foreign policy approach. India has adopted various strategic initiatives to navigate this new global power structure, including Panchamrit, multi-alignment, strategic autonomy, and more. However, in this new global order, the East and West are divided on various issues, which has also been reflected in the new alliance mechanisms. In contrast, India has been able to make a strategic position in both East and West by being part of both alliances. In summary, this research paper comprehensively examines India's policy of de-hyphenation in the emerging multipolar world order.

Keywords: Dehyphenation; Multi Polarity; Global order; Multialignment; Strategic autonomy; Panchamrit

INTRODUCTION

The foreign policy of any country is crucial, especially since it influences the nation's security, prosperity, diplomacy, and ability to navigate complex global issues. The domain of foreign policy is very dynamic, and it involves complex interactions and considerations that influence a nation's approach to its external relations. The foreign policy of any country will evolve according to the changes happening in the global and domestic order. India's foreign policy, too, has evolved in response to changes happening in the global order. The end of the Second World War and the independence of India occurred in the same period. The Second World War also emphasised the decolonisation movement all around the world; along with it, India's foreign policy also emphasised decolonisation, disarmament, and supporting newly independent nations in Asia, Africa, and Latin America¹. In the post-Second World War period, the globe dived on an ideological base, leading to the

emergence of the Cold War¹. During this period, India pursued a non-aligned foreign policy and highlighted the Non-Alignment Movement (NAM), aiming to maintain independence from both the United States and the Soviet Union². The non-alignment policy sought to diversify its international partnerships and maintain strategic autonomy with both blocks and meanwhile not align with either superpower officially³.

The end of the Cold War changed global power dynamics, and the bipolar world order changed into a unipolar world dominated by a single superpower, namely the USA⁴. The disintegration of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR) and the changes that happened at the global and domestic levels during the 1990s were also reflected in India's foreign policy. In the aftermath of the Cold War, India emphasised a balance between economic interests, security concerns, and regional and global diplomacy². The adoption of a new liberal economic policy, popularly known



as economic liberalisation, contains the new principles of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation. India's adoption of economic liberalisation in the early 1990s led to a greater emphasis on economic diplomacy. Meanwhile, India moved away from its old non-alignment to multi-alignment. The adoption of a new foreign policy approach is more pragmatic and realistic and includes partnerships with multiple countries, including the USA, Russia, and China⁵.

In the 21st century, global power dynamics started to change again. The global order has moved away from a unipolar world towards a more complex and diverse landscape of multi-polar world order⁶. The financial crisis of 2008, the economic boom of China, the re-emergence of Russia, the installation of new powerful blocks, and more have made global order multi-polar. In this new order, power is distributed into various entities, and this new global framework ensures that no single party can get a hegemonic position in the global domain⁷. The position of India's foreign policy needs to be examined from this background and this new global framework, navigating the reasons for the adoption of these new foreign policy principles by the government of India since 2014. The emergence of new alliance systems such as Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), BRICS, QUAD, I2U2 and more are contributing further to global power politics, especially on the background of the East-West divide. However, India has been able to make a strategic position in both East and West by being part of both alliances through its policy of de-hyphenation⁵.

In international politics, de-hyphenation refers to the independent handling of two nations with an adversarial relationship. This approach involves establishing a relationship with one nation while disregarding the complexities of its relations with the other. If a third nation is overly mindful of the enduring hostility between two such countries, it may encounter foreign policy challenges in maintaining smooth relationships with both. The policy of de-hyphenation is characterised by a pragmatic and realistic approach involving a nation's independent engagement with two rival or conflicting nations rather than viewing them through a single hyphenated lens. As a result, a declaratory policy of de-hyphenation serves to create the necessary flexibility for the third nation by reducing expectations of partisanship from it in relation to the other two nations. There were multiple examples of de-hyphenation by various countries.

India's foreign policy has evolved from the principles of the Nehruvian era Panchsheel to the pragmatic and realistic 'Panchamrit' policy of the Modi era. This newly evolved 'Panchamrit' has emerged as a new cornerstone of Indian foreign policy. India's policy of the 'Panchamrit' principle has again substantiated its strategic position in this new global order⁸. The shift in foreign policy strategy is primarily attributed to the evolving global environment and national political dynamics. India is compelled to nurture

and safeguard its relationships with multiple global powers on the international stage while safeguarding its security, identity, and national interests. Against this backdrop, the 'Panchmrit' policy assumes greater significance, advocating five pillars for India's Foreign Policy: 'Samman' (dignity and honour), 'Samvad' (enhanced engagement and dialogue), 'Samriddhi' (shared prosperity), 'Suraksha' (regional and global security), and 'Sanskriti' or 'Sabhyata' (cultural and civilisational linkages). A closer examination of these foreign policy principles reveals a notable emphasis on strategic autonomy. This research paper provides a comprehensive examination of India's policy of de-hyphenation in the emerging multipolar world order⁸.

THE NEW GLOBAL ORDER: FROM UNIPOLARITY TO MULTI-POLARITY

In recent years, substantial changes in the global landscape have led to a departure from the previously predominant unipolar world order. This transition towards multi-polarity is observable in diverse economic, geopolitical, and technological advancements. In the post-Cold War, a unipolar world emerged, characterized by the unmatched supremacy of the United States of America. After the dissolution of the USSR, America assumed the sole superpower, influencing global politics and institutions to align with its interests and values⁴. The rise of China and other emerging powers in the global economy has disrupted the previously dominant unipolar structure led by the USA⁹. This new phenomenon has led to a more decentralised distribution of economic influence, creating a multi-polar system of wealth and power. This shift challenges the efficacy of established international institutions, prompting a need to reassess global governance structures to accommodate diverse viewpoints better and address common challenges. Additionally, traditional alliances are evolving as nations pursue strategic partnerships based on mutual interests. Regional powers are gaining significance, resulting in a more intricate geopolitical environment with influence dispersed among multiple actors⁷.

The 21st century has seen the establishment of a novel multilateral global order, denoting the rise of fresh modes of collaboration and discourse among nations and regions in this contemporary era⁶. This development has arisen in response to diverse opportunities and challenges brought about by climate change, globalisation, the COVID-19 pandemic, the rising terrorist threat, and other related transformations necessitating collective efforts and shared solutions. The new global order encompasses various characteristics, including the expansion and diversification of existing multilateral institutions such as the United Nations Organizations (UNO), World Bank (WB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF), incorporating a broader array of voices and perspectives from the global south and developing world. Additionally, it involves the



establishment and reinforcement of new regional and sub-regional organisations such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), African Union (AU), European Union (EU), Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and BRICS, and with the aim of fostering regional integration, development, and cooperation. Furthermore, the emergence of informal networks and initiatives, such as the Alliance for Multilateralism, G20, and QUAD, seeks to address specific issues and challenges that transcend national boundaries and necessitate coordinated action.

The primary factor driving this shift in power dynamics is the ongoing ascendance of China and the resulting strategic complexities it has engendered. These complexities encompass the growing power hegemonic tussle between China and the United States of America and the geopolitical imperatives faced by other countries, particularly those in Asia that are dependent heavily on the Chinese economy. The different influential Asian countries with various levels of political and economic influence, often categorised as 'middle powers', have found themselves particularly vulnerable to the dilemma of balancing high-stakes security concerns with economic interests². The ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine (2022) has accelerated the evaluation of various global alliances. Countries from the Indo-Pacific region, such as Japan, South Korea, and Australia, who are treaty allies of the USA, have opted to castigate Russia by imposing sanctions on its economy and providing non-lethal military support to Ukraine. The other major countries, particularly China and India, have chosen to remain neutral in this scenario. These nations have emphasised the increasing disparity between the developed and developing world, pointing out the unequal effects of the war on different regions. The latest war erupted in the Middle East between Israel and Hamas again, resulting in turmoil.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has implemented a series of comprehensive policy initiatives, including Act East, Neighbourhood First, Act West, Security and Growth for All in the Region, and the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative, which has considerably advanced the strategic agenda of India⁶. The escalating global events such as the trade war and rising tensions between the USA and China, the Russia-Ukraine conflict of 2022, the Israel-Hamas war of 2023 and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic have had a major impact. Furthermore, the emergence of new alliance systems such as the BRICS, QUAD, Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), I2U2 (India, Israeli, UAE, USA), and others is further contributing to global power dynamics. India's de-hyphenation foreign policy must be carefully evaluated and assessed within this complex global context. India's realpolitik approach holds great significance amidst the myriad of complex global challenges, particularly in the background of the emerging multipolar global order.

INDIA'S POLICY OF DE-HYPHENATION

India's foreign policy in the 21st century has undergone a paradigm shift. India's adoption of a de-hyphenation strategy has marked significant changes in its global outlook. Traditionally, India's diplomatic practices often involved being closely associated with its neighbouring nations and the global community. However, there has been a strategic and deliberative shift towards de-hyphenation in recent years, indicating a departure from past approaches and a more sophisticated and strategic engagement with the global community. The de-hyphenation policy has emerged as a defining feature of India's new pragmatic global outlook⁶.

India's decision to pursue de-hyphenation was primarily driven by the desire to strengthen its global position and independently establish relations with major global powers. India aimed to establish robust diplomatic and economic partnerships with countries across the globe. This strategic shift was intended to project India as a self-reliant and confident player capable of contributing significantly to international affairs. The Panchamrit policy, Atmanirbhar Bharat, Make in India, and Vocal for Local are some crucial initiatives by India for achieving self-reliance and independent foreign affairs. The Panchamrit policy adopted by India has a similar pragmatic approach in its engagement with global affairs and has replicated India's realistic global outlook¹⁰. India's stance on the Russia-Ukraine conflict of 2022 demonstrates its de-hyphenation policy.

India's de-hyphenation has allowed it to leverage and capitalise on its position in areas such as defence, energy security and trade, and strategic alignments with both the U.S. and Russia. While this policy has brought advantages in multiple sectors, it has also presented different challenges. One of the primary obstacles has been managing global powers in this complex scenario. Furthermore, India's traditional ideal global perspectives and historical complexities have presented key hurdles in India's actions, and it also requires careful diplomatic navigation to prevent misunderstandings. The de-hyphenation policy also raises questions about India's regional responsibilities and relationships with neighbours. As a significant power in South Asia and the Indian Ocean, India's actions and policies inevitably impact its neighbours and surrounding countries. Balancing its assertion of independence in global affairs and addressing regional concerns poses an ongoing challenge for India. This new global approach has also faced criticism for deviating from its previous liberal, idealistic global outlook.

India has successfully navigated the de-hyphenation policy in the 21st century. A big market and leader of the global south like India has more weight in global affairs especially after becoming economically and militarily in a strong position. India has cleverly capitalised the situation and along with its realpolitik approach of the present government helped India to manage de-hyphenation policy strategically. Along with the Ukrainian crisis, India has



been able to manage Palestinian crisis, Iraq- US ongoing issues, becoming the part of new alliance systems of both West and East and so on. The consequences of India's de-hyphenation policy have implications that reach beyond diplomatic nuances. From an economic perspective, India's endeavours to broaden its partnerships have resulted in tangible benefits, opening new avenues for investment and trade. Furthermore, India's increased involvement in international and multilateral organisations, independent of regional hyphenation, has enhanced its trustworthiness and influence in global decision-making arenas. In summary, India's de-hyphenation policy in this multi-polar world order signifies a strategic transformation of its diplomatic approach. This deliberate departure has enabled India to establish a more autonomous and assertive role on the global platform. While challenges persist, the overall trajectory demonstrates that the de-hyphenation strategy is a dynamic and adaptive response to the complexities of contemporary global politics⁷.

CONCLUSION

The de-hyphenation policy of India in an emerging multipolar world order indicates a strategic recalibration of its diplomatic and global approach. India's deliberative shift away from its historical global outlook and this strategic move signifies India's aspiration for a more autonomous and nuanced position in the global political frame. This notable shift in foreign affairs aims to engage with major powers and emerging powers on individual merits and foster its national interest. The membership of India in both QUAD and SCO replicate India's strategic autonomy. India's de-hyphenation policy reflects a dynamic response to the complexities of the evolving multipolar global order. Additionally, India has been able to make a strategic position in both East and West by adopting the policy of de-hyphenation. However, this strategic move poses specific challenges towards Indian

diplomatic global missions. The durability of some of the ongoing crises could also make a strategic challenge for India's diplomatic missions. The world is slowly awakening from the Covid-19 crisis and global peace and cooperation is very much-needed at this moment. India has to manage both its national and global interests in this critical juncture. Managing global powers in this complex global scenario, delinking with its earlier liberal ideal approaches, and more are some challenges facing India. The policy of de-hyphenation by India at this critical situation is a pragmatic move and it will light India's way for global interests in this multipolar world order.

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Original Article

Regime Change and Democracy in Sikkim

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 28.11.2023

Accepted 22.12.2023

Published 27.12.2023

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10.53989/jcp.v2i4.24.2



ABSTRACT

This paper delves into the intertwined dynamics of regime change, democracy, and political opposition in the context of Sikkim, a unique state nestled in the Himalayas. Firstly, it explores the theoretical underpinnings of regime change and democracy, examining their conceptual nuances and interplay. Secondly, it scrutinizes Sikkim's trajectory towards democracy, assessing the extent to which democratic values and institutions have taken root in its governance landscape. Finally, the paper evaluates the role of political opposition as a crucial component of a thriving democracy, probing where Sikkim currently stands in fostering robust oppositional voices within its political arena. Through this comprehensive analysis, the paper sheds light on Sikkim's journey towards democratic governance amidst the backdrop of regime change and highlights the challenges and prospects it faces in consolidating its democratic credentials.

Keywords: Regime Change; Democracy; Political Opposition Theoretical Construction; Sikkim

THEORETICAL CONSTRUCTION

A regime may be thought of as the formal or informal organization of the centre of political power and of its relations with the broader society. To Fishman, a regime determines who has access to political power and how those who are in power deal with those who are not. Regime has less to do with power than it does with the way power is actually used (Fishman, 1990).

Moreover, it prompts the inquiry: what defines a regime type? Fishman contends that regime type encompasses classifications such as democracy, totalitarianism, and authoritarianism. He highlights that distinctions among these concepts are crucial "Regimes are more permanent forms of political organisation than the specific governments". In essence, while governments may undergo shifts, the fundamental structures of regimes tend to

persist. This notion aligns with the understanding that a change in government does not inherently signify a change in the overarching regime. Instead, it suggests that governments operating within a specific regime generally exhibit similar characteristics, as they adhere to or align with the overarching principles and norms of that regime. Moreover, the regime not only dictates the processes of government formation and operation but also establishes the parameters for their legitimacy and the scope of their authority (Fishman, 1990).

Krasner highlights that within a regime, changes typically pertain to rules and decision-making processes rather than fundamental norms and principles. However, when a regime change occurs, it entails a shift in the underlying norms and principles governing the regime itself. This concept is particularly applicable to political systems characterized by a strong tradition of constitutional governance, where



mechanisms for peaceful government succession, often through popular elections governed by established regime rules and procedures, are in place. In such contexts, a change in government does not necessarily indicate a disruption in the constitutional framework. Here, the notion of regime is closely intertwined with the principles associated with constitutionalism¹ (Krasner, 1983).

The doctrine of constitutionalism imparts significance by delineating specific boundaries for governments and guiding the conduct of politics and state affairs in a general sense. By imposing constraints and establishing rules for political behavior, constitutionalism underscores the fundamental norms of democratic politics. To summarize, regimes encapsulate the norms and principles governing the political organization of the state, as outlined in the rules and procedures that govern governmental operations¹ (Krasner, 1983).

Now talking about democracy, Daniel Lavine notes without an adequate concept of democracy the entire effort attempting to understand regime change stalls virtually at the starting point. Also although, there may be an evolving consensus on what democracy means there is no cause for satisfaction² (Lavine, 1988).

Democracy as Stephanie Lawson says is one regime type, this has suffered some loss of meaning because it is applied to or claimed by many a wide variety of regimes and requires more practical need to establish conceptual clarity in regime change theory. We do not find specific meaning of the term democracy³ (Lawson, 1993). According to Vel Not only in media but also in academic writing democracy is often not specified but taken for granted (Vel, 2008).

The ancient Greek origin of the term 'democracy' translates to 'rule of the people'. It is commonly understood as a system of governance where voters elect representatives to advocate for their interests, typically exemplified in modern liberal democracies (Vel, A.C., Reform Politics). However, democracy encompasses more than just governance by elected officials. Diamond, Linz, and Lipset, in their work "Politics in Developing Countries: Comparing Experiences with Democracy" (1995), identified three fundamental conditions essential for democracy through their comparative study of democratic practices across numerous developing nations (Vel, 2008)

1. Meaningful and extensive competition among individuals and organised groups (political parties) for all effective positions of government power through regular, free and fair elections that exclude the use of force.
2. Highly inclusive level of political participation in the selection of leaders and policies.
3. A level of civil and political liberties – Freedom of thought and expression, freedom of press, freedom of assembly and demonstration, freedom to form or join organisations, freedom from terror and unjustified

imprisonment, secured through political equality and rule of law, sufficient to ensure that citizens can develop and advocate their views and interest and contest policies (Constitutional liberalism – taken as a democratic package).

Lawson asserts that democracy characterizes a distinct form of governance, not simply any regime that labels itself as such. She posits that in today's mass politics, specific minimum criteria must be fulfilled for a regime to be truly considered 'democratic.' Fundamentally, democracy involves the institutional mechanisms through which the authority of the populace is expressed through representative frameworks, suggesting that a limited number of individuals oversee the system³ (Lawson, 1993).

Contrarily, Graham Maddox observes that there are no definitive dimensions or sub-concepts universally accepted as characteristics of democracy. These encompass values such as equality, liberty, justice, and community, along with representative institutions, electoral systems, a plurality of political parties, participation, and free opposition. While some of these elements may hold greater significance than others⁴ (Maddox, 1986).

Gallie suggests that democracy is complex internally, allowing for various interpretations where different aspects are prioritized differently. Establishing a definitive set of necessary and sufficient conditions for the proper implementation of democracy is considered unfeasible. However, it is possible to delineate certain criteria as necessary, though not entirely sufficient conditions, for qualifying a regime as democratic⁵ (Gallie, 1986).

If democratization represents a political shift towards greater government accountability, increased competitiveness in elections, and enhanced protection of civil and political rights, it encompasses more than just electoral processes. Restricting democratization solely to electoral democracy would lead elected governments to perceive themselves as possessing absolute power, potentially exploiting the system to their advantage.

POLITICAL OPPOSITION AS NECESSARY CONDITION FOR DEMOCRACY

The purpose of this paper is to understand how far Sikkim has gone in its way of democracy? Considering political opposition as necessary condition for democracy the purpose here is to understand Sikkim's position in its democratization process.

This is not to disregard the importance of other elements or dimensions (including other types of opposition), nor to claim presence of political opposition as a sufficient condition. As Dahl in his 'Political Opposition in Western Democracies' observed "one is important to regard the existence of an opposition party as a very nearly the most distinctive characteristic of democracy itself, absence of an



opposition party is taken as an evidence, if not always conclusive proof, for the absence of democracy”

Why political opposition is a necessary condition for democracy

Some western scholars like Lawsone and Vel points out:

- The idea of constitutional political opposition means amongst other things, the right of political opposition to show dissatisfaction, opinion etc within some limits that can be legitimately expressed.
- In democracy the purpose of political opposition is to become the government and to do so within the rules and procedures contained in the existing regime.
- On this account the power of the government in democratic regime is always conditional and always temporary. It is conditional because it is subject to limitations on its power imposed by doctrine of constitutionalism and it is temporary because it is subject to periodic judgement of people who may choose to replace it with an alternative government.
- When we talk about political opposition in representative democracy the role of political parties become central.
- The growth of political opposition in democratic regime depends on the existence of competitive party system, where competitive interaction is formed between parties. For this it is obvious it requires more than one party to be a system of this kind. And the idea that there could be any sort of competition for office with only one participant is absurd (illogical).
- The people consist of entire body of citizens, not just a majority. Though in representative democracy the concept of majoritarianism is implied but one party cannot claim to represent an entire political community. The political opposition makes legitimate provision for expression of minority interest and opinion.

Regime Change, Democracy and Political Opposition in Sikkim

Sikkim had been a theocratic monarchical state until it was merged with Indian Union in 1975. With the merger to the Indian union Sikkim saw a regime change in its larger political process. On May 16, 1975 when Sikkim formally became a part of India or merged with India as its 22nd state this ended the theocratic monarchical rule forever and established parliamentary democracy in Sikkim. We can say Sikkim so far experienced two regime type: Monarchical and Democratic.

Before 1975 the political process of Sikkim were guided by the norms and principles of monarchical regime. Though Sikkim were first under British protectorate and later under India's protectorate that brought change within a regime but

did not totally changed the regime. The Sikkimese ruler or Chogyal who was a hereditary ruler who possessed absolute power and ruled by durbar decrees (through Extraordinary Gazetteers). There were no codified rules even for High Courts (established in Sikkim 1955) (His whims were the rules, his grace the qualification.) The Kazis who were the feudal lords and Thekadars (the contractors) were vested with enormous power over the land. In the political system below the ruler there was Sidlon or Dewan, Indian Political officer – J.S.Lall in 1949. Below that a Sikkim State Council (to allow const govt the Chogyal) was formed, where it represented political parties of Sikkim along with the communal representation. In 1953 the first election to the State Council was held. Along with these the system of ‘Dyarchy’ was also introduced (the reserved subjects were in the hands of Chogyal and the transferred were to be represented by peoples representative. The local self-government was also introduced in 1948, 1951 first election for the panchayats were held (One tier panchayat system Sikkim had adopted – Block Council).

Before merger or regime change, Sikkimese political system saw limited evidence of political participation⁶ (Sinha, Gazeteer of Sikkim). There was no viable democratic institution in Sikkim. There was no majority rule. There was no Opposition in the state council (the majority of the councillors were either appointed as Executive Councillors or nominated by the ruler). In local self government the voters had to be the property owners and the members of Block council were largely nominated on the ground of safeguarding the minority. The political parties also had little or institutional organisational maturity.

In a democratic regime in Sikkim, with the introduction of democracy, we can trace a difference in the manner in which the power is used. The access to political power which was absolutely in the hands of Chogyal and his intermediaries now shifted to the people's representative. The government now functions under the banner of constitutionalism and faces a limit in the manner in which his power is used (Separation of power, Constitution defines his power).

If we go on to analyse political opposition in Sikkim which is one essential or necessary condition for democracy: The analysis of election results (from 1979-2014)

Sikkim has witnessed 9 general elections including the election of 1974.

Firstly we can see that the people of Sikkim in a new democratic regime after its merger with Indian Union favour the regional parties than the National one (unlike other states of North East). No national party has ever come to power in the state through elections. Though INC started contesting election since 1979 and BJP since 1994 but they have not been able to influence the mind of the people of Sikkim.

Second, what we generally see in this region is pro-incumbency factor operating. In Sikkim's approximately 50



year history of democracy we find two distinct eras – The first era was that of Nar Bahadur Bhandari who ruled the state for 15 years between 1979-1994 (except for two breaks in between). In 1994 assembly election turned the table in favour of Pawan Kumar Chamling leader of SDF party, who now ruled Sikkim for 25 years.

Sikkims political history reflects the trend of one party dominance syndrome, which is danger to the practice of democracy. Whichever party is in power whether it is Sikkim Democratic Front now or Sikkim Sangram Parishad earlier the ruling party enjoyed a great majority with no opponent at all. One would say that these were the government chosen by the voters, but it is quite evident that it is because of a lack of strong opposition party.

The Sikkim Sangram Parishad which ruled Sikkim for two consecutive periods had become almost non-existent in 2004 election. And other small opponent parties like (Rising Sun, Dendong Peoples Chogpi, Himali Rastra Parishad) in Sikkim did not maintain its stability and failed to perform active political opposition role that also contributed to the pro-incumbency factor in Sikkim.

It was in 2014 election we can see some effective change again in Sikkim politics, where SKM party has won 10 seats out of 32. Formed in the year 2013, it is the only major opposition party in Sikkim and also now holds second largest party inside the state legislative house of Sikkim with one position.

Some reasons for why political opposition in Sikkim was lacking behind

Lack of education which led to political unawareness: Prior to 1975 (because it was the beginning of democratic government in Sikkim) and it was a Monarchy, there was no such need for the people of Sikkim to understand the workings of democratic form of government or of politics in general. Hence, it resulted in a rushed sort of initiation for the Sikkimese people into the world of democracy. Moreover, Sikkim was also lacking in the educational sector. When Sikkim became a part of India in 1975, the education in Sikkim was still at an elementary stage. The literacy rate was below 50%. 17.74 % literacy rate was figured according to 1971 census. That slowly went up to 41.59% in 1981 and 82.20% in 2011 (population 1971: 209843 -.2011: 607688). The lack of political awareness gave Sikkimese people a one dimensional view of democracy, wherein the ruling government represented their notion of democracy; they never felt the need for an opposition. One of the principle ideals of democracy is the presence of strong opposition which counter balances the equation of democracy and that has been lacking in Sikkim for quite some time.

Another factor is that after the formation of the democratic government, there was a huge need for educated Sikkimese citizens for filling up various official, administrative, teaching posts (tertiary sector alone – 13.74 % were recorded in 1980-81, public Adm had 11.30%). This shift in man power and possible political resources also left a gaping hole in what could have been the formation of strong opposition party. Ever since, in this two era of government in Sikkim there have been instances of many opposition party formations but none of them have been much magnitude that is required to balance the equilibrium of a democratic state.

There is no denying the fact that in representative parliamentary democracy, acquiring majority of seats will lead to the formation of a ruling government but another necessary aspect of democracy lies in the existence of an opposition which can be voice for the political minorities, which may be less in number but they will be an integral part of the political system. For example if we look at 2014 election, Sikkim saw defection of 7 MLA's from the opposition SKM to the then ruling party SDF. This kind of political defection definitely breaks the trust of the common people on democracy. It fosters a very hostile environment and renders the opposition weak and also tarnishes the face of democracy.

CONCLUSION

Looking back at Sikkims history of approximately 50 years we see no opposition or very loose opposition in the two era of one party dominance. This is not an issue that arose because of a single reason; it is a culmination of many factors. It is not Chamlings government or Bhandari's government who can be blamed, the 'political culture' is also at fault as seen from the absence of a political opposition. Since political opposition was more or less lacking in Sikkim for so long, the power of the government in democratic regime is conditioned but can it be called temporary is a matter of question.

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

Since its inception, the Department has promoted critical inquiry and exchange of ideas. It strives to remove barriers in higher education and motivate students in realizing their potential through creative spaces. It promotes inter-disciplinary research and tie-ups with civil society and industry, with the intention of facilitating placement of students. Presently, the department consists of three Professors. Prof. Veena Devi, Prof. M. Narasimhamurthy, and Prof. S. Y. Surendra Kumar

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

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#208, Treasury Layout, Bogadi, Mysore-570026

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

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