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Voice of Global South, G20 and India: Accomplishments, Prospects and Challenges

Jayanta Krishna Sarmah and Parimita Bhuyan

Abstract

The holding of Group of 20 (G20) Presidency by India is essentially connected to the concerns of the Global South. The recognition of India as a country of the Global South as well as India's deep concern towards the problems of Global South creates the foundation behind this connection. The paper aims to look into the significance of India's G20 Presidency for the Global South. The paper proceeds to explore on the prospects for Global South under India's leadership that has been envisioned in the coming years. Finally, the paper looks into the challenges that stand as impediments to the advancement of Global South but remained unaddressed during India's G20 Presidency.

Keywords: Developing Countries, Global South, Group of 20 (G20), India, Multilateralism

The American writer and activist, Carl Ogelsby coined the term Global South in 1969 to denote "North's dominance over the South" (Ogelsby 1969). The term is not fundamentally a geographical construct; as it has political and economic connotations. One section of academic writing associates the concept of Global South with Third World - implying countries emancipated from colonial master; largely remained non-aligned during the cold war period and are striving to gear up from their 'Developing' or 'Underdeveloped' or 'Least Developed' condition. Another section of scholars perceives Global South as a political concept and in the form of G77 (Freeman 2018); which is a collection of postcolonial countries formed in 1964, "to promote collective economic interests and to enhance their joint negotiating capacity on all major issues within the United Nations system" (g77.org.doc). Based on this understanding, it may be perceived that the Global South broadly comprises countries from Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean; Asia (excluding a few) and Oceania without Australia and New Zealand. The majority of the countries of the Global South are underdeveloped or least developed; encircled by economic problems of food insecurity, poverty,

unemployment and so on; environmental problems of climate vulnerability; social problems of gender, illiteracy and so on. The underrepresentation of these countries in United Nations (UN) multilateral system; International Financial System and other international platforms have led to global non-attentiveness towards their problems and concerns. India's formal membership of G77 and its colonial experience before becoming independent fits it in the category of Global South; nevertheless, the stability of India's national government, its remarkable gearing up of India's economy and its distinguished position in international platforms indicate India's comparatively better situation in the International Order.

The G20 is a platform to accommodate both developed and developing countries and therefore, countries of Global South such as- Brazil, India, Indonesia, South Africa, Saudi Arabia and so on are original members of G20. Besides, as an influential forum to hold about two-thirds of world population, almost 75 per cent of global trade and around 85 per cent of world's GDP, the G20 exerts economic, financial, trade-related, social, political and other influences on countries of the Global South, even on its non-members. India's holding G20 Presidency (1st December 2022 to 30th November, 2023) is intrinsically connected to the concerns or issues of the Global South. The foundation behind this connection is based on two factors- firstly, India itself is recognised as a country of the Global South; and secondly, India has demonstrated its utmost concern towards the issues of Global South.

In this context, the paper aims to look into the significance of the India's G20 Presidency for the Global South- how India's G20 Presidency has attended to the issues of the Global South. The paper proceeds to explore on the positive prospects for Global South in the upcoming years under India's leadership- the leadership that has been envisioned. Finally, the paper looks into the challenges that restrain the advancement of the Global South but were unaddressed during India's G20 Presidency.

The paper proceeds under the following headings-

- Accomplishments for Global South under India's G20 Presidency
- Future prospects for Global South under India's "envisioned leadership"
- Challenges before the Global South- unaddressed during India's G20 Presidency

Accomplishments for Global South under India's G20 Presidency

India hosted two Global South Summits during its G20 Presidency- the first one is Voice of Global South Summit in January 2023; and the other one is Second Voice of Global South Summit, in November 2023. The hosting of the first Voice of Global South Summit by India, during its G20 Presidency, demonstrates India's

concern for the issues of the Global South and this event may be cited as the first accomplishment for the Global South during India's G-20 Presidency. The virtually hosted event, on 12-13 January, 2023 was attended by 125 countries, including 18 at Heads of State/Government level and others at Ministerial level (pib.gov.in). This Summit provided a platform to the countries of Global South to come together, to exchange ideas among themselves regarding their issues and thereby, to collectively work on solutions. The Prime Minister of Bangladesh Shiekh Hasina placed six proposals before the G20 platform to be addressed collectively for sustained growth and development of the Global South (Bhatia, 2023). There has been stress on worldwide peace and stability for the greater benefit of humanity; developing a new paradigm to address inequalities in line with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); special financing needs of the most vulnerable countries; binding the 'Digital Divide' to ensure equal opportunities for all and so on (Bhatia, 2023). This Summit facilitated the raising of the issues of the Global South in G20 deliberations for the year 2023 and further, enabled grabbing of international attention towards the "priorities, perspectives and concerns of the developing world (High Commission of India, 2023). Out of the ten sessions of the first Voice of Global South Summit, in seven sessions of Ministers' (Ministers' Sessions on Finance, Energy, Environment, Foreign Affairs, Education, Health and Commerce/Trade) - the countries of the Global South exchanged ideas on the concerns of the Global South. Significantly, in the session dedicated to sharing ideas for India's G20 Presidency (Foreign Ministers' Session on G20), External Affairs Minister (EAM) of India assured that valuable inputs generated from partner countries in the Voice of Global South will receive "cognisance globally, including in G20 deliberations" (High Commission of India, Canberra, 2023). In addition, the Voice of Global South Summit put forward the idea of 'Human Centric Globalisation" and emphasised reforms in International Institutions to provide just representation to the countries of the Global South. The need for institutional reforms to represent the voice of the Global South is stretched by India's External Affairs Minister through the use of vocabularies as "More Multi Polarity" and "Reformed Multilateralism"- in the Foreign Minister's Session on G20, of the Voice of Global South Summit (India, Ministry of External Affairs 13 January, 2023). The emphasis laid by India on shaping of the world order in the interest of the Global South through institutional reforms- reflects India's engagement with the problems, perspectives and experiences of Global South. The nature of multilateralism conceptualised in the Voice of Global South Summit is based on the following considerations:

- *Well-being of Human Family, with critical focus on the Vulnerable*

The new globalisation paradigm that has been envisioned during this first Global South Summit aims at well-being of the entire humankind with critical

focus on vulnerable population, as stated by India's EAM in the Foreign Ministers' Session on G20 of the Voice of Global South Summit (India, Ministry of External Affairs, 13 January 2023). This philosophy has been reaffirmed in the concluding session of the event that has been themed as "Unity of Voice, and Unity of Purpose": thereby, inviting collective endeavours to deal with the problems of humankind as a whole and developing countries in particular.

- *Common but Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR)*

The principle of CBRD received a new impetus in the inaugural session of the Voice of Global South Summit, where PM Modi stated that this principle applies to all global challenges (PMINDIA 2023). The principle was again mentioned in the Environment Minister's Session of the Voice of Global South Summit (India, Ministry of External Affairs, 12 January 2023) where it has been reaffirmed that climate action involves a common concern of the humankind; however, the developed countries responsibility is prominent in the context of historical reasons.

- *Diversification and Localisation*

The Voice of Global South Summit aimed at overcoming the dangers of over centralised globalisation and unreliable supply chains through greater "diversification and localisation of capabilities", as stated by India's EAM in the Foreign Minister's Session on G20 of the Voice of Global South Summit (India, Ministry of External Affairs, 13th January 2023). This principle constitutes an important component of the proposed multilateralism in the event.

- *International Cooperation*

The Foreign Ministers' Session on G20 of the Voice of Global South Summit emphasised on concerted collective action and international cooperation for achieving SDGs, food and energy security along with addressing terrorism (India, Ministry of External Affairs, 13 January, 2023). As part of reformed multilateralism, the session laid emphasis on international cooperation and multi stakeholder approach for data related activities, innovation and technology- specifically in the interest of the Global South (India, Ministry of External Affairs, 13 January, 2023).

- *Green Development Model*

The Reformed Multilateralism as proposed in the Foreign Ministers session of G20, of the Voice of Global South Summit envisions green development all over the world through investment in sustainable lifestyles, leveraging green hydrogen for climate action and accelerating progress in SDGs (India, Ministry of External

Affairs, 13 January, 2023).

Precisely, the Voice of Global South Summit, by proposing the concept of Reformed Multilateralism aimed at evolving ways to justly represent the Global South in the International System. The endowing of just share to the LDCs, Environmentally Vulnerable Countries and Heavily Indebted Countries constitute one core component in the proposed idea of Reformed Multiculturism.

Further, the Voice of Global South Summit promised sharing of India's expertise and technology to the countries of the Global South- with an aim to build their capacity in technology and innovation. The Finance Ministers' Session themed "Financing People Centric Development", led by India's Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman reaffirmed that "India's Development Cooperation projects are becoming role models for knowledge sharing and capacity building of countries of Global South" (India, Ministry of External Affairs, 12 January 2023). With reference to the problems affecting the development of Global South, the finance minister emphasised on building "common understanding" in common issues of Global South (India, Ministry of External Affairs, 12 January 2023). With the aim of benefitting the Global South, India's EAM in the Foreign Ministers' Session of the Summit emphasised on utilisation of India's technology by Global South as a part of development cooperation (India, Ministry of External Affairs, 12 January 2023). Similarly, the Education Ministers' Session of the Voice of the Global South Summit, put its thrust on institutional linkages and partnering with other countries of Global South for universal education and human resource development for all (India, Ministry of External Affairs, 13 January 2023). The realisation that the joint initiatives among countries of Global South are indispensable to forward the voice of Global South, India's PM announced a number of new initiatives in the Concluding Leaders' Session of the Voice of Global South Summit. In this connection, reference may be made to New Aarogya Maitri that aims at the supply of essential medical products to any developing country affected by natural disaster or humanitarian crisis; establishing a Global South Centre of Excellence that will undertake research based on Global South; Global South Young Diplomats Forum to connect youthful officers to our foreign countries; Global South Scholarship to students of developing countries to pursue higher education in India and so on (*Sansad TV* 13 January, 2023). Precisely, the Voice of the Global South Summit, hosted by India during India's G20 Presidency, is unique in its nature to grab international attention to the problems and priorities of the Global South. The Summit facilitated the entry of the African Union formally within the G20 ambit in the G20 Summit held in New Delhi, on September, 2023.

The G20 New Delhi Summit under India's Presidency (18th G20 Summit) held on 9th to 10th September, 2023 welcomed 55- nation African Union as

permanent member of G20. The New Delhi Declaration, 2023 resolved to integrate the perspectives of developing countries, including LDCs, LLDCs (Land Locked Developing Countries) and Small Island Developing Countries (SIDS), into future G20 agenda and to strengthen their voice in global decision making. The G20 Summit came up with the idea of reinvigorated multilateralism with due concern to make global governance more "representative, effective, transparent and accountable" (G20 New Delhi Declaration, India, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) 2023), 2023). The idea of multilateralism got expanded to emphasise on representation/ voice of developing countries in decision-making in global international economic and financial institutions (G20 New Delhi Declaration, India, MEA 2023). Further, the focus on 'significantly more financing' to developing countries and EMEs' by international finance systems as well as implementation of the G20 2023 Action Plan to accelerate progress on SDGs (G20 New Delhi Declaration, India, MEA 2023)- demonstrate G20's concern towards Global South under India's Presidency. The G20 Summit placed the Global South at the centre while designing its approach towards ensuring global food security, on global health (by implementing One Health Approach); delivering quality education and so on. The attention towards addressing the debt vulnerabilities of low- and middle-income countries (LMICs); the commitment to provide technical assistance for implementing Digital Public Infrastructure in LMICs; the assurance to address the vulnerabilities of SIDCs with adoption of Sustainable Blue Economy (G20 New Delhi Declaration, India, MEA 2023) - reaffirm G20's concern towards Global South under India's presidency.

With this profound commitment towards upholding the interest of Global South, India has recently organised the Second Voice of the Global South Summit on 17th November, 2023 in virtual mode. Addressing the inaugural address of the summit themed "Together for Everyone's Growth, with Everyone's Trust", India has pointed out shared priorities of the nations of Global South and has stressed on trust building among them. India expresses its belief that fulfilling the needs of the Global South will ultimately inspire them to work towards "greater global good"- relying on five Cs of cooperation, consultation, communication, creativity and capacity building [India, Press Information Bureau (PIB), 17 November 2023]. As part of fulfilling the commitment of first Voice of Global South Summit that was held on January 2023, India inaugurates DAKSHIN (Development and Knowledge Sharing Initiative) which is a Global South Centre of Excellence aimed at searching practical solutions for developmental issues of Global South (India, PIB, 17 November 2023). The concluding session of the summit "Global South: Together for One Future" conveys the message that Global South wants 'Autonomy' and declares Global South's readiness to take responsibility in contemporary global politics (PMINDIA 17 November, 2023). The Second Voice of Global South

Summit reiterates the commitment towards Inclusive Multilateralism (including Comprehensive reform of UNSC); South-South Cooperation; achievement of SDGs; One Health Approach and so on [Chair's Summary, India, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) 2023]. With due emphasis on comprehensive reform of Global Financial Institutions, the Summit underscores the need to ensure that no Global South country fails into debt trap (Chair's Summary, India, MEA 2023). The Summit's reaffirming of the principle of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC) and just energy transition (Chair's Summary, India, MEA 2023) – are reflective of actions in the interest of the Global South while dealing with climate vulnerabilities. Significantly, with due emphasis on women led development; women's safety; women's inclusion into climate action (Chair's Summary, India, MEA 2023) - the Summit upholds that sustainable development of Global South should be accomplished in an inclusive and just manner.

Precisely, in course of India's G20 presidency from 1st December, 2022 to 30th November, 2023, the Global South has made remarkable strides to raise its concern in Global Platform, under India's leadership. The holding of the two Voice of Global South Summits; meetings of G20 and the New Delhi Summit of G20- indicates prioritising of the issues of Global South and the commitment to work towards their solution.

Future Prospects for Global South under India's Envisioned Leadership:

The envisioning of India as a leader of Global South for the coming years or even after the end of India's G20 Presidency- needs attention among the academic circle. It would be an exaggeration to comment that the holding of G20 Presidency by India for one year will automatically ordain India a leadership position in the Global South. The holding of G20 Presidency at best serves as a catalyst to establish India as a leader of the Global South; nevertheless, it needs to be supported by a strong foundation of diplomatic expertise, economic abundance and political stability. In this context three pertinent questions arise- firstly, is India capable of providing leadership to the Global South in the upcoming years?; secondly, what would be the nature of India's leadership that has been envisioned?; and thirdly, how India's leadership (that has been envisioned) creates opportunities for the advancement of the Global South?

India's capability to emerge as a leader of Global South is based on India's historical legacy as an ancient democracy as well as India's historical ties with countries presently constituting the Global South. India's cultural connectivity with East and Southeast as well as Middle and Central Asia is well documented

by various scholars and it has been highlighted that this connectivity underscores India's centuries old role as the font of various religions and cultures (Pant 2019). In addition there are historical evidence suggesting that there existed proto forms of democracy and republicanism in some kingdoms of ancient India- as during the Vedic era the Rajan (Raja) has limited powers and the institution of kingship is controlled by three institutions named Sabha (legislative body); Samiti (most powerful body) and Vidhatha (dispute settlement body). The inscriptions in the wall of Sundaravarada Perumal Temple near Kanchipuram confirm the practice of democracy (prevalence of Village Assembly elections; right to recall elected candidates; written constitution and so on) in Uttaramerur village of South India about 1000 years ago (Subramanian, 2010). Referring to these evidences, PM Modi declares in the floor of United Nations General Assembly that India is the mother of all democracies (Haidar, 2021). The interconnectedness of India with countries of East/Southeast/Middle Asia as well as India's longstanding commitment towards the ethos of cooperation and tolerance since ancient times- indicate India's historical legacy as a vibrant and accommodative actor in the Afro-Asian region.

The belief of India in shared interest of the countries of the Global South is reflected in India's efforts towards Non-Aligned Movement; India's membership of G77 and most significantly, India's participation in India-Africa Forum Summit. The India- Africa Summits- held on 8th -9th April in New Delhi; on 24th -25th May, 2011 in Addis Abada and on 26th- 29th October, 2012 in New Delhi- upheld the principle of South-South cooperation as both India and Africa (countries of Africa) are parts of Global South. While these summits aimed at tackling common challenges of India and Africa through collaboration; nevertheless, India recognised the serious vulnerabilities of African countries and promised to provide assistance for addressing these vulnerabilities. For instance, in Third India Africa Forum Summit, under the banner "Patterns in Progress: Towards a Dynamic and Transformative Development Agenda", India promised skill training for African countries; assured assistance towards Human Resource Development of Africans through scholarship student/academician enrolment and so on [Delhi Declaration, India, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), 2015]. India's call to international community to assist the African Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPCs) to come out of debt trap; advocacy for comprehensive reform of the UN System, including the Security Council, to make it "regionally representative, democratic, accountable and effective" (Delhi Declaration, India, MEA, 2015)- demonstrate India's positioning as a voice of the voiceless African countries. India's approach in these three India-Africa Forum Summits was based on three core aspects: to collaborate with Africa to solve common problems of Global South; to grab the attention of international community towards addressing these problems; and

finally, restructuring of global governance with a just share for India and countries of Africa (Global South). Precisely, India's shared identity with the countries of the Global South, impelled India to organise and actively participate in the India-Africa Forum Summits and thereby, to advocate just share for the developing/ underdeveloped countries of the Global South in the international order.

India's capability to become a leader of the Global South is grounded in India's intent of assisting the needy and its humanitarian outlook. In this regard reference may be made to initiatives as Vaccine Maitri Campaign, 2021 under which India has been supplying COVID 19 vaccines to countries across the Globe. The campaign carries political significance in building humanitarian ties with countries of Global South as in the course of this initiative, India's then Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare Dr Mansukh Mandaviya interacted with ambassadors of Latin America and Caribbean nations (the GRULAC formation), in November, 2021. The supply of Vaccines beyond Asia (to countries such as Egypt, South Africa, Brazil, Algeria and so on) is perceived as a way "to establish India's regional superiority in the global south" (Ariyawardana, 2022). India's demonstration of responsibility towards the countries of the Global South even before the acceptance of G20 presidency, reinforced the belief that India possess the will and intent to become the leader of the Global South even after the termination of its G20 Presidency.

India's leadership for the Global South can be visualised in reference to its rise in technology and innovation which has ushered the rise of digital economy and transparent governance. The Digital India campaign was adopted by India in 2015 with an aim to work on three critical areas of- digital infrastructure as utility to every citizen; governance and services on demand; and finally, digital empowerment of citizens (Information Bulletin, Lok Sabha Secretariat, 2017). The Digital Revolution in India is marked by the expansion of digital public goods and some remarkable achievements in this regard are- Aadhar, Digi Locker, My Gov, Bharat Net, Common Service Centres, Digitisation of post office and so on. The digitisation of various sectors of economy as- digital health care services, digital education, e-commerce and Consumer Internet sectors, FINTECT and so on has resulted in the upsurge of a digital economy; while digital services are exhibited and conceptualised as steps for promoting good governance (Tiwari 2018 and others). The digitisation of Indian economy and reforms in governance has encouraged Indian PM to envision India of becoming a five trillion-dollar economy by 2024-25. In the same line of thinking, India's Economic Advisor (CEA) V. Anantha Nageswaran in 2023 has remarked that India has the potential to grow at six point five to seven per cent and will become a USD five trillion by 2025-26 and USD seven trillion by 2030 depending on exchange rate fluctuation (Economic Times, 2023).

India being a Global South country shares most of the experiences and vulnerabilities of other Global South countries; nevertheless, India's unique historical legacy of being an ancient democracy; its longstanding connectivity with other parts of the Globe; its activism in international sphere and the upsurge of its digital economy- portrays its capability to become the leader of the Global South. It is in this context that the leadership of India for the Global South in the upcoming years could be visualised.

With this understanding the paper proceeds to put some light on the nature of India's leadership that has been visualised for the Global South. India's upholding of the principle of respecting sovereignty and territorial integrity of nation states in various international forums- clarifies that the India's proposed leadership of the Global South is devoid of any negative connotation involving aggression or dominance. This point can further be substantiated with reference to the Third India- Africa Forum Summit of 2015 which declares the principle of "conforming respect for the sovereign and territorial integrity of states as well as non-interference in their internal affairs" (India, Delhi Declaration, 2015). There are other historical mentions that clarifies that India conveys its aspirations to assume leadership with the intent of benefitting entire humanity. In this context reference may be made to Swami Vivekananda who expressed that all the soul-elevating ideas and various branches of knowledge have their roots in India (Gupta, 2018). The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) in its Para 11.1 has also mentioned the long tradition of holistic and multidisciplinary learning in Ancient Indian Universities as Takshashila and Nalanda (NEP 2020) and this expresses India's longstanding old in education and learning. India's past behaviour in global politics as well as existing historical accounts, suggests that there is absence of aggressive tendencies on the part of India to curb upon the sovereign equality of countries of Global South. India's leadership of the Global South is based on its commitment to act within the bound of humanitarianism and to work in solidarity with the countries of the Global South. India is not only concerned towards the problems of the Global South, but is also aware of International Order that perpetuates inequality and injustice which in turn mostly affects the Global South. India's leadership is based on working towards the uplift of the Global South by erecting a just and representative international order.

With this discussion on India's capability to become a leader of the Global South and the nature of its leadership, we may proceed to understand how India's leadership (that has been envisioned) will create opportunities for the Global South. India has aspired to become a leader of the Global South to advocate the collective interests of the Global South- to address the socio-economic-climate vulnerabilities of the Global South as well as to ensure just representation of

Global South in Global Governance. India's progress in the field of innovation and technology is combined with India's willingness to assist the countries of the Global South (particularly LDCs and SIDCs) with an aim to empower them digitally. The International Solar Alliance (ISA) launched by India and France, for instance, aims at development and deployment of "cost-effective and transformational energy solutions supported by the sun to help member countries develop low-carbon trajectories", with particular focus on delivering impact in LDCs and SIDCs (https://isolaralliance.org). The underdeveloped/Least Developed countries of Global South may strive to access these technologies in an affordable manner and may work towards their capacity-building in the field of innovation and technology. Further, India's Maritime Security Strategy has been designed with due attention to the stability and safety of the entire Indo Pacific Region. For instance- in the SAGAR doctrine, 2015 India upholds Safety and Growth of all in the Region (Indian Ocean Region); in the Shangri-La Dialogue Speech Singapore, 2018 India outlines its Indo-Pacific vision- showing concern for the region stretching from eastern shores of Africa to the Western shores of the Pacific. The Global South is surrounded by both hard security challenges and unconventional security challenges; besides, the voices from the littoral states in Asia, Africa and the Southern Pacific are ignored by developed countries (The Hindu, 2023). In addition, the zero-sum competition among powerful nations in Indo-Pacific has been detriment to the developing world (The Hindu, 2023). In this context there arises the need for India's active role to address the maritime threats surrounding the Global South. India's active role in Maritime governance conveys the promise of addressing the maritime problems of the Global South and thereby, to ensure peace, stability and safety in maritime sphere benefitting the Global South. India has constructed its Maritime Vision 2030 that envisages development of ports, shipping and inland waterways as way of generating growth portraying a "creative model" with potential to address the maritime threats confronting Global South (The Hindu, 2023). In addition, the establishment of the Information Fusion Centre- Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR) located in Gurugram has emerged as a prominent hub of maritime security information in the Indian Ocean region as stated by Deputy Chief of Naval Staff Vice Admiral Sanjay Mahindru (The Hindu, 2023). Significantly, India's adherence to the principle of strategic autonomy in international matters has encouraged India to take its own stand in international affairs and not to side with one major player. India's cordiality with major powers and its presence in prominent international forums, creates opportunity for the Global South to strengthen their diplomatic ties with prominent global players. Precisely, India's leadership of the Global South (that has been envisioned) holds the promise of creating new opportunities for the Global South in the spheres of security and diplomacy; economy; science and technology; climate issues and so on.

Challenges before the Global South

The Global South is surrounded by multiple challenges that restrain it's just positioning in the international order. The holding of G20 Presidency by India is marked by concerted efforts to address the problems of the Global South; nevertheless, the complexity of the global governance regime reinforces multiple challenges for the Global South which are difficult to be addressed.

Firstly, non-incorporation of Pakistan and China in the Voice of the Global South Summits signals the contentious relationship between emerging powers of Global South. This prevents the establishment of an all-inclusive platform for the countries of the Global South.

Secondly, China's abhorrence to a rule-based order as reflected in its undermining of the sovereign rights of Southeast Asian Coastal States and subsequently, aggression in South China Sea- pose serious challenges to the peace and stability of Global South. In addition, China's debt trap diplomacy in Global South, as evident in case of Sri Lanka and Pakistan, reinforces the economic challenges of these countries as well as provides ground for China to expand its political leverage. China's continued reluctance to come in terms with India prevents in the realisation of unified concerted action in matters of Global South.

Thirdly, India's stand in Israel-Palestine dispute is critical in the context of its leadership in Global South. India's condemnation of violent attacks by Hamas in-spite of its official support to the Palestinian cause reflects India's unique stand on world politics. However, India's softening of attitude towards Israel and its maintenance of ties with the same has invited criticism from opposition and academic writings. Despite the fact India has continued humanitarian assistance to Gaza and has not designated Hamas as terrorist organisation; it has been commented that India fails to condemn Israel's continued occupation of Palestinian territory and its 'atrocities' on the Palestinians of Gaza (Apoorva, 2023). The growing discontentment cantering Government of India's stand on Israel-Palestine dispute may contribute towards the formation of trust deficit between India and countries of Global South, as most of the countries of Global South strongly condemns Israel and advocates the cause of Palestine.

Despite the complexities of global politics, the role of India's G20 Presidency in advocating the concerns of Global South cannot be diluted. In addition, the potential of India to emerge as a leader of the Global South, even after the termination of its G20 Presidency, cannot be disregarded. The establishment of platforms as Brazil Russia India China South Africa (BRICS) aimed at restructuring of the global order to address the vulnerabilities of the Global South; nevertheless, it performs more as 'Mini-Lateral" (s) - with issue-based focus (Pant, 2023).

Organisations as BRICS face limitations to pursue a robust agenda in restructuring global financial institutions in the interest of Global South. The initiatives under India during its G20 Presidency have ensured large participation of countries of Global South; have paid special attention to the most vulnerable as LDCs, SIDC etc.; have focused on their capacity building and have adopted robust agenda of restructuring global governance. There are prospects for the Global South to secure its just position in the global governance and in this regard, a unified effort from countries of Global South to deal with Global complexities- is highly desired.

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East Africa in India's Indo-Pacific Calculus

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This article aims to bring out the importance of East Africa in India's conception of Indo-Pacific region. As is known the Indo-Pacific region has been variously conceived by regional and extra regional powers depending on their respective foreign policy goals and interests. As far as India is concerned Indo-Pacific region includes the geographical scope of East African region comprising of 13 countries including the six horn countries - Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan, South Sudan, Djibouti and Somalia plus Kenya, Rwanda, Burundi, Comoros, Tanzania, Uganda and the island state of Seychelles. This owes largely to the Indian Ocean connect of these countries and by extension to the larger Indo-Pacific region, which notwithstanding the ongoing Russia – Ukraine conflict continues to be the centre of attraction in global politics today. Apart from the geo-political importance, the East African region is a developing region with a large number of Indian Diaspora and huge market potential and possessing some of the strategic resources such as oil in South Sudan. Also, the horn of Africa region is located close to the middle-east bordering Red Sea and the Persian Gulf from where much of the energy resources for the major powers are being shipped across. As the marine space has gathered quite a lot of significance today the competition to access or secure strategic resources with any or all of these East African countries has also correspondingly increased leading to competition from among major powers in particular India and China. Hence there is a need for India also to leverage these East Africa to its favor in order that a) the historical connection with East Africa is not lost and b) to ensure that the security of India's Sea Lines of Communication is protected.

Keywords: East Africa; Indo-Pacific; Maritime security; Blue economy; Strategic interests; India; China

Introduction

A notable development in today's international political context is the increasing importance of maritime space in the national security calculations of all

states as the huge resource potential that oceans offer for economic development is enormous and hence has caught the attention of major powers. In this regard the East African region has of late attained geo-political importance in international affairs owing to its location at the western end of the Indian Ocean region (WIO) and thereby within the larger Indo-Pacific region. This owes largely to the Indian Ocean connect of these countries and by extension to the larger Indo-Pacific region, which notwithstanding the ongoing Russia – Ukraine conflict continues to be the centre of attraction in global politics today. The region encompasses 13 countries including the six horn countries - Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan, South Sudan, Djibouti and Somalia plus Kenya, Rwanda, Burundi, Comoros, Tanzania, Uganda and the island state of Seychelles. For countries such as India this region is certainly important owing to its proximity just across the Arabian Sea that separates India from this part of Africa besides its official position on Indo-Pacific region is inclusive of East Africa.[1]

Apart from the geo-political importance, the East African region is a developing region with huge market potential and presence of large number of Indian Diaspora and possessing some of the strategic resources such as oil in Sudan. Also, the Horn of Africa region is located close to the middle-east bordering Red Sea and the Persian Gulf from where much of the energy resources for the major powers are being shipped across through the Arabian Sea. As access to marine space by all major powers is gaining momentum it is inevitable that the natural fall out of it would be a corresponding conflict of interest thereby providing scope for competition to access or acquire or even gain some strategic leverage with any or all of these East African countries. Such activity would only contribute to greater instability in the region as exemplified by increasing military activities by major powers including the US, China, and Japan for influence in the region by way of deploying their military assets.

Equally important is the impact such developments would have on the peace and security of East African countries as these countries are increasingly drawn or getting trapped into great power politics. India being closely located just across the Arabian Sean and sharing historical cultural ties with several of the East African countries cannot afford to ignore these new developments as it also has equal strategic interests in the region. Hence there is a need for India also to leverage these East African countries to its favor in order that a) the historical connection with East Africa is not lost b) it ensures that its maritime interests are protected and c) it plays a major role in the region for prosperity and mutual benefit.

This article aims to analyze the significance of East Africa in India's Indo-Pacific conception and the extent to which India can succeed in leveraging its historical ties with East Africa to its national interests in the larger Indo-Pacific

region given the increasing foot print of China through its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The article proceeds by first providing a conceptual overview and then discusses the geo-political and strategic importance of East Africa. Thereafter the maritime security threats and defence and military significance of the region to India as against China's influence and competition is analyzed. Finally, the article brings out the challenges that remain for India to realize its national security interests in the larger Indo-Pacific region.

Conceptual Framework

The concept security has widened in scope and magnitude driving all nations to literally scramble for in whatever way possible. Security is indeed a crucial aspect of state sovereignty for which all states strive in all possible ways to achieve. Yet, achieving complete success in the pursuit of security is not possible for the concept of security is dynamic due to its interconnected nature – comprising of both internal and external dimensions. New security threats have risen today as compared to few decades ago such as those relating to environment, energy, food, health, cyber and the like. Hence governments face increasing pressure to secure themselves from such types of emerging and new threats thereby compelling them to cooperate with neighboring and distant countries driven by economic challenges and technological disparities. Consequently, it is highly likely that cooperation from other countries will be required to promote economic development. Both security and economic development therefore are complimentary and one cannot forgo the other. Since there is a shift towards the maritime space by all countries today owing to its potential contribution for economic development the issue of both securing the maritime space and ensuring economic development becomes vital. Hence the discussion on maritime security and blue economy in the context of Indian Ocean needs to be conceptualized within the backdrop of Indo-Pacific region.

The Concept of Maritime Security

Maritime security is defined crudely as protection of ships and vessels that carry goods and services for trade purposes from both potential and actual threats. As states turn to the oceans for economic activity by way of increasing their trade activities with all other states the protection of such an activity from threats is demanding enough for which efforts are needed to ensure their safe passage and secure them. The threats to such shipping activity primarily come from terrorists and piracy which we call as maritime terrorism and maritime piracy. In particular as maritime piracy started increasing in the Red Sea Coast off Somalia the awareness for greater maritime security caught the attention of all states to the extent that today states have devised maritime security strategy as part of their

national security policies. Christian Bueger calls maritime security as the latest buzzword in international relations as nations have started to include this as part of their mandate.[2]

Apart from the threats noted above maritime inter-state disputes, drug trafficking, human trafficking, illegal goods, small arms trafficking, illegal and unregulated fishing, environmental crimes, maritime accidents and disasters also pose significant threats to states. These kinds of threats continue to proliferate and hence demanding enough for nations to come together and cooperate by way of increasing capacity to tackle such types of threats. These are non-traditional threats that have soared high requiring appropriate policy measures. Besides such kinds of threats that go to understand the concept of maritime security it is equally important to make note of contentions arising from competing powers that potentially pose a threat to their security. As will be discussed below the competing role and influence of China in the Western Indian Ocean poses a threat to India compelling the later to secure its maritime interests.

It is understandable from the above that maritime security includes both the economic dimension and security dimension. The economic point of view includes trade-related activities and from the security point of view it is the inter-state maritime disputes or even those other types of conflicts that gets extended to the maritime realm such as that of India's and China's competition in the maritime seas. Therefore, the issue is how to include such types of potential inter-state conflict of interests at the maritime realm within the conceptual parameters of maritime security and how to prioritize the different types of threats. Therefore, maritime security as a concept should also be broadened to include such types of potential threats as part of its definition. However, one looks at it and whichever dimension the fact remains that for maritime security to be achieved there is inevitably adequate sea power projection and marine safety that are needed besides the blue economy to which we turn to now.

Maritime Security in the Indian Ocean Region

The Indian Ocean region is at the forefront of international politics today primarily due to its geographical location, which holds global and regional significance. It is surrounded by numerous nations, extending from Cape Agulhas to the Malay Peninsula, encompassing East Africa, Asia, and Australia in the west. To the north lies continental Asia, stretching from Suez to the Malay Peninsula, while Singapore, Australia, and Tasmania lie to the east. It is a region of great diversity and contrasts in terms of "politics, population, culture, economy and environment as well as a complex geo-political framework where foreign powers and local states' interests deeply intermingle".[3]

The term "Indian Ocean States" includes both landlocked and coastal states, with ongoing discussion about the inclusion of 51 states in Indian Ocean strategies. Among these, 26 states are located on the Indian Ocean Rim (IOR), five on the Red Sea, and four on the Persian Gulf. Notably, countries such as Saudi Arabia, France, the United Kingdom, and 13 landlocked states hold significant stakes in the region. Many of these states were former colonies, facing numerous challenges and complexities. These issues have contributed to conflicts in the Indian Ocean, transforming seemingly weak countries into influential players in global politics, particularly in the context of combating global terrorism.

India's strategic thinking in recent years is witnessing a reorientation towards the maritime realm, which has gained significant attention as compared to the past. In contrast, this is not the case with Africa and more particularly East Africa. As will be brought out in subsequent paragraphs Africa in general and East Africa in particular have not been able to concentrate much on the maritime benefits owing to a combination of factors such as lack of naval capacity and internal conflicts that has prevented them from utilizing much from the seas. On the part of India its reorientation owes much to the historical experience of military threats which were land based coming primarily from the north-west. In the 20th Century too direct military threats to India were land based coming from Japan, Pakistan and China. Understandably therefore the continuing threats on India's western and northern borders and from domestic insurgencies has led to the Indian Army holding an undisputedly dominant position within the Indian military establishment.[4]

But one can observe that this perception of land-based focus has changed now in the Indian strategic establishment as the importance of Indian Ocean to India's national security and power position has been accepted by all. As rightly noted by one prominent Chinese scholar that as nations transform from an economy that is focused internally to one that is more oriented towards global engagement, the emphasis on national security inevitably shift towards the oceans. As a result the significance of sea power becomes increasingly recognized. This pattern has been observed more frequently throughout history to the extent that it is considered more of a rule than an exception.[5] In this regard it is worth to point out what the then Indian Foreign Minister and later President of India Mr. Pranab Mukherjee had to say while addressing the first memorial lecture for Admiral AK Chatterjee at Kolkata. Recalling the historical connection between India and the Indian Ocean he said:

> for far too many centuries of our history has India either neglected or devoted insufficient attention to this relationship. Fortunately, after almost a millennia of inward and landward focus, we are once again turning our gaze outwards and seawards, which is the natural direction of view for a nation seeking to re-establish itself not simply as a

> continental power, but even more so as a 'maritime' power — and, consequently, as one that is of significance upon the global stage[6]

The statement is visionary and today we witness the active participation of India in the maritime space that is being contended by other nations as well. In fact, the Indian Ocean is ranked as the world's third largest ocean and has been a cradle for renowned maritime civilizations. Throughout history, it has remained a vibrant and active waterway. In today's global and strategic landscape, this ocean holds significant importance as it attracts established and emerging superpowers. The relevance of A.T. Mahan's statement becomes apparent, as he believed that controlling the Indian Ocean meant governing Asia and shaping the world's destiny.[7] This notion resonates with the current power dynamics revolving around this vital water body.

The Concept of Blue Economy

The very common view of blue economy is to utilize the resources of the ocean for economic growth in a sustainable manner. The World Bank defines blue economy more or less the same emphasizing on "economic growth, improved livelihoods and jobs while preserving the health of ocean ecosystem".[8] India's definition is comprehensive enough according to which "blue economy is understood as a subset of the national economy comprising an entire ocean resources system and human-made economic infrastructure in marine, maritime, and onshore coastal zones within the country's legal jurisdiction. It aids the production of goods and services that have clear linkages with economic growth, environmental sustainability, and national security".[9] Besides, among the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals, Blue economy occupies 14th goal indicating us the importance of conserving sea water resources. It's a global effort for which global cooperation and support is required. These definitions entail inevitably that for the active utilization of ocean resources there is a need to secure them in the first place and hence the sustenance of blue economy depends on maritime security without which the utilization of ocean resources will not be possible.

Blue economy therefore can be seen as complementing maritime security as trade and economic activities of all nations have now-a-days largely become dependent on the oceans. And besides the security perspective, what is needed for the effective utilization of ocean resources is the technological capacity and cooperation from stake holders to utilize them in a sustainable manner. When seen in the context of East African countries such capacity is minimal and therefore requires the support and cooperation from wherever it can be obtained.

The Indo-Pacific Region

The geographic space and correspondingly the geo-political implications of the region Indo-Pacific is a contested one indeed when seen from the perspectives of various countries and hence requires some understanding. Although the term Indo-Pacific was in vogue in early 1920s[10] it gained significance as the global power politics shifted from the West to the East in particular to the Indo-Pacific. The much-cited Japanese Prime Minster Shizo Abe's remark in 2007 was the recent and pertinent one in which he envisioned as "We are now at a point at which the Confluence of the Two Seas is coming into being. The Pacific and the Indian Oceans are now bringing about a dynamic coupling as seas of freedom and of prosperity".[11] Indeed it's a confluence of two oceans – the Indian and Pacific – that has come to be called the Indo-Pacific.

However, what is not clear is the differentiation with which countries have tried to see this region, which understandably has not been uniform. Subsequent reactions from different countries notably India, the US, Australia, the ASEAN and others have poured in all of which have differed in their outlook as per their respective national outlook. For example, the US although came up with its acceptance of the new term as against the then existing term Asia-Pacific[12] for the sake of promoting what it termed as 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy', (FIOP) as it new regional policy however, has not accepted the geographic extension of the same from West Coast of the US to that of the East Coast of Africa but restricting to the East of Indian Ocean only.[13]

Similarly, Australia also came up with its own outlook on Indo-Pacific strategy accepting the new term but limiting it in geographic scope to India and thereafter to Southeast and Northeast Asia.[14] India's perception, in contrast is much expansive, understandably. For India, Indo-Pacific includes the entire two oceans namely the Indian and the Pacific Ocean and stands for a free, open and inclusive region with emphasis on ASEAN centrality stressing on the "sovereignty, territorial integrity and equality of all nations" to achieve common prosperity and security.[15] It is clear that India's definition has the largest geographical scope of Indo-Pacific region as compared to other countries. Several other countries have also accepted the concept of Indo-Pacific the recent country being Bangladesh which in its 15 point policy document unveiled in April 2023 its Indo-Pacific Outlook (IPO). Accordingly, Bangladesh outlook on Indo-Pacific while not specifying the geographical confines spells out a "free, open, secure and inclusive Indo-Pacific with shared prosperity for all, based on respect to international legal frameworks".[16] The above differentiation in the conception of the Indo-Pacific region tells us how diverse the views are as regards the region as perceived through the lens of the respective countries.

Geo-Strategic Importance of East Africa

East Africa is among the fastest growing region compared to other regions of Africa as it hosts some of the fastest growing economies such as Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda besides, Ethiopia too. According to the African Development Bank, growth is not even across the region and the reasons for such unevenness is due to the underlying development challenges such as "poor infrastructure connectivity, especially in transport and power; persistent non-tariff barriers to trade; limited economic diversification, slow implementation of regional agreements; and weak capacity within the regional economic institutions".[17] Also, these countries depend much on import of energy losing foreign exchange reserves than to tap their own potential sources that are indeed available in Uganda, Kenya, South Sudan[18] as well as huge potential natural gas in Tanzania (besides Mozambique)[19] as well as in the waters off the coast of East Africa. At present the energy sources are shipped across the waters of Indian Ocean into these countries. What is noteworthy here is the potential for regional players like China and India to help correct these drawbacks through joint collaboration and financial and technological support for development projects.

The coastal length of the 13 countries of East Africa measures to about 4,600 km with Somalia having the longest coast line and correspondingly the maritime space of East Africa is also vast with huge untapped resources and shipping passing through the major waterways of Red Sea and Gulf of Aden into the Indian Ocean. The Institute for Security Studies points out that Africa has a huge dependency of 90% of trade on the maritime sector for exports of whatever primary products that are shipped across and imports that are manufactured and finished products including energy sources into Africa. Despite such dependency on the oceans Africa is not a global player in maritime trade as they own just 1% of global shipping fleets.[20] Reasons for such low level of shipping is due to the lack of facilities such as rail and road infrastructure, weak ports, harbours that are congested, high logistical costs and cargo theft besides the issue of piracy[21] that are actual barriers to greater utilization of maritime space.

Therefore, having realized the importance of maritime resources for economic growth and consequently the need for maritime governance African states have embarked on the path to achieve the same in three essential ways. Firstly, the incapability of Africa to effectively utilize the maritime space was noted at the continental level wherein the African Union came up with a policy note proposing Africa's Integrated Maritime Strategy 2050 (AIM 20250).[22] The strategy envisages integrating cooperation at the national, regional and continental level to protect and promote its maritime resources for economic growth. For this the strategy comes up with the challenges faced by African

countries such as illegal activities like toxic waste dumping into the oceans, illicit crude oil, arms and drug trafficking, piracy and armed robbery at sea. And then it identifies the prevailing maritime capacity and capability so that the inherent drawbacks could be overcome. Accordingly, four building blocks for capacity and capability building have been identified as:

1. Maritime Defence Architecture
2. Maritime Professionals
3. Maritime Infrastructure and
4. Maritime Surveillance and response capabilities.[23]

Besides, the AIM strategy also envisions collaboration with international community and other stake holders to bring about effective governance of the maritime domain without which economic growth, blue economy, the marine environment, human security and national security cannot be achieved.

Secondly, one can also observe the efforts taken by African states to rope in support from regional actors such as China. The role played by regional players is well known from the aggressive manner in which China has sought to influence and support African countries by way of taking up mega projects in the name of Belt and Road Initiative. And finally, at the international level Africa has also sought the intervention of international forums such as the UN to help seek legal framework and support. The international action taken up by Africa is the recent agreement called the marine biological diversity areas beyond national jurisdiction of BBNJ that was recently drafted at the United Nations in March 2023. The BBNJ is divided 12 chapters and 70 articles detailing every single aspect of marine ecosystem.[24] Article 6 draws attention to international cooperation for the sustainable use of marine biological diversity as well as "promote international cooperation in marine scientific research and in the development and transfer of marine technology".[25] Even though the scope of this particular agreement is emphatically beyond national jurisdiction what needs to be understood is the possibility of cooperation from the international community to support Africa in this ambitious effort benefit from marine research in a sustainable manner.

India's interests in East Africa and Efforts taken So Far

At the outset it should be pointed out that India's efforts to forge ties with the developing nations should be seen as an attempt to help support what is called the Global South, which includes the developing nations of Asia, Africa and Latin America. In his recent speech at the Joint Session of US Congress on 23rd June 2023 Prime Minister Modi reiterated the importance of Global South and as part of that African Union (AU) should be given full membership of G-20.[26]

It is from this perspective that India's interests in East Africa should also be seen despite the fact that this region attains some added value stemming from a combination of several factors such as history, economic, cultural, political and strategic reasons. Also the East African calculations in India's foreign policy dynamics has increased of late as can be seen from the clear shift in foreign policy focus on the part of India from one of regional to extra regional to global that has led to some serious actions on building relations with East Africa. This is so much so that whatever relations that exist today or even being attempted today between India and Africa in general and East Africa in particular owes profoundly to these factors. So therefore, it is within the larger vision of supporting the Global South one can find India's relations with East Africa is also being built. It should also be seen in the context of what Prime Minister Modi called 'SAGAR' or Security and Growth for All in the Region that called for "deepening and strengthening economic and security cooperation with India's maritime neighbors".[27]

It has been rightly observed that "East Africa is, and should be, from every point of view, the America of the Hindu".[28] Hence India's historic ties and role has marked an impression that cannot be easily ignored. The literatures detail on the migration of Indian's to several destinations in Africa for trade and economic purposes and consequently settled down there successfully.[29] Figures indicate that substantial number of Indians have settled down in various destinations of Africa and together constitute something like 12.37 per cent of the total Indian Diaspora among which about 93.58 per cent are Persons of Indian Origin (PIO).[30] Therefore, we can to a large extent argue that India's efforts to strengthen relations with East Africa is merely a continuation of its past.[31] It should be noted that most of the East African countries are least developing and do not possess strategic resources except for oil in South Sudan. However, as mentioned above their importance to India lies in the fact that they are coastal states of the Indian Ocean region and hence come within India's definition of the Indo-Pacific region and therefore the scope for expansion in trade and commerce is large.

It is along this line that one can see India's foreign policy objectives catered to improving its relations with Africa in general and East Africa in particular starting from Africa's anti-colonial struggle for independence from their colonial masters in various international forums spearheaded through the non-aligned movement (NAM) at that point in time. In fact, India's contribution to the economic development of British East Africa that comprised of Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika and Zanzibar (the present Tanzania) is well noted and significant[32] and which even continues up until today. Going beyond recent history is the Anthropologists perception of the physical similarity between Indians and people of East Africa notably Ethiopia which is home to the first Homo sapiens

and known as the cradle of human civilization.[33] This is evident enough of the linkages that exist between India and Africa and hence the prospects of continuing and strengthening it further remains quite bright.

In continuation of the importance given to Africa several efforts to build and strengthen the historical connect with East African countries have been taken up. At the political level several high-level political visits by the Indian leaders to East African destinations such as Ethiopia, Djibouti, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda and Seychelles was undertaken. Examples include the visit by the then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to South Africa and Ethiopia in 2010 followed by other high-level visits from and to India and East Africa continued notable of which is that of the Indian President Ram Nath Kovind visit in 2017 to Djibouti and Ethiopia and again in 2018 to Equatorial Guinea, Swaziland, Mauritius and Madagascar. Thereafter India's Prime Minister Modi has also undertaken visit to Mozambique, Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya and Rwanda between 2016 and 2018.

Besides, high-level delegations from Africa to India have also taken place. From the African side, the President of Kenya Uhuru Kenyatta and the President of Rwanda Paul Kagame paid state visit to New Delhi in early 2017. In fact, the Rwandan President had visited India on several other occasions as well. With Paul Kagame India signed a strategic partnership agreement in 2017 the first of its kind of all African countries.[34] The recent visit by India's External Affairs Minister Jayshankar to Kenya in June 2021 to Chair the India – Kenya Joint Commission is another landmark event in bilateral relations. These are evidences to show the significance attached to solidifying bilateral relationships.

Such visits have also produced economic agreements and memoranda of understanding on various sectors of mutual concern. This includes for example help build infrastructural projects in Africa, providing technological support, improve capacity building, strengthen human resource development and most importantly forging security ties like defence partnerships through training and weapon systems to help benefit these countries.

India and East African countries have also signed several defence related deals focusing on security aspects. Examples include the India – Kenya Joint Defence Cooperation Committee meeting of November 2022 that reviewed the progress made between the two countries in the area of joint defence exercises, training, high level visits, agreement for staff exchanges, equipment supply and expertise-sharing of security intelligence on threats related to terrorism and maritime surveillance.[35] With Mauritius, which is another Indian Ocean littoral state and having a majority of Indian Diaspora, India had signed key agreements include defence tie-ups besides Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and Partnership Agreement (CECPA) in 2021. Besides, India has also agreed to

transfer Dornier aircraft and Advanced Light Helicopter to Mauritius to monitor the maritime space adjoining Mauritius and extending USD 100 million line of credit to help procure defence equipments besides setting up coastal surveillance radar systems.[36] Similarly, with Seychelles too India has helped donate naval assets such as patrol boat and training for Seychelles coast guard.[37]

Be that as it may what is interesting to note is enlisting these countries in some kind of institutional mechanisms and frameworks that would help provide continuity in dialogue, alignment in policies and programmes, understand the requirements according to their own needs and thereby bind them into it. The starting point of such institutional mechanisms include the initiative by India called the "Focus Africa" integrated programme that would help boost India's trade ties with African countries. This initiative was launched as early as in 2002 involving seven countries in Africa two of which were from East Africa – Kenya and Tanzania.[38] Mention should also be made of the launching of the India – Africa Forum Summit (IAFS) in 2008 (following the Chinese version called FOCAC – Forum on China Africa Cooperation) and since its launch three summit meetings have been held in India and Africa with the recent third such summit being held in New Delhi in 2015 in which 41 Heads of State and Government from Africa participated. During the meeting a sum of USD 10 billion concessional line of credit was extended to Africa for a five-year period besides USD 600 million as grant assistance for various developmental projects – development fund, health fund, 50,000 scholarships, strengthening the Pan-African E-Network as well a institution for skilling, training and learning across Africa.[39] As can be seen the summit meetings have indeed helped improve political and economic relations with all 54 countries of Africa.

Besides there are several other bilateral level institutional mechanisms that India has forged with individual East African countries that help contribute regular meetings and discussions on agreed agenda. Examples on this include the Joint Commission Meeting with Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania to discuss economic, technical, scientific and cultural aspects of cooperation.[40] Similarly such committees and commissions have been set up with other countries like Rwanda, South Sudan and Burundi.

With East African countries in particular India has extended all help to improve their economic situation with focus on developing information technology, developing their pharmaceutical industries, productive agricultural innovations, skilled human resource development and non-conventional energy resource way back in 2003 itself when a MOU was signed then.[41] Noteworthy to also mention are the various Lines of Credit (LoC's), grants in aid and the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) agreements to support them

in capacity building and other technology related aspects all of which have acted crucial tool for India's partnership with East Africa. Trade between East Africa and India have also been increasing in momentum with diversified trade items being exported from East Africa to India such as ores and metals, agricultural raw materials and manufactured materials.[42]

Challenges Ahead

One of the major challenges faced by India is China's hegemonic and aggressive actions in the region, which happens to be India's overarching security concern. The waters off the Western Indian Ocean is no more peaceful as the entry of China and its rising naval capabilities is seen as a security concern than a welcoming thing. The People' Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) has significantly improved its naval fleet to the extent that it has the worlds' largest navy surpassing the US and projected to increase more augmented by modernized weaponry. The launching of the third Aircraft Carrier 'Fujian' which is China's first fully indigenously developed carrier has provided the capability to "deploy as a fully fledged blue-water force beyond the island chains, perhaps with an initial focus on the Indian Ocean".[43] The US Department of Defense Report of November 2022 informs us that PLAN "is numerically the largest navy in the world with an overall battle force of approximately 340 ships and submarines, including approximately 125 major surface combatants"[44] which is about three times the size of Indian navy.[45]

In addition to the issue of superiority in number of naval vessels and corresponding expansion in modernized weapon systems that each country possess is the military strategy of China that is based on 'active defense", which as observed by the US Department of Defense Report of 2019 that it is neither purely defensive strategy nor offensive in nature.[46] This strategy is affirmed in the 2019 Defense White Paper of China adhering to the principles of defense, self-defense and post-strike response and adopting active defence maintaining that "we will not attack unless we are attacked, but we will surely counterattack if attacked".[47] What this entails is the security concerns this military strategy and the expanding Chinese naval fleet poses to India in the Indian Ocean region. Therefore, we see both China and India getting actively involved in whatever way possible to secure their respective national interests.

Even then from the point of view of trade and economic clout one has to accept that Chinese strong manufacturing sector and defense capabilities outdo that of India's and hence the competition to win over the relations with East African countries is tilted in favor of China now. A comparative assessment of volume of trade between East Africa on the one hand and China and India on the other hand

will tell us the differences between these two countries and indicate the extent of penetration that China and India have been able to make in this part of the world. Statistical data notwithstanding it is known that Chinese products have swamped Africa today with all its investments, low-cost products, completion of construction activities in a timely manner, support by way of providing Chinese skilled labor – all of which without any question on human rights or governance issues. For India the challenge therefore is the capacity to outmaneuver China in all these areas despite the fact that India has strong and long historical connect than that of China.

Other challenges also confront India's ongoing effort to boost its link with East African countries. They include issues relating to India's economic interaction that is mutually beneficial. Given the policy framework put in place by way of Make in India in all sectors the extent to which such measures would help connect with East African countries needs to be thought of. This again leads us to the challenge from China which has already captured the markets and it is now for India to take aggressive measures to invest and counter Chinese economic clout.

Conclusion

From the above analysis it is clear that maritime space occupies a significant component in every country's foreign policy and more particularly for big and rising powers. The theoretical underpinnings eloquently analyzed by international relations scholars such as A.T. Mahan and Julian Corbett emphasizing the importance of sea power dominance and naval capability have got renewed life today. The scope and magnitude of navies of India and China along with the US, Japan and Australia are getting increasingly modernized and expanded both to protect their respective national interests and to tackle challenges posed by the competing interests of these major powers.

In such situation East African countries have become the centre of attraction for India owing to their geo-strategic location straddling the waters off the Western Indian Ocean Region. It is in view of this that one can observe increased attention being paid by Indian foreign policy to outreach these countries by high level visits, scaling up its diplomatic effort through economic support and defence cooperation methods and thereby solidifying relations in all possible manner. As noted in this article there are obstacles that remain to be confronted with by India to enable itself to be seen as a trusted partner by East African countries and to cope up with the competition arising from China in Western Indian Ocean Region. It is hoped that by continued and unrelenting focus on this region and enlisting the support of these countries by way of strengthening bilateral relations with individual East African countries in their developmental efforts India will be able to overcome these challenges.

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Influx of Chins from Myanmar to Mizoram: Brother or the Other Dilemma

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Abstract

The February 01 coup in Myanmar led to the harrowing exodus of thousands of Chins in fear to India's Northeastern states of Mizoram and Manipur. The ethnic ties and the belief in common descent as well as the political, economic and social factors have played a role in receiving Chin refugees in Mizoram. At the same time reception of Chins in Mizoram has also been affected by perceived otherness. This article is concerned with the implications of the Chins coming to Mizoram, the kind/s of support received and whether Mizoram can sustain giving support. The paper contends that he people of Mizoram are constantly having to face the dilemma in considering the Chins as either their brother or as the other. This in turn shapes the ways in which the Chins are received.

Keywords: India, Myanmar, Mizoram, Chin, Refugee, Tatmadaw.

Introduction

Myanmar's 2021 coup d'état saw the country's military the Tatmadaw stage a coup d'etat, declare 1 year state of emergency and forcibly remove the democratically elected government led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) party, less than 10 years after it handed over power to a civilian government.It saw leading members of the ruling party National League for Democracy detained and elected members of the Myanmar parliament held in house arrest.The Coup took place just before the new session of the parliament and after the landslide victory of NLD in the recently concluded election. The armed forces sided with the opposition party, asking for a rerun of the vote, claiming widespread fraud (Cuddy 2021). These happenings sparked nationwide resistance movement demanding restoration of democracy. Several armed militias across the country are also resisting the military from gaining control. Some of the fiercest resistance to the junta rule has come from ethnic minority regions bordering India and Thailand. The armed resistance to Junta rule from ethnic minority along the

border with Mizoram came from dozens of local civilian militias, in collaboration with Chin National Army (CNA) that are jointly fighting to build a federal democratic union. A pro-democracy civilian resistance group called the Chin Defence Force — which is backed and trained by the Chin National Army (CNA), an ethnic armed organization active in Myanmar — has also been fighting the forces of the junta ever since the military coup of February 2021.

The protests of 2021 and the Civil Disobedience Movement have had broad public support. Since some communities in the Burman majority areas of the country are experiencing the brutality of the military in a way that many ethnic minority areas have long suffered, bringing thereby a new shared experience of oppression leading to a newly galvanized resistance to the military, often crossing ethnic and religious boundaries. Even as the staging of the coup, triggered a wave of protests as people demanded a return to the civilian government the Tatmadaw led by General Min Aung Hlaing took measures to quash the armed resistance and unleashed a brutal reign of terror on the civilian population. Thousands of people have been arrested. The highest intensity military activity is in the Sagaing region, Chin, Kachin, Kayah and Kayin states where the military has been punishing local communities for their assumed support of armed elements.

The ensuing conflict between the military junta and resistance groups has triggered an exodusof thousands of people from the Chin state including dissenting police officers (The Hindu 2021), fleeing across the border to Mizoram and Manipur (Ghoshal and Ghoshal 2021). This resembled the similar situation that had unfolded after the 1988 uprising in Myanmar.This paper will examine the local response to the exodus of Chin's fleeing persecution to India's Mizoram State and its consequences for India.

Why do Chin's seek safety in Mizoram?

Although there are no clear official estimates of their numbers, people, particularly from the Chin State are pouring into Mizoram. Mizoram has two international borders (with Myanmar to the east and Bangladesh to the south). In the words of P. Cuttitta (2006, 27-39) border is not only the "mere control of territorial areas. But it more and more depends on the control over different flows running inside and through territories". Six Mizoram districts - Champhai, Siaha, Lawngtlai, Serchhip, Hnahthial and Saitual- share a 510 km-long international border with Myanmar's Chin state. Mizoram and Chin State are small and ethnically distinct sub-states that have considerable commonalities with each other. Migration between Mizoram and the western part of Burma, specifically the Chin State, Sagaing Division and Arakan State, may have been commonplace during pre-independence times (Agamben 1995, 114-19) but, in recent history,

migration is mostly one-sided affair, with more Chins from Chin State and Sagaing Division coming over to Mizoram.

In refugee terms, there is no real difference between Rohingya and the Chin's. Both have fled the Myanmar Army, although in different circumstances. But the treatment meted out to them are different. It is not the first time that Mizoram is home to the Chins fleeing Myanmar. In the past Mizoram had been hosting Chin population who have fled political repression, military oppression and economic impasse. The border between Mizoram and Myanmar is porous and people from the border from both the countries move across them for many reasons.

The waves of migration which started in the late 1960s gathered momentum after the 1988 pro-democracy uprising in Myanmar. The end of the decade of the 1980s is known to have characterized Burmese migration differently from the previous decades (Bhaumik 2003, 182-210). An increase in the military strength of the junta during this period and its gaining control of the ethnic states resulted in the setting up of military camps and to large-scale internal displacement (Basu Ray Chaudhuri, 2005). The Chin state was heavily militarized, and together with poverty and military oppression that they had to endure, compelled many Chins to cross the border and take shelter in India's Mizoram state (UNHCR, 2019). Many Chins fled to India to escape brutal military crackdown, arbitrary arrests, torture, forced labor and religious persecution. A large number of people from the Chin State of Myanmar had come into Mizoram then had decided to stay back and eventually got integrated into the social fabric of the Mizo society.

During the initial period of the migration to Mizoram, India welcomed Burmese nationals who fled following the student demonstrations in the late 1980s. India's Union government and the government of Mizoram provided them aid and assistance in Champhai and Saiha districts of Mizoram. Similarly, from the 1960s to the 1980s, the Chin people extended open support and sanctuary to the members of the Mizo National Front, who were fighting for secession from the Indian Union. And when the Chins were subjected to brutal repression at the hands of the junta regime during the 1988 pro-democracy movement in Myanmar, the Mizo's in turn reciprocated and extended a helping hand. As a matter of fact, the long history of mutual empathy and solidarity between the Mizo's and the Chins have had a great influence on the extent of receiving the Chins from Myanmar.

Other reason for Chin's seeking safety in Mizoram and Mizo's heartily welcoming them are not only because of the geographic and political reality of the friendly uninterrupted border between Chin State and Mizoram, but also because of the close ethno-cultural links between the Chin-Mizo fraternal relations. The Chins also migrate to Mizoram for linguistic, cultural and religious proximity with the Mizo, as they share a common historic and genetic background. Along

the largely unfenced Mizoram-Myanmar border, people from both sides have traditionally moved in and out freely. The Free Movement Regime (FMR) between India and Myanmar allowing both the Mizo's and Chins on either side to go up to 16 km on the other side legalized this practice. This has facilitated ease of movement wherein a large number of border landers routinely cross over on either side for work or to meet relatives. Cross-border marriages, trade in essential commodities is common. Because of linguistic, religious similarities they merge easily with the Mizo population and some of them have even acquired citizenship rights with the help of the local Mizos. For these reasons Mizoram has been transformed into a natural refuge for the Chins.

The Chins in Mizoram often take up low paid jobs. Some also take part in informal border trade. Many come and go in search of better economic opportunities and employment. Very often they are alleged to be involved in illegal activities such as drugs trafficking, theft, liquor brewing etc (Khonumthung News, 2009a). They have also been accused of illegal trade, entry without identity documents, violation of laws and "misuse of freedoms they have in Mizoram" (Khonumthung News, 2009b). This contradictory response to Chins in Mizoram illustrates a dynamic relationship and the changing contours of their relations and identity in the construction of insider and others(Migdal 2004, 1-23).

At present the Chin's fleeing Myanmar are provided with food and other relief from the Mizoram government, NGOs, churches, student bodies and village authorities. The state government, backed by the civil society at large, has not only extended a warm welcome to everybody wanting to come in but has also strongly communicated to New Delhi that it cannot be "indifferent" to its concerns (PTI, 2021). In this instance one clearly sees local generosity taking over national policies.

How long can Mizoram weather support to the Chins?

What differs from the usual pattern is that Mizo's and Chins are ethnically related, winning the Chins a better and unique treatment compared to that reserved for the Chakmas, Rohingya's or Brus. As the law stands, the entry, stay and exit of a foreigner arriving in India is regulated under the Foreigners Act, 1946, the Constitution of India, the Registration of Foreigners Act, 1939, and the Passports Act. Chins who live in Mizoram often do not have valid legal identity papers. They arrive in cities, such as Aizawl, or border towns either for a short duration or for a longer haul. The fact that both share a strong ethnic bond predating India's Independence, and that the two are bound together by a common religion: Mizo's are predominantly Christians, just as the Chin's in Myanmar, play a vital role. Nonetheless, the reception of the Chins oscillates between rejection, solidarity and dependency.

The co-existing discourses of Chin as the brother/other (McConnachie 2018, 314-333) is marked by the fact that the Chins are welcome in Mizoram as long as they serve their needs by providing cheap labor for instance but becomes a nuisance as soon as they pose a challenge to the Mizo way of life. The presence of a sizeable migrant Chin population has over the years generated competition between the locals and the Chin for control over the resources. As the population of Chin's grew in numbers, they were increasingly being viewed as a burden on the Mizo society. This has resulted in periodic violence and attempts to drive out the Chins and mass pushbacks across the border to Myanmar displaying the limitations of ethnic affinity. The phenomenon of influx of migrants from across the border and the extent of the menace is highly debatable as it is gauged on the basis of varied estimates made over the years. What it certainly establishes is that refugee policy decisions are largely based on cost-benefit calculations.

The first case of large-scale Chin deportation from Mizoram took place on 16 July 1996 when C. Lalhmangaiha, the president of the Khuang Leng village unit of the Young Mizo Association (YMA) was allegedly shot dead by three members of the Chin National army (CNA). This created tension between the Chins and Mizos. Thousands of Chins, who were believed to be supporters and sympathizers of the CNA and the Chin National Front (CNF) were arrested, jailed and deported back to Myanmar by the Mizo authorities and Mizo voluntary association (Press release… 1996).[1] Several campaigns have been organized by the local NGO's and on 25 July 2003, leaders of prominent Mizo NGO's such as YMA, Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP) Mizo UpaPawl (MUP) and Mizo HmeichheInsuikhawm Pawl (MHIP) submitted a joint memorandum to the then chief minister of Mizoram, urging the government of Mizoram to place a check-gate at the Myanmar-India border, so that illegal influx to Mizoram and illegal smuggling of drugs, alcohol and other items can be curbed (A Joint Memorandum….2003).[2]

Currently the entire task of hosting the Chin's seeking refuge in Mizoram is being handled by village communities organized by powerful institutions like the Young Mizo Association and the Mizo Baptist Church that have also been organizing fundraisers and distributing relief. The state government, local NGOs, local churches, international humanitarian organizations, are working in tandem to ensure asylum seekers have basic amenities. Schools have also enrolled Chin children. In this way the Mizoram government's informal asylum policy has moved beyond basic amenities.

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) had made it clear that "India is not a signatory to the 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol theron" and issued an advisory to stay alert and take appropriate action to prevent a possible influx into Indian territory" and further reminding the Northeastern states of Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Nagaland, and Mizoram that

share borders with Myanmar that they have no powers to grant refugee status to any foreigner. Yet despite the MHA advisory "... to stay alert and take appropriate action to prevent a possible influx into Indian territory" the Mizoram government has exhibited exceptional magnanimity to giving shelter to the Chin's coming to Mizoram. The state government, led by the Mizo National Front is an alliance partner of the Democratic alliance has defied the instruction of the Ministry of Home Affairs, forbidding states from offering refuge and relief. To this Chief Minister Zoramthanga responded on 18th March, 2021, "Every day, terrified Myanmar citizens are struggling to cross over to Mizoram in search of shelter and protection. Mizoram cannot just remain indifferent to their suffering today."[3] "I understand that there are certain foreign policy issues where India needs to proceed cautiously," said Mr.PuZoramthanga, according to a copy of the letter reviewed by Reuters. "However, we cannot ignore this humanitarian crisis," he said.

The Centre State schism is clearly visible in Mizoram government's defiance of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) orders to "detect and deport the refugees". The reason for the Mizoram government's defiance lies in the common history of the Mizos and Chins as they trace their origin from the same Zo tribe. While a common descent is invoked by the two communities in relating to each other ("they are our brothers"),[4] the abrupt physical disconnection in the post partition post partition period (Van Schendel, 2005),[5] led to the artificial line separating the Chin and the Mizo that in turn gave a new narrative on the co-existing discourse of Chin as brother as well as other. This is important in the context of shared ethnic ties and the unique social-political realities between them.

Even so, if Mizoram continues to bear the brunt of an increasing burden to provide refuge for a growing number of Chin's coming into Mizoram it will lead to not only deteriorating living conditions for the refugees but also as in the past cause tension between them. Besides, the deteriorating living conditions and other circumstances may aggravate their resentment which may turn them towards militancy and terrorism to vent their anger and frustrations. Even though the flexibility of perceptions of belonging, and the existence of overlapping identities are accorded different weight and value at different times, the growing number of Chins may once again trigger opposition. Besides, triggering demographic changes in the long term, the attendant security risks cannot be undermined. Hence, the fallout on security implications for India cannot be ignored. More so because of the volatile situation in Myanmar, the Chin refugees are likely to stay in Mizoram for long. As such the refugee flows to India are unlikely to end any time soon given the geopolitical, economic, ethnic, and religious contexts of the region.

India does not have specific legislation to address the problem of refugees. In the absence of a formal law the Indian State has been dealing with the refugees on

the basis of the 1946 Foreigners act which delas with the treatment of non-citizens in India. But the Foreigners Act, 1946, fails to address the peculiar problems faced by refugees as a class. The Indian Government has taken measures to control the movement of people but its decision to fence the border has triggered opposition in Mizoram.

Although, there is a strong social and hence, political, consensus in the state in favor of giving refuge to those fleeing from Myanmar and strong historical, cultural and ethnic connections between Chin and Mizo might suggest that those arriving would easily integrate into Mizoram the ground reality may be somewhat different. While this has been true to some extent but what must not be overlooked is that the reception of Chin in Mizoram in the past has also been shaped by their perceived otherness. If this consideration plays out in the context of the Chins at this time, then in the long run their survival will depend on whether they are able to secure a place to live and work and in forging a negotiated settlement between them and their hosts.And above all an important aspect is that the refugee issue poses an economic burden for the state. In view of their own meagre infrastructure and resources, the Mizo's are today stretched beyond their capacity to continue to render assistance. Therefore, how long will Mizoram be able to offer shelter to the Chins is the moot question?

Response of the Indian Government

The next question that arises then: should India allow the Chins to come to Mizoram? Being directly affected by the massive influx into Mizoram, India cannot turn a blind eye as they are ethnically related to the dominant Mizo community in Mizoram. At the same time India cannot upset the Myanmar junta by providing a roof over their head especially policemen fleeing military crackdown.

Since India shares 1,643 km of porous, unfenced border with Myanmar. Any instability in Myanmar has a direct impact on India's internal security. The history of instability on both sides of the international border, ongoing since India and Burma attained Independence, has led to some of the longest-running insurgency movements in the world. The burgeoning Chin presence in Mizoram is the latest sign of how Myanmar's internal conflicts have exported the chances of instability to India's northeast.

The northeastern states of India are at peace after many decades, and cannot entertain any situation that may undo peace. At the same time, it is important to recognize that developments in Myanmar is an essential factor in keeping the northeastern states peaceful. Myanmar's geographical location at the trifurcation of ASEAN, India and China and its internal crisis have a huge geopolitical

implication. More so since instability in the region is neither good for India's internal security nor for India's national interest in the region.While the military takeover of government in Myanmar on 1 February 2021 demonstrated the fragility of the supposed transition to democracy, India's reaction was one of concern (Press statement....2021).[6] Given its democratic credentials its dilemma is that it cannot afford to back the military rule either. Although New Delhi did say that it has "always been steadfast in its support to the process of democratic transition in Myanmar" and "believe that the rule of law and the democratic process must be upheld" it did not directly condemn the military's action. Though India has advocated restoration of democracy in Myanmar but openly did not condemn the Coup.New Delhi's reaction to the recent development in Myanmar is entirely predictable which reaffirmed the value India attached to the military-diplomatic outreach to Myanmar that has been the cornerstone of its Act East policy.

Despite the fact that India's concerns about security have had a more restrictive impact on asylum space in the country, and that India is not a signatory to the 1951 UN Convention and the 1967 Protocol, which secure the rights of refugees to seek asylum and protect them from being sent back to life-threatening places, the Mizoram government has not insisted on deporting the Chins back to Myanmar from where they fled to escape violence. There is no doubt that Chins in Mizoram face numerous challenges such as lack of legal status, limited access to livelihood healthcare etc. The NGOs and Christian churches in Mizoram have played a significant role in providing assistance and support to the Chins. New Delhi is having to walking a tightrope in dealing with the large-scale influx of Chin's to Mizoram as it is conscious of the implications of how it calibrates its policy.In doing so India's stand so far has exhibited its intention to attach value to establishing good relations with Myanmar and in safeguarding its strategic interests in Myanmar.

It is true that despite the Mizo National Front being an NDA partner New Delhi and Aizawl's approach to the Chin's is afflicted by dissonance.The contrast in the responses of the Centre and the state emanates from the security-centric approach of the Centre and the people-centered focus of the Mizoram government (Karmakar, 2021). Mizoram's approach has been wavering between retribution and restraint while she Centre's stance is rooted in firm geopolitical considerations especially when the security implications for India cannot be ignored while Mizoram is caught between a humanitarian urge and India's policy on refugees. The Mizoram government has completed the profiling of all the Myanmar's Chin people in Mizoram, and identity cards and refugee certificates have been issued to 30,177 people. Home Minister Lalchamliana said: "Although profiling is more or less completed, it is a continuous process and conducted in a phased manner

as there are still new entrants and some people used to return to their villages on a regular basis," and that the state disaster management and rehabilitation department has so far disbursed Rs 3 crore as a relief to the refugees. Resettlement will have to address compelling protection needs. At the same time Chief Minister Zoramthanga told Mr. Modi that India should play vital role in bringing back peace in Myanmar and to play a "proactive role" in restoring peace in Myanmar so as to ultimately stem the refugee flow (The Hindu, 2021). In the light of the above discussion then what should be the response towards the Chins coming to Mizoram? Should they be deported because they cross over illegally or be accepted as members of the community through legalization of their stay?

Conclusion

It is clear is that cartographic lines are not precise prescriptions for offering hospitality as well as acceptance. Likewise national policies do not always dictate reception of Chin refugee in Mizoram. Instead, it has been largely dictated by local community organizations. Besides, Chin claims have been made as well as considered as members of common ethnic and cultural heritage preferably over their status as refugees. Apart from being seen as fellow ethnic kins they are simultaneously also perceived as the other leading to resentment. Thereby drawing attention to the importance of political, economic, social and cultural factors that shape the treatment of the Chins coming to Mizoram.While one of the unintended consequences of the ongoing Spring Revolution in Myanmar has been the consolidation of the historical ties between the people of the country's Chin State and their ethnic kin in the contiguous Indian border state of Mizoram with Mizoram offeringshelter and support, it is likely that the situation will become more complex, with issues arising from the large influx of Chins that will bring the challenges of integration as well as the dilemma of the brother versus the other once again to the forefront.

Endnotes

1. Press release by the non-governmental organization (NGO) Coordination Committee, General Headquarters Aizawl, Mizoram. 28 July 1996.
2. A Joint Memorandum submitted after the joint meeting of all NGOs to the chief minister of Mizoram. 25 July 2003.
3. Economic Times 20 March 2021, https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/cant-accept-centres-myanmar-advisory-says-mizoram-cm/articleshow/81593667.cms?from=mdr.
4. One term that is often used in any discussion on the Chin–Mizo relationship is the word brothers. It refers to the common descent that is evoked by both the Chins and the Mizos.

5. For instance, the distance from Agartala to Calcutta before partition was only 350 Kms away, now through Siliguri corridor it is 1645 kms. See, Van Schendel, W. 2005. *The Bengal Borderland: Beyond State and Nation in South Asia*.London:Anthem Press.
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The Mizoram government in Northeast India, is ready to accept Chin refugees being persecuted by the Myanmar military regime, said Mr. Lalthanzara (MLA), Parliamentary Secretary of the Mizoram government on the 61st anniversary of the Chin National Day … He said "Although we welcome all the Chin tribes from Burma, we have to take action against any kind of unfair means like smuggling and illegal matters." Khonumthung News, 23 February 2009.

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Communalism and Effects of Moral Policing in Kerala Polity

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Abstract

Moral policing is a growing concern in India, where vigilant individuals and groups aim to enforce a strict code of morality, opposing perceived foreign or progressive influences. Often associated with political entities, their actions involve protesting against diverse cultural trends, occasionally escalating to violence. This article delves into the multifaceted nature of moral policing, its impact on India's socio-cultural landscape, and the challenges it poses. It also explores how this phenomenon is not confined to a single political party, highlighting the complex interplay of culture and politics. Furthermore, it discusses the specific case of Kerala, a state known for its social progress but grappling with moral policing incidents. The article underscores the need for political and societal change to combat moral policing and foster inclusivity and tolerance.

Keywords: Moral Policing, Diverse, Religious, Instability, Conservative, Parties, Progressive, Ideologies.

Introduction

Moral Policing has several dimensions and colours. This article analyses the literature on moral policing, its theoretical discussions, the political impact of moral policing and the role of Sangh Parivar as well as other political parties in propagating moral policing, particularly addressing different cases of moral policing stories in Kerala. Religious parties having affiliations with Christianity or Islam also have ideologies that support moral policing. This article primarily tries to understand and evaluate the effects of Sangh Parivar politics in shaping moral policing in Kerala society and polity.

Bhoje(2015) tries to point out the conflict between Indian and Western culture. In his work, he views Indian culture as very unique and as one that has various practices, a culture in which, due to westernisation, the youth do not believe in or practise their traditional practices. Culture varies with time, and what was

once considered 'traditional' may not be traditional anymore. India is becoming a globalised environment in terms of economy, food, and culture, but what it takes to ensure our youth do not forget the uniqueness of being Indian is a serious question to consider.

Hima Shankar, a theater artist from 2018, highlighted the societal problem of moral policing based on cultural values. The resistance faced by her perspective from a senior citizen might stem from deeply ingrained beliefs and the challenge her critique posed to their long-held views. This phenomenon of moral policing often occurs when individuals forget the shared humanity in others, reducing them to mere cultural elements, despite the irony that cultures they seek to protect once celebrated diversity in sexuality. Shankar, as a theater practitioner, advocates for a shift towards individual transformation as the solution. She proposes that instead of trying to change society en masse, we should focus on changing the attitudes and beliefs of individuals. To accomplish this, she emphasizes the need for adjustments in our educational system and psychological institutions, promoting acceptance, empathy, and a more inclusive understanding of cultural values, thus reducing the prevalence of moral policing in our society.

Richa Tyagi (2017), vehemently highlighted the oppression endured by consenting individuals within our society, all under the guise of 'culture'. She passionately criticized the staunch adherence to outdated cultural norms, likening it to a stubborn child refusing to attend school, thereby resisting essential change. Within our society, some individuals have willingly taken it upon themselves to protect our culture from perceived Western influences and our youth from moral corruption. Each year, like clockwork, they embark on their annual moral policing mission, primarily targeting Valentine's Day. Their approach remains consistent: they identify public spaces frequented by couples, who are, in essence, consenting adults in romantic relationships, and then commit acts of violence against them, driven by their personal feelings of anger and hurt towards what they view as 'immoral conduct'. This disturbing pattern highlights a concerning trend of cultural conservatism manifesting as violent and unjust behavior towards those who are simply expressing their love and affection within a consenting framework.

In a discussion featured in the Deccan Chronicle (2018), Sandeep Aiykam, a prominent political activist, passionately asserted that individual freedom and personal choice should be inviolable rights, regardless of the intentions behind moral policing. Aiykam's argument can be illustrated by considering a real-world example: imagine a couple expressing their love on Valentine's Day in a public park. In some cases, self-appointed moral police may confront and harass them, claiming it goes against their cultural values. Aiykam's stance emphasizes that no matter the cultural beliefs of the moral police, the couple's right to express their

affection should be protected. He further highlighted the systemic issues, pointing out that these assaults often go unpunished, contributing to a breakdown in law and order. Aiykam's call for reform in the country's regressive laws resonates in this scenario, emphasizing the need for change to safeguard individual rights and personal freedoms.

In the same debate, Shiv Viswanathan, a renowned academician and author, made a significant contribution by shedding light on the different facets of moral policing and the critical need to protect individuals in public spaces. He discerned two primary forms of policing: physical and moral. To illustrate this, consider a scenario where a couple, in a public park, engages in a simple act like holding hands or sharing affectionate gestures. According to Viswanathan, moral policing creates a coercive system where even such innocent displays of affection are met with suspicion and considered 'susceptible' to punishment by self-appointed guardians of cultural norms. This stifling of natural behavior in public spaces is unwarranted, leading to the harassment of couples when society takes on the role of enforcers. Viswanathan emphasized the urgency of ending this practice, asserting that as long as a couple is not violating any established laws or norms of decency, they should be allowed to express themselves freely. He asserted that no one has the authority to dictate another person's freedom in public spaces or their choices in relationships, highlighting the importance of preserving individual autonomy and personal choices in society.

Moral policing in India often centers around the prevention of acts deemed "obscene," highlighting the critical need for a closer examination of this term. The complexity arises from the ambiguity in defining "obscene." Lockhart & McClure (1984) point out that in most Indian states with statutes pertaining to obscenity, the term is elaborated by adding words such as 'disgusting, filthy, indecent, immoral, impure, lascivious, lewd, licentious, and vulgar.' These terms lack objective, universally accepted definitions, and are often circularly defined in dictionaries, referring to one another. Their meaning largely hinges on assumed standards of social sexual behavior or theories of cause-and-effect. This inherent subjectivity in the definition of "obscene" underscores the challenges faced in addressing moral policing, as it allows for interpretations based on personal or cultural biases, potentially leading to the unjust policing of individuals' personal choices and expressions.

G. Sampath (2017) provides an insight into the interpretation of obscenity. He states that the provision of the law that the moral police feed on is Section 294 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), which states that 'whoever, to the annoyance of others, a) does any obscene act in any public place, or b) sings, recites or utters any obscene songs, ballad or word, in or near any public place, shall be punished with

imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to three months, or with fine, or with both'. However, what is interesting is that the most critical element of this provision, obscenity, is not defined. This means that whether or not a couple kissing in a public place is an "obscene act" is entirely a matter of interpretation.

To comprehend the concept of moral policing in India, it is essential to delve into the definitions of morality and immorality. Morality, as defined by the Stanford Encyclopedia, encompasses a set of standards or principles that can originate from a particular philosophy, religion, culture, or a universal belief system that an individual upholds. It serves as a guiding framework for ethical behavior and choices. In contrast, Anita Nair (2019) sheds light on 'immorality' as an active opposition to morality. She characterizes it as a state of unawareness, indifference, or disbelief in any specific set of moral standards or principles. This distinction underscores the crux of moral policing in India, where self-appointed enforcers often act in the name of preserving perceived moral values and norms, while their actions may infringe upon the individual freedom and personal choices of others who may not align with their particular moral code.

The term 'morality' indeed carries a deeply subjective dimension, as it reflects one's perspective and ideological framework. Bapat's perspective in 2017 logically asserts that determining what is right or wrong is a subjective matter, and this is where the criticism of moral policing becomes evident. He aptly highlights that the responsibility of judging whether someone is committing a crime or not lies with the judiciary, which, in the Indian context, refers to the Constitution. Remarkably, the Indian constitution does not explicitly endorse or legitimize moral policing. Hence, from a legal standpoint, entities such as anti-Romeo squads, vigilant groups, and proponents of moral policing may be seen as operating outside the constitutional framework. Bapat's argument underscores the importance of upholding the rule of law and due process rather than allowing subjective moral judgments to dictate the behavior and choices of individuals in society.

Certainly, concerns about the influence of Western culture on traditional Indian values are often expressed by specific conservative or traditionalist groups in India. These groups tend to hold more traditional views and values and may voice apprehensions about what they perceive as the erosion of Indian cultural norms and values due to Western influences. Gupta and Bajpai (2016); Prakesh (2018) provide a nuanced perspective on the impact of Westernization, acknowledging that it has introduced sophistication in areas like cuisine, fashion, and etiquette, thereby reshaping aspects of Indian life. The British colonial era, in particular, brought forth significant changes in technology, institutions, knowledge, values, and attitudes, which profoundly impacted Indian society and culture. While this

Western influence has at times led to tensions and challenges, it has also contributed to making India more progressive in its outlook and attitude. It's important to recognize that these viewpoints exist along a spectrum, and not all segments of Indian society share the same perspectives on the influence of Western culture and its relationship to moral policing.

Tribeni Pegu's 2017 analysis delves into the persistent issue of moral policing in India, particularly highlighting the recurring challenges associated with Valentine's Day. February, known as the month of love and the celebration of Valentine's Day, unfortunately also becomes synonymous with moral policing incidents. Pegu astutely points out that moral policing is not confined to this specific time but remains an ongoing concern. The annual debate on whether Valentine's Day symbolizes the encroachment of Western culture upon Indian traditions resurfaces each year. However, Pegu emphasizes the need to broaden the discussion beyond this limited scope. It's crucial, she argues, to address moral policing as a pervasive issue that extends beyond Valentine's Day, affecting various aspects of life, especially women and sexual minorities who endure subtle forms of power dynamics and violence in places like colleges, homes, and public spaces. Pegu draws attention to the challenges faced by female students living in college hostels, who often contend with patriarchal rules and regulations imposed by college authorities. Her perspective underscores the urgency of addressing these complex and deeply ingrained issues of power and control in society comprehensively and continuously.

The emergence of technology has played a significant role in shaping cultural dynamics in India. With the proliferation of the internet and platforms like Skype, Twitter, and Facebook, information and ideas from around the world are easily accessible. This interconnectedness has allowed societies to absorb elements from various cultures, leading to a cultural exchange between Indian and Western cultures. While this exchange can be enriching and bring positive aspects from different cultures into the mix, it has also sparked concerns about a decline in faith in traditional Indian culture. Some argue that the influx of Western ideas and values has led to a shift in societal attitudes and practices. It's important to note that this doesn't necessarily mean a complete abandonment of Indian values but rather a blending of influences. The present scenario, according to some observers, suggests a decline in religiosity and an increasing influence of Western culture in various aspects of Indian society. The relationship between technology, cultural exchange, and the evolving cultural landscape is a complex one, marked by both positive and challenging aspects.

Reports from various media sources including newspapers, news channels, and online publications, have highlighted instances of moral policing targeting

unmarried couples in different parts of India, emphasizing the urgent need for clarity regarding relationships in Indian society and culture. Chuchra and Kaur (2016) have astutely observed that Indian youth today grapple with the complex interplay of Western and Indian cultural influences. They argue that Westernization has brought both positive and negative effects, particularly concerning the understanding of romantic relationships. In the 21st century, the absence of a well-defined framework for romantic love relationships has created confusion, and some sectors of society still uphold marriage as the sole institution for true love. This cultural blend has sparked debates about the evolving dynamics of relationships and values in India, revealing a nuanced interplay between tradition and modernity with implications for the country's youth.

Moral policing incidents are not limited to public spaces but have also been observed within academic and institutional circles, with a notable impact on young teenagers in Kerala, as highlighted by the renowned historian K.N. Panikkar (2016). Panikkar stresses that everyday interactions, such as greeting one another, should not always be subjected to interpretation in "other" terms, suggesting that they should be viewed in a straightforward, human context. He advocates for a societal approach that fosters an environment where young boys and girls can see each other as fellow human beings rather than creating an atmosphere where they are compelled to perceive each other differently. Panikkar's perspective underscores the importance of promoting a healthy and respectful attitude in educational and institutional settings, allowing individuals to interact without undue moral policing or unwarranted judgment based on cultural norms.

When we talk about moral policing in Kerala, there exists the need to address the conflicts between the Orthodox older generation and the younger generations. Aneesh. K.U (2018) provides insights into this area and says that the popular ideologies of morality, sexuality, gender, tradition, values, etc. are in a transformation phase in the state and are trying to fetch new meanings and manifestations in the last two decades. But the conservatives who uphold the tradition and customs of Kerala have always been critical of the rampant westernisation of the society. A cultural conflict of a similar kind is visible in every aspect of life in Kerala society.

The adherents of Hindutva, a conservative ideology that equates Indian identity with Hindu values, consider kissing in public as anti- Hindu. In a further act to support such stances, a former conservative minister also claimed that public kissing is just not Indian.

There are critical enquiries connecting moral policing with patriarchy, anti-women and feudal. The Asian Age points out that the people supporting morality and moral policing are not numb towards punishable legally articulate crimes. The intolerance is not just against the couple's mere togetherness; it is often deemed

as 'polluting the society'. The atmosphere that these squads create pushes society once again into dark times, where sexes should be segregated, where women are treated as symbols of honour, and have to adhere to orthodox cultural norms of the good and dignified. It is this very atmosphere that breeds patriarchy and promotes violent crimes against women, both at home and outside.

In the light of continuous moral policing activities, both small and large, reported in the district in 2019, the District Collector of Kozhikode, Prashanth Nair, in his open press meet, said that a little bit of control is necessary for the general attitude of the people. He also asserted that no one is assigned to uphold the moral values in this country. There is nothing 'moral' about these incidents. It is getting into someone's private space, which is against the Indian constitution as it facilitates everyone with individual freedom. Women are still seen as a commodity, and moral police negates the fact that women, too, have desires, choices and likes of their own. In a statement made by S. Sreelakshmi in 2020, he also commented on the pathetic state of affairs where women are not even allowed to decide whom to sleep with while men openly enjoy such freedoms. The social stigma on women is more when she dares to make such a decision. Even though we come across clips of moral policing on social media, the victims of these incidents don't come up with valid complaints to the police due to the lack of support from their families.

In the context of the state's stance on moral policing, a debate persists about its necessity. Some sections of society argue that the growing resistance against moral policing has encouraged public questioning, which is a positive development. This perspective is upheld by Asha Prakash (2017) and Murali Gopi (2017), who emphasize that although the rising number of moral policing cases is concerning, it signals a shift toward addressing issues that were previously ignored. They advocate for a step-by-step approach to progress, urging a deeper examination of the root causes of these situations instead of simply assigning blame to a few individuals. It is widely recognized that moral policing is not morally upright; it reflects a repressed societal mindset and involves elements of perverted sexuality. These diverse viewpoints on moral policing are fueled and popularized by various political parties spanning the spectrum from left to right.

In conclusion, the discussions surrounding moral policing in India reveal a dynamic and evolving societal landscape. This multifaceted issue has brought to the forefront the complexities of cultural shifts, generational differences, and the need to balance tradition with modernity. While incidents of moral policing have raised concerns, they have also prompted important conversations about individual rights, personal freedom, and the role of cultural exchange in shaping contemporary Indian society. The diverse perspectives offered by historians, administrators, and scholars underscore the ongoing transformation of India,

reflecting a nation striving to find a harmonious equilibrium between tradition and progress, while upholding the fundamental values of respect for individual choices and autonomy. It is within these dialogues and debates that the path forward toward a more inclusive and empathetic society is illuminated.

Moral Policing in Indian Political Culture

Moral policing is a term encompassing vigilant individuals and groups in India who aim to enforce a strict code of morality, often resisting cultural influences perceived as foreign or progressive. These vigilante groups, including those associated with the Bharatiya Janatha Party (BJP) and Sanghparivar, claim to protect Indian culture by opposing perceived imported or secular and modern socio-political ideas. Their actions, categorized as moral policing, involve protesting against progressive trends and cultural evolutions. These self-appointed enforcers of morality have become a contentious aspect of India's cultural and political landscape.

According to their ideology, the Western or progressive trends and traits of other cultural groups are spoiling the social and political culture of India. They assert that there is no place for any other culture on social, political, religious or legal terms in India and that India has its own culture and the people should follow that. The political demand for a Uniform Civil Code by Sangh Parivar forces can be seen as part of this. They also think that if someone tries to follow any other culture, which, in any form, is against Indian culture, they should be punished. If the Indian law does not have any provision to punish them, it becomes the responsibility of the Sena to punish the people following them. For this, the moral police groups attack pubs and bars and shut down exhibitions. In some areas, they also oppose western clothes, attires of other religious groups, love marriages and occasions like Valentine's Day, kiss day, hug day etc., Sometimes, their actions can get unlawfully violent. Their protest against Love Jihad can be referred to here as evidence.

Moral policing in India is a complex and subjective phenomenon characterized by the enforcement of strict vigilance and restrictions on individuals who are perceived to violate societal norms. These norms are often rooted in ancient customs derived from scriptures and texts such as the Ramayana and Manu Smriti. Moral police see their primary duty as safeguarding cultural values, especially when they perceive a threat from alternative cultures. This enforcement of conformity can stifle the coexistence of diverse cultural elements and limit tolerance within society, leading to conflicts and political unrest. Instances of moral policing have extended to the targeting of bars, pubs, art exhibitions, and cinemas, where they allege the presence of obscene content. These actions highlight the contentious nature of moral policing and its potential to disrupt social harmony.

This phenomenon contravenes the secular nature of India if we assess the outfits which are involved in promoting their conservative beliefs and ideologies and their activities. Ideologies of political parties like BJP, Shiv Sena etc., which promote moral policing, usually consider themselves to be upholding the Indian culture; they raise their voice and stop private interactions as they consider it offend the Indian culture or traditional norms of the society. Such political parties hold influence in all areas of society through religion, belief, language, locality, education etc., Some sections of the media have also colluded with such groups. Mainly these groups or individuals try to prevent the happening of "obscene" activities which they deem is against their culture. Sections 292 to 294 in the Indian Penal Code (IPC), dating back to 1860, were used to fight against or to prevent "obscenity," a term whose scope was always perhaps intentionally unclear. Today,"obscenity" remains in the eye of the beholder as the age-old trend of moral policing gathers fresh momentum.

Cultural values and moral standards vary significantly from one nation to another, leading to differing perceptions of what constitutes sexually explicit content or behavior. While such content may be deemed acceptable in Western countries, it can be considered obscene in India, often becoming a focal point for moral policing groups with political motives. These groups have gained momentum, fueled by the spread of rumors through social networking platforms. Their intent is to eliminate anything they perceive as foreign to the so-called Indian culture. The roots of moral policing lie in the notion that Indian culture must be 'protected' from the influence of other cultures. Frequently, acts of moral policing turn violent, resulting in criminal complaints. Indian parents are often seen as strict and controlling, attempting to instill their moral values in their children. In extreme cases, moral policing can escalate to acts of violence, including killings and property damage. Moreover, it can hinder artistic creativity and innovation. This diversity of approaches highlights that moral policing is not a national agenda but rather an anti-national, non-political, criminal, and anti-constitutional practice.

Political Parties and Moral Policing

Moral policing stands as a prevalent phenomenon in India, and amid a world marked by rapid socioeconomic progress and evolving collective perspectives, India appears to be regressing. Moral policing is reported by national media as one of the many means employed to make the conventional, orthodox, and dogmatic culture homogenised among the masses to invoke a false consciousness of what is 'right' and what is 'wrong'. Moral policing is a gripping example of the radicalisation of ideology at play. Often, when we scroll through our social media or flip through the pages of the daily newspapers, we come across instances of 'moral policing'. Be it one's neighbour, institutional heads, vigilant groups or the highest state of government, they exercise

judgement and dictate what is morally right and wrong. Public display of affection is believed to be obscene in many sections of Indian society. They believe that it is against Indian culture and deem it intolerable. The political ideologies which stand on the right wing support these activities, and those belonging to the left are against these trends. Evidence suggests that BJP in bigger states like Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh has been showing signs of support for moral policing.

Those who have fallen victim to moral policing often express frustration with the perpetrators' failure to recognize that what may be deemed morally unacceptable or indecent by some can be entirely acceptable to others. India's ongoing societal transformation is a complex journey, marked by a significant shift from liberal, modern values toward a resurgence of more traditional ones. The young anti-socials who are supporters of political moral forces dispose of the progressive values and become disciples of the 'nationalist' group, neglect the differences, and stand for uniformity. Since uniformisation is a practice propounded by modern,liberal, progressive thinkers, conflicts arise between the 'other' cultures and the Indian culture. In India, falling in love with a person of another caste or religion is still not widely accepted by society. In certain communities , it will be politically termed as 'love jihad'.

Contrary to the general perception, moral policing is not limited to any one political party. Despite the long-standing women's movement, patriarchy remains deeply entrenched in India, influencing its political structure, social institutions and determining the opportunities for women and men. Rigid patriarchal attitudes devalue the role of women in society, resulting in the widespread occurrence of violence against them. The supremacy of morality begins and ends with the female sex, the control of whose sexuality is crucial to patriarchal forces. Those who infringe upon these moral codes are dealt with extreme violence. The process of democratisation and opening of economic opportunities has altered the power dynamics in the relation between men and women. This difference can also be seen among the political parties. This new social characteristic reflected much in the Congress Party. Later when the Congress Party split into several groups, factions and other political parties, they also started continuing similar characteristics. The Rashtriya Swayam Sevaka Sangham (RSS) and other splinter groups supporting Hindutva ideology supported BJP to become the sole party defending the traditional Indian culture.

Numerous symbolic and material violence are also inflicted on women who are categorised as 'women living outside the norm'. Protecting the modesty of girls is something that colleges and its management take it upon themselves to do. There have been many incidents of moral policing in our country, more so ever, to secure vote banks or to act as protectors of Indian culture. Political parties always seem to be at the helm of moral policing, indulging in acts in which their leaders make outrageous statements. Other than political parties, pressure groups, vigilant

groups, or even the police are seen to be indulging in such acts. However, this is different in different religions, and those parties which have affiliations to these religious groups will take ideological positions favouring their communities which are normally anti-women. This gender discrimination also leads to moral policing.

These groups resort to a variety of extreme actions, such as vandalism, filing defamation cases, lawsuits, and even self-immolation, in response to specific incidents, often accompanied by large-scale riots and massacres. These actions not only lead to socio-political instability but also create an atmosphere of violence and inconvenience that affects both the general population and the functioning of the government. India grapples with a significant issue of intolerance, particularly within the framework of the law. In reality, there is no law in India that prohibits unmarried couples from spending private time together, as long as they are consenting adults. Legally, an adult capable of providing consent can book a hotel room, provided they possess a government-approved identity card, which the hotel can retain a copy of for their records (TOI 2021). However, the extent to which one is monitored by moral policing or protected by state police often depends on those in positions of power.

Moral Police Stories of Political Kerala

Kerala is increasingly facing the dilemma of moral policing of different shades Kerala, despite its progress in education, has often been criticized for its conservative moral standards. In recent times, right-wing political groups have gained influence in the state, contributing to a shift in the mindset of its people. Despite efforts, random incidents of moral policing continue to be reported from across the state. The interventions being made by the state government to make the city safe for couples and women turn futile when the police themselves adopt moral policing and prevent victims from registering complaints legally. Over the past few months, Kerala has made national headlines for isolated incidents and is sometimes picturised as a state growing towards increasing incidents of moral policing. It is evident from the stories from colleges controlling the freedom of students to nosy neighbours taking the law into their hands moral policing has been spreading its influence across the state by political parties belonging to the Left Democratic Front (LDF) or United Democratic Front (UDF) (Sagar 2019 & Zacharia 2017).

Mob attacks have sadly become a recurring occurrence in the remote districts of Kerala, often attributed to the influence of communal groups. Troublingly, there have been reported instances where even married couples face restrictions on their freedom of movement unless they can produce their marriage certificates. Cases related to moral policing have seen a noticeable increase across all districts in Kerala, with fatal incidents occurring, particularly in places like Kollam and Thiruvananthapuram. Young couples have consistently borne the brunt of moral

policing, and the situation can occasionally escalate into violence, leaving lasting scars on the victims.It is to be noted that moral policing and harassment in the name of culture is a crime in India, and such anti-social elements must be brought to justice. There have been instances where women with their sons were alleged of immorality by the moral policing group in Thiruvananthapuram (Shaju 2021). The most dangerous fact is that the groups supporting the moral policing have bargaining powers during elections, who can place candidates of their own or contest in elections with the communal favour.

Kerala is often lauded for its achievements in women's social development, but the state has also grappled with a disconcerting paradox. Despite these advancements, there exists a palpable hostility, even among progressive groups, towards women's freedom of movement, expression, and their fundamental right to be free citizens. It is imperative that a progressive government, particularly one led by Leftist parties and college educators who are committed to Indian democracy, takes responsibility for addressing these injustices against women. This duty cannot be shirked without compromising the very essence of being part of the political left. Additionally, there have been persistent issues concerning tech professionals and their interactions with the police in the state capital. Those working in Technopark often face questioning by the police regarding their activities during night shifts, despite the fact that many work these hours to provide better support for their families. This challenging situation highlights the need for a more inclusive and empathetic approach. Furthermore, political dynamics in areas like Kazhakkoottam Assembly Constituency, where Technopark is located, as well as Thiruvananthapuram and Attingal Loksabha Constituencies, where many tech professionals reside, have shown political shifts towards right-wing parties, particularly the BJP, adding complexity to these issues.

Following a concerning incident at the technopark, tech professionals raised a set of demands aimed at improving their interactions with the police. These requests included providing personality development classes for law enforcement officers to enhance their behavior, establishing clear guidelines for employees arriving without an ID card to prevent moral policing, viewing security lapses as security issues rather than matters of law and order, and transferring officers involved in public harassment incidents. While employees expressed their willingness to cooperate with security checks, they firmly stated their intent to protest against any instances of moral policing. They also emphasized the importance of officers being prepared to make amends, highlighting that their concerns were not directed at those who diligently perform their duties. Notably, Kerala boasts a higher conviction rate for cases related to moral policing compared to other states, which reflects the political stance of the LDF Government in power regarding this issue.

Moral Policing Incidents by Timeline

Over the last two decades, India has witnessed a series of cases that have shaken the secular and democratic basement of the country. Since 2000, there has been only a hike in the rate of moral policing comments and acquisitions. In December 2006, an obscenity case was filed against Rajasthan Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje and Biocon India Chief Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw for allegedly kissing at a public function. The lawsuit came after the newspapers published the pictures of a cheek-to-cheek air kiss from a peculiar angle. On 24th January 2009, members of the Sri Ram Sena barged into the pub, Amnesia – The Lounge in Mangalore, Karnataka, and beat up a group of young women and men, claiming the women should not be drinking in a public place. On 28th July 2012, activists from the Hindu Jagarana Vedike attacked a birthday party at an unlicensed homestay in Mangalore, Karnataka. The 12 people at the party, including five girls, were allegedly beaten, stripped and molested. The faces of some of the girls there were blackened. The activists claimed that the youngsters were consuming alcohol and were involved in 'some indecent activities'. On 23rd October 2014, a restaurant in Kozhikode was attacked and vandalised. The attackers claimed that the eatery was facilitating immoral activities. The attack came after a local Malayalam-language TV channel broadcast a report claiming that some coffee shops and restaurants in Kozhikode had become centres of 'immoral activities'(TOI 2015).

On 14th July 2015, a journalist from the daily, Madhyamam, was attacked by a group at her office along with her husband. The attackers did not pay heed to the fact that they were married. The police arrived before the incident escalated. In 2016, a man was killed in Mankada, Malappuram, Kerala, for visiting his girlfriend during the night. The victim was a 42-year-old man named Nazeer who lived in the locality and was spotted around three in the morning by the neighbours in a house where a woman was living alone. They attacked and killed him as an act of moral policing. Three of them were arrested by the Kerala police (Chronicle Deccan 2016).

Colleges and universities often impose dress codes on their students, typically with the aim of limiting the attire choices of female students, especially when it comes to Western clothing. These restrictions are frequently justified on the grounds that such clothing may attract 'eve-teasing.' In response to moral policing, a public hugging and kissing campaign known as 'Kiss of Love' was initiated in Kerala on November 2nd, 2014, serving as inspiration for similar events in Delhi, Kolkata, and numerous urban centers across the country (Babu 2014).

Moral Policing is Political

Despite several major incidents, moral policing continues to persist in our society. A survey conducted by the News Minute, an online daily, reveals that a

majority of people have experienced some form of moral policing at least once in their lifetime, as it has been ingrained in Indian society for years. What's crucial in addressing this issue is the stance taken by political parties. It's evident that political parties' approaches to moral policing vary depending on their political ideologies. In many instances, moral policing activities find support from political parties aligned with communal groups.

Vote banks have been compelled to deviate from traditional Indian values and ethos due to the growing influence of progressive lifestyles. This shift has led to an increase in moral policing in recent years. Those involved in moral policing believe they are safeguarding their culture, aiming to shield it from the perceived infiltration of 'other' cultures. However, their understanding of Indian culture seems to be misguided. Indian culture has never been against love, and couples should not be subjected to policing. In a democratic country like India, everyone has the right to live life on their terms. Love should not be a crime, and no one should be humiliated or attacked for loving someone. There have been distressing instances where young couples have faced physical abuse and humiliation simply because they loved each other. However, loving someone is not a crime, and it aligns with Indian law, which upholds the right of adults to marry the person of their choice. Forced marriages go against the principles of freedom and individual choice. The prevalence of such incidents is largely attributed to the influence of political parties seeking support from these particular vote banks.

In conclusion, addressing the issue of moral policing necessitates a multi-faceted approach, involving not only social awareness and education but also a reconsideration of political stances and their alignment with communal groups. It is imperative to promote a society that respects individual choices and relationships while upholding the values of inclusivity and tolerance that have long been part of India's cultural fabric.

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Green Growth and Environmental Sustainability: Constitutional Provisions and Government Initiatives In India

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Abstract

Like every developing nation in the world, India faces the twin challenges of expanding economic opportunities on the one hand and addressing environmental pressures on the other hand. Being the most populated country in the world, India is under pressure to expand the economic opportunities, in the context of a growing population. To meet the twin challenges and to ensure adequate facilities for each and every section of the population, the country needs green growth, which involves rethinking growth strategies with regard to their impacts on environmental sustainability. The present work explains green growth, traces its evolution, portrays the constitutional perspective on growth and sustainability in India, analyses the landmark judgements on environmental protection and details the governmental initiatives for green growth in India.

Keywords: Development; environment; green growth; natural capital; sustainability

India, being a developing economy with wide diversity, there is a need to strike a balance between development and environmental protection, to ensure harmony between various social, economic and environmental needs. Satisfying the demands of a developing economy requires more production which in turn demands maximum utilization of available resources and exploitation of further resources. In the back drop of scarcity and environmental degradation, maximum utilization and further exploitation of natural resourcesdefinitely strike at the roots of sustainability. Like every developing nation in the world, India faces the twin challenges of expanding economic opportunities on the one hand and addressing environmental pressures on the other hand. Being the most populated country in the world, India is under pressure to expand the economic opportunities, in the context of a growing population. To meet the twin challenges and to ensure adequate facilities for each and every section

of the population, the country needs green growth, which involves rethinking growth strategies with regard to their impacts on environmental sustainability. Green growth is in no way a replacement for sustainable development but involves an approach to foster a strong, inclusive and sustainable growth.

Green Growth

Green growth is a development paradigm that sustains economic growth and at the same time ensures climatic and environmental sustainability. This development paradigm is revolutionary as on the one hand it focuses on addressing the root causes of climate change and environmental degradation and on the other it focuses on the creation of necessary channels for resource distribution and access to basic resources for the poor and deprived (United Nations, 2022). According to the Organization for Economic Development and Cooperation [OECD] (2011) green growth means fostering economic growth and development while ensuring that natural assets continue to provide the resources and environmental services on which our wellbeing relies (p. 4). The concept of green growth has its origin in the 21st Century, in the Asia and Pacific Region and more precisely its origin can be traced to the Fifth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development held in March 2005 in Seoul, where the participants agreed to pursue a path of "green growth" (UN, 2022). Later green growth was viewed as a main strategy for achieving sustainable development and the Millennium Development Goals, especially relating to poverty reduction and environmental sustainability. Green growth approach thus is no doubt a strategy to harmonize economic growth with environmental sustainability, as there is a close link between the two. Economic growth has no doubt lifted millions out of poverty during the last decades but this has come at the expense of the environment. This in turn threatens the sustainability of economic growth and progress as resource depletion and pollution can affect the resilience capacity of the ecosystem.

The first nation-state to adopt the concept of green-growth was the Republic of Korea and it was part of their National Strategy for Green Growth, 2009. Since then, Korea was instrumental in promoting the idea of green growth. The OECD Declaration of 2009 was another milestone in this regard. This is because OECD members account for about 80 percent of the world economy. Acknowledging that "green" and "growth" can go hand-in-hand, the declaration entrusted OECD to develop a green growth strategy bringing together economic, environmental, technological, financial and development aspects into a comprehensive framework (OECD, 2011, p. 3). The very next year the United Nations Economic Commission on Asia and Pacific (UNECAP) adopted a declaration on green growth (Incheon Declaration[1]) in which members expressed their willingness to strengthen the efforts to pursue green growth strategies. The establishment of Global Green

Growth Institute in 2010 and its elevation to a new international organization in 2012 is another significant step towards popularization of the concept of green growth. Dedicated to supporting and promoting strong, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, the institute provides framework for achieving poverty reduction, social inclusion, environmental sustainability, and economic growth (Global Green Growth Institute [GGGI], 2023).The G20 Seoul Summit (2010) also recognized the importance of green growth and has recognized it as an inherent part of sustainable development. The steps towards the development of energy efficiency and clean energy technologies can be seen as responses in this regard. The concept has got increased attention and a number of international organizations and associations including the World Bank and the UNEP have diverted their attention towards green growth.

A shift to green growth has become essential these days as the development process is continuously eroding the natural capital[2]. Natural capital in simple sense refers to the stock of natural assets which includes soil, air, water, all living beings and other renewable and non-renewable resources which yields a flow of benefit to the people. But the development process has polluted the land, air and water and there is increased water scarcity, biodiversity loss, resource bottle necks, deforestation which if unchecked can affect the resilience capacity of the ecosystem. This will surely undermine the future development prospects because it is hard and at the same time costly to substitute physical capital for natural capital especially for resources like air and water. So, the only way to sustain the development that we have attained is finding new ways for producing and consuming things and it is at this point green growth has its relevance. Following the pattern of green growth will help to reduce the risks that comes in the form of resource bottlenecks and imbalances in the natural systems. Further it can open up new sources of growth through productivity, innovation, stability, confidence and creation of new markets. This requires a framework of innovation which improves resource management, boosts productivity and encourages economic activity to the best advantage of the society (OECD, 2011). Four dimensions are there for green growth which includes efficient and sustainable resource use, natural capital protection, green economic opportunities and social inclusion (GGGI, 2022, p. 2).

Growth and Sustainability – Constitutional Perspective

The Constitution of India was drafted at a time when environmental concerns were least felt or debated. Environmental concerns came to limelight of the world with the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*[3], which exposed the destruction of wildlife through the widespread use of pesticides. Despite the heavy-handed efforts to ban the book, Carson (2000) succeeded in creating public

awareness about the environmental damages of pesticides and this has inspired the growth and activities of ecological movements. When debates shaped the UN Conference on Human Environment (1972) popularly known as the Stockholm Conference, India participated in the same and is one among the two states that were represented by the heads of state or government. At the conference, Mrs. Gandhi, who represented India, voiced deep concern about the degradation of environment. By being a signatory to the Stockholm Declaration, India expressed its commitment to address the issue of environment and sustainable development. The subsequent constitutional amendments and laws were in tune with India's commitment to address the issue of environmental degradation.

Specific provisions for environmental protection can be seen with regard to the directive principles of state policy and fundamental duties. But initially there were no explicit provisions relating to environmental protection. The 42nd Constitutional Amendment of 1976 filled the gap and explicit provisions were added to the Constitution. By adding Article 48(A), it has become the duty of the state to safeguard the country's forests and wildlife and to maintain and promote the environment. Article 47 has an implicit reference to environmental protection as raising the standard of living and improving public health in one way or the other depends upon the quality of the environment in which he or she resides. The other explicit reference is in Part IV A of the Constitution which deals with Fundamental Duties. Though not legally enforceable, all citizens are morally obliged to perform their duties. Article 51(A)(g) clearly states that it is the duty of every citizen of India to "protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers and wildlife, and to have compassion for living creatures". So it is not wrong in telling that India provides constitutional protection to the environment and is among the first countries to extend the same.

Environmental protection is implicit when it comes to Article 21 of the Indian Constitution, which is part of Fundamental Rights that are legally enforceable. Popularly known as part of the golden triangle of the Indian Constitution, Article 21 protects the life and personal liberty of the individual - "No person shall be deprived of his life and personal liberty except according to procedure established by law". When Article 21 guarantees the right of persons to a life with human dignity, it includes all aspects of life which makes an individual's life meaningful and worth living. Access to water, food and noise and pollution free environment, thus becomes an imperative for a meaningful and complete life. Judicial intervention with regard to expanding the scope of Article 21 to include environmental protection has got appreciation from various quarters and currently India is one nation having the maximum number of laws for environmental protection.

The scope of Article 253 in ensuring environmental protection or in any other matter is significant. This is because it is Article 253 that empowers the Parliament to make any law for the whole or any part of the country, for implementing any treaty, agreement or convention with any other country or countries or any decision made at any international conference, association or other body. The Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972; The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974; The Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act 1981; The Environmental (Protection) Act, 1986; Biological Diversity Act, 2002 and the National Green Tribunal Act, 2010 are the products of this provision. When some of the legislations were mooted by domestic considerations, others were in connection with India's commitment at the International Conferences on Environment, starting with the Stockholm Conference of 1972. The Biological Diversity Act of 2002 was enacted to meet India's obligation under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), 1992.

Landmark Judgements on Environmental Protection

Judiciary has played an active role in environmental protection in India and it is judicial activism that filled the gap with respect to the constitutional provisions to safeguard the environment. During various litigations, the Supreme Court of India has interpreted the scope of Article 21 to include environmental protection. *Rural Litigation and Entitlement Kendra & Ors. v. State of Uttar Pradesh & Ors*. (1985), also known as the "Dehradun Valley Litigation" is a landmark case where the Supreme Court not only ordered the termination of all mining operation (lime stone) not even clandestinely in Dehradun Mussoorie area, but also directed the government to reclaim the quarries for afforestation and soil conservation activities. The Dehradun Valley Litigation was the first case requiring the Supreme Court to balance the question of environment and ecological integrity on the one hand and the (industrial) demand for forest resources on the other hand.

M.C. Mehta v. Union of India(1986) is another landmark case where the Supreme Court recognized the principle of "Absolute Liability". The Delhi Gas Leakage happened one year after the Bhopal Gas Tragedy which is described as one of the world's worst industrial disasters. The Court ordered the management of Shri Ram Foods to deposit an amount of Rs. 20 lakhs as security for the payment of compensation to the victims. The court observed that an enterprise which poses a potential threat to the health and safety of the persons owes an absolute non-delegable duty to the community to ensure highest standards of safety. Moreover, if any harm happens out of its actions the firm must be absolutely responsible for such actions and is liable to pay compensation. This is irrespective of the fact that whether the enterprise has taken all responsible care or not.

Ganga Pollution Case (1988) is another significant case and is the first river pollution case in the history of public interest litigation in India. The Court here relied on Article 48(A) and 51(A) of the Indian Constitution. When 48(A) provides that the state shall take actions to protect and improve the environment 51(A) imposes a basic duty on every citizen to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers and wildlife. Together with ordering the closure of polluting tanneries at Kanpur, the Court ordered for the setting up of treatment plants to prevent future pollution. Further relying upon Article 51(A) the Court held that it is the duty of the Central Government to direct all the educational institutions in India to teach, at least for one hour in a week, lessons relating to protection and the improvement of environment. The importance of protection of environment by virtue of Articles 48(A) and 51(A) was once again recognized by the Supreme Court during the Vehicular Pollution Case (*M.C. Mehta v. Union of India, 1991*), a writ petition that requested the court to pass orders for the reduction of vehicular pollution in Delhi.

A.P Pollution Control Board v. Prof. M.V. Nayudu & Ors. (1999) is another landmark case where court implicitly uphold the right to safe drinking water. Together with this the court recommended the Law Commission of India to consider reviewing of the existing environmental laws in India. The Court also referred to the need for establishing environmental courts in India which should consist of judicial members assisted by technical experts. The Supreme Court of India during various cases like Subhash Kumar (1991), Vellore Citizens' Welfare Forum (1996), Delhi Water Supply and Sewage (1996), M.C. Mehta (1997) upheld the importance of right to water. In *Narmada Bachao Andolan v. Union of India* (2000), the Supreme Court clearly observed that "water is a basic need for the survival of human beings and is part of the right to life and human rights enshrined in Article 21 of the Indian Constitution."

The National Green Tribunal of India has also given certain landmark judgements and the most prominent one is in *Samir Mehta v. Union of India* (2017). The National Green Tribunal is a specialized body under the National Green Tribunal Act 2010, established on 18 October 2010, for the effective and expeditious disposal of cases relating to environmental protection and conservation of forests and other natural resources. A specialized body equipped with the necessary expertise to handle environmental disputes the tribunal is not bound by the procedure laid down under the Code of Civil Procedure. Samir Mehta case was related to the pollution caused by ship sinking and oil spill in the territorial waters. A continuous trial of oil leak was noticeable upto 12 nautical miles and this spillage caused marine pollution and damaged the aquatic life and ecology including the mangrove ecosystem. The Tribunal invoked "Precautionary

Principle" and "Polluter Pay Principle" in this case and recognized the right to clean environment as a fundamental right under Article 21 of the Indian Constitution which guarantees to every person the right to life and persona liberty. For polluting the marine environment and for not fulfilling its obligations, the Delta International Group (owner of the ship) was held liable for a compensation of Rs. 100 crores to the Ministry of Shipping, Government of India and Adani Enterprises (for whom the coal was shipped) was held liable to pay Rs. 5 Crore to the Ministry of Shipping as compensation. The Tribunal also imposed environmental compensation on the governments of West Bengal (Rs. 3,500 crore), Maharashtra (Rs. 12,000 crores) and Haryana (Rs. 100 crore) for failure with regard to waste management and environmental damage.

Government Initiatives for Green Growth in India

A fastest growing economy, India is currently the fifth largest economy in the world in terms of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) nominal and third largest in terms of purchasing power parity (PPP). Its GDP in nominal terms have touched $3.346 trillion and $11.665 trillion in terms of PPP and is expected to be $5 trillion economy by 2025 (Press Information Bureau [PIB], 2023a, para. 3). When the economy grows on the one side, on the other side India's population is also increasing and it has surpassed China as the world's most populous nation. With a 1.42 million population as of now, India's population growth is expected to reach stability only by 2060s. This puts more pressure on the governments to ensure more job opportunities, more resources and facilities so as to ensure that the country sustains its growth rate. All these should be ecologically sustainable, otherwise it will backfire the progress that the nation achieved during these years. With a number of examples, it has been proved beyond doubt that a development process that does not take into consideration the health and integrity of the environment is not sustainable and in future it becomes a burden to the political system. The state is already facing challenges like air and water pollution, loss of forest cover and bio-diversity, perennial water shortage, heavy dependence on fossil fuels for energy, climate change and issues of urbanization.

Green growth is imperative for India to achieve a stable economic growth and development because of fast-depletion in the stock of natural resources including fossil fuels and water. Adding to this is the risk of climate change and climate induced disasters. India has been ranked as 7th in the Global Climate Risk Index 2021. The Study of the Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW) reveals that 27 of 36 states and UTs are highly vulnerable to extreme hydro-meteorological disasters; three out of four states in India are extreme event hotspots; 17 out of 20 people in India are vulnerable to extreme hydro-meteorological disasters and

5 out of every 20 Indians are highly vulnerable to hydro-meteorological disasters (Mohanty, 2020). Disasters so far have caused a heavy damage to the country and during the period between 2000 and 2019, the country suffered a loss of 80 billion USD. In 2018 alone, the country lost nearly 37 billion USD, which is almost twice than what it lost between 1998 and 2017 (UNICEF, 2022). The loss of potential labour hours in 2021 due to extreme heat is estimated to be around 167 billion and is estimated to be thirty times more in 2022 as the nation has experienced around 314 days of extreme weather events (The Economic Times, 2023, para. 3). Since disasters are predicted to rise, the level of damage will also be rising in relation to the intensity of the hazard and vulnerability of the region and the population.

The concept of green growth got an explicit reference in an official document with the report of the Thirteenth Finance Commission. As per the report, green growth involves rethinking growth strategies with regard to their impact on environmental sustainability and the environmental resources available to poor (Thirteenth Finance Commission, 2009,p. 23). The report came at a time when the world was facing a global recession and the international experiences in compacting recession revealed that green growth promotes inclusivity and is labour intensive, especially the renewable energy sector has the potential for generating more employments. Besides this green growth is critical for India's future generations as a degraded environment reduces the quality of life of the citizens. The impact of this is mainly on the poor and vulnerable sections of the population because of their vulnerability and exposure to polluted water, air, poor sanitation and climate induced disasters. So, the measures taken by the government for soil conservation, energy conservation, renewable energy, preventing water pollution and ensuring affordable access to safe drinking water to all, afforestation, reducing greenhouse gas emissions etc. were not just part of international commitment but to ensure a safe and sustained life for its citizens and future generations.

India's updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) reflects its commitment to inclusive growth and sustainable development. The updated NDC communicated to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in 2022, as part of its international commitments under the Paris Agreements (2015), is a step towards its goal to reach net zero emissions by 2070 (PIB, 2022, para. 4). The update propagates a healthy and sustainable way of living based on traditions and values of conservation and moderation, envisages a climate friendly and a cleaner path, better adaptation to climate change and building capacities for cutting edge climate technology in India. The update also speaks about three quantified targets which includes reducing emission intensity of GDP by 45 percent, achieving 50 percent cumulative electric power installed capacity from non-fossil fuel-based resources and an additional carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tons of carbon

dioxide equivalent through additional forest and tree cover, all targets by the year 2030 (Government of India, 2022). The updated NDC reflects the "Panchamrit" or India's five-point pledge at the COP26, Glasgow Summit. After the successful introduction of the Sovereign Green Bonds, the Union Budget 2023-24 articulated the idea of "green" and "sustainable" to the practical level by developing green growth strategies. In fact, green growth has become one of the top seven priorities of the government and is outlined on three major pillars: increasing the production of renewable energy, reducing dependence on fossil fuels and move towards a gas-based economy (PIB, 2023b).

The green growth priorities in the 2023 budget includes programmes for green fuel, green energy, green farming, green mobility, green buildings, green equipment, and policies for efficient use of energy across various economic sectors to reduce carbon intensity of the economy and to provide large scale job opportunities. The highlights of the union budget include the Green Hydrogen Mission, Energy Transition, Energy Storage Projects, Renewable Energy Evacuation, Green Credit Programme, PM-PRANAM, GOBARdhan Scheme, Bhartiya Prakritik Kheti Bio-Input Resource Centres, MISHTI, Amrit Dharohar and Vehicle Replacement. The target of green hydrogen mission is an annual production of 5 MMT by 2030 with an outlay of Rs. 19,700 crores (197 billion) to facilitate the transition of the economy to low carbon intensity and to reduce dependence on fossil fuels import. When the objective of the green credit programme aims is to incentivize environmentally sustainable and responsive actions by companies, individuals and local bodies, the PM Programme for Restoration, Awareness, Nourishment and Amelioration of Mother Earth is to incentivize States and Union Territories to promote alternative fertilizers and balanced use of chemical fertilizers. An investment of Rs. 35,000 crore (350 billion) for priority capital investments towards energy transition and net zero objectives, Rs. 20,700 crore (207 billion) for the Inter-state transmission system for evacuation and grid integration of 13 GW renewable energy from Ladakh, Rs. 10,000 crore (100 billion) for Galvanizing Organic Bio-Agro Resources Dhan scheme for promoting circular economy and replacing polluting vehicles, forms part of greening the economy (Government of India, 2023).

Conclusion

Productivity, growth and environment are three interrelated pillars of an economy. When growth of an economy is determined by productivity, growth in turn will have its impact on environment. Fifty years from the Stockholm Conference, the nation states of the world are now clear about the significance of green growth and sustainable development. The 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda with its

17 sustainable development goals demonstrate the ambition of nation states in this new universal agenda. In a number of times, India expressed its commitment to green growth and sustainable development and has made ample provisions for the same including constitutional amendments for incorporating provisions relating to protection of environment and forests. India's commitment is influenced by the need to sustain its process of development for poverty reduction. India's willingness to have voluntary commitments with respect to greenhouse gases were motivated by the fact that a clean and safe environment is inevitable for continuing the current levels of development. Any damage to environment can no doubt hamper the rate of progress that has been achieved during these years. The health and integrity of air, water, land, forests, and biodiversity are important when it comes to the question of sustainability of development and is more important for a country like India that faces the twin challenges of expanding economic opportunities and mounting environmental pressures in the wake of population growth. India's green growth project is well defined and ambitious but it requires a green strategy to ensure its effective implementation for reducing the carbon intensity of the economy, meeting clean energy targets and for generating large scale "green" job opportunities.

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Endnotes

1. The declaration was part of the 66thCommission Session of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, convened in Incheon (Republic of Korea), from 13-19 May 2010. The Declaration called for countries to strengthen and adopt green growth strategies in response to the global economic crisis of 2008 and 2009 and to seek to create a more sustainable development path. Further it urged the governments to use incentives to encourage the private sector to pursue more environmentally friendly practices.
2. It is E.F. Schumacher, an economist, who presented the concept of natural capital in his book "Small is Beautiful" (1973). Natural capital refers to the stock of natural assets and it includes the role of environment and ecosystems in supporting human well-being through supply of resources and services such as clean water, fertile soils and valuable genetic resources.
3. Silent Spring is a book that documented the environmental harm caused by the indiscriminate use of pesticides. The book was originally published in 1962 by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt and the book described how DDT entered the food chain and accumulated in the fatty tissues of animals, including human beings, and caused cancer and genetic damage. The findings of the book were later vindicated by the President's Science Advisory Committee and this eventually led to the ban of DDT in United States.

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Rudimentary Perspectives on Mob Violence in India: Ideology versus Micro-Sociology

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Introduction

Discussions on mob violence, especially on incidents of lynching and vigilante violence, cannot disregard the question of political sensitivity and often invite controversies. In most cases the immediate responses and discussions around them would lead to controversies regarding the political patronage behind such crimes. Even most of the scholarly responses on the issue are in the same tunnel. But there are other scholarly responses which look at this issue through various lenses such as social psychology, anthropology, cultural theories, micro-sociology, subaltern perspectives etc. In one way or the other, each perspective enriches our understanding of mob violence and some of its peculiar characteristics in India. Unfortunately, theorization of mob lynching and vigilante violence in India is still in its infancy. But this may not surprise the students of social sciences, as reported history of mob lynching in India is not more than a decade long. But this infancy in theorization is not politically innocent. Belew (2014) argues that historiography of lynching in US moved beyond infancy only recently, although it has centuries old history of such incidences. This hints that the delay in conceptualizing mob lynching and vigilante violence in India is not merely due to a normal ambiguity regarding its elusive nature.

Not considering mob lynching and vigilante violence as separate category of violence in India has come out of a conviction that such distinctions are of minor importance. The delay in comprehensive theorization of mob violence in India also alludes to factors other than innocent obliviousness to the nature of new categories of violence which is yet to unfold its character completely. Precisely speaking, a conceptualization of meaning of mob violence may also expose the means of such categories of violence. Theorizing the particular and local nature of mob violence makes the politics and social order surrounding it vulnerable. In fact, it is true with all other kinds of violence as well. This article attempts to critically analyze

various approaches to understand mob violence in India. The particular focus of this article is on mob lynching and vigilante violence among other forms of mob violence. We categorize hitherto approaches into two broad trends. First, there is an ideological trend in which events of violence are believed to be the outcome of an ideological rhetoric. Second trend focuses on micro-sociological factors of each case and investigates into situational factors. These two trends will be discussed in the first two sections. The question of political patronage and role of state and its various apparatuses in mob violence in India will be discussed in the third section. As our primary focus is on ideas of mob lynching and vigilante violence, we need to know the exact meanings of these terms. How does these conceptual categories help to examine and elucidate recent mob crimes in India is also a key matter of concern of this article. We try to solve this puzzle at the end of this article.

Subject side – perpetrators – in all the incidents of violence discussed in this article is mob. This article may not directly deal with interpersonal or individual level violence, rather violence perpetrated by mob. General conceptualization of mob is that it is an ephemeral grouping of random people. In other words, it is an emotionally charged grouping (Glodstein, 2002). Then what does it mean by the term 'lynch'? The term lynch was used US to denote extra-legal killings by a mob. This is normally an informal and extra-judicial mechanism to punish someone who transgresses the general norm of the majority social order. These kinds of crime are believed to be sanctioned by the majoritarian community, not by the modern State. Etymological origin of the term lynching can be traced back to 18th Century US (Jackson, 2014). Almost all the etymological account of the term suggests the original meaning of extra-legal punishment. The etymology of lynching suggests not only its original meaning, but also some of its universal characteristics. First, the perpetrators of violence were revered by the general public. Second, community considers it as the legitimate right to punish - "the righteous revenge of the common man".

Are lynching and vigilante violence same? No. Unlike mob lynching, vigilante violence can be perpetrated only by an organized group. It demands a belief system or ideology to motivate its members. Hence a random mob cannot execute vigilante violence unless they can organize with a common motivating ideology. In most cases, vigilante violence is intentional. Now it is clear why there is no clear distinction is made between these terms. Once the term vigilante is used in reporting a crime instead of mob lynching, it immediately raises the question of intention. Hence the interchangeable usages of these terms are not the product of innocent ambiguity regarding logical grammar. Hence it is highly political to determine the terminology to narrate the incident of mob crime in each local context. Belew's comment on US historiography of lynching is also true in Indian

context. "The remarkable delay in fully theorized work about lynching results, in large part, from disagreement over its definition." (Belew, 2014, p. 84). In India, these two – mob lynching and vigilante violence - may sometimes overlap with each other. However, the term 'mob vigilante' is not a theoretically appropriate word to use. Because rarely an ephemeral mob organize itself to commit vigilante violence motivated by a common belief or ideology. In short, there are theoretical and political implications to choose a word in a local context of mob violence in India. This article uses both the terms – 'vigilante violence' and 'mob lynching' – in appropriate contexts. Moreover, it continues to use the general term 'mob violence' because other forms of mob violence in India such as riots and genocide share some common characteristics with mob lynching and vigilante violence. Other conceptual issues and its political implications can be discussed in succeeding sections. Now let us begin our discussion on ideological trend in studies of mob violence in India.

Ideology and Violence

Relationship between violence and ideology which motivating it is debatable. An aggressive ideology working in the background may motivate people to act violently. But does it enough to give a complete picture of an event of violence occurred? General public and media are interested in investigating into the relationship between violence and motivating ideology behind it when a collective or group violence is reported. People are inquisitive about the political patronage behind the reported crime. Why do scholars also haste to get into this ideological tunnel to explain violence? The over emphasis on ideology gives scholars a feeling that they successfully entered into the psyche of the perpetrators and attained the mastery over the problem posed by the actor (Nandy et al., 1998). This makes the ideology an important sole variable attractable to modern scholars in political studies on violence.

Studies on all kinds of violence explain the psyche of the perpetrators through an ideological tunnel. For some scholars, ideology is the sole determinant of violence while others see it as important motivating factor among other determinants. For instance, literature on terrorism suggests that ideology reinforces terrorism and its lethality (Carson & Suppenbach, 2018). Communal rhetoric by political parties and people in power are accused when a violent incident is reported. Interestingly, Belew (2014) discusses relationship between power and lynching in US. She argues that vigilantism creates power. For her, the study of group vigilantism or lynching is crucial to undertand State and its working. Blue (2017) who also worked on mob violence in US alludes to the role of State appartus. He explained how the liberal State merged the "deportation apparatus" into the realm of legality which inturn resulted in the decline of violence in South US (Blue, 2017). Mob violence against

Mexicans in US from 1989 to 1928 also largely explained as state sanctioned extra-legal violence (Carrigan & Webb, 2013). Studies on mob violence in US found root causes in white racist ideology supported by State apparatuses whereas studies on mob violence in India, especially on riots trace back it causes in communal ideologies and political rhetoric. Nandy and Others criticizes this perception which ignores the relationship between socio-cultural conditions and communal ideology (Nandy et al., 1998). Their study on riots in India from 1960 to 1970 found that Secular reasons are more in number as the sources of riots in post-independent India as per the records of Government of India (Nandy et al., 1998). Similarly, lynchings in US are not always racially motivated (Jackson, 2014). One of the serious shortcomings of this ideological approach is that it ignores structural factors of communal violence such as folk sociologies, stereotypes, subjective justifications, unemployment etc. (Nandy et al., 1998). Nationalist agenda, communal speech, propaganda, and ideology continue to be the major culprits for scholarly studies on riots in India.

Scholarly studies on mob lynching and vigilante violence in India in its embryonic stage also goes through the same ideological tunnel. Immediate social and political inquiries on mob lynching and vigilante violence are surrounded by the question on political patronage and ideological motivation behind it. For instance, Ashutosh Varshney writes, "Ideological ecosystem and the master narrative of cow protection promoted by the political elite offers a narrative for the murderers who carry out the lynching to plug into, and enables their rampant violence" (Arun, 2019, p. 31). This ideological perspectives pose an ambiguity in explaining the agency of real perpetrators of the violence. Are the perpetrators committing a "banal evil"? Are they passively moved by ideological motivations? How to make the real agents accountable to the crime? These are the concerns while approaching mob violence in India through an ideological tunnel. Apart from these theoretical concerns, there are political implications for this approach. How can the nationalist ideology which is modern in its origin mobilize conservative social elements? Does the counter politics of ideological tunnel agree with the historical claims of modern ideologies and thereby make it stronger? All the political and theoretical implications of ideological trend in the studies in Indian context can be elaborated later in this article. Now let us discuss other approaches to understand mob violence.

Micro-Sociology of Violence

There are two contrasting approaches to understand mass violence. First, the functionalist approach emphasized the structures that catalyze violence in society. Second, intentionalist paradigm located agency of violence directly in the tyrant (Pleasants, 2018). The second approach lean more towards the ideological trend

which we have discussed in the previous section. Former approach concentrates more micro elements in a social structure which leverage violence. There are various cultural, sociological and critical studies which focus on structural factors leveraging violence. Danika Kamal writing on the mob lynching of Mashal Khan who was accused of blasphemy in Pakistan traced back the roots of mob lynching in structural shortcoming of society (Kamal, 2017). Relationship between violence and belief system is also widely discussed (Hayes, Mills, Freilich, & Chermark, 2018). Psychological approaches which view mob violence solely in terms of behavioural patterns of actors also emphasizes background elements like culture, peer group, parenting, media influence etc. (Weller, 1985). A study on 2011 London riots examined the emotional factors that work as a catalyst for participating in riots. Young people were motivated by excitement, curiosity, fear etc. to participate in violent events (Tim et al., 2018). It would give only an incomplete picture of reality if these kinds of violence are seen only in terms of political and immediate causes. Reinermann (2020) suggest a dynamic approach to explain the nature of genocidal violence. Various factors like social environment, group factors etc. lead people to violent events (Reinermann, 2020). The cultural spectacle of mob lynching in US is highlighted by Wood (2018). She views racist lynchings as performative act by whites to regain supremacy in modern social order (Wood, 2018). Apart from the background factors in social structures there are micro situational factors which immediately lead to violence. Randall Collins popularized such situational factors and micro-sociological determinants of violence (Collins, 2020). Collins's micro sociological theory concentrates on violent situations, not on violent individuals (Collins, 2008). Now let us discuss micro-sociological theory of violence.

Collins (2008) begins his micro-sociological theory with a fundamental question – Whether violence is motivated by background factors or immediate situational factors? Answering this crucial question would also resolve the puzzle we have been dealing with since the beginning. Background factors may motivate people to act violently. But Collins argues that violence is not easy to occur even if background factors like racist ideology exists. This uneasiness of violence is the core of Collins' thesis. If a racist ideology motivates violence, why all individuals moved by the ideology do not resort to violent means? He says that even people with a culture of violence not necessarily resort to violent means always. This alludes to the significance of immediate situational factors in understanding violence. Problem with ideological paradigms we have discussed is that it ignores these immediate situational factors. In most cases of likely conflicts if the situation overcomes "tension/fear," violence may deflect (Collins, 2008). It may result only in bluster or bluff between individuals. Collins leans maximum to the side of situational factors. His micro-sociological theory finds background conditions as

secondary importance in understanding the events of violence. Making situational factors in the center of analysis, he argues that violence may begin with mere blustering, boasting or an argument with each other. The same may deflect violence. But sometimes it may slip to real conflict. Rhythm of normal conversation is lost in argumentations and slips into violence when one party becomes weak. Collins talks of the loud repetition of some sound as the final brim moment in real violence. What the content they loudly repeat is hardly matters, no matter whether they say 'Allah is great' or 'Long live Ram.' Micro-sociological theory also finds problems with cultural explanation of violence. Cultural theorists consider violence as an easy phenomenon to happen (Collins, 2008). Their focus on structural factors which motivate violence undermine the role of situational elements. This is also true in the case of mob violence in India and US. If violence against minorities is merely motivated by culture of racism, communalism, or xenophobia, how do we explain a mob lynching against a member of majority community? For Collins, symbolic violence is also mere rhetorical.

Participants in mob violence may not always be courageous actors as observed by macro theorists. For Collins, even courage is not the complete absence of fear. Sometimes people slip into the tunnel of violence by situational factors. But we should not forget the core argument of Collins that it is hard to enter into the tunnel of violence – violence is not an easy phenomenon to happen. In mob violence only small proportion of people at the front participates in the actual violence (Collins, 2008). Most of others in the mob are mere passive actors – not exactly passive spectators.

Collins identifies different stages of group violence. Important among them are period of lull – before the actual violence. Put in his words, "the lull is a period of rumour" (Collins, 2008, p. 118). This is also a period of contagious mood in which rumours are spread. He writes, "rumours claim that violence has already happened"(Collins, 2008, p. 118). Members of the community cannot question the authenticity of such rumours. "Attacks on peacemakers and multi-ethnic cosmopolitans" is another characteristic of this stage. This period helps mobilize people for actual violence.

Collins' micro-sociological theory lost the sight of the forest while overemphasising on trees constututing it. "From within sociology, Felson (2009) contends that Collins's theory is unconformable, relies too heavily on anecdotes and ignores the more relevant quantitative literature" (Gross, 2016, p. 244). Over reliance on micro details of individual cases tempted to ignore macro determinants of violence. "Laitin (2008) and Wilson and Daly (2008) criticize Collins's theory as being vague, relying too heavily on metaphors, ultimately being too informal and not measurable, and thus not really explanatory" (Gross, 2016, p. 244). Gross (2016)

while applying micro-sociological theory in vigilante violence in Johannesburg was aware of the fact that this micro-sociological theory originally developed to understand interpersonal violence, not conceptualized for explaining group or community violence (Gross, 2016). But it can be applied even in understanding large events of mob violence carefully only when micro details of each event are available to the researcher. Let us look into the appropriateness in understanding mob violence in India using approaches we have discussed so far.

Banality of Evil?

Arjun Appadurai's (1998) excellent work on ethnic violence unravels the fundamental nature of mob violence in India. According to him violence stemmed out of uncertainty regarding the *Other*. He found an interesting but elusive nexus between violence and uncertainty. The idea of uncertainty should not be confused with lack of acquaintance. Ambiguity in relation with each other leads to violence sometimes. Certainty can be achieved only through the killing of uncertain enemy, what Appadurai calls 'death certainty.' What people fear is the potentiality of uncertain enemy (Appadurai, 1998). He exposes the simple principle behind such violence - "let me kill you before you kill me" (Appadurai, 1998, p. 244). In many reported cases people are lynched in India being accused of child lifting or stealing only on the ground that they are looking strange to the local people. It is starnge that even local inhabitants are killed in India by mob for various reasons including rumours regarding carrying beaf with them. Hence the word uncertainty is not politically innocent usage. It has many implications in Indian society. Unceratinty increases with gloablization and accelerating mobility of people.

As we have seen earlier, studies on mob violence in India is in its embyonic stage. Most of the immediate scholarly invetsigations are surrounded on the question of political patronage. The controversial question of political patronage and ideological motivations are discussed widely in studies on all forms of collective violence in India. The nexus between State apparatus and the perpetrators of violence is an important point of inquiry for Indian scholars. The formal mechanisms which are supposed to act against violence are not detached from the structure of violence. Veena Das's (2007) observations on violence in India unravel the apparent nexus between institutions of State and perpetrators of violence. She found that in anti-Sikh riots in 1984 police took part with perpetrators of violence (Bryjak, 1986). Similar reports of violence on the part of police also reported during Gujrat riots (Bryjak, 1986). Human Rights Watch Report (2019) on cow protection violence in India also highlighted the same concern. According to their report police apparently sided with the cow vigilante groups (Human Rights Watch, 2019). They

also found evidences of delaying of filing FIRs, filing cases against victims and witnesses or threatening them, and police try to cover up crimes and weakening the investigations and further proceedings. They found the serious negligence on the part of police in the case Akbar Khan who was killed in Rajsthan in 2018:

> After an inquiry following media criticism, one police official was suspended and four others were transferred because they had allegedly deliberately delayed bringing Khan, who was critically injured, to the hospital. It took them three hours to reach the hospital, which was only 20 minutes away, because they reportedly stopped to drink tea and arrange transportation for Khan's cows. Khan, alive when the police picked him up, was declared dead on arrival at the hospital (Human Rights Watch, 2019, p. 8).

The police support to mob violence happened in other countries where similar issues are reported. For instance, long standing experience of Indonesian showed the nexus between perpetrators of violence and police and local leaders (Arun, 2019). "Welsh found that many forms of mob violence are made possible by the consent of law enforcement and local leaders" (Arun, 2019, p. 31). Arun also highlight the same pattern of patronage by police and politicians in Paul Brass's study on communal riots in India. Why do the impersonal rational authorities taking part with transgressors of law and order?

> Meeran Borwankar, former police commissioner of Pune in Maharashtra state, said the unprofessional conduct of the police in such cases may come from their personal beliefs and bias, as well as what they perceive to be the message from the political leadership (Human Rights Watch, 2019, p. 27).

The rational members of formal instituion of State are culturally embedded in the structure of society in which they live. The difficulty in detaching from the social structure may explain their bias towards perpetrators in a mob violence. Are mob violences in India ideologically motivated? Unraveling this puzzle may help us extending the question of political patronage beyond. Some find roots of collective violence in India in religious pride and other narrow identities (Bryjak, 1986). Nationalist and communal ideologies are accused as the culprits in the recently reported issues of mob lynching and vigilante violence. Supreme Court of India in Tehseen S Poonawalla versus Union of India and Others (Supreme Court Writ Petition No. 754 of 2016) connected mob lynching into the ideological dominance among various other reasons such as intolerance, prejudice and so on. Media also have been reporting the incidences of rhetoric on unfair privilege of minorities and other communal hate speeches. Report (2019) by Human Rights Watch also investigated into the relationship between rhetoric of politicians and hate crimes. Following is the remark on the murder of Pehlu Khan by Gyan Dev Ahuja, a legislative member in Rajasthan:

> "We should not take law into our hands. But we have no regret over his death [Pehlu Khan] because those who are cow smugglers are cow killers; sinners like them have met this fate earlier and will continue to do so." (Human Rights Watch, 2019, p.4)

No one may disagree with the fact that vigilante groups are motivated to acts of violence by clear cut aggressive ideologies. The family of Alimuddin Ansari who was killed in Jharkhand in 2017 expressed that the presence of supporters of cow vigilante groups created tense atmosphere even in courts during trial (Human Rights Watch, 2019). If we agree with the argument that aggressive ideologies necessarily motivate violence at least in the case of vigilante violence, are we saying that the perpetrators of violence were pushed into the structure of violence and hence they were committing a banal evil? Ideological tunnel is too narrow to approach mob violence in India.

Characteristics of Mob Lynching in India

Any visual of mob lynching in India is characterized by a considerable number of spectators surrounding the real perpetrators. Micro-sociological theorists may call them passive perpetrators. Because in an actual event only a few people at the frontline may commit violence. However public support which leverages mob violence in India continues even after the actual occurrence of violence. In some cases, perpetrators of mob violence were revered by public (Gudavarthy, 2019). An accused man in cow vigilante violence in Uttar Pradesh in 2018 shared such an experince:

> Meanwhile, an investigation by news channel NDTV showed one of the accused men talking on camera about the assault. He said, after being released on bail, that he was welcomed as a hero by the people of his village and that he was not afraid because he had police support. 'People were shouting slogans in my name,' he said (Human Rights Watch, 2019, p. 38).

The visible elements of excessive proud and machismo in perpetrators is another characteristic of mob lynching and vigilante violence in India. This feeling of excessive proud and popular support and reverence to machismo of perpetrators make it difficult for them to break this cycle of violence. Normally a transgression of social or institutionalized norm by a perceived enemy leads to mob violence. But most of the reported cases in India showed that these accusations of transgression were just rumors. Hence, a false accusation of transgression rather than actual transgression of a majoritarian social norm leads to mob lynching and vigilante violence in India. Rumours are immediate situational factor in mob violence in India. How the rumours are spread?

Arun (2019) finds determining roles of social media and rumours in violence in India. Particularly he emphasizes two problems in the role of WhatsApp in

lynching – one is the spreading of disinformation and other is that it catalyzes incitement to violence (Arun, 2019). Mob lynching occurs in some parts of the world when the State mechanism fail to address the transgression of majoritarian social norm theres. But Indian scenerio doesn't show such trends. Rather incidents of cow vigilante violence is frequent in Indian states where cow ptotection is legally implememted. Are the vigilante groups perceive themselves as the extended branches of the State?

The phenomenon of 'overkilling' is also visible in mob lynching in India. Visual records of mob lynching and vigilante violence in India prove this. Excessive force is used even if the victims are surrendered. Victims in mob lynching in India are emotionally paralyzed and they hardly try to defend or counter attack. This shows that there is total domination by perpetrators in mob violence in India. Perpetrators see lynching as the 'righteous' revenge of the ordinary.

Concluding Remarks

Theorization of mob lynching and vigilante violence in India is in its embryonic stage. The initial scholarly studies on mob lynching and vigilante violence go through an ideological tunnel. But travelling through an ideological tunnel not necessarily unravels all the puzzles associated with mob violence in India. Immediate scholarly investigation on the issue is surrounded by the questions of political patronage and ideological motivations behind the crimes. We can agree with the fact that ideologies and political patronage work in the background to catalyze the incitement to violence in India. But such a view would miss crucial situational factors which push people to the actual violence. Micro-sociological theories may explain the immediate situational factors which motivate people to actual violence. Rumours, disinformation, machismo and excessive pride in violent actions, forward panic etc. may help explaining micro elements of mob lynching and vigilante violence in India. However micro-sociological theories give only secondary importance to background factors such as ideological motivation, cultural structures, political patronage etc. which are crucial to understand mob violence in India. The ideological tunnel to mob violence makes the real agency of violence disputable whereas micro-sociological theories reject such possible claims of banality of evil. The exclusive features of mob lynching and vigilante violence in India demand a new approach to understand mob violence. We expect that the future researches on mob violence in India would address this crucial issue. Better understanding of mob lynching and vigilante violence in India is also in need of a politically sensitive terminologies.

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India-Japan Relations: Towards a Strategic Partnership

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Abstract

The diplomatic relations between India and Japan witnessed the 70th anniversary in 2022. Beginning with the Indo-Japanese Peace Treaty of 1952, the diplomatic relations between the two countries the mutual perception between the two countries had been generally positive. However, active political engagement between them did not start until the mid-1980s. The cold war compulsions and the differences in their economic and political strategies compelled both states to maintain a same distance from the other. However, in the post-cold war period, both nations overcame the trust deficit and successfully elevated their relations to a Specific Strategic and Global Partnership based on history and shared values. They found each other as indispensable partners in addressing a wide range of issues from trade and economic development to energy security. Through sustained, reciprocal interactions, both nations registered themselves as critical players in the 21st century global politics. This article examines the development of India-Japan relations since 1952 and identifies the areas where both nations have successfully institutionalised their bilateral relations and thus become the critical layers in global politics.

Keywords: Post-cold war era, strategic and global partnership, indo-pacific, Asia-Africa Growth Corridor, Maritime Security.

The official relations between India and Japan are entering their 70th anniversary in 2022. The Steering Committee constituted to commemorate the 70th anniversary, under the chairmanship of the Ambassador of Japan, decided to consider the year 2022 as 'building a future for our Centenary'. The seven decades of their journey have brought about significant milestones and a shared vision of their future relationships. There are immense possibilities for the two countries to cooperate due to their convergence of interests in the political, economic and strategic arenas. This article is structured into four sections. The first section examines the history of India-Japan relations, beginning with the cultural contact between the two countries during the early 6th Century A.D. The contribution of

Japan towards the Indian independence movement, India's post-independent initiative for Japan's reentry into world affairs and the support extended at various international fora are also discussed. The second section critically examines the reasons for the low level of engagement between the two nations during the cold war period. The emerging area of convergence of interest between the two nations in the post-cold war era is provided in the third section. Finally, the complimentary nature of their trade, security, and defence relations are examined to showcase how they have become indispensable partners in the 21st Century global politics.

The Roots of India-Japan Relations

The relations between India and Japan have a long history rooted in spiritual affinity and strong cultural and civilisational ties. Even though India and Japan are geographically distant, the two countries have close relations with each other in cultural and other aspects (Nakamura, 1956). Buddhism has been one of the significant links between the two countries, dating back to the 6th century A.D., when the religion was introduced in Japan (Ghosh, 2014). Even though Buddhism originated in India, it has been an integral part of Japan's cultural and religious landscape for more than 1500 years (Narasimha, 2014). The cultural and civilisational bondage developed during the ancient period continued to influence their relationship in the modern period. Japan was one of the countries which effectively supported, both directly and indirectly, India's struggle for freedom. Many Indian revolutionaries looked toward Japan for ideological and material support in their struggle for independence. Japan has also provided physical training and asylum to Indian revolutionaries.

The independence of India and the re-emergence of Japan as a great industrial power have opened new avenues for closer engagement between the two countries. Several gestures made by India since its emergence from colonial rule as a free and sovereign nation have led to increasing ties between the two. Indian Justice Radha Binod Pal's dissenting voice at the International Military Tribunal for the Far East set up in 1946 to try Japanese war criminals (Borah, 2011), India's participation in the San Francisco Peace Conference of 1951, and the bilateral peace treaty with Japan showed India's willingness to engage with Japan based on the spirit of tolerance, pacifism and coexistence. India became one of the first Asian nations to establish diplomatic ties with Tokyo on 28 April 1952. India has also shown great sympathy for Japan's national sentiments and aspirations. India wanted Japan to join the comity of nations as early as possible (Kesavan, 1969). India invited occupied Japan to participate in the New Delhi Asian Games as an independent nation, even while under military occupation. India was also a central player in lobbying for Japan's entry into the U.N. and its participation in the first

Afro-Asian Conference in Bandung in 1955. Beyond the bilateral peace treaty and various positive measures, bilateral trade and cultural agreements were also signed between the two countries (Jain, 2010).

India and Japan have also expressed mutual compassion and generosity towards each other. Japan considered Jawaharlal Nehru as a champion of peace and positive neutrality. Nehru's Panchsheel principles are widely acclaimed in Japan. In the immediate post-war years, many Japanese were attracted to India's policy of non-alignment and its search for a universal voice for third-world countries. Even though Japan had joined the US-led alliance system, it was conscious of India's moral and idealistic principles for solving the problems confronted by the world. Both countries showed concern for preserving world peace and shared views on nuclear disarmament. Thus, several attempts were made to widen the basis of Indo-Japanese relations in the post-independent period.

Cold War India-Japan Relations

The subcontinent of South Asia remained at the periphery of Japan's cold war foreign policy compared to its engagement with East and South East Asia. Japan paid little attention to India, considering it a developing nation without significant geopolitical or economic consequences (Wilkins, 2011). During this period, one of the central problems confronted by both nations was their relationships with the U.S. While India was guilty of dismissing Japan as a camp follower of the U.S., Japan considered India's policy of NAM as a strategic tilt towards the Soviet Union. Japan has also anticipated India as an anarchic, dysfunctional, desperately emerging country and not as a potential partner (Mansingh, 2007). They have differences in alliance patterns and divergence regarding their economic policies. With the support of the western market economy, Japan achieved miraculous economic growth in the 1960s and eventually became the world's second-largest economy (Yamada, 2008).

On the other hand, India opted for a socialist economic model based on self-sufficiency. Thus, India's pursuit of an inward-looking economic system in contrast to Japan's liberal market economy hindered close economic ties. Moreover, India has shown vociferous political activism on global issues at most forums, while trade-oriented Japan has chosen to contribute to trade and development-related issues. India's image in Japan was highlighted by its sporadic ethnic violence, periodic political turmoil, continuing war, and conflict with neighbouring states, especially its vexed relationship with Pakistan (Jain, 2010). Due to these historical and political reasons, both countries look to the West than to each other.

The bilateral relations between India and Japan witnessed positive changes during the early 1980s. Prime Minister Mrs Gandhi's visit to Japan in 1982,

followed by her counterpart's visit by Nakasone to India in 1984, was a turning point in bilateral relations. The warm relationship between India and Japan during the mid-1980s was mainly due to India's decision to open its economy. Both countries attempted to create appropriate channels to monitor and coordinate the expanding relations. As the areas of their contact multiplied, the need arose for arrangements at all levels to hold regular consultations and exchange views. While arrangements were agreed upon for annual talks between representatives of the two Foreign Offices, it was later raised to Ministerial-level talks. The range of subjects covered in the negotiations was comprehensive, and economic matters undoubtedly had a significant role.

Post-Cold War India-Japan Relations

The post-cold war has brought about fundamental shifts in India and Japan's domestic and foreign policy. India has been compelled to shift significantly in every aspect of its political, security and economic policies. At the domestic level, one of the significant changes in India's policy was its shift to economic liberalisation after the 1991 financial crisis. India's commitment to economic liberalisation during the Rajiv Gandhi administration and subsequently under Prime Minister Narasimha Rao (1991–96) and his Finance Minister Manmohan Singh made New Delhi close to Japan economically (Jain, 2010). Increasing investment and political exchanges helped to foster closer economic and political relations (Jaishankar, 2000). Besides domestic policy changes, India has also brought about substantial changes in its foreign policy. While non-alignment remains the cornerstone of India's foreign policy, there is a greater emphasis on building sound relations with immediate and extended neighbours, including the United States and Japan (Yamada, 2008). Prime Minister Narasimha Rao's Look East Policy in the early 1990s aimed at integrating India within the Asia-Pacific region, economically and politically. Whilst the first phase of the Look East policy focused on economic and institutional relations with the countries of ASEAN, the second phase expanded the definition of 'East' to include Japan, South Korea and Australia and took on a much more strategic flavour (Lee, 2015).

Similarly, Japan's foreign policy has undergone a protracted process of adaptation and normalisation through changes in its regional security and defence relationships. The measures include granting permission for military deployment overseas in non-combat roles and restructuring Article 9 of the "Peace Constitution". Japan has augmented its force projection capabilities by acquiring in-flight refuelling aircraft, attention to space and surveillance assets, and producing light aircraft carriers. Another notable feature of Japan in the post-Cold War period is the changing domestic political landscape with a new generation of political leaders

with more confident and self-assertive political stances (Wilkins, 2011). Besides changes at the domestic level, Japan has also undertaken significant changes in its foreign policy orientations. The relative decline of the U.S. presence in East Asia and the emergence of China as a new regional power centre compelled Japan to reorient its policy towards Asia. Japan began to pursue a cooperative approach to regional security by engaging with the U.S. and other like-minded partners, including India, Australia, and the ASEAN countries (Drifte, 1996). Thus the two countries are moving much closer, from merely maintaining a political relationship to having a deeper strategic one.

Beyond the domestic and foreign policy changes of both countries, the structural changes in the Asian security environment also gave India and Japan much more strategic maneuverability. The strategic and political divide between the two countries has become less prominent. China now occupies a decisive place in the strategic calculations of both countries. From Tokyo's perspective, India, the world's second-most populous nation, can be an active partner in counterbalancing China's increasing role in the Indo-Pacific (Jain, 2007). Besides, both states are also driven by their convergence of interests, aspirations and concerns and the shared commitment to democracy, human rights protection, the rule of law, and a free-market economy.

India-Japan Relations in the 21st Century: From Periphery to Centre-Stage

The bilateral relations between India and Japan, which came to a standstill due to the nuclear test of 1998, changed dramatically after Yoshiro Mori, the then Prime Minister of Japan, visited New Delhi in August 2000. The Summit became significant as he was the first Japanese Premier to visit India after ten years (Ching, 2000). At the meeting, both leaders further strengthened their relations, not just bilaterally but also by playing a significant role together regionally and globally (MOFA, 2000). Mori cautioned India and Japan to bridge the gap in bilateral issues by building a global partnership to address a broad spectrum of issues such as disarmament, maritime security, reform of the U.N., counter-terrorism, energy cooperation and environmental issues. The Japanese Government removed most of the sanctions against India after the U.S. government decided to do the same due to the War on Terror. Since then, the two governments have successfully elevated diplomatic relations in a wide area, including security cooperation (Kiyota, 2015). The agreement arrived at by Mori and Vajpayee in 2000 led to the institutionalisation of bilateral relations. Since then, both countries have carried out several meetings at the political and diplomatic levels, and several agreements were inked between the two countries. The institutionalisation of bilateral relations since 2000 has led to increased engagement in areas like trade and economic relations,

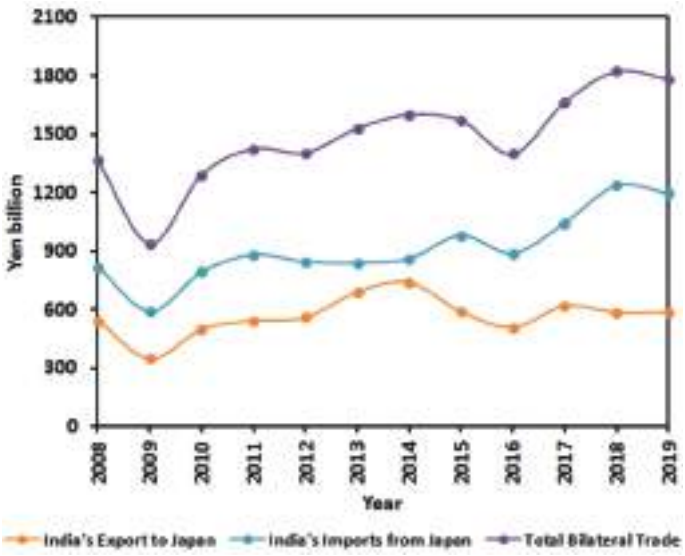
security and defence relationships, maritime security cooperation and cooperation in the non-traditional arena like U.N. Security Council reforms, counter-terrorism cooperation, nuclear cooperation, environmental issues and climate change, and limiting the proliferation of WMDs.

Economic and Trade Relations

Despite some glaring asymmetry in economic performance, India and Japan have developed a fair measure of closeness and understanding during the last seven decades of their relations. There are two underlying reasons for closer economic links between Japan and India in the post-reform period. The first is the complementarity between the strengths and weaknesses of their respective economies. Japan is a capital-rich country whose high labour costs have led Japanese firms to look toward China, Korea, Indonesia, and other ASEAN countries for the labour-intensive parts of their supply chains (Kapur & Lamba, 2016). Being an economic giant rich in high technology and investible capital, Japan has attracted India's large and growing market and workforce, information technology and knowledge-based industries. Simultaneously, India is entering a high growth trajectory. Its growing economy needs modern technology and large-scale investments. India has a large volume of young, skilled, and educated workforce, which can supplement Japan's population's greying segment. India has created a strong science, technology, and industrial framework to become a platform for complementarity with Japan (Singh, 2015). The second rationale is a strategic response to the region's changing geopolitical environment, particularly China's increasing role in the Indo-Pacific.

The economic complementarities between the two countries resulted in the joint declaration of the Japan–India Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) in 2011 (Kiyota, 2015). The CEPA envisages tariff abolition over 94% of items traded between India and Japan for ten years. The increase in bilateral trade between 2012 and 2015 is the positive outcome of such an agreement (Figure.1). However, India's trade with Tokyo is still negligible compared to the U.S. and China. However, due to their complementary economies, India remains much more comfortable with Japanese businesses investing in developing strategic assets and infrastructure. Thus India- Japan CEPA and economic partnership has not only boosted trade and investment but also facilitated shifting economic power to Asia while simultaneously ensuring greater economic cooperation with extra-regional economic centres (Das, 2014).

Fig. 1. India-Japan Bilateral Trade2008-2019 (in Yen billion)



Source: *MOFA 2020*

Japan's Investments in India (FDI)

India has become one of the premium destinations for Japanese FDI. Credit-finance interactions started in early 1958 when the First Yen Loans agreement was signed between the two countries. During the 1980s, Japanese FDI was centred on transport machinery and other related sectors. However, with the inauguration of neoliberal policies in the 1990s, India has become one of the most important and attractive investment destinations for Japanese capital. Moreover, India requires a considerable investment to strengthen infrastructure, renew the manufacturing sector, and sustain its burgeoning urbanisation. Therefore, Japan has become a crucial partner for India.

The Japanese FDI in India increased to 543 yen billion in 2008. It was the first highest growth in FDI since 2001. The number of Japanese companies operating in India skyrocketed from 267 yen billion to 1800 yen billion in 2013 (Herman 2015). The sustained economic growth of 8% per annum since 2004 is one of the reasons for attracting investment from Japan. The firms that entered the Indian market include automobile assembly operations by Suzuki, Nissan, Toyota and Honda. Besides, electronic manufacturers like Sony, Panasonic, and other Pharmaceuticals, food, stationary, cosmetics and sanitary goods have also entered the Indian market. Cumulatively, from 2000 till June 2019, the investments in

India have been around US$ 30.746 billion. Between April 2000 and June 2015, Japanese companies invested $18.81 billion in India. This investment accounted for 7% of the total FDI inflow into India, making Japan the fourth largest investor (Embassy of India, 2016). For India, FDI from Japan will enable carrying forward with its 'Make in India' initiative, thus enticing foreign firms to view India as a low-cost manufacturing base.

Official Development Assistance (ODA)

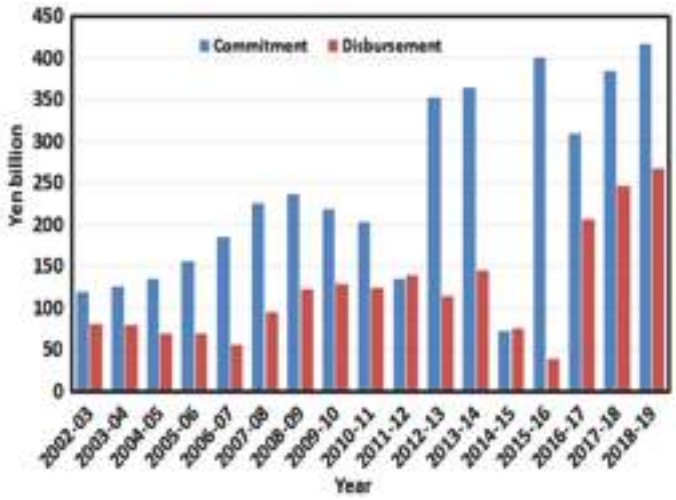
The first-ever Japanese ODA loan to India was extended in 1958, which was the first ODA Japan had ever extended not only for India but for any country. Since then, Japan has become India's largest bilateral donor. The focus areas of Japan's ODA to India have been: a) infrastructure sectors, including power and transportation; b) agricultural and rural development; c) environmental protection through afforestation and improvement in the quality of water and; d) health and medical care (Nataraj, 2010). The ODA supports India's efforts for accelerated economic development, particularly in priority areas like infrastructure developments, transportation and communication, environmental projects and projects related to basic human needs. From 2002-03, India has been the top recipient of Japanese soft loan assistance for five consecutive years.

During 2008-09, India received 236.047 Yen billion as Japanese development assistance. This loan package covers four large-scale projects in transportation, environment and finance. The highest ODA assistance was recorded in 2018-19, with 416.458 yen billion (Figure.2). These projects are related to infrastructure sectors such as power, road and highways, shipping, bridges, water supply and sanitation, urban transport, environment and forests, health, human resource development, and combating natural disasters (Sahoo & Bishnoi, 2016). India remained the top recipient of Japanese ODA. In 2014, India received 57% of Japan's South Asian ODA budget (MOFA, 2016). The Indian economy gained numerous benefits from Japan's ODA loans, which flow into critical sectors like power, transportation, communication, environment, water, public health, and agriculture. The Indian Government has also encouraged Tokyo to invest in its highest-profile infrastructural projects, including the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC) project, Dedicated Freight Corridor (DFC) and Delhi Metro. Therefore, Japanese natural potency in capital-intensive, long-gestation projects and India's need for funding in infrastructure made India and Japan natural win-win partners (Nataraj & Bhunia, 2014).

A conspicuous trend in the ODA pattern is that since 2014-15, even as the amount committed has stabilised or gone down somewhat, actual disbursement has increased. From 2007-2008, Japan introduced a Double Track Mechanism for

providing ODA loans, allowing India to file project proposals twice a year. Most of these loans are like soft loans, with low-interest rates and extended repayment time. From April 2013, the interest rate applicable is 1.4 % per annum for general projects. The tenure for the loan is 30 years and has a grace period of 10 years. For projects related to the environment, the interest rate is 0.30 % per annum with 40 years of tenure and a grace period of 10 years (Embassy of India, Japan, 2016). This ODA pattern has created the basis for goodwill between the two nations and acted as a potential driver for deeper bilateral engagements.

Fig.2 Commitment and Disbursement of ODA loan from Japan



Source: http://www.indembassytokyo.gov.in/india-japan-economic- relatons.html

India and Japan have also launched their infrastructure development projects to cope with China's increasing infrastructural investment in their immediate and extended neighbours. Japan's Partnership for Quality Infrastructure (PQI) and partnerships in northeast India and on the Andaman and Nicobar Islands off the Indian coasts are vital features of this pushback (Baruah, 2016). Based on the PQI, both India and Japan have agreed to build and strengthen a reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure that increases connectivity between India and other countries in the region and within India. Following Modi's visit to Japan in September 2014, both leaders affirmed their commitment to infrastructure and connectivity projects, emphasising India's northeast region and increased connectivity within India and between India and Southeast Asia (MOFA, 2014). India and Japan are interested in extending their strategic economic partnership beyond South Asian nations. Modi's November 2016 visit to Japan underlined the need for improved

connectivity between Asia and Africa for a stable Indo-Pacific region. Apart from collaborations in South Asia, both leaders mentioned Afghanistan and Iran as likely states for future cooperation, specifically citing infrastructure development for the Chabahar Port in Iran and Gwadar Port in neighbouring Pakistan. Expanding their bilateral relationship to include joint infrastructure development across Asia and Africa, India and Japan are looking to leverage their strategic outreach beyond South Asia to the broader Indo-Pacific region (MOFA, 2016).

Bi-Lateral Defence Cooperation

Defence relations between India and Japan are somewhat unique in international politics. Both nations frequently declared their desire for closer military engagements, yet they remained decidedly cold towards the other in practice. Defence cooperation between India and Japan has primarily occurred in the naval domain. There are increasing maritime exercises between the Indian Navy and Japan Marine Self Defence Force (JMSDF). Among them, the Trilateral Malabar Exercise is the most significant engagement. The first staff-level bilateral naval talks between India and Japan began in 2008. The first bilateral maritime security dialogue subsequently followed in 2009. When India's Defence Minister visited Tokyo in November 2011, the two sides agreed to conduct direct bilateral maritime exercises. As a result, the first bilateral Indo-Japanese joint naval exercises took place on Okinawa's coast in June 2012. Since then, both parties have agreed to conduct such exercises regularly and frequently. In December 2013, the Japanese Navy conducted its first bilateral maritime exercise with the Indian Navy in the Indian Ocean region. The key objective of the exercises was to train and prepare contingents to perform joint counter-insurgency and counter-terrorist operations in urban and semi-urban terrain. The exercise marks an important step in expanding the military-to-military relationship between New Delhi and Tokyo. Besides, Passing Exercises (PASSEXs) were regularly conducted during Indian Naval ships and JMSDF ships' visits to each other's ports.

Besides joint defence exercises, bilateral training between the defence forces of India and Japan was carried out in their respective training institutes. Japanese military officers were trained at India's oldest military training institutions like the Defence Staff College at Wellington, the National Defence College, New Delhi, India's Counter-Insurgency Jungle Warfare School, and the College of Naval Warfare, Goa. The Indians got training at the National Institute for Defense Studies, Tokyo.

India and Japan have also been involved in the joint development and production of weapons (Aoki, 2014). India has decided to procure 12 ShinMaywa US-2 aircraft to patrol Andaman and Nicobar islands and conduct the Indian Ocean

search and rescue operations. The rapid surveillance and response of state-of-the-art technology of US-2 aircraft will enable India to carry out rough sea operations, lake/riverine landing, and short take-off and landing. It can be effectively used for securing critical SLOCs operations like conducting air-sea rescue operations, casualty evacuation, humanitarian relief and disaster management, constabulary operations, Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA), and assignments of the Indian Navy (Basu, 2015)

India and Japan have recognised the enormous potential of transferring defence technology and collaborative projects to further their defence partnership. Tokyo has lifted the ban on six Indian firms, blacklisted after the 1998 nuclear weapon test, involved in defence research and development, paving the way to transfer Japanese military technology to India. This defence partnership has benefited from growing economic ties between the two countries. India has been urging Japan to allow Indian companies to produce parts for the US-2i amphibian plane in the hope of developing its aviation industry (Kyodo, 2014). In the India-Japan Vision 2025, both states have designed an "action-oriented partnership", through defence technology cooperation, including co-development and co-production (MOFA, 2015). Through the Agreement on Transfer of Defence Equipment and Technology Cooperation and the agreement for the Protection of Classified Military Information, both states have agreed on joint research, development and production of defence equipment and technology.

On 9 September 2020, India and Japan signed an agreement known as the "Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement". It allowed the militaries of the two countries to exchange supplies and services on a reciprocal basis during exercises in which both participate, the U.N. and humanitarian assistance operations, as well as visits to each other's ports (MOFA, 2020). The goods and services included in the agreement are food, water, transport, airlift, petroleum, clothes, communications and medical services, equipment, spare parts components, and repair and maintenance services (Laskar, 2020). The agreement will also drive closer military cooperation and contribute to security in the Indo-Pacific.

Maritime Security Cooperation

For India and Japan, the maritime trade routes in the Indo-pacific are strategically significant due to their geostrategic location. Both countries are surrounded by the sea and are hugely dependent on marine resources and sea-borne trade. They have also realised that maintaining the rule of law at sea is essential for maritime rights and interests and for carrying out maritime activities. Besides increasing threats from various sources like political instabilities, blockades, pirates, and terror attacks, India and Japan have similar concerns over

China's military and maritime outreach in the Indian Ocean, the South, and the East China Sea. The quest for energy and outsourcing from Africa and the Persian Gulf has brought China into the Indian Ocean. However, China has become more assertive in recent years by flouting all international norms and legitimate claims of other nations to use international waters for their interest. India and Japan are deeply concerned about the Chinese String-of-Pearls Strategy of encircling their maritime borders through overt and covert measures. They fear China's "String of Pearls" can easily be translated into Chinese military bases in the Indian Ocean (Khurana, 2008).

India and China are also concerned about China's growing presence in South Asia and the Indian Ocean littoral, including its ambitious One Belt, One Road (OBOR), also known as the Belt and Road initiative (BRI). China's Indo-Pacific military strategy and BRI's overall infrastructural focus follow two directions: land and sea. On land, the Chinese Government is concerned with strengthening the military forces in the western part of the country. China's Indo-Pacific military strategy mainly focuses on port expansion and the evolution of maritime doctrine at sea (Miracola, 2018). Therefore, maritime issues and securing the SLOCs are critical drivers for India and Japan's defence and security partnership.

The increasing sea-based transport has encouraged close naval cooperation between the two countries (Panda, 2012). The navies of India and Japan have been carrying out joint naval exercises and search and rescue operations in the Indo-Pacific region. The invitation of the Japanese Navy to participate in MILAN and the International Fleet Review would go a long way in furthering bilateral naval cooperation (Sakhuja, 2000). Japan and India also joined the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia. Thus, the Indo-Pacific concept was a subconscious effort to strengthen India's languishing easterly geostrategic reorientation, which gained strength in 2014 through Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "Act East" articulation.

Japan's strategic vision for Indo-pacific also converges with the policies initiated by India towards the region. In March 2015, when Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Seychelles, Mauritius, and Sri Lanka, he unveiled the novel concept of Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) (MEA, 2015). Through this vision, India has projected its capabilities to lead as a regional net security provider and emphasised universality, equality, and mutual respect between India and its neighbours. Even though India strongly believes that those who live in the region have primary responsibility for ensuring peace, stability and prosperity, it also recognised the role of other nations in the region (PIB, 2015). The SAGAR concept has been further developed and institutionalised, resulting in India's maritime strategy (MOD, 2015).

Similarly, recognising the importance of the Indo-Pacific region, Shinzo Abe floated the concept of a 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific' (FOIP) in 2016. The FOIP was the beginning of an intensified and proactive Japanese foreign policy that sought to strengthen a rules-based and open maritime order. Through these policies, India and Japan aim to build a comprehensive, inclusive, transparent and rule-based international order attaching importance to unity, peace, stability and prosperity for every country and region.

India and Japan are also committed to universally agreed principles of international law, including the U.N. agreement on the SLOCs and other maritime laws (MEA, 2011). In the Vision 2025 Special Strategic and Global Partnership, both states called upon all states to refrain from all unilateral measures that could lead to regional tensions (MOFA, 2015). Both nations agreed to arrive at a code of conduct in the South China Sea by a consensus for maintaining peace and stability. They also decided to hold regular close consultations on issues related to the safety and security of SLOCs. Moreover, India and Japan have moved fast on developing the Asia Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC). The project seeks to rediscover the ancient sea routes and create new sea corridors linking the African continent with India, South Asia, and Southeast Asia states. The AAGC reflects a growing convergence between India and Japan based on the four pillars of development and cooperation. Both sides view China's growing presence and role in Africa as a threat to their interest. Formally termed the "Asia Africa Growth Corridor: Partnership for Sustainable and Innovative Development", AAGC is a mega-regional growth programme where India and Japan have committed themselves to develop the African region (Prakash 2020). The project stakeholders hope that the sea corridors will be a "low-cost" and "less carbon footprint" land corridor. The AAGC plans to connect ports in Jamnagar (Gujarat) with Djibouti in the Gulf of Eden, Mombasa and Zanzibar with Madurai, and Kolkata with the Sittwe port in Myanmar.

Apart from sea corridors, the AAGC also proposes to build robust institutional, industrial and transport infrastructure in countries in Asia and Africa. Japan contributes its state-of-the-art technology and ability to build quality infrastructure, while India will bring in its expertise working in Africa. The private sector of both countries will play a significant role by taking up infrastructure, power or agribusiness projects in Africa. The idea is to enable Asia and African economies to integrate further and collectively emerge as a globally competitive economic bloc. The desire of Japanese businesses to collaborate with Indian partners to invest in Africa shows the desire of both countries to develop a common agenda that combines Japan's 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy and India's 'Act East policy. Thus, the AAGC provides a solid foundation for the India–Japan strategic partnership and thus acts as a potential counterbalance to China's

BRI by improving connectivity between the two continents. Thus, through joint infrastructure development, Tokyo and New Delhi can advance their geopolitical interest by increasing their support for Japanese and Indian firms that want to collaborate on African investments (Pajon and Mezard, 2018).

Cooperation in Nonconventional Security Issues

India and Japan shared increasing concerns about the growing turmoil, tensions and transitions in the world. Both called for a more robust and closer partnership between the two countries for their prosperous future and to sustain peace, stability and prosperity in the world. They agreed to cooperate in several security arenas globally, including counter-terrorism, UNSC reforms, nuclear cooperation, environmental issues and climate change, and restricting the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. These substantive areas play a significant role in deciding bilateral relations between India and Japan.

India-Japan Partnership for Sustainable Growth in a Post-Covid World

India and Japan agreed to contribute to global efforts to combat Covid 19 and to protect the lives and livelihood of people affected by the pandemic. Tokyo has committed a grant of 50 billion yen to help India tackle the Covid-19 pandemic. Both nations welcomed the progress made under the Quad Vaccine Partnership to enhance equitable access to safe and effective vaccines in the Indo-Pacific littorals and beyond. The Government of India appreciated Japan's efforts to combat COVID-19 and provide social protection (MEA, 2022). Thus, the pandemic has provided India with a unique opportunity to capitalise on the emerging sentiment of various companies across the globe, particularly in Japan, to relocate their business operations from China due to geopolitical, economic, and other considerations. Several prominent Japanese companies like SoftBank are active investors in multiple Indian startups such as OYO, Paytm, and PolicyBazaar and have successful investments across multiple sectors in India. Moreover, India, Japan, and Australia are working together to launch a Trilateral Supply Chain Resilience Initiative to reduce excessive dependency on China by strengthening their respective supply chain operations.

Considering the issues in Indo-China relations and Japan's eagerness to find more markets, India and Japan can cooperate for their respective long-term goals, sourcing finished goods for Japan and increasing manufacturing output for India. Emphasising the importance of their relationship, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that the Indo-Japanese friendship and partnership during the COVID-19

crisis is more relevant for global stability and prosperity. The Prime Minister of Japan, H.E. Mr Kishida Fumio, during his first official visit to India for the 14th India-Japan Annual Summit 2022, recognised the significance of their relations as the two countries were celebrating the 70th anniversary of establishing diplomatic relations. He also praised India's initiatives in the fight against COVID-19, especially in ensuring the support for safe and effective vacination through the Vaccine Maitri initiative. Both nations have also reaffirmed their commitment to achieving the health-related SDGs, in particular universal health coverage, and to strengthening global health architecture, including the leading and coordinating role of the World Health Organization and its reform.

Conclusion

The study of India-Japan relations reveals that different factors have driven the bilateral relationship between the two Asian democracies in different periods. Their relationship witnessed various phases of estrangements and engagements, during which there were negligible and excellent contacts between the two countries. The post II World War period and the subsequent seven decades paved the way for India-Japan to develop strong relations based on their understanding, needs and mutual respect. Despite the China factor, there are a number of areas where both nations can cooperate and reap the benefit of mutual cooperation. Areas like trade and economic cooperation, maritime security, regional economic and trade initiatives, and non- conventional energy security are the emerging areas of their cooperation in the 21st Century.

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Social Safety Net programmes (SSN) in India and Brazil: A comparative study of the Indian Public Distribution System and Bolsa Familia Programme in Brazil

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Abstract

The term 'Social Safety Net (SSN)' depicts the representation of protectionist policies that worked consistently to improve vulnerable communities. In literal meaning, Social Safety Net imbibes about safeguarding the high wire walkers (vulnerable communities) by reducing the risk of being vulnerable to food insecurity and poverty. The Public Distribution System (PDS) and Bolsa Familia Programme (BFP) are welfare policies that work like the 'Social Safety Net' in Brazil and India. This study will explore the significance of the Public Distribution System in India in safeguarding food security and the Bolsa Familiaprogramme in Brazil in safeguarding and meeting minimal requirement of vulnerable population. Both programmeshave aimed at reducing poverty and hunger. In India, the Public Distribution system has the reputation of being a 'price stabilizer' through distributing food grains atsubsidized prices. It has a significant role in checking food inflation and balancing the demand and supply side of market forces. In Brazil, the Bolsa Familia programme has brought tremendous changes in ensuring food security and minimum essential requirements for needy people through financial assistance. Both these programmesoperate in huge populous countries and contribute to curbing food security in their unique implementation.

This study examines how social safety programmes have succeeded in achieving their target in Brazil and India. First, this study will explore the history and background of the Public Distribution System and the Bolsa Familia programme. Secondly, this study intended to know the 'best of the best' initiative in operation, performance and result achievement. Thirdly, this study is also helpful in making a comparative analysis to know each program's strength-based approach. This study has planned with selected literature analysis by using government reports, research articles, books, and international publications, which is used to substantiate and validate the results and conclusion.

Introduction

Welfare-centric policies are integral approaches of world institutions to deal with the socio-economic problems of the 21st century. International institutions

such as the UN, World Bank, and FAO significantly assist developing and underdeveloped countries frame welfare policies. Nowadays, welfare priorities are the primary concern of every nation. Meeting the essential requirements of human life is an integral task in welfare policy to gain stable and sustainable growth. The world, which is always uneven, still needs to fulfil the necessities of human life in society. Several factors are responsible for the still prevalence of hunger, poverty and malnutrition in society. The increase in the enormous world population has dramatically increased the governing institutions' socio-economic burden. Wealth, resources and energy inequalities differentiate welfare-centric opportunities and capabilities. It is a matter of humanity and civilized society to assist the weak and inferior to make a decent and dignified life. Welfare policies have a significant role in safeguarding the interests of vulnerable and more fragile sections of society. Policies that sustain and protect the primary and social livelihood of people are called social welfare policies.In other words, *"social welfare policy may be defined as the government's response to human needs such as food, housing, healthcare, employment, and other necessities"*.(DiNitto & Johnson, 2013)

Thepublic distribution system and Bolsa Familia Programme are welfare policies that work like 'Social Safety Net' (SSN). International institutions such as World Bank and IMF popularize the term Social Safety Net. According to the World Bank, Social Safety Nets *"encompass all informal family-based arrangements, all social security programs and poverty-targeted interventions"* (Paitoonpong et al., 2008). This statement has broader connotations and multiple meanings in the domain of public administration. In its literal meaning, SSNs safeguard the interest of vulnerable sections through adequate measurement, which will work as a 'protector' from disaster, disintegration and all forms of risk. SSN carries the meaning of 'safety', which imbibes sustenance and consolidates the livelihood standard of people from vulnerable situations. The main intention of SSN is to create a risk-free environment and stimulate the poor sections to achieve the development path. It prevents people from falling to scratch in the development process. SSN 'clears the ground level' and creates a bedrock for initiating development. Initially, welfare-centric policies work like social protection in nature and will later act as a Social Safety Net.SrawoothPaitoonpong and Shigeyuki Abe, in their work on 'the meaning of Social Safety Net', define "*the safety net used by high-wire walkers could be viewed from another perspective: it prevents any walker who falls – unexpectedly or not – from hitting the floor and incurring catastrophic injuries."*(Paitoonpong et al., 2008)The Asian Development Bank (ADB) defines social protection as *"policies and programs designed to reduce poverty and vulnerability by improving the efficiency of labour markets, diminishing people's exposure to risks, and enhancing people's capacity to protect themselves against hazards and the interruption or loss of income"*.(Wihtol, 2010)

Asian Development Bank, in its report, explains that *"Social safety nets can take several forms, including targeted or untargeted, conditional or unconditional cash or in-kind transfers. Examples of commonly used safety nets include conditional cash transfers, child allowances or non-contributory pension programs; food-based programs such as food stamps, food rations, or school feeding programs; food-for-work or labour-intensive public works; assistance to access basic services (such as school fee waivers, scholarships, or health care fee waivers); and more general welfare supports such as agricultural input subsidies (prices or vouchers), energy subsidies, food price subsidies, and housing subsidies"*(Wihtol, 2010).This caption clearly shows that the meaning of Social Safety Net has a broader connotation and multi-dimensional coverage. Social Safety Net can resist the unimaginable and unpredictable impact on society. If it fails, it can minimize the consequences of unpredictable incidences like natural calamities, economic breakdown, and other disasters. It should be understandable from the significant crisis period where the use of Social Safety Net will immediately effect relief and restabilization. "*Social safety nets aim to prevent poor and other vulnerable groups from falling into poverty or being caught in a poverty trap when affected by temporary shocks, such as a natural disaster or economic downturn"*.(Wihtol, 2010)

According to Vivian, there are three main objectives of social safety net. They are poverty alleviation,and it is obviousthat most of the SSN initiatives are working towards meeting the primary priorities of human life.Secondly, structural adjustment programmes with political acceptance and,at last, institutional reforms. (Paitoonpong et al., 2008)This explains the political perception and will that encourages a periodical institutional and structural modification according to the needs of the modern dynamic context. There are four major types of social safety net interventions. Cash transfers, food-based programs, public work programmes and free education and health services or fee waivers.(Wihtol, 2010) This study is intended to make an overall comparative study of two types of SSN: the Bolsa Familia Program in Brazil and the Public Distribution System in India.

History shows India and Brazil both are part of European colonies, and since Independence, due to exploitative colonial nature, poverty, hunger, and malnutrition became rampant. (Mooij, 1998)The adverse impact of colonial rule forced both countries to adopt welfare-centric policies where a significant portion of the population is suffering and struggling to meet the basic human necessities(Pinheiro Machado, 2018). This study is focused on the two famous policies initiated in India and Brazil with similar motives and objectives to fulfil the aspirations of socially and economically vulnerable sections. It would also intend to present a picture of the historical background of the PDS and Bolsa

Familia Programme. Both programmes are unique, even though their objective is the same. This study will shed light on the differences in their structure, nature of implementation, coverage and the outcome of both programmes in their respective country. It also intended to know about the 'best initiative' between the two programmes by comparing the nature of the operation. The study will conclude by selecting the successive features among the two programmes to improve policy-making in governance.

Methodology

This study is purely based on secondary sources. This study uses articles, books, international publications, and reports from the Asian Development Bank, FAO, UN, etc. Comprehensive literature coverage was done to substantiate the conclusion. This study was conducted in a descriptive analysis way.

Brazil and India are developing countries and significantly contribute to world food production.(FAO, 2022) Brazil and India are part of various international economic forums and have shared similar visions and views on their economic progress. This study concentrated on the Bolsa Familia Programme in Brazil and the Public Distribution System in India. Both programmes have aimed at reducing poverty and hunger. In India, the Public Distribution system has the reputation of being a 'price stabilizer' through distributing food grains at subsidized prices. It is a flagship programme in ensuring food security. It has a significant role in checking food inflation and balancing the demand and supply side of market forces. (GOI, 2017) In Brazil, the Bolsa Familia programme has brought tremendous changes in ensuring food security and minimum essential requirements for needy people through financial assistance. (Erdogdu & Akar, 2018b)Both these programmesoperate in huge populous countries and have played an essential role in ensuring food security in their unique implementation.

Profile picture of India and Brazil

This is a selected general profile of Brazil and India. This includes the aspects of population, poverty and food production.

Items	India	Brazil
Population	1,42Billion	216 million
Size of the country	3,287,263 sq km	8,515,770 sq km
Nature of government	Parliamentary democracy	Presidential democracy
Economy	Mixed economy	Mixed economy

Food production	Second largest food producer in the world	Fourth largest food producer in the world
Export Level of Agricultural Production	Sixteenth largest food exporter in the World	Leading producer of soya bean, coffee, and sugarcane products
Import rate of Agricultural production	Does not have specific data	Fourteenth most prominent importerof cereals and pulses
Malnutrition level	109th rank	73rd rank
Hunger level	107th position	20nth position
Poverty rate	14.96 %	18.70%
Food Inflation Rate	4.49%	4.01%
Population Growth rate	0.8%	0.5%

Source: ***(****FAO statistics report 2022) (Statista(2022),* *(FAO, 2017),* *(World Bank, 2023),* *(GOI & Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2021),* *(Staff, 2022),(Singh, 2022),* *(Malnutrition in Brazil, 2023),* *(Malnutrition in India, 2023),* *(Instituto et al. e Estatística (IBGE), 2023)*

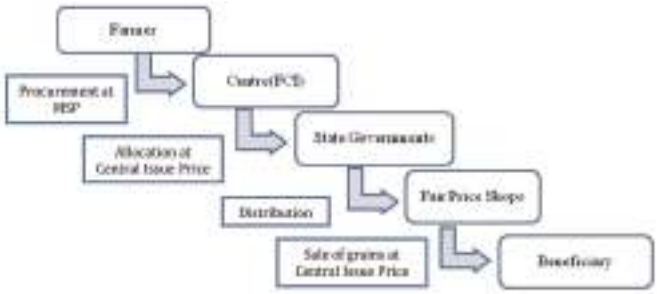
Public Distribution System (PDS): the flagship programme of the Indian version of Social Safety Net

History of Public Distribution System (PDS) emerged during the colonial era. It was started as a wartime food grain supply to the fighting Indian soldiers in the Second World War. It was known as 'rationing', and the British extended rationing to the public when the Great Bengal famine occurred in 1943. Since Independence in India, due to the high prevalence of hunger, poverty, and food insecurity, the Food Grain Policy Committee has framed adequate measures to extend nationwide. PDS is one of the principal instruments in ensuring food security through distributing food grains at subsidized rates. It is one of the most significant food grain supply chain mechanisms of its kind in the world. (Niti Aayog, 2017)In India, PDS has a separate ministry and department with a bulky structure and massive operation in various distribution phases.PDS starts with procuring food grains from the hands of farmers, rice mills and local traders. The central government, which shares asignificant role in PDS operation, begins the PDS procurement process with the help of an autonomous body known as the Food Corporation of India (FCI). The procurement process has a significant role in protecting the interest of farmers by providing a Minimum Support Price (MSP). Apart from FCI, since 1997, the state government has also had the power to make procurement under the decentralised procurement system. Decentralised procurement aims to procure from the minor food-producing regions effectively with maximum capability. Theprocurement process is farmer- and producer-friendly, and their interest is protected by giving

minimum financial assurance. Food Corporation of India conductsduties like procurement, buffer stock operation, regulating food grain market price and exporting surplus food grains to other countries.(Balani, 2013)

Regardingstate-wide distribution, India follows a centralised procurement process and diversified distribution practices. Each state has its unique distribution practices and where beneficiary identification is different. (Sahoo et al., 2019)Food grains and staple items are ultimately distributed through the point of distribution known as Fair Price Shop (FPS). FPS or ration shops are licensed and authorized by the state government, and private individuals, cooperative societies, or women self-help groups run these shops. Generally, PDS distributes the items like rice, wheat, sugar and kerosene across the country.(Ministry of Consumer Affairs Food and Public Distribution, 1955)Food grains are distributed once a month on a ration card. Food grains distributed to the public are varied according to the ration card category. (World Food Programme, 2014a)There are fourkinds of ration card categories, and they are easily recognisable based on the colour given to them. White, Blue, Yellow and pink are the ration card colours resembling Non-prioritynon-subsidy (NPNS), Non-priority subsidy (NPS), Priority Households (PHH) and Anthyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY). The payment, known as a commission of an Authorised Ration Shop (ARD) or ration shop owner, is based on the quantity of food grains sold out in a particular month.(World Food Programme, 2014b) The sale price of staple items supplied in the public distribution system is much less than the market price, which was fixed in a manner that would permanently subsidise benefits to the targeted beneficiaries. The whole system protects the interests of both producers and consumers by providing MSP and subsidised price rates. *As its name mentions, the public distribution system is a state-funded store chain that distributes basic food and non-food goods to the poor at relatively cheap rates* (Thushar, 2018).

Structure and Institution of Public Distribution System in India



Source: *(Balani, 2013)*

When we look into the origin and emergence of the Public Distribution system, the governing institution has made periodic and frequent updates to the operation of PDS according to the contextual requirements. The first form of PDS is known as 'rationing,' which is used to supply food grains to soldiers fighting in World War I (Radhakrishna & Subbarao, 1997). Independent India incorporated the Universal Public Distribution System (UPDS), which is intended to cover the entire population of India to uplift them from chronic hunger and malnutrition. In 1992, to make PDS more reachable to the country's remote corners, the Revamped Public Distribution System (RPDS) was introduced. It intends to benefit PDS in the most isolated part of the country. In 1997, in order to make PDS practical and cost-effective, a Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) was introduced.(Mane, 2006) It is intended to reduce the cost overburden in PDS operations and make it more targeted towards beneficiaries.(Svedberg, 2012)These periodical reformative effort succeeded in its dimension but later created new horizons of challenges. Majorly, PDS finds corruption, leakages, and faulty findings of beneficiaries and creates financial pathetic situations for the Fair Price Shop owners (FPSs). Tofurther reform the PDS,the D.P. Wadhwa committee was formed, and it strongly recommended institutional and structural modification in the operation of the Public Distribution System.Various electronic-enabled initiatives have been introduced to improve the overall condition of PDS. (Government of India, 2004)

Bolsa Familia Programme (BFP),a unique Brazilianinitiative of Social Safety Net

Bolsa Familia (Brazilian initiative of the Conditioned Cash Transfer scheme) is introduced by the Brazilian president Lula Da Silva. It is very distinct from the Public Distribution System. According to the World Bank data, Brazil is one of the world's most unequal countries, and the average poverty rate was closer to the 20% between 1980 and 2000.(World Bank, 2023)This situation forced Brazilian policymakers to think about initiating the social welfare policy, which is widely known as the Bolsa Familia Programme.Two municipalities started the idea and the initiation of the Conditional Cash Transfer scheme. They are known as "Bolsa Escola" and "Guaranteed Minimum Family Income Program (PGRFM). Later, these initiatives are taken as models by other municipalities.(Lindert et al., 2007) But both these programmeshave similar features. Both initiatives are targeted to identify people with low incomes with income ceilings. In every family, women are selected as beneficiary heads. For both 'Bolsa Escola' and 'Guaranteed Minimum Family Income Programme' are putting the conditions required: (a) Education to the school-aged children, (b) the attendance of the students in school should required up to 80 – 90 %.(Paiva et al., 2019) The benefit of programmes

will be available to the families who have taken an active part and commitment to fulfilling the conditions. Apart from programmes like Bolsa Escola, Bolsa Alimentacao in 2001, Auxilio Gas (2002) and Fome Zero (2003) have adopted similar characteristics in the policy framework.(Lindert et al., 2007).Bolsa Familia is thelargest Conditional Cash Transfer programme (CCT)currently operatingin the world. According to an ILO report, PBF has significantly expanded reach and access, offering conditional cash transfers to 46 million people which has coverage for one in every four families in Brazil. 75 per cent of beneficiaries are Afro-Brazilians, and 54 per cent are women. The PBF operates in all 5,570 municipalities in Brazil through a network of 176,000 local operators, making the programmeaccessible across all of Brazil.(Berg, 2010) This program is directed at financial assistance to the beneficiaries. It got wider recognition in the International arena because of its unique initiative. Compared to PDS, it does not have any material distribution. Its idea is pure monetary aid to the public.Bolsa Familia was a merger of four existing programmes: Bolsa Escola, Bolsa Alimentaco, CartaoAlimentacao, Auxilios –Gas, Programa de e Erradicacao do TrabalhoInfantil PETI). Bolsa Familia Programme aimed *'to improve the efficiency and coherence of the social safety net and to scale up assistance to provide universal coverage of Brazilian poor'.* (Steven, 2019) There are three main objectives of Bola FamilaProgramme: minimizing poverty among poor communities with minimal financial assistance. Conditioned financial benefit to the beneficiaries based on some of the criteria like attending the schools to children and regular health checkups of children. Lastly, providing complementary services like employment training and social assistance programmes.(Keshavarz, 2012)"*Households eligible for the Bolsa Famíliaprogramme receive a monthly income transfer based on household income and composition. At its inception in 2003, households with per capita monthly incomes up to BRL70 (Brazilian Real) entitled to a fixed household transfer of BRL70 plus an additional amount of BRL32 for each child up to fifteen years of age, to a maximum of five, and an additional amount of BRL38 for each youth aged sixteen to seventeen, to a maximum of two. The maximum benefit amount for households in extreme poverty [was] therefore BRL242. The conditionality attached to these transfers includes school attendance for teenagers, immunization of children, prenatal monitoring for pregnant women, and remedial education for children and for those at risk of being drawn into child labour."*(Barrientos, 2013). Both the federal and local governments of Brazil have important roles in the successful implementation of the programme. *"Each beneficiary receives a debit card which is charged every month unless the recipient has not met the necessary conditions, in which case (and after a couple of warnings) the payment is suspended."* (Staff, 2008). Beneficiary monitoring was started in 2006, and those families self-reporting about their family income were not excluded from the beneficiary list for up to two

years; since 2012, additional social benefits have been granted to poor background communities(Staff, 2008).According to the World Bank's Poverty and Inequality platform, *"it is estimated that the level of extreme poverty would be between 33 per cent and 50 per cent higher without the PBF. The programme has also reduced income inequality, accounting for 12 to 21 per cent of the recent sharp decline"*(Erdogdu & Akar, 2018a).According to a recent UN study, *"the number of people suffering from hunger in Brazil decreased from 22.8 million people in 1992 to 13.6 million in 2012"*. (Nobrega, 2013)According to the International Labour Organizationreport, *"the Bolsa Familia Programme benefits 11.1 million Brazilian families. It is approximately one-fourth of the total Brazilian population.*(Berg, 2010)*The Bolsa Familia Programme has brought significant improvement in the development parameters of the Brazilian economy"*. The idea of the Bolsa Familia initiative became successful and became a role model for under-governing countries to effectively build and restructure welfare policies based on the principle of 'conditionality'.

What is the Conditional Cash Transfer Programme?

Conditionality or the Conditions attached to welfare policies are the initiatives popularized in the Latin American continent. In almost every country, the majority of the welfare policies are operated unconditionally. It was in Brazil that BFP introduced a programme that benefits should meet certain criteria in order to avail of benefits of the government programme. The idea of conditionality became popular and appreciated on the International platform (Inter-American Development Bank, 2023). Countries in South America have already adoptedCondition-based social welfare policies in their respective context. Some example are Universal Child Allowance for Social Protection (2006) in Argentina, Juancito Pinto Grant (2006) in Bolivia, Avance Mos (2006) in Costa Rica, Mi Familia Progresa (2008) in Guatemala, Familia Allowance Programme (1990) in Honduras, Programme of Advancement through Health & Education (2002) in Jamaica, Opportunities network (2006), Tekopora in Paraguay (2005), Junto (2005) in Peru and Solidarity (2005) in Dominion Republic.

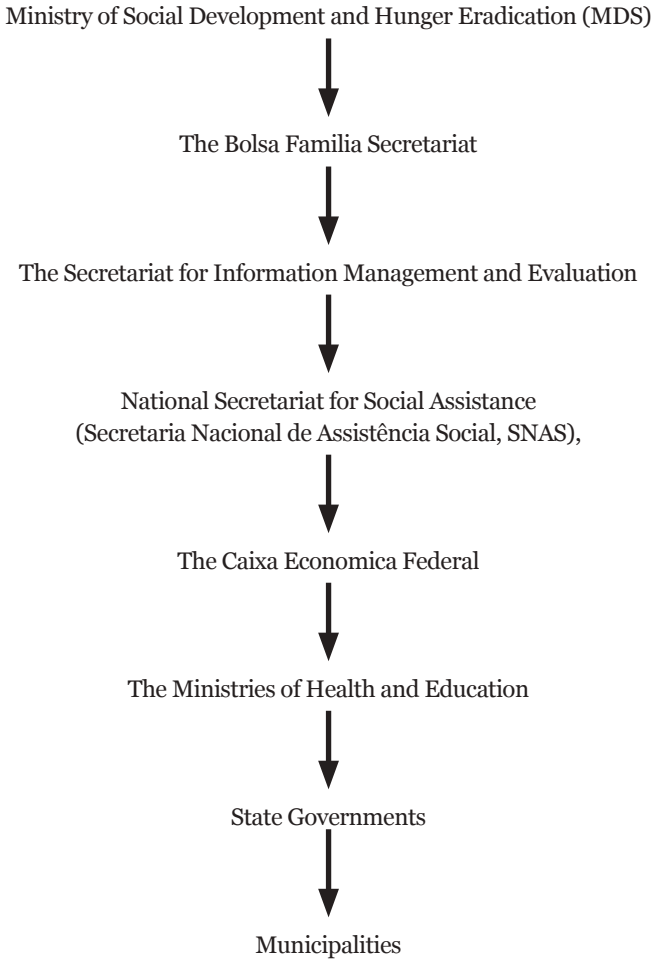
It is a new trend in the administrative paradigm. In reality, conditions are co-responsibility. Meeting the condition is the beneficiary's duty in response to the service they are availing from the state. It works in the principle of 'to gain something to perform something'. The nature of the policy itself compelsthe beneficiary to meet specific criteria.The programs aim to reduce both short-term and long-term poverty. The key features of the BF Conditional Cash transfer programs are: (a) poor households are targeted via some kind of selection, (b) the families are given cash, and (c) the beneficiaries are given some sort of responsibility or criteria in

order to receive the money (Heimo, 2014). The criteria are intended to enhance the Individual capability of beneficiaries. Somecriteriainclude enrollment and school attendance at public schools, regular health check-ups in public health centers and vaccination, etc. Looking at the nature of the criteria, it is a compulsion from the administrative side to invite beneficiaries to be a part of the mainstream of society and progress. Conditional public policies have compelled people to interact with the government at the grassroots level. Most welfare policies don't have any stage set up for the active involvement of the public, but conditional welfare policies have a platform where beneficiary people are assigned specific responsibilities to meet. Conditional welfare policies are targeted at people, but they are not a unidirectional approach to uplift the downtrodden society. Its ground level hasa platform for mutual interaction between the 'service provider' and 'service receiver'. Conditional welfare policy does not mean restriction. It creates a space for the upliftment of beneficiaries. It prevents laziness among the beneficiaries, and the scope for underestimation of policy benefits will be reduced. Conditionality creates the consciousness of obligation among the citizens and helpful to improve participatory culture in society.

There are two motives behind the operation practice of conditioned welfare policies: one is 'Individual development', and the second is 'generational upliftment'. "*An essential feature of the programs is to encourage and promote relationships between the beneficiaries, the service providers and the governments by focusing on including people with low incomes, especially children. By focusing on children, the governments hope to break the cycle of poverty eventually".* (Keshavarz, 2012) Conditioned welfare policies are intended to create an impact in the long term, and when an entire generation is uplifted from the shackles of poverty, malnutrition, and food insecurity, it helps the governmentin reduce the burdening cost of future welfare policies. It sustains the future and makes unproductive generations into productive ones through active involvement.

The nature of the condition is not to restrict but it is to improvisation. Performing conditionality is an obligation and gratitude in return to the state and government. It is a civic responsibility towards fulfilling good governance. In India, the constitution itself prescribed the fundamental duties to be performed by the citizen. Among the eleven duties, the tenth fundamental duty is much connected with the nature of conditionality practiced in southern American countries. The tenth fundamental duty of the Indian constitution says 'tostrive towards excellence in all spheres of individual and collective activity so that the nation constantly rises to higher levels of endeavour and achievement'.The idea of conditionality is directed at the righteousness and goodness of the individual, community, society, and state.

Structure of Bolsa FamiliaProgramme in Brazil



Three controls agencies

- General Controllers Office (CGU),
- Federal Audits Court (TCU)
- Office of the Public Prosecutor (MP)

Source: *Lindert et al., 2007*

Ministry of Social Development and Hunger Eradication (MDS)

Bolsa Familia Program has multiple stakeholders like the federal government, municipalities and government-based agencies. It has various phases in implementation. The Ministry of Social Development and Hunger Eradication (MDS) is the apex body that deals with policy-making and policy updation. It was created in 2004, and it is a merger of the (former) Ministry of Social Assistance, the (former) Ministryof Food Security, and the Bolsa Familia Executive Secretariat.

The Bolsa Familia Secretariat (Secretaria Nacional de Renda de Cidadania, SENARC) is the administrative head of the programme. It performs multiple functions like selection of beneficiaries, authorization of financial payment, periodical and frequent evaluation of conditionality of the programme, monitoring and supervision and training municipal managers.

The Secretariat for Information Management and Evaluation (Secretaria da Avaliacao e Gestao da Informacao, SAGI) is responsible for the overall qualitative and quantitative evaluation of the Bolsa FamiliaProgramme.Under this National Secretariat for Social Assistance (Secretaria Nacional de Assistencia Social (SNAS) is working to monitor the social welfare programme for the elderly population, the disabled, child laborers and vulnerable families. Apart from that, one more parallel office known as the National Secretariat for Food Security (SESAN) works to ensure food security in Brazil. Both officesare working collaboratively to achieve the specific target with the partnership.

Municipalities

Municipalities are the programme implementation bodies. Each municipality maintains a regional-wise local program coordinator. Local coordinators are the point of contact for the beneficiaries of the programme. They are responsible for identifying beneficiaries, monitoring the benefit implementation, ensuring the conditionality from beneficiaries and providing complementary services.

Caixa Economica Federal

The Caixa is a federal savings/credit union organization. It is an outsourcing agency and programme operating agent. It operates and consolidates the national registry database for social programs, Cadastro Unico. It will give unique social identification numbers to registered beneficiaries and credit financial payments through electronic benefit cards (EBCs) on a monthly basis through a network-based banking network. In order to comply with the conditionality of BFP, it operates software that is run and coordinated with the Ministry of Education.

Ministry of Health and Education

This ministry is responsible for establishing technical and operational guidelines for school attendance. It is also responsible for overseeing the training of municipal and state officials who are part of BF implementation. It has a significant role in consolidating and evaluating the conditionality.

State government

State Governments have a role in assuring logistical and technical support to the various municipalities. It also assists municipalities in providing complementary services. Apart from this, the state government also has the responsibility to document the beneficiaries and register the deatails in Cadastro Unico (online registration platform).

Three control agencies

Three control agencies – the General Controllers Office (CGU), the Federal Audits Court (TCU), and the Office of the Public Prosecutor (MP) – are responsible for formal oversight and controls of the BFP.

Similarities between PDS and the Bolsa Familia Programme

Bothprogrammesare the largest of its kind in the world.

Public Distribution System is one of the most extensive food supply distribution systems in the world. (Alam, 2019)Compared to those countries having the largest food distribution, like China, the USA, Indonesia, and Nigeria, PDS has a coverage of 67 % of the total population. Since the National Food Security Act 2013, the government has been responsible for providing PDS benefits to 50 % of the urban population and 75% of the rural population. The annual report published by the Department of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution System shows that the Central government already reached up to 80 crore population. In India, fourteen states have full PDS coverability and operationalization. According to the central government press release, PDS still has the capability to extend to ten million people(Haq, 2022). In the Rabhi Marketing Season in 2023, India procured 26.1 million tonnes of wheat (Das, 2023) and 521.27 metrictonnes of rice (Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution System, 2023). According to the Food Corporation of India report, during the period of 2020- 21, the total procurement of food grains consisting of rice, wheat, other pulses, and millets is approximately 594 lakh million tonnes(Ministry of Consumer Affairs Food and Public Distribution, 2021). Food Corporation of India is assigning the duty of buffer stock operation

and transportation. In 2023, there will be 1923 warehouses functioning under FCI, which have the capability of storing food grains at 371.93 Lakh Metric Tonnes (LMT)(Ministry of Consumer Affairs Food and Public Distribution, 2023a). A significant portion of food grains are transported through railway service. In the 2020-21 FCI annual report, 478 LMT was transported all over India through the Rail routes. At the last stage, the distribution point, according to the statistics given by the Fair Price Shop Dashboard, there are 5.34 lakh FPSs working in India. (Ministry of Consumer Affairs Food and Public Distribution, 2023b)

The BF programme is one of the largest Conditional Cash transfer schemes of its kind in the world. It covers almost 25% of the total Brazilian population. Among the Conditional Cash Transfer scheme initiatives in the southern American continent, the Bolsa Familia initiative became one of the most appreciated and recognizedprogrammes at the international level. In the year 2023, BFP covered 21.1 million families in 5,570 municipalities in Brazil. Of which 8.9 million are children. The Brazilian government has spent 1.6 billion in investment and transferred BRL 14 million in the amount to the beneficiary accounts.Compared to the BFP, other initiatives in Latin American countries are micro in nature, and some are not in full-fledged operation. Those operated conditional welfare policies are heterogeneous in nature, and hence, each programme is at its experimental stage to make it more effective. (Planalto, 2023) BFP is aunique initiative and was considered a new modelprogrammein the 21st century.

Both are aimed at poverty alleviation and target beneficiaries

Bolsa Familia and the public distribution system are aimed at poverty alleviation, hunger eradication and mission food security. The idea behind these programmes is to meet contextual demand and challenges. When the British initiated the 'rationing' system, it was the crisis period when Japan induced Burma to stop the rice supply to India. In order to avoid food shortages and hunger, the British were forced to adopt an alternative system. It would primarily sustain the food grain supply to British soldiers since the greatness of this programme was understood by policymakers of Independent India and continued with the name of Targeted Public Distribution System. It is target-oriented towards vulnerable and poor communities.One of the key features of this initiative is that beneficiaries have been divided on the basis of the Above Poverty Line (APL) and Below Poverty Line (BPL). Here, the poverty line category has been given much priority compared to the above poverty line in giving food grains benefits. This pattern aims to assist the weaker and vulnerable communitiesin breaking the poverty trap and creating an egalitarian society.

In Brazil, the context is different; the entire nation's situation is characterized by the existence of a high proportion of inequality in society. Compared to other

countries, Brazil has a high inequality trend and a disparity between rich and poor. (Maia, 2022)In order tocounter this issue, Brazil has introduced a conditional cash transfer scheme. The idea of BFP is to reduce the bridge between rich and poor to enhance the capability of the poor to gain a comfortable life in society.It has yielded significant results in eradicating hunger and poverty.

Digital-enabled delivery of services

Both PDS and Bolsa Familia Programme have incorporated electronic tools in their nature of function. In India, the Public Distribution System suffers from institutional inefficiency and massive corruption at various stages of operation. The reported outcome of the D.P. Wadhwa committee strongly recommended the introduction of an electronically enabled public distribution system. Today, most Indian states have implemented electronic tools-based functioning processes. There are four steps of an electronification process in PDS. They are (1) web-based platforms to disseminate and display all the departmental activity and its information. (2) Establishing the digital-based database of PDS beneficiaries. (3) Introducing software to look after the affairs of ration card management known as Ration Card Management Software (RCMS). (4) Introduction of the e-pose machine at the ration shop function.Nowadays, all manual practice is discontinued, and e-pose machine finger-based recognition (Biometric authentication) is operating, which would help the government avoid all the manipulation and space for the diversion of food grains. Apart from digital-based ration cards, barcode-based identification is also practiced. The overall intention of the electronically enabled PDS is to improve the efficiency and performance of the entire programme.

In the Bolsa Familia Programme, at its inception itself, the entire operation is built up with an electronic transaction process. Caixa, an outsourcing agency, is responsible for keeping the digital-based beneficiary registry known as Cadastro Unico. Those who are registered here are allotted electronic benefit cards (EBCs). The financial allowance of each beneficiary is directly transferred to the beneficiary's account. So, the entire process is working with an electronic process without manual functioning. The financial allowance varies between the families from Brazilian Dollar (R$) 20 to R$ 180. Factors like the composition of the family and poverty level determine the amount of each family. Overall, this programmehelps the government to benefit fromprogrammespromptly, without loopholes and corruption.

Legislative and constitutional support

Both programmes are the integral tool for ensuring food security and eradicating poverty. Discontinuation or altering the basic structure of these programmes will

bring adverse consequences in respective countries. Hence, to strengthen the existing policy, both programmes have been given legislative support. It will help this programme to be a permanent feature of the governing institution for a longer duration. In India, PDS became the constitutionally approved programme in 2013 after the implementation of the National Food Security Act 2013. Because of this programme, food security in India has shifted from the welfare-centric approach to the right-based approach. This act will make government machinery accountable for feeding the food grains to the 81 crore population. At the same time, it empowers the vulnerable community to take legal benefits regarding food insecurity issues.

Brazil's 1988 adapted constitution has made a clear statement about the state's responsibility in organizing and legislating social security programmes. Apart from that, Article 6, Article 194, Article 201, and Article 203 have stated the clarity on the legal provision on ensuring social security programmes.(Ortiz, 2016)

Women-centric approach

One surprising element among both programmes is that women are considered family heads. The motive behind this move is to empower and benefit the women. Women play a significant part in the family's welfare. This policy works with the notion of the welfare of women, which means it contributes to the all-around development of families, including children. In India, women are not the nominee for ration cards up to 2013. Since the enactment of the National Food Security Act 2013, women have been considered as family heads, and it says that the eldest woman (18 years of age and above) is eligible to apply for the ration card.

The Bolsa Familiaprogramme is aimed at providing financial aid to the beneficiaries. Like PDS, it also recognized women as family heads and family financial allowances were credited to the women's bank accounts. It aimsto achieve financial security for women through contributing to the overall progress of the family. Apart from that, the extra benefit was allowed to those families have pregnant women, lactating and teen children. It is very crucial to assist maternal welfare and family development.

Dissimilarities between PDS and the Bolsa Familia Programme

While comparing both programmes, this study found a number of differences in their context, operation and nature. Indian PDS is rooted ina colonial legacy. It started during the middle of the 20th century and shaped and evolved over the period. Still, PDS play a significant role in ensuring food security and eradicating poverty. However,compared to the PDS, most conditional welfare schemes emerged during the last decade of the 20th century. CCT schemes, which are

popular among Latin American countries, are the new trend like welfare scheme operations. It is highly appreciated for its operation, performance and reachability. Both programmesdiffer in their nature of operation. PDS distributes food grains like rice, wheat, sugar and kerosene. Apart from these four items, a number of stateshave their own addition. But BFP is purely financial allotment in form. When we compare the bulkiness of each progress, eachis the largest in its kind initiative. However, comparing the budgetary allocation, number of people cover ability, and the stakeholders participating in each programme, PDS became much larger than the BFP initiative. Both programs are operating with a targeted direction to vulnerable and poor communities. However, the difference is that in India, PDS became selected with proper eligible criteria to select the beneficiary, while BFP is lagging in setting up systematic criteria.

Lessons to learn from the mode of operandi of both programmes forUnderstanding a better version of the social welfareProgramme

The public distribution system and Bolsa Familia Programme are integral and inalienable policy approaches to ensuring food security. The tactics and structure of both programmesdiffer in their operation. Nevertheless, both policies have vital significance in meeting the contextual requirements. This study aims to select the best feature among both policies by analyzing the positive and negative aspects.

From 1970 onwards, India started to experience a population explosion. According to the proportionate population increase, PDS expansion is also required. From 1997 onwards, feeding the underprivileged population has become a burden to the government. Apart from that, a significant number of issues, lapses, and loopholes started to appear in the PDS operation. Due to massive operationswith overburdened responsibility, PDS became underperforming and ineffective. Government reports and studies found that there are massive loopholes and corruption in every stage of operation. This is visible from the generation of literature that emerged during the first decade of the 21st century.

In order to overcome the floppiness of the system, electronic-enabled systemic restructuring was started. Since 2019, electronic-based transition PDS has started to appear.The electronic initiative resembles the BFP initiative in Brazil. So, both programmes have similarities with respect to the use of electronic tools. It is an effort to update to the contextual demand of a technology-based era. The technological transition of PDS will be helpful in reducing operational complexity. It is also helpful to reduce the space for corruption and manipulation activity.

Looking at the Indian context, the distribution of subsidized food grains to surplus food-growing states needs to be avoided, and instead of that, cash transfer

schemes would benefit farmers more. Seasonal food production and seasonal market rush are common phenomena in India that result in unprecedented price falls for the crops produced. To avoid this issue, a cash transfer scheme would be helpful to farmers rather than kind in aid.

Most of the public policies are lacking in the implementation phase of targeting, coverability and utilization. There was a big gap between the government's effort to reach out to people and civic active involvement. There are still remote communities in India that are unaware of what is happening in mainstream society. Government citizen partnership with mutual interaction is essential for the smooth success of each programme.However, in India, there is no proper and systematic channel interaction, and both government and society lack consciousness in that aspect. Conditions are one of the criticalfactors that help society to be active and conscious about public policy. This study will suggestthat incorporating conditionality will yield fruitful results in Indian public policy.

The idea of conditional social assistance schemes is not alien to India. India has already implemented the Janani Suraksha Yojana, the first condition-basedprogramme. Inculcating the conditional element in the Public Distribution system will improve the status of backward society, and it will make the programmemore efficient by checking underestimation tendencies. When we look at the conditions adopted in Latin American countries, its criteria's includes the fulfilment of education and health aspects. In India, as per the statistics, the approximate national level average school dropout rate will be 12 % in 2021 to 2022. There are six Indian states, Bihar, Gujarat, Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Punjab, Meghalaya, and Karnataka, where the school dropout rate will still be above 20% in 2021.(PTI, 2023)Along with the Healthcare Access and Quality Index 2023 report, India is in 145th place among 195 countries.(McVay, 2023)So, considering the ground reality,there is a vast scope for adapting condition-basedprogrammes to improve literacy and health index. Condition-based social assistance policies not only meet the primary objective. It also contributes to the capacity building of beneficiaries with certain constrained guidelines. While looking at the nature of public policies in India, most policies are backed by political will and to gain popular support rather than national interest. In India, politicians prefer freebies-natured policies,which is always against the conditional principle. Experts believe that freebies without contextual demand will be ineffective and a burden to the public purse. This study will refrain from suggesting full-scaleconditional cash transfer schemes. Looking at the situations in India, it is one of the largest populous countries in the world and has a significant contributor to feeding the world's food grain demand.

One more aspect should be improved from the observation of two different social safety nets, both programmes lagging proper measurement scales to identify

the actual beneficiaries under each programme. In India, poverty is measured in terms of calories of food consumed per person. There are other methods, too, but since the TPDS was introduced, targeting beneficiaries resulted in more inclusive errors. In order to identify the BPL family, there is a criteria-based evaluation system that failed to differentiate between the poor and the rich. Due to several reasons, in Indian PDS, inclusion errors or subsidized benefits availed by the non-poor resulted in poor targeting results. So, this study will strongly demand a precise measurement scale to distinguish the beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries.

When it comesto Brazil, the scale of measuring the poverty line is pathetic. Brazil lacked a systematic method to measure the poverty level, apart from the Bolsa Familia programme, which considered the beneficiaries based on income criteria. This model is not suitable for finding financially sustained,unorganized workers. Hence, the scope of manipulation and malpractice would be high to imbibe as poor. This problem needs to be solved for the better performance of the Bolsa Familiaprogramme.

Nevertheless, the study by Bortholo viewed that the scope of empowerment of families is more in the Bolsa Familia programme. It stated that the financial allowances give the opportunity of freedom of choice to beneficiaries where it is not available in food grain-based PDS in India. (Bartholo, 2016)

This study will suggest the possibility of applying conditional cash transfer schemes during the food depletion period when the producer fails to get justifiable prices for the crops it produces. The scope for incorporating cash transfer schemes will be much more in surplus food-producing states than consumer majoritarian states. In such a context, a financial form of aid will benefit the most. Full-scale implementation of a conditional cash transfer scheme has its own repercussions, which will lead towards an inflationary situation in the economy. Instead of cash transfers, policies like the Food for Work Programme (FWP) should be strengthened in India. It should be understandable from both electronic initiatives and conditional initiatives that one is working towards institutional improvement, and the other one is working toward civic empowerment. Hence, both initiatives play the role of 'pull and push factor' to enhance and smooth the governance process.

Conclusion

Ensuring food security is one of the herculean tasks faced by the modern world in order to meet the large population. Every country has a different approach to combat hunger and food security issues. India and Brazil have their own successive initiative tools to ensure food security. Each programme follows its tools and

tactics. Due to heterogeneous context, institutional structure, mode of operation, and beneficiary identification system, pragmatic operation isvaried from the fundamental approaches of the social safety net programme. It is necessary to adopt the best policy by understanding the different initiatives worldwide. This study explored the condition-based policies and their benefits by evaluating the Bolsa Familiaprogramme. This study also viewed the possibilities of applying it in the Indian context. It is necessary to adopt the best governance practices to meet the governance burden in a huge, populous country like India. Conditions will stimulate the people's participation, and in one aspect, it is an effort towards achieving the aspects of democratic governance**.**

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Representation and Inclusion in the Public Policies on Inland Fisheries in India: A Gender Justice Approach

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Abstract

Inland fishing women's workforce plays a crucial role in fisheries, contributing significantly to household sustenance and economic stability. However, despite their vital contributions, these women often face social invisiblities and marginalization in policy discussions related to inland fisheries development. It is imperative to shift the perspective and acknowledge women's unique challenges and opportunities in inland fishing. Policies should be formulated focusing on equitable practices of gender justice, ensuring that women have rightful access to resources, training, and decision-making processes within the inland fisheries sector. Recognizing and documenting the diverse roles that women play in inland fishing activities in rivers, ponds, canals, and wetland water bodies will be essential.

Moreover, providing targeted support, such as access to fishing gear, technology, and financial resources, will empower inland fishing women to actively participate in and benefit from the growth and development of the sector. Efforts should also be made to facilitate the formation of women's networks and groups within inland fishing communities, fostering a supportive environment for knowledge exchange and advocacy. Ultimately, a policy perspective that addresses the specific needs and contributions of inland fishing women is crucial for achieving a more inclusive and sustainable inland fisheries sector.

Keywords: Inland fisherwomen, policy analysis, fishing communities

Introduction

In inland fishing communities worldwide, women undertake varied roles encompassing livelihood, household responsibilities, reproductive duties, and active participation in community affairs. Despite their engagement in a broad spectrum of fishing-related activities within the capture and culture of different edible species and fish, their contributions to the fisheries' value chains are often overlooked and considered invisible. An area of concern revolves around whether

the specific issues faced by inland fishing women are being duly acknowledged and given significance in policies, schemes, and programs (Chandra, 2014). It is crucial to recognize that policies impact the lives of both men and women, and due to economic and social differences, the outcomes of policies often vary along gender lines. Public policy has the potential to either perpetuate or eliminate gender discrimination and inequality. Failing to do so poses the risk of perpetuating existing forms of oppression against inland fishing women, limiting their autonomy, and potentially creating new forms of gender oppression (Kurien, 1998). Against this backdrop, this paper explores the gender context within the fisheries policies, programs, and schemes at India's Central and State levels, explicitly focusing on inland fishing women.

Based on a comprehensive review of the states and the center, this paper tries to locate the context of gender justice in fisheries policies. The study examined several vital policies and schemes at the Central level, including the National Policy for Marine Fisheries, the Draft National Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Policy, and the National Scheme of Welfare of Fishermen and Blue Revolution Scheme. At the state level, various programs implemented by the Department of Fisheries were scrutinized using information available on their official websites. Additionally, data collection was complemented by interviews with fisherwomen, trade union leaders, and Department of Fisheries officials. A qualitative assessment of the gathered information was conducted using ethnographic interviews. This approach aimed to identify and analyse the gender context within Indian fisheries policies and programs at both the national and state levels. This paper primarily draws its conceptual apparatus through the critical readings of policy documents that were done while reviewing literature and fieldwork framework for the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) study on inland fisherwomen.

National Policy Analysis

India's national fisheries policies at the central level have acknowledged gender issues in their documents. The National Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Policy (NIFAP, 2018) is designed to establish a supportive environment for fostering the country's sustainable development of inland fisheries and aquaculture. The key objectives include ensuring food and nutritional security, creating livelihood opportunities, promoting ecological health, and fostering inclusive economic development, specifically focusing on inland fishing women. The Draft National Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Policy explicitly highlights gender-sensitive and precautionary approaches as essential aspects of the primary objective. The policy underscores the significance of gender mainstreaming and equity across the entire value chain of inland fisheries and aquaculture. This entails empowering inland

fishing women, fortifying their organizations, and enhancing their leadership capabilities. The policy underscores the commitment to creating a conducive environment by providing adequate space and women-centric basic facilities in the workplace. This reiterates the dedication to actively involve and empower inland fishing women, recognizing their integral role in the inland fisheries and aquaculture sector.

The National Policy for Marine Fisheries (NPMF, 2017), formulated by the Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairy, and Fisheries, aims to preserve marine living resources' health and ecological balance within the Indian Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). Specifically addressing fisherwomen, the policy underscores gender equity as a crucial aspect, emphasizing the significant roles played by women in the fisheries sector. This includes involvement in fish retailing, fish drying, and various value addition activities. Recognizing the pivotal role of women in fisheries, the policy advocates continual government support. This involves the formation of women's cooperatives, initiating women-friendly financial support schemes, and assuring good working conditions to ensure their physical safety, livelihood security, and occupational hygiene. It commits to supporting women through cooperatives, financial schemes, and favorable working conditions.

Furthermore, the policy encourages women's participation in small-scale fishing and other value-added activities (NPMF, 2017). Under the National Scheme of Welfare for Fishermen, fisherwomen are explicitly considered alongside fishermen, allowing them to avail of insurance benefits. This underscores the policy's commitment to addressing fisherwomen's specific needs and contributions in the marine fisheries sector.

The Blue Revolution scheme, aimed at integrated fisheries development and management, incorporates government interventions to provide financial support, taking into account socio-economic and geographical backwardness, with a specific emphasis on strengthening the participation of fisherwomen (Blue Revolution - An Overview, 2018). Commencing in 2016, the Central Government initiated the 'Blue Revolution,' an encompassing scheme designed for fisheries' integrated development and management. The primary vision is to establish conditions conducive to the holistic advancement of the country's fisheries, concurrently striving to enhance the income status of fishers and fish farmers substantially. The scheme prioritizes sustainability, bio-security, and environmental considerations. To actively involve and encourage the participation of fisherwomen, the scheme incorporates provisions for substantial subsidies across various niches of fisheries. The scheme extends support to women SHGs and fisherwomen co-operative entrepreneurs by providing a 50% subsidy on unit costs for the fabrication

of aquariums and the establishment of backyard hatcheries for ornamental fishes. Specialized training programs on ornamental fish farming are offered for up to five days to women SHGs, complete with provisions for travel, dearness allowance, and other benefits.

Further provisions include subsidies for socially backward women and beneficiaries from North Eastern states for developing and constructing new retail markets, complexes, and outlets (Blue Revolution - An Overview, 2018). Fisherwomen engaged in fish marketing, particularly those from fishermen communities and members of local fishermen or fisherwomen co-operative societies, are eligible for up to subsidy. The scheme also allocates subsidies for socially backward women and beneficiaries from North Eastern states for cold chain development and the processing of value-added fish products. Moreover, fishermen, fisherwomen, SHGs, and entrepreneurs can avail themselves of subsidies to set up solar drying units for fish. Training and demonstrations focused on the hygienic handling of fish and processing/value addition are provided to fisherwomen, complete with daily allowances and travel assistance.

State-level policy analysis

The Kerala Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture (Amendment) Bill (KIFAB 2021) focuses on regulating fishery and aquaculture activities in inland public water bodies. Here are specific points highlighted in the act:

1. Government Authority and Delegation: The State Government is vested with the authority to regulate fishery and aquaculture activities in public water bodies. However, there is provision for delegation to Local Self Government Institutions for water bodies within their boundaries, with technical advice from Fisheries Department officers.
2. Environmental Conservation: The Bill emphasizes preserving the original state of public water bodies and wetlands to safeguard fish survival. Activities transforming these areas adversely affecting fish survival are prohibited.
3. Aquaculture Area Designation: The Government can declare any public water body or suitable area as an aquaculture area exclusively for aquaculture-related activities. This can be done through a Gazette notification for the development or general interest of the aquaculture sector.
4. Fishing Regulations: The Bill restricts fishing activities, requiring registration and licensing of fishing vessels and equipment. Unauthorized fishing activities in public water bodies are prohibited.

5. Government Intervention for Conservation: Through Gazette notifications, the government can prohibit various fishing activities to conserve fish. This includes fishing methods, vessel types, and periods during which fishing is prohibited.
6. Conservation Measures: Specific conservation measures are outlined for selected water bodies, including restrictions on construction, depositing contaminants, breeding and marketing of unauthorized fish species, and introducing fish that may endanger native fish wealth.
7. Local Fisheries Management Councils: To ensure sustainable and responsible fish conservation, the Bill allows the Government to constitute Local Fisheries Management Councils for specific water bodies. These councils are tasked with implementing the provisions of the Act and related rules.
8. Inclusion of Women's Neighbourhood Groups: The prioritization criteria specifically include Women's Neighbourhood Groups, recognizing the importance of involving women in aquaculture activities. This is a positive step towards promoting gender inclusivity in the fisheries sector.

In summary, the Bill addresses the need for comprehensive regulation of inland fisheries and aquaculture, balancing government authority with local involvement and emphasizing conservation measures to protect the aquatic ecosystem.

Through a careful and comprehensive analysis of the above-selected national and state-level policies, we came to know that the state system has made a deliberate effort to develop natural resources, fish species, and fishing communities. Many attempts have been proposed to include women in the fishing sector based on their acceptance of their labour contribution to the work of this inland fishing sector. Like men, women are also engaged in inland water bodies for a variety of activities like, fishing, sales, manufacturing, loading, net making and other allied activities. The proportion of the women inland fishing for their survival were also high. By accepting their contribution, we need to look after their condition in their labour field.

Gender perspective in policy analysis

It refers to address the policies through the lens of gender dimension and explore the exclusion of women in policy level. It includes all concerns related to fisher women's (1) Activities in fisheries, (2) access and control over resources, (3) technology and marketing availability,(4) physical health condition.

Technology and Resource management

Within the realm of inland fisheries, resources such as rivers, lakes, and ponds are commonly perceived as communal assets (Padmakumar, 2006). Although there are typically no strict usage restrictions, local traditions and conventions often guide access. National and regional agreements may also influence access limitations. However, a distinctive pattern becomes evident when considering privately owned aquaculture ponds, predominantly owned by men. In instances where traditional rights are upheld, women frequently find themselves excluded from decision-making processes, with decision authority residing primarily with men in the community. In the perspective of inland fisherwomen, fisheries-related natural resources like backwaters, rivers, lakes, and ponds are considered common property resources (Padmakumar, 2006). Despite the absence of formal restrictions on use, access is often regulated by traditions and conventions. However, national and regional agreements can impose restrictions on access.

In contrast, inland water bodies are predominantly privately owned by men. In areas where traditional rights are exercised, women are often excluded from the decision-making process, and access is primarily governed by men (Chandra, 2014). This lack of inclusion contributes to the scarcity of women venturing into the inland water bodies for fishing, with their fishing activities usually being smaller in scale and supportive in nature. Unfortunately, many fisheries development activities tend to be male-centric, neglecting the essential contributions of women, especially those fishing in inland and inshore waters (Chandra, 2014). The oversight in recognizing the impact of development activities on women›s fishing practices has led to the exclusion or prohibition of various activities women perform when formulating fisheries management policies.

Furthermore, the ownership and inheritance of land and significant fishing implements are predominantly through men, reinforcing gender disparities in the inland fishing community. In the realm of inland fishing, women encounter specific challenges that contribute to their exclusion from certain sector activities despite their significant contributions to households and communities (Houtart, 1988). A key issue is the limited access and control over productive resources, creating barriers for women engaged in inland fishing. Social, cultural, political, and economic factors further exacerbate this situation, making resources easily accessible to men but not readily available to women (Chandra, 2014). Overcoming these hurdles is a complex task, requiring affirmative policies to instigate the necessary changes. In the context of small-scale fisheries prevalent in many developing regions, the community's role becomes pivotal. Addressing these specific challenges faced by inland fishing women is crucial for achieving sustainable and inclusive growth in the inland fisheries domain.

Credit accessibility

In the context of inland fisheries, credit emerges as a critical resource influencing the scale of operations for enterprises. Traditionally, rural credit has been predominantly sourced from informal channels (Kurien, 1998). In the realm of inland fisherwomen, challenges arise as craft, gear, and marketing activities are financed by large-scale traders or auctioneers. Securing credit support for their activities proves to be extremely difficult for women (Houtart, 1988). Access to credit is often channeled through husbands or other male relatives due to the interdependency between trade and finance. Unfortunately, credit obtained by women for specific fishing activities may sometimes be redirected for household needs. Women engaged in fish trading face additional hurdles, including high transportation costs, fluctuating prices, and the need to travel during odd hours. Moreover, intense competition from male fish retailers adds to the challenges. Men typically own vehicles, making transportation more accessible, while women contend with these barriers in their pursuit of sustainable inland fishing activities (Kurien, 1998). Enhancing the participation of women in the inland fishing sector is vital, and a critical approach involves improving their access to the resources mentioned earlier. State-level policy instruments tailored to the unique needs of the inland fishing community are necessary to achieve this. Although community traditions in the fishing sector can be resistant to change, it is crucial to adhere to legal requirements. Implementing specific laws to ensure the inclusion of women in decision-making bodies within inland fishing communities serves as a foundational step. Additionally, promoting the formation of Inland Fisherwomen Self-Help Groups can play a pivotal role. Through this, women in small units can come together to engage in productive activities, promote savings, and provide short-term loans at lower interest rates. Scaling up these efforts, the establishment of inland fishing cooperatives can serve a similar purpose in fostering women's active involvement in the sector.

Health

Most prevalent illnesses among inland fishing women are lifestyle-related and often linked to their daily life and work. Fish and fishing women are transported via bus, autorickshaws or other vehicles from the work area to the market or market area. Once inside the market, fishing women sit for extended periods, selling fish to retailers or wholesalers. This prolonged sitting often lasts for hours, with rare breaks for water or a cup of tea from nearby hotels. After concluding business for the day, they return home using various means of transportation, such as autorickshaws or buses. Throughout this process, there is minimal space for physical exercise and

movement. Many of them struggle to find time and space for proper urination in marketplaces. Their water intake is often low and irregular.

Consequently, they persist with their health issues, only seeking medical attention when the situation becomes serious. The physical environment in the markets is not always hygienic, contributing to the health challenges inland fishing women face (Chandra, 2014). Many of them regularly take medications for conditions such as diabetes and high blood pressure.

Market

Fish marketing in most developing countries are poorly organised and lack of cold chain and other infrastructural facilities force vendors to transact their businesses on the same day. Women are usually relegated to the poor market spaces and have to jostle with other players in the market. However, in the inland fishing sector, it has been observed that women are disadvantaged as far as the wages are concerned and invariably earn less than the men engaged in this industry. The working conditions also leave a lot to be desired. Much of the catch is for household subsistence and meets household needs.

Conclusion

Most inland fisherwomen lack access to their own homes and land. For those who do own land, it often consists of small plots sufficient only for constructing modest houses. Educational attainment within the families of fisherwomen is notably low, leading to limited participation in higher-paying occupations. In particular, the community is minimally present in government jobs. A significant proportion still resides below the poverty line, as per data collected from the field. The asset base is meager, with numerous families lacking even essential fishing assets such as net, vessels, boat, vehicles, and other fishing equipment. The diminishing fish population in inland waters seriously threatens the livelihoods of inland fisherwomen and fishing communities. This is a complex issue that the community struggles to tackle within a short timeframe. Even over the long term, the problem intensifies each year, where the monsoon season work is lost. The threat stems from factors such as pollution in the inland ecosystem, non-compliance with existing laws, disregard for waste management, and climate change. Most of the women from this region depend on fisheries and other cool works. Though paddy cultivation existed in earlier times, there is significant reduction of cultivation in the recent decades . Fisheries activities are the primary livelihood of people in the areas. The older generation generally possesses a low level of education, primarily limited to primary or lower primary levels. As family incomes rise, there is a prevailing effort to ensure that the younger generation receives advanced

education, including higher, professional, and technical training. While this shift in focus holds the potential for future benefits such as improved employment prospects, the present educational situation could be better. The fact that many inland fisherwomen live with their spouses indicates that these women recognize the importance of working and earning income to provide for their families. They aim to live independently, not relying solely on their husbands for personal expenses, and having the autonomy to spend on necessities as they see fit. In certain situations, women are compelled to enter or continue in the inland fishing occupation due to circumstances such as husbands falling ill, the obligation to repay family loans, the marriage of their daughters, or the acquisition of a house or land, etc. In the context of inland fishing women, achieving equal access to skill development and technology is crucial for gender mainstreaming. Technological advancements in harvesting have been instrumental in elevating the inland fishing sector from traditional subsistence to commercial levels. The adoption of labor-saving technology is inherently gender-specific, with differing impacts.

Given that women are predominant in fishing activities, technology plays a significant role in their empowerment. Improved technologies for fishing, curing, drying, and processing fish have contributed to enhancing the incomes of inland fishing women. While the technology development process is generally considered gender-neutral, it must account for the women's ability to handle or use the technology effectively in the context of inland fishing.

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Democratic Decentralization: An Innovative Experience of Participative Development and Empowerment of Women in Kerala

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In the changing administrative sphere, participatory development has become a popular catchword of politicians, policymakers as well as administrators to academicians. Development is a process of the betterment of life qualities and living standards of human beings. Participatory development is a collective activity; it is a conscious and coordinated effort organized by the State at the grassroots level. The success of participatory development at the grass root level mainly depends on the capacity of the Local Government Institutions to coordinate the policies with maximum popular participation. So, people participation is a significant factor for effective coordination and development. The realization of true democracy and real development of all sections of the society, women and other weaker sections give maximum opportunity to participate in the decision-making in the administrative sphere and thereby protects the democratic rights of these sections.

The term 'Development' is used with different connotations in accordance with subjects which deals, with the goal of organizations, the ideological background of the State etc. In the general concept, development is a dynamic process of the betterment of life and the good of standards of living for human beings. Development is a multi-dimensional process involving a change in structures, attitudes and institutions as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality and the eradication of absolute poverty (Michael, 2011). Decentralization and devolution of political, administrative and fiscal power may change incentive structures for political participation and the ability of the weaker sections to participate, thus creating conditions for bargaining which are more beneficial to downtrodden sections of society. Increasing participation of women and weaker sections in governance is widely accepted as an enabling condition for strengthening the micro-level institutional structures and fostering democratization. Women are often excluded from decision-making, whether within the household and community, in the local and national government, or within global institutions such as United Nations (Brody, 2009).

People's participation enriches the planning process by checking the reliability of data, ensuring the possibility of the projects in the targeted community, rationalizing proposals by the agencies concerned, reducing unreasonable pressure through informal channels and finally the proposals-based judgment which affecting by the programmes. People's involvement ensures strict supervision at cutting edge of the level of the administration (Arora, 1989). Local people know their problems better and how and where a facility should be located. They are the best judges of their own interests. Here Local- Self-Government Intuition's responsibility is to create an environment where local people seek their best interests freely. According to the Working Groups on District Planning, People's Participation is needed at the Local- Self-Government Institutional levels for the following reasons: (a) to take note of the people; (b) to mobilize local resources for plan implementations, including manpower; (c) to decrease the level of conflict during the planning and implementation stages; (d) to increase the speed of implementation by securing the co-operation of the people; (e) to increase the legitimacy of authority; and (f) to reduce people's resistance to the decision (Satya Sundaram, 2002).

People's participation is more relevant in development when the rural government is aimed at providing the basic needs. It has been rightly observed by Rajani Kothari, "participation is not some process of involving everyone and reducing all to a common denominator, rather it consists of evolving institutional structure from which diverse individuals get a sense of dignity and self- respect as being that are able to determine their own destinies" (Rajani Kothari, 1998). So, the main objectives of people's participation can be (i) better planning and implementation rural development programmes; (ii) mobilization of additional resources required for rural development programmes; and (iii) empowering the people, particularly the women and poor to play an effective role in rural development. Finally, it must be an instrument of expression of local people's will taking in view of local development.

Kerala is known for its paradoxical pattern of socio-economic, political, and cultural developmental models. It has a good record of social development (Kerala Model Development) indicators such as literacy, particularly female literacy, sex ratio, life expectancy, birth and death rate, and infant mortality as compared to other states and Union Territories in India. The target of this debate is to assess the impact of democratic decentralization and people's participation under PRIs on rural development, especially for women and weaker sections in Kerala. For my doctoral thesis, 'Changing Role of Bureaucracy and Rural Political Elites in Development: A Case Study on People's Plan Experience in Kerala', I collected data from political-elected leaders, LSGI administrative officials, recipients of

various schemes and projects, and the general public in the Kollam district. This information served as the basis for the writing of this article. Three questionnaires are used for collecting primary data, together with the interview technique. Six Grama Panchayats from the Kollam district were chosen for the study based on respondents' preferred geographic location and their strengths.

The study noticed certain pre-conditions for the successes of any programmes aiming at people's involvement such as: the competency of leadership especially elected representatives, legal framework and institutional arrangement, the content of the programmes and the spectrum of beneficiary groups to which they appeal. Popular participation is to be ensured through the generation of awareness and the promotion of motivation. As the grass root population is not homogeneous, it would be necessary to ensure the much-needed participation of weaker section especially women in the planning and developmental process. It would be fruitful if only the weaker sections have access to correct and reliable information. Participation should start at the stage of deciding what to do and how to do it. So, for proper participation of weaker sections, leaders should preferably emerge from within their population. It is also observed in an egalitarian society, that the elected representatives are in a better position to secure proper participation of weaker sections in PRIs.

Women Political Rights and Development

As women constitute half of the population and a crucial segment of the human resources in the society, due importance has to be according to the role and contribution of women in the various socio-economic, political and cultural activities. The new millennium has ushered in an era of empowerment of women, the Beijing World Conference of Women 1994, emphasized that women's empowerment and their fuller participation on the basis of equality in all sphere of society, including participation in decision making processes and in power, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace (BWCW, 1994). Political participation of women is thus seen as a global link in the total of empowerment of women.

Women's participation in Political affairs is a precondition for strengthening democracy and it also accelerating their struggle against marginalization, exploitation, social restriction and opposition. Their inclusion in the higher levels political decision-making bodies would change the nature and content of legislative debates on policy formation. But the electoral politics world over has a patriarchal bias which excluded women from higher level political activities like contesting in elections and representation in significant political structures and the issue has

been consistently deliberate in several national and international forums. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights highlights the need for special provisions to facilitate participation of women has been suggested universally for reforming the prevalent political practices endorsing the rights of every one in a democracy to take part in the government of his/her country (Meenakshi, 2012).

The key issue of women's participation in Politics is that their membership in political parties is not only extremely low but also their representation in the higher cadres of the political parties is lower still. The male dominated political parties are not interested to promote female membership in the party beyond a certain limit so that men could hold maximum number of important positions. Majority of the women are not much aware of the main stream activities of their respective parties at all. When election comes, they vote for the party's symbol and the matter ends there. But the fact is that, without proper representations of women in the legislative bodies and participation at all levels of such other political bodies, issues concerning women would remain neglected. The Constitution of India makes it clear that women, being the weaker section, are eligible for reservation whenever necessary. For this purpose, one-third of seats are reserved in LSGIs for women and now, through the 106th Connotational Amendment Act, the same reservation is also applicable in the parliament and the state legislatures in the country.

Political participation of women in Indian started during the time of freedom struggle movement. Mahatma Gandhi was mostly influenced for arousing political consciousness in the poor, illiterate sections of women and making them take part in the freedom movement. Political participation may be defined as voluntary participation in political affairs through membership, voting and involving in the activities of political parties, legislative bodies or politically motivated movement (Pandey, 2015). The constitution of India guaranteed universal adult franchise and provides the platform for active women participation in politics. But the number of women filing their nomination in any election other than PRIs is only a fraction of the corresponding number of men. Furthermore, the number of women winning election well so small that their percentage in the Centre as well as State legislative body will be nominal. No variation whatsoever has occurred in completed seven decades after independence. The percentage of winning candidates in Parliament elections has been below 10% still 2004 and now it is 14%. The Figure: shows the percentage and the strength of women in past Lok Sabha elections in India.

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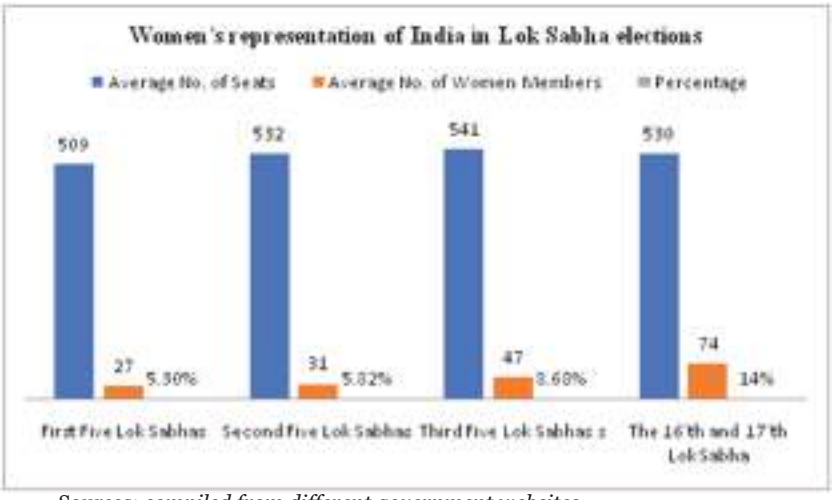
Women's representation of India in Lok Sabha Elections



Sources: *compiled from different government websites*

It has now become clear that, for sustainable socio-economic development to take place in any country, it is necessary that all sections of people participate in the political process. The process of political participation is a complex phenomenon and it is by no means clear that it is comprehensively inclusive. By this, mean that it is not possible to assume that all sections of the population take part effectively in the political and democratic process of society. There are many reasons why women may not participate in the political process. They faced multiple hurdles like domestic responsibilities, gender discriminations, male dominant social traditions and structures, historical prejudices, economic constrains etc. (Pandey, 2015).

A populated country like India needs the wider and whole hearted participation of all sections of people, irrespective of cast, creed or sex. After the historic 73'rd and 74'th Constitutional Amendments Acts which ensured the democratic rights of women and created an environment of political participation in Indian. The Acts also created a strong legal environment and movement to protect women's rights in all sphere of their social life. However, the social status of the majority of Indian women remains unchanged. The traditional social structure and religious faiths are the major factors that contributed with the construction and development of male dominant social system in India. While women are made considerable progress in some area such as education and employment, they continue to be subjected to the influence of the existing patriarchal attitudes in society.

Local-Self Government Institutions and New Leadership in Kerala

Building of competent and rightful leadership suited to development became more important in the context of democratic decentralized system under Panchayati Raj Institutions. It is mainly because such new style of leadership is necessary in local self-government institutions for dealt with the changing new rural political scenario. The new PR institutional system not only brought structural changes in the rural political leadership but in administrative level also. The elections to PRIs opened up the local level recruitment of political leadership from weaker and vulnerable and other diverse social groups. In the meantime, the increasing frequency and intensity of electoral politics as well as various organizational movements in the rural area, and the diminishing power structure of the traditional social order has brought in new groups in rural political scenario in Kerala. These new developments forced to turned changes in the nature of local level leadership and the State made conscious efforts to bring about changes as a part of their long-term political strategy.

The key to the successful democratic decentralization and development is to increase the supply of competent leaders who have reputations for using public funds responsibly to provide public welfare. The study revealed that substantial political change must be embodied in the personal deputations of leaders, and that effective democratic competition depends on voters having an ample supply trusted candidates with proven records of good public services. So, democratic decentralization and participation under PRIs maximizes opportunities for increasing this vital supply of competent democratic deputations in Kerala.

Left Democratic Front Government in Kerala amended PR Act (1994) on 2009 with 50% of seats reserved for women in Local Self -Government Institutions, similarly the half of the LSGIs Presidents, Vice- Presidents, Chairman/ Chairperson, Vice- Chairman/Vice- Chairperson, Mayor and Deputy Mayor have reserved for women. The Act also provided for fifty percentage women's representation in District Planning Committee and State Development Councils. The women from Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes also got seats reservation in these bodies. The Act brought equal or majority women representation in LSGIs and established gender equality at grass root level political institutions in Kerala. Thus, can be seen as a means of creating a new socio-political environment in which women can take part in the decisions making process and make their own decisions either individually or collectively at grass root developmental administration in Kerala (Kumar, 2010).

Thus, the new local level democratic institutional setup under PRIs has certainly opened up opportunities for different groups, including the deprived, to join the leadership. Their new official positions in the local level institutions

which have in many causes have been used as springboards for social mobility and movement to institutions at higher levels. This new style of leadership development under local self- government institutions brought some discussions in political sphere in Kerala. The new political leadership have either from the result of socio-economic changes in society or have come to occupy positions as a result of reservation system under local self- governments. The 50% reservation of seats for women in local self -governments institutions and seats for SC and ST in proportion to their share in population have empowered these depressed social groups in Kerala.

Local Self Government Institutions and Development in Kerala

People's Planning Campaign is considered as a landmark in the history of the real democratic decentralization in Kerala. As per the provisions of the Act the Kerala initiated the 'People's Campaign for Democratic Decentralized Planning' devolving new responsibilities and resources to panchayat. Its mandating structure and processes intended to maximize the direct involvement of people in planning and budgeting at grass root level institutions. In both of its design and capacity these reforms stand for the most ambitious effort to build Local Self- Government Institutions of participatory democratic governance ever undertake in the southern part of the country.

The Kerala model of people's participation i.e. Janakeeyasoothranam is popular all over the world for its distinctiveness. It mobilizes the people to participate in local planning and development process beyond the party politics. Planning process at Grama Panchayat is given to the standing committee on Development. They will responsible to make yearly plans, mid-term and long-term perspective plans for the Panchayat. The People's Planning Programme has succeeded in setting agenda for decentralized development and has evolved a concrete methodology for preparing participatory plan for local development in Kerala. It will strengthen decentralized planning process by ensuring freedom of planning and preparing of projects according to local priorities and demands.

People's Planning Programme under democratic decentralization has ensured participation of weaker and vulnerable sections in the planning and implementation process of various development programes. It is possible through the constitution of Neighbourhood Groups, Area Development Agency & Community Development Societies and Kudumbashree, has gained national and international commendation as an ideal developmental model based on the principles of democratic decentralization and participation.

Women Participation: Empowerment and Development

Women in all over the world were kept out of the main stream, especially socio-political sphere and subjected to all types of discrimination and exploitation. They are excluded from the governance and faced cruel socio-economic and political exploitation in one way or the other way. So, it is essential to understand political socialization of women, their gender gap in political attitudes, political capabilities and the pattern of participation in politics. It also helps to seeks information on how women can enhance democracy and good governance and how to promote their participation and representation in political life. While in the broader sense, 'empowerment' refers to creating 'popular knowledge' questioning 'monopoly of the dominant paradigm, the population's resentment against the most visible aspects of political and social discrimination. In a more specific context, it refers to the provision of assured representation to the 'deprived' groups in elected local institutions so that their participation is assured. It argued that such provision will make decentralized system more democratic in so far as they will reflect the views of the wider society.

Empowerment of any section of a society is a myth until they are conferred equal opportunity and preference in the entire socio-economic and political sphere. The foundation of freedom, justice and fraternity is based on the reorganization of the inherent dignity and of equal and inalienable rights to all the members of the society. Through the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Act of 1993, political participation of women in developmental process has been ensured and they are now playing a productive role in the welfare activities of the country. The study revealed that changing role of women leadership is going on in a positive direction. They have become more aware and confident to conduct their business and various functions independently. This will lead to positive changes in the entire socio-political system. One-third reservation of seats for women in local bodies through Constitutional Amendment Acts has also opened a new path in the power structure and occupies a legitimate space for women in society. Through the periodical training, orientations and involvement in the different level's administration can help the women representatives to respond and react in according with the changing socio-political challenges in the society.

One of the essential goals of popular participation is the empowerment of rural population and satisfied their basic needs and conditions for life. This is the reason by which empowerment is regarded as a means of strengthening democratic ideals of participation and attaining developmental goals. In the recent decades, empowerment of women has been concerned as the central theme in Indian politics especially rural political sphere which determining the status of women. It is in this context that the issues of women empowerment gained importance in

India. Empowerment as a social process, it challenges the fundamental imbalances of power distribution and power relations between individuals in societies. It aimed at achieving social equality and status through depowering some structures of power that have inherent class, cast and gender biases (Shivani Singh, 2016). Empowerment of woman is definitely a means which help in liberating them from the clutches of traditional bondage and exploitation.

Development is the change in socio-economic conditions; changes in the people's attitudes and perception towards social-economic-political and administrative institutions and also ensured their participation and involvement in these institutions. It is considered as 'a multidimensional process involving change in structure, attitudes and institutions as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality, and the eradication of absolute poverty (Hoshiar Singh, 2001). It should, therefore, be perceived as a multidimensional process, involving the reorientation and reorganization of both economic and social systems. It also involved radical changes in institutional, social, and administrative structures, values and ethos of individuals and communities (Katar Singh, 2016).

Women Empowerment and PRIs

In the words of Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India," You can tell the conditions of nation by looking at the status of its women". As women comprise almost 50% of the population of a country, any development activities cannot be performed without the active and continues participation of them. It is most commonly heard that women are the mother of the society and social progress depends upon the empowerment and development of women in society. If a mother is empowered; a family, and eventually an entire society are also empowered. Women's empowerment is a process of awareness and capacity building leading to better participation, more decision making power and greater control to initiate actions. For women's empowerment, there is a need that women re-examine their lives critically, recognize the structure and sources of power and subordination. They need to discover their strengths, and alter their self-image, acquire new skills and information challenge the existing ideology structure, and gain more control over resources. So, in order to ensure development, it is essential to ensure empowerment of women.

The participation of Women is felt essential in the social, economic, political and other various developmental activities. It is true that the effective participation and empowerment of women in all sphere of society are fundamental for the achievement of equality and balanced development of any states. Unfortunately, despite the numerical strength, in India through 73'rd and 74'th Constitutional Amendment Acts, two-third seats of local self-governments are reserved to women

candidates. However, the State of Kerala Amended Panchayati Raj Act and 50% seats are reserved local self-governments to women candidates. However, still in India, no seats are reserved for women in Parliament and State Legislatures. It is a time to makes the debate on the proposed 81'st Constitutional Amendment Bill that provides 33% reservation for women in Parliament and State Legislative Assemblies all the more importance. It is also accepted that in due course of the time the role of women in politics will increase globally especially in India. Thus, it will lead the attainment of powerful political positions of women and the expansion of their political power and also gaining empowerment in other areas of social life.

Women Empowerment and Democratic Decentralization

The advocates of liberal democrats argued that decentralization is beneficial for the functioning of democratic system at the national level, as also at level of locality: 'each can be further sub-divided into three sets of inter-related values. At the national level, these values related to political education, training in leadership and political stability. At the local level, the relevant values are equality, liberty and responsiveness. The benefits of democratic decentralization are elaborated thus: decentralization combined with democratization might provide greater transparency, accountability, responsiveness, probity, frugality, efficiency, equity and opportunities for mass participation (Crook and Manor, 1998). The process of decentralization got more attention after independence from the point of view of the twin objectives of the Indian Polity, namely, democracy and development. For the realization of democratic decentralization in India different forms and institutional schemes have been introduced since 1950.

Another concept that has appeared on the scene is 'empowerment' especially with reference to social groups that are generally not covered by the process of democracy and development because of social and economic constrains. In more specific context the term 'empowerment' reefers to the provision of assured representation to the deprived groups in the elected local institutions so that their participation is assured. The deprived groups are often provided protected representation in the local bodies (Rehnema, 1997). Women's empowerment is a state of being that expresses certain level of women's critical consciousness about external relations and an awareness of their external thought construction and belief systems that have a bearing on their wellbeing in terms of gender and social equity. It also refers to a state of determination to use one's own physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual resources to protect, nurture and sustain values that guarantee gender equity at personal, household, social, political and other institutional level **(**Meenakshi, 2012).

Women are considering the weaker section in the society in many parts of the world. The issue in women's empowerment is the rectification of the disproportionate power- positions relations amongst men and women in the society. Men already established their domination both at home and when they work with women; in local bodies in which women have a legitimate status of power, men have a tendency to prohibit them or disregard their perspectives or, more awful still, physically ambush them (Nisha & Neera, 2003). After the 73'rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Act, the situation was considerably changed, now women playing a strategic role in the welfare activities especially at the local level administration in the country.

Women Empowerment and Reservation under PRIs

Empowerment is the process by which the depowered or power less people can change their conditions and being to have control over their lives. Women empowerment is a process of increasing women's involvement in all levels of political and social institutions. It is essential for the total development of the nation. It also aims at assisting disadvantaged women groups to gain greater control over regional, state and national level institutions for the decision-making process and resource management system.

As women comprise almost 50% of the population it is unfair that they are not adequately represented in government institutions and other allied sectors. So in order to ensure good governance, it is essential to ensure participation and empowerment of women. Since India gained Independence, many steps have been undertaken to provide constitutional safeguards and institutional framework for women welfare activities. But, the reservation of 30% seats for women at all levels of elective bodies was initiated during Rajiv Gandhi's time. Now in India through 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts, two third of the total number of seats at all levels of local self-governments are reserved for women candidates. In addition to two third of the seats reserved for women candidates, seats were also reserved for SC and ST in proportion to their population in the PRIs. Again, reservation of not less than one third of such reserved seats to the women belonging to SC and ST and one third of the total seats at all levels of PRI's Chairpersons are reserved for women.

The73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts serve as a major landmark towards ensuring equal access to women and increased participation and power in political structure. It was introduced with the objective to promote gender equality, making rural services provision, inclusive local governance and development and responsive needs and demands of women. It also stimulates the political participation of women in rural areas and improves the quality and access of public

services. Now women were making significant gains in the political sphere, increased participation in administration, empowering and thereby boosting their confidence, providing more contribution in the decision-making process and resource system and improving their status and position in society (Jhaand. N, 1999). Kerala and some other states have amended Panchayati Raj Act and 50% seats were reserved in local self-governments for women candidates. Like Kerala in many states, the percentage of women who had got into PRIs exceeded the reserved positions. The membership of women in PRIs through statutory reservation has altered the rural political scenario in India. It would not only result in the political empowerment of women, but also in increasing the quality and competence of leadership in PRIs. It ensures the revolutionary changes in the existing perspective and role of women at the grass root level political system. Thus, political participation and grass root democracy have been strengthened by the above amendments.

In Kerala, the People's Plan Campaign has set the path for deliberative democracy and has constructed a large number of democratic platforms for people's participation in development planning and local governance in Kerala. The sustainability of this democratic transitional change greatly depends upon the changing role of bureaucracy and political elites on the one hand and the policy support and financial assistance from the Centre-State government to local governments on the other. This has also contributed to empowering the marginalized and weaker sections of society, especially women. Women have been accommodated in the public sphere in large numbers and they have been able to articulate their choice in development planning. In Kerala, democratic decentralization near the past three decades has not only empowered such weaker sections of people but has also positively forced the officials and elected representatives to creatively respond to their demands.

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Post Covid-19World Revisited: Dissecting the Impacts, Re-imagining the Future

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Abstract

At present, Covid-19 has brought about a major change in the lives of all and sundry in the Western Hemisphere, accompanied by potential impacts in China and many parts of Asia, and alarming disruption and wide-ranging social problems in Africa. The pandemic comes out to be a major shock in the long battles between humans and viruses throughout human history. The present article undertakes some sub-themes of enquiry and analysis that are especially useful for a clear insight in respect of potential implications of corona virus in multifarious fields all over the world. The major thrust of the article is to explore the impact of pandemic over global economy, globalization, and geo-political context by establishing the fact that the re-imagination of a post-corona virus existence is the need of the hour with a focus of possible solutions and considerations for moving towards a new and better normal.

The COVID-19 pandemic marked one of the most significant global disruptions of the 21st century. Beyond its immediate toll on public health, it exposed systemic vulnerabilities in global governance, public infrastructure, healthcare, education, and economies. Now, years after the initial outbreak, revisiting the post-pandemic world allows scholars, policymakers, and citizens to reflect critically on the lasting consequences and reimagine more resilient and inclusive futures. The post-COVID-19 world is not merely a return to normalcy but a reconfiguration of socio-economic and political priorities under new paradigms of uncertainty, adaptability, and interdependence.

Keywords: Pandemic, Economy, Geo-politics, Globalisation, lockdown.

Impact on Global Economy

The COVID-19 epidemic has had a devastating effect on the global economy, escalating issues like inequality, poverty, and gender injustice. Because to significant disruptions in virtually every economic sector, the COVID-19 pandemic is anticipated to have long-term economic effects. The impact of this problem is huge in developing economies like India due to already dropping development

rates, a deficient health system, and a sizable population living in abject poverty. COVID-19's proliferation has enflamed the Indian economy, which was already in risk due to weakening domestic demand and external issues such as the US–China trade war.The collapse of India's informal economy, which employs approximately 80% of the country's working population, is one of the direct consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic's lockdown. India also has a sizable population working in the unorganised sector for daily earnings. There are many that migrate from their villages to cities in search of a better life. Throughout India's shutdown, large-scale reverse movement from cities to countryside has been observed, putting these people's livelihoods at risk. Furthermore, creating demand is an important part of reviving the economy following the COVID-19 pandemic. Changes in taxation structures, particularly the GST, can put more money in people's hands, reducing demand destruction (Sharma Jain, 2020).

The first and most important component of a pandemic is catastrophic human suffering and loss of life, as demonstrated by the coronavirus pandemic, which has already resulted in six million confirmed cases of infection and close to 400,000 confirmed fatalities worldwide. (Norouzia, 2020) The rapidly spreading new corona virus has resulted in massive global catastrophe. Aside from the staggering human toll, the epidemic has resulted in worldwide supply and demand shocks, economic turbulence, and financial market collapse, with the possibility of a global recession. Oil prices have dropped sharply as a result of pandemic-related policies, such as worldwide travel bans, which have reduced demand. Efforts to contain the pandemic have resulted in physical damage to critical industries such as tourism, as well as disruptions in production, manufacturing, and trade, resulting in major job losses.

For the first time in the nearly two-and-a-half-century history of global economic crises, the epidemic served as a major driver for the economic crisis. (Grinin & Korotayev, 2020). The quick spread of the disease across the globe would not have occurred if there had not been such a high level of global economic integration and, as a result, a surge in international human migration (Harilal,2020).

The pandemic's widespread horrible illness and devastation, as well as the tremendously negative mega-trends of modern civilization and the worldwide economy, are vividly obvious. The threat posed by COVID -19 to the economy and financial markets was enormous. The sluggish spread of the virus over the world had a negative impact on investors, as most major investors had made huge investments prior to the pandemic. The damage caused by this outbreak could result in a drop in GDP growth and potentially a substantial surge in country bankruptcies. The global economy's growth pace could be slowed by the corona virus's gradual spread.As a

direct result of the suspension of Chinese manufacturing and a notable decline in people's activity in general, the international market is on the verge of devastating losses. The entire network, from retail stores to raw material suppliers, become pathological victims as a result of it. During the spread of the corona virus, most countries throughout the world were experiencing an economic and financial crisis, as well as stock market stagnation (Huseynova, 2020).

In comparison to high-income countries, the pandemic has already had major economic consequences, with 80 percent of the international workforce losing their jobs and a 0.3 percent predicted recession (0.3 percent).According to studies conducted jointly by the World Bank and the World Health Organization (WHO), the impact of such a pandemic may reach 2.2–4.8 percent of global GDP (the 3 trillion USD). According to a WHO evaluation, these kinds of epidemics can have a substantial effect on the private sector and pose a serious danger to food security due to decreased agricultural production and cross-border trade restrictions on goods, services, and travel. In the short term, COVID-19 has had a considerable impact on the energy and power systems, leading to significant changes in usage patterns and total levels of output and consumption. In the case of the oil sector, the result has been a reduction in transportation consumption, with global aviation traffic, as well as passenger and freight movement, coming to a halt. Such changes surely speak to future energy policies in China, as well as globally, in the post-COVID-19 time (Norouzia, Rubensb,Choupanpieshehc& Enevoldsenb, 2020).

China and India account for roughly 26% of global gross domestic output. Changes in global economic dynamics are influenced by the two most populated countries on the planet, therefore what happens there is quite important. Instead of the previously forecasted GDP growth of above 6%, India will experience a recession. It will not be able to escape the havoc that a total lockdown of its populace will bring. The enslavement of the vast majority of the populace caught both supply and demand off guard in an economy focused primarily on small businesses and services, which account for 62 percent of GDP. In this impoverished country, 100 million people are rural who are periodically employed in cities and live in slums in abject poverty. The lockdown resulted in the abandonment of numerous businesses and the influx of tens of millions of people onto the streets and highways. The only way out of danger for the victims was to return to their native communities, which were hundreds of kilometres away from where they were staying. As a result, rather of limiting the spread of the corona virus, the lockdown accelerated it, resulting in disastrous economic effects.Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean are generally less important from a global perspective because their economic problems have a smaller impact on the world's fate, delivering just around 4% and 7.5 percent of global production, respectively. Although the recession may not last long, it may

take a long time to overcome the depression and huge unemployment. According to the International Labor Organization's methodology, there were approximately 170 million unemployed persons in the world by the end of 2019 before the pandemic, accounting for around 5% of the global workforce's potential.To put it another way, there are 3.4 billion individuals eager and able to work, but not all of them are able to find work. According to the International Labor Organization, the corona virus outbreak is expected to obliterate 6.7 percent, or one sixteenth, of global working hours in the second quarter of 2020. This is terrible since it means the equivalent of 195 million full-time people will lose their jobs. The Dow Jones (the most important stock market index in the world economy) saw the five highest daily falls and five largest daily advances in its 135-year history during the first 25 days of March.This, in turn, will agitate investors and market speculators, as well as challenge company expectations, with negative consequences for the real economy: employment, production, consumption, and investment (Kolodko, 2020a).

The first quarter of 2020 saw the lowest real GDP contraction in the US since the fourth quarter of 2008, with a seasonally adjusted annual rate (SAAR) of 4.8 percent. Predictions indicate that real GDP will drop by almost 40% SAAR in the second quarter, which would be significantly worse. Since the Great Depression of the previous century, these figures have not been witnessed. With the unemployment rate rising to 14.7 percent in April 2020, more than 20 million Americans lost their jobs. The Eurozone is another titan in decline. Its GDP decreased 14.4% q/q SAAR in the first quarter of 2020 when lockdowns were implemented around mid-March and activity started to operate at around a third below average levels. (Canuto,2020).

The real GDP of Japan is predicted to decline by more than 40% SAAR in the second quarter of 2020. Due to daily rises in the number of infections, the administration was forced to prolong the state of emergency beyond May 6 for an additional month. China, on the other hand, saw an outbreak-related abrupt halt. Although there was a modest rebound in March, it wasn't enough to enable a return to prior GDP levels, and May 2020 manufacturing projections showed a tiny decline. The normalisation of domestic consumer demand and the service sector supported China's economic recovery in the second quarter, but demand conditions were not exceptionally favourable.The steep decline in exports in May 2020 emphasises the crisis' worldwide scope and underscores the difficulties of any one country's recovery while a recession lasts in other countries. Domestically, it's vital to note that individuals were still unwilling to use services even after quarantines were eliminated. The large variation in first-quarter annual rates of GDP negative outcomes among the three giants—the United States (minus 4.9 percent), the Eurozone (minus 14.4 percent), and China—can be connected to the

varying times of their COVID-19 outbreaks (minus 34.7 percent). The breadth and severity of the crisis were highlighted in the Global Economic Outlook estimates from the IMF, which were published in mid-April (IMF, 2020).In contrast to a 1.6 percent decline in 2009 during the global financial crisis, the IMF predicted a 4.2 percent decline in global GDP per capita in 2020. 90% of countries are anticipated to see negative GDP growth in 2020. (Canuto, 2020).

The value of savings and pensions has also been questioned, and there has been a general fear and unease about job security. Food supply lines have been affected, and some food items are currently in limited supply. As a result of the circumstance, several people have gone without food. Negative shocks have made people less ready to take chances and save more, while lower actual and expected income may make them less inclined to pay for environmental improvements. Because of the fractured revenue base and the likelihood of future tax increases, public goods are now at greater risk (Helm, 2020).

The corona virus makes intergenerational disparities worse. The corona virus lockdown is anticipated to have a disproportionately negative impact on the young in the immediate term since they are more engaged in the leisure, entertainment, restaurant, and travel industries. The old, especially those over the age of 65, are forecast to account for the majority of deaths from the virus, whilst the young are believed to be immune to its detrimental effects. The debts will be passed on to the next generation, and broad monetary policy responses may further boost the prices of important assets like housing (Helm, 2020).

The corona virus is anticipated to have a greater effect on the world economy beyond 2020. The World Bank and the IMF predict that the GDP per capita in the majority of countries will be lower at the end of 2021 than it was in December 2019. A post-corona virus global economy is anticipated to have higher levels of public and private debt, faster digitization processes, and less internationalisation (Canuto, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic caused a significant economic disruption, causing a 3.4% GDP shrink in 2020, with emerging economies suffering disproportionately. The informal economy, which employs over 60% of the global workforce, suffered significant income losses due to inadequate safety nets. The global trade slumped, with a 5.3% decline in merchandise trade volume. The labor market dislocations, including 255 million full-time jobs lost in 2020, disproportionately affected women, youth, and low-skilled workers. Governments responded with large-scale fiscal and monetary interventions, but the disparity in fiscal capacities between developed and developing countries reinforced global economic inequality. The pandemic also accelerated structural transformations, with digital platforms expanding rapidly, but also widening the digital divide. The post-pandemic recovery

has been marked by asymmetry, with advanced economies recovering faster due to vaccine access and fiscal space, while low- and middle-income countries face slower growth, inflation, and public health challenges.

Impact on Globalization

The COVID-19 pandemic has also been a sledgehammer to globalisation, which has already been hampered by increased protectionism (Sharma,Talan and Jain,2020). Under emergency law, national governments play a critical role in the Covid-19 Pandemic because they must lead national policy. This is in contrast to the globalisation boom that began in the 1990s following the end of the bipolar world, when many expected that national governments would become obsolete as the global economy would be handled by international corporations and globalised markets (Stückelberger, 2020).

Globalization has been viewed as a beneficial development and an expansion of humanity's perspective from local and parochial to cosmopolitan and worldwide for about 200 years. Globalization, on the other hand, now entails economic instability and rising inequality, as well as unwelcome immigration and disease transmission. Globalization's extensive and rapid international travel provided an excellent environment for the Corona virus to spread quickly. Globalization and cross-border travel become synonymous with major sickness and death. Our shared humanity is insufficient to motivate us to take collective action; instead, self-interest takes primacy. "In an interdependent world, none of us is safe until all of us are safe," stated UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon. COVID-19 does not tolerate any kind of discrimination. COVID-19 is unconcerned about geographical boundaries. People everywhere are at risk from COVID-19 (Harris, 2020).

Distancing on a social and inter-country level is clearly incompatible with globalisation. Early social separation within countries, and more significantly, early social distancing across countries, focusing on the human aspect, are critical to avoiding or at least containing a pandemic.Thus, strict border controls on human movement may seem necessary. This would require a future decrease in globalisation given the threat posed by the corona virus. Once the COVID-19 epidemic turned into a pandemic, similar anti-globalist sentiments have surfaced.The export of medical supplies and pharmaceuticals has been banned by many governments.Because the worldwide impact of the Corona virus is significantly greater than that of SARS, these discussions could have a longer-term negative influence on the globalisation process (Zimmermann et al., 2020).

It is possible that the incomplete globalisation syndrome will worsen. It manifests itself in the contradiction between the growth of economic globalisation and the advancement of political globalisation, which has lagged behind or even

regressed due to the Second Cold War. Trends toward protectionism and a desire to break away from external economic ties have been obvious for some years, coinciding with the rise of a new nationalism. For a period, they may become even stronger, leading to ill-advised isolationist inclinations and a refusal to rely on imports or economic aid. On the one hand, all of these considerations may push a number of countries toward regionalization rather than globalisation. On the other side, it may weaken regional integration in areas where great progress had been made previously. In this way, the European Union is a unique case. In the aftermath of the corona virus epidemic, its fate will be crucial for the world's future. This is not only because it accounts for the sixth largest share of global output, but also because, as the world's most sophisticated regional integration process, it will be worthy of imitation or not in other areas of the globe (Kolodko, 2020a).

Geopolitics and geoeconomics will always be intertwined. In such an uncertain world, where China is booming and the US is declining, they will be battling for primacy more and more. The geopolitics of the world will shift. The conflict between democracy and authoritarianism will intensify, and the market-state synergy will be changed. Friendly rivalry is wonderful, but angry conflict is lethal. If the United States loses its relevance at a time when it was intended to be "First!" and "Great again!" it may act rashly and aggressively. The most likely response from China will be calm and pragmatic, but there is no guarantee. China will not abandon the Belt and Road Initiative, but will work hard to advance it with new initiatives.China will not abandon the Belt and Road Initiative, but will seek new ways to encourage it to move forward. While some countries will enthusiastically welcome the idea, others will be wary of it, fearing that it will erode their international clout. (Kolodko, 2020a)

Because of the pervasiveness of such large-scale threats, as well as the uncertainty and dread that accompany them, new behaviours and beliefs emerge. People have become more sceptical as well as more trusting. Above all, they grow less willing to interact with anything that appears weird or alien. Another important factor is the effectiveness of public-health agencies, which in many nations are substantially less competent than in China. Factory closures and production halts have already wreaked havoc on global supply systems. Producers are taking steps to mitigate their long-distance vulnerabilities. At the same time, many Chinese are likely to perceive some US anti-virus policies as ethnically motivated and designed to stymie China's progress.Conspiracy theories about the virus being created by the US Central Intelligence Agency are already circulating. COVID-19 aims to deliver even more deception to a world already rife with it. A Universalist culture was eventually brought to an end by mysticism, irrationalism, and xenophobia. The 'waning of globalisation' will be hastened by COVID-19 (Harold, 2020).

The virus has increased public perception of national governments' influence on international organisations. Due to the United States' failure to put out a new member to restore quorum, the World Trade Organization's appeals body is already inactive, and the widespread use of state assistance has exacerbated the protectionist policies already in place. These effects should be sufficient to limit the rebound in commerce, and thus the accompanying shipping and aviation demand, following the lockdowns (Helm, 2020).

The fast spread of viruses from one continent to another has been facilitated by the rise of globalisation and urbanisation. Following the Corona incident, a number of allegations of racism and xenophobia have surfaced. Discrimination doesn't just affect mainland Chinese people; it also affects persons of east and south east Asian heritage. The frequent usage of the terms "Chinese virus" and "Wuhan virus" by US President Donald Trump and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo may have increased support for hate speech in the United States. Lunaria, an Italian civil society organisation, has gathered several reports of attacks, verbal harassment, bullying, and discrimination against people of Asian heritage.Asian persons have been pierced in the face and ridiculed in the United Kingdom after being accused of spreading the corona virus. In Africa, allegations of prejudice and attacks against Asian people, as well as immigrants in general, abound, particularly in Kenya, Ethiopia, and Africa. Malaysian authorities carried out extensive raids to apprehend large numbers of refugees and migrant workers, but there was no evidence that the migrant community or Rohingya refugees were to blame for the spread of Covid-19. After many Covid-19 outbreaks in densely packed segregated zones for foreign workers, the majority of whom are Asian, the use of racist rhetoric in public discourse against foreign workers increased across the Middle East. Discrimination against Chinese people has also been discovered in the United States.South Korea, Japan, and Indonesia have all reported discrimination against Chinese people. Many violence and prejudice against Muslims have been recorded in India and Sri Lanka as a result of Covid-19. The pandemic has been used by ultra-nationalist politicians in Myanmar to justify threats and hate speech directed at Muslims. Early in April 2020, Chinese officials in Guangzhou, China's southernmost city, launched a drive to test Africans for the corona virus against their will, ordering them to isolate themselves or quarantine in approved hotels. All of these things affect everyone because they weaken the globalisation that connects us all. Indeed, connectedness, which is at the heart of globalisation, is now in jeopardy. Donald Trump's disdain for nearly everything his democratic predecessors (especially President Barack Obama) did to advance peaceful cooperation and inclusive globalization—from regional free trade agreements to the Paris Agreement on addressingclimate change, from the economic agreement

with Canada and Mexico to the agreement on Iran's nuclear programme, from the treaty with Russia on medium-range missile systems to the WTO's prerogatives, and so on (Kolodko, 2020a).

The long-term implications are more significant. Without a doubt, the upheaval created by production and consumption problems will leave an indelible impact on home microeconomic behaviour, as well as the macroeconomic performance of multinational firms and the attitudes of politicians dealing with the economy. The way they approach global supply chains will be crucial. The emergence of phobias and irrationalism, parochialism and nationalism, particularism and protectionism has been slow. One of the downsides of growing globalisation is figuring out how to stop emerging diseases from spreading quickly across borders. We live in a world that is extremely connected, and practically everyone travels. Potential diffusion networks are broad and open in nature (Kolodko, 2020a).

Pandemic, with its long-term implications, intersects with a number of negative mega-trends, including climate change, uncontrolled global migration, and inequality. If democracy fails to face the challenges posed by such a crisis, authoritarianism must be resorted to. Due to the expansion of so-called adversarial democracy, liberal democracy has been wrestling with issues that it has been unable to overcome for some time.The United States and Poland, the United Kingdom and South Korea, Colombia and Indonesia, all have societies that are frequently split almost evenly on fundamental political, social, economic, and environmental concerns. Recently, it has been at the forefront of sweeping movements in all of these nations. Democracy could now be put under a lot more stress. The repercussions of the plague, as well as the scope, depth, and long-term ramifications of the accompanying economic, social, and political crises, are all based on impossible-to-predict prophesies. Tomorrow, what seems visionary today can come off as lacking in inventiveness (Kolodko, 2020 b).

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted globalization, challenged its core assumptions, and exposed its inherent contradictions. The crisis disrupted global flows of goods, services, people, and capital, highlighting the vulnerabilities associated with hyper connectivity. Some trends suggest a temporary retrenchment of globalization, while others suggest a reconfiguration, emphasizing resilience, regionalization, and strategic autonomy. The crisis also highlighted the fragility of cross-border human mobility and the need for global cooperation. The pandemic also reignited nationalist rhetoric and protectionist policies, highlighting the inequities embedded in the current global order. However, the pandemic has also underscored the necessity of global cooperation, with scientific collaboration in vaccine development and digital globalization facilitating new forms of global interaction. The future of globalization depends on whether nations and institutions

can reimagine global cooperation grounded in equity, sustainability, and shared humanity.

Geo-political Ramification

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted global geopolitics, intensifying rivalries, accelerating strategic realignments, and revealing the fragility of multilateral institutions. It has prompted both cooperation and competition among states, influencing international diplomacy, regional security dynamics, and the global balance of power. The pandemic has heightened U.S.-China tensions, leading to "vaccine diplomacy" and "health nationalism," with both countries attempting to exert influence through aid, supplies, and public health assistance. Multilateralism, once the backbone of post-World War II international cooperation, suffered setbacks, with some nations adopting isolationist or nationalist policies. Regional security and diplomatic priorities have reshuffled, with China asserting regional hegemony in the South China Sea and India repositioning as a responsible regional power. The Middle East and Africa have faced unique geopolitical stresses, with fragile states with weak healthcare systems exacerbated by the pandemic. The redefinition of national security has expanded, with governments treating pandemics, climate change, and technological vulnerabilities as integral components of national and international security agendas.

Pandemics have a tremendous geopolitical impact on economy and strategic interests of nations, causing them to suffer from the negative repercussions of pandemics, including the loss of human lives and the deployment of vast resources to health systems. Pandemics are a disruptive force in the globalised world's geopolitical system. Despite the fact that pandemics require international cooperation, the virus that took hold in Wuhan and quickly travelled around the world is expected to exacerbate already-existing tensions between the world's two largest economies. China's already vulnerable economy has been devastated by the Corona virus. In order to find immediate assistance, the CCP is likely to delay difficult economic reforms. Xi would give up additional policies of financial and economic liberalisation along with the 19th Party Congress. The growth of toxic debt and capital misallocation to state-owned businesses will continue. In order to deal with an ageing population and a weak public health system, the CCP will simultaneously need to reallocate more resources. Due to the greater need for Chinese growth, Beijing's brand of state capitalism will continue to take advantage of faults in the free market by supporting IP theft, funding national champions, and other means. The American economy will simultaneously experience a headwind. The American economy will also be buffeted simultaneously by an air current that is blowing the opposite way. The virus will cause disruptions to the US economy

and way of life. Current indications suggest that the United States may be about to enter a recession. Even if Russia's attempt to destroy the American shale oil industry fails, it still puts pressure on one of the nation's most significant economic sectors. Protectionism and techno-nationalism between the United States and China will solidify. The CCP employed big data, artificial intelligence, drones, facial recognition technology, and technology to cope with the Wuhan issue. Beijing's attempts to achieve information superiority and realise the China Dream through investments in Made in China 2025 technology will also be stepped up as a result of the virus. As a result, it's conceivable that the United States and a few allies will quicken efforts to seize vital technologies and lessen their reliance on China strategically. Other nations will also declare their intentions to build industrial and commercial hubs outside of China. Time, leadership, and the ability to rally the private sector and coalition allies will be needed to complete the tremendous task of freeing the United States from a congested or tangled position. One problem can be known as the Microsoft problem. For a sizable American company to entirely cut itself off from Huawei, ZTE, and other national champions of China without losing market share or starving itself of necessary R&D for future innovation is a challenging task.

Moreover, the virus is predicted to heighten competition for setting global technology standards and rules. The corona virus will lead to further fractures in the CCP and perhaps even a leadership crisis in North Korea. For Xi, a time that could be labelled "Chernobyl" began with China's early concealment of the outbreak's seriousness, especially in light of news about the brutal crackdown in Xinjiang, harsh measures in Hong Kong, and harassment of Taiwan. The ongoing criticism of Xi's early attempts to conceal the scope of the outbreak and his appeal for the Chinese people to fight for him in a "People's War" indicates both the CCP's ongoing legitimacy problems and Xi's anticipated happy ending.A fully developed health crisis in North Korea, meanwhile, might have negative repercussions for the Kim dynasty. An overworked public health system might lead to a coup or, worse, force Kim Jong Un to start a war in order to unite the populace behind him, much like the Sixth Army Corps of North Korea did during the 1996 famine. It's also conceivable that the malware will make other present security problems worse. The US, its allies, and security partners are among them, as are tensions over Taiwan. The pressure on American allies and partners will rise even as they attempt to refuse requests to shoulder heavier responsibilities and run the risk of becoming caught up in a major geopolitical struggle.Synthetic biology will merely increase the risks it already poses. Rather than a biological facility, a wet market that was operating illegally is where the corona virus is most likely to have started. On the other hand, a dangerous new virus's impact may provide CCP leaders the assurance

they need to direct their new intents to use it as a future synthetic biology weapon. Future biodangers of all kinds could materialise from hidden facilities thanks to the usage of CRISPR, DNA printing, and other synthetic biology advancements. The CCP's technological breakthroughs may lead it to think about the unthinkable: how it can discreetly plant a future virus with strategic, political, and economic ramifications, perhaps during a crisis or conflict (Cronin & Rough,2020).

As a result of COVID-19, there has been a significant shift in the citizenry. The crisis and its management are both extremely distressing for the general public, and they necessitate their acceptance of quasi-punitive measures such as incarceration, travel restrictions, loss of productive job, and intrusive surveillance. People frequently judge their governments' policies as either ineffective or excessively severe. Though the COVID-19 downturn is not as protracted or as brutal as the Great Depression, the widespread disruption it has caused in everyone's life in just a few months will drastically alter the internal and exterior dynamics of our polities and societies (Heisbourg, 2020).

Political leaders will have little time to devote to concerns beyond their own boundaries. Domestic spill over effects will necessitate fiscal resources and result in domestic socio-economic pressure, which must be addressed as a top priority. This will divert attention away from global issues for a while and use a lot of resources. Furthermore, the huge levels of national debt that are being amassed are breaking new ground. This will push us to refocus our efforts on increasing economic and health security, as well as improving resilience and infrastructure. Although an international dimension will be recognised, the priority placed on fiscal stability, human security, and rising debt levels will have a negative influence on the resources allocated to international activities. Instead, the parties will perceive the necessity for foreign policy control. No matter who occupies the White House in January 2021, public health infrastructure and economic recovery will be of paramount importance. Within the sphere of credibility, America must look within and continue to reassert its global power. Economic downturns at home will sap popular support for a strong worldwide presence. Several situations could have a distinct influence on the defence budget (Hoffman, 2020).

Reimagining a New Post Pandemic Normal

The Corona virus pandemic will make us reevaluate our lifestyles, places of employment, and technological practises. The development of the new "normal" will be one of the most important challenges to overcome in any successful long-term strategy. (Tschiesner,2020). In order for the nation to advance, the fundamental dynamics and deeply established notions of "acceptable living" and "equality for all" must be addressed and meticulously reexamined in order to re-imagine

a new normal after COVID-19. When a business first reopens, gatherings should be limited to no more than 10 people, and restaurants will need to install socially awkward seating to welcome clients.On the other hand, the government and public health experts have mandated that people over 60 who are medically helpless stay in their houses until the last stage of rehabilitation. For schools and businesses, new environmental precautions including temperature and ventilation checks, as well as mandated handwashing and sanitising at every entrance and occasionally throughout the day, may be suitable. Quarantining of travellers from regions with a high COVID-19 frequency may be necessary. Governmental regulations may call for travellers to present proof of immunity documents or spend 14 days in isolation prior to entering a new country.After a successful initial reopening and at least four weeks with no discernible increase in new COVID-19 cases, the six-foot social distancing measure may be eliminated, but there should still be a restriction on gatherings of more than 50 people for at least four months after the initial reopening. For the length of these phase transitions. All public health officials, political administrations, and the general public must work together to control, reduce, and eradicate COVID-19.UN Secretary-General António Guterres claims that the corona virus epidemic is a public health catastrophe that has turned into a crisis in the economy, society, and human rights. The remedies to today's unexpected calamity and tomorrow's recovery will be more effective and inclusive if people cooperate and protect human rights, especially during this time of crisis. Even with a new definition of normalcy, everyone can still practise good hygiene by washing their hands, sneezing and coughing, and extending new kinds of greetings and interactions to one another. It's feasible that individuals may need to devise new techniques for meeting up with friends and coworkers (Roberts & Tehrani,2020).

Throughout the past few decades, the sharing economy has grown and created habitats with new elements of how multiple people share the same space. The corona virus pandemic has also sped up the implementation of risk-mitigation techniques meant to minimise human-to-human contact, enhance building ventilation and physical barriers, and use automation technology like robotics and artificial intelligence vision systems. Due to the severity of the pandemic and in accordance with social distancing guidelines, public transit was drastically reduced in several American cities. Many other transportation companies may adopt a new rule requiring face masks to be worn at all times when riding the train or bus once some of them, like the Chicago Transit Authority, have implemented cleanliness measures to stop the spread of the COVID-19. The adoption of telemedicine, virtual schools, and videoconferencing by businesses as a result of social distancing strategies suggests that these kinds of contacts could eventually become more commonplace. The risk of infection has driven businesses to alter their operational

procedures.Before the corona virus pandemic, a lot of businesses had already stopped accepting cash payments; as a result of the epidemic, a lot more may now move exclusively to digital payments (Roberts & Tehrani, 2020).

After COVID-19, many Americans may find it much simpler to adjust to structural building modifications or environmental adaptations. Nonetheless, it is challenging to alter deeply rooted beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours that make up the American way of life. Social injustices involving many health-related socioeconomic variables are nothing new; the epidemic has just highlighted them. African Americans see a substantial gap in COVID-19 mortality rates, which only emphasises the urgency of addressing historical injustices. Racism has led to inequality in the US in terms of wealth, employment, education, healthcare, and housing. These socioeconomic determinants of health can all improve or impair a person's health and lifespan.In order to move forward, racism must be tackled. New and individualised approaches are urgently needed to reach underprivileged people as well as the situations brought on by racist ideology, behaviours, and legislation. For instance, when drive-through testing was initially introduced in Louisiana, a 90-year-old African American woman had to walk one mile in the heat to get tested. This demonstrates how many people found it challenging to get to the COVID-19 testing site, whether they have no cars, reside in transit deserts, or cannot afford private transportation. After learning this, public health officials chose the zip codes with the highest proportion of COVID-19 reported deaths and set up testing there.. Population-based testing and contact tracing have been essential during this pandemic in determining where to focus efforts, stopping the spread of the virus, and implementing evidence-based interventions in high-risk areas. On the other hand, evidence-based interventions can only be put into practise when appropriate data and evidence are available. It was not until the beginning of April 2020 that the CDC started including information on race and ethnicity in its Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. The public is not generally able to access the demographic information on deaths in many states.While SARS-CoV-2 may be exploiting unfairness in the United States, it should be noted that this virus, like all others in the past and present, does not discriminate on the basis of race or any other social construct created by man. If COVID-19 is not stopped among the most susceptible populations, it will spread to all communities and have an impact on the future of human existence (Roberts & Tehrani, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic has prompted a reimagining of global life, emphasizing the importance of well-being indicators, education, work, care work, environmental sustainability, and political reform. The new normal requires a shift from economic growth to well-being indicators, such as universal healthcare, social cohesion, ecological sustainability, and mental health. Education and work

must invest in inclusive digital infrastructure, while care work must be valued as foundational to society. Environmentally, the new normal should be guided by climate justice, circular economies, and green transitions. Politically, a renewed global ethic based on cooperation, equity, and shared responsibility is needed. A truly post-pandemic future should be one where empathy is institutionalized, policies reflect compassion, and communities are rebuilt around care, justice, and sustainability. The choice is not to return to "normal," but to imagine and build a better world.

Concluding Observations

Reimagining life after the Corona Virus is urgently needed, with an emphasis on workable solutions and factors for transitioning to a better and new normal. However, on the road to recovery, a number of doubts and hazards have surfaced. Following the outbreak, a large number of disgruntled people will take to the streets. Although there will be no global revolution, turmoil is likely to persist unabated. New ideas and excellent leaders are needed around the world, not demagogues shouting "America First!" or "Alternative für Deutschland."" In order to avoid anarchy, which is threatening to destroy cultures and economies around the world, new ideas and development concepts, such as a new pragmatism, are urgently needed. It is a form of bridge between comprehensive economic theory and practical economic policy, with the goal of achieving inclusive growth and long-term development (Kolodko, 2020a). Although there are many dramatic microeconomic situations, short-term concerns can be addressed, however it is not a simple effort. Furthermore, the macroeconomic effects will be disastrous. Governments are on the right track to increase public spending to boost economic recovery and safeguard vulnerable communities and individuals.Depending on the circumstances, billions, if not hundreds of billions, of dollars must be injected into the economy in a responsible manner, and new financial instruments must be developed particularly for the purpose.It is part of our responsibility to remember the threats that exist in other areas while we work to eliminate the corona virus before it kills us. The danger may appear to be far away at times, but in this day of globalisation, nothing is truly far away. The corona virus epidemic is actually the catalyst for turning our pressing problems into an effective fundamental transformation. But for this transformation to occur, we need a compelling vision of where we want to go, how we want to change the institutional structure, and how we want to interact with one another and the natural world. The formation of a new Enlightenment movement is necessary as a result of this transition (Palazzo, 2020).In our reactions to global pandemics, climate change, biodiversity loss, and environmental degradation, indigenous methods of knowing, doing, and

being are considered crucial. The time has come to reconcile our relationship with the components of nature. It can only be anticipated to re-imagine "normal" in the post-COVID world by exhibiting respect for the eternal merits of these lived experiences and applying these teachings to our own ways of knowing, doing, and being. Under the current conditions, the current epidemic is an ideal opportunity to continue pure and wholehearted international efforts to lend a helping hand to those countries who lack the fiscal flexibility to deal with this global challenge.It should be done not merely to meet the continued challenge posed by COVID-19 to the capacity of respective health systems, but also to protect people whose income-generating opportunities have been temporarily disrupted (Sumner, Hoy & Juarez, 2020).

In the post-pandemic world, the greatest road to take is inclusive globalisation, which is based on collaboration between social market economies that many countries can create with their unique culturally entrenched qualities. In the contemporary era of international coordination, such globalisation also necessitates an appropriate cooperative interaction between market forces and state policies. Economic functioning must be based on a new pragmatism that considers the need for moderation and long-term economic, social, and environmental development. Then greater harmony, empathy, and tolerance will emerge, with less exploitation, injustice, and animosity (Kolodko, 2020a).The development of a global equilibrium could be threatened by the differences in states' capacities to comprehend and react to the geopolitical challenges and opportunities brought about by the COVID-19 outbreak between the US and China. The extent of the pandemic's effects won't be fully understood for months or maybe years because of how slowly it is spreading. Major geopolitical repercussions will continue to be reflected in major and regional governments' responses to the pandemic, as well as how they are viewed internally and globally.Such responses will be important in the long run, particularly in terms of how states manage the key geopolitical power levers—credibility, economic performance, social cohesiveness, military strength, diplomatic engagement, global leadership, and great powers' relative global impact.As a result of trade wars, unresolved conflicts, and inaction on climate change, global governance remains under jeopardy. A cohesive and coordinated response to COVID-19, on the other hand, might be the foundation for restoring faith in international institutions like the WHO and reducing tensions between geopolitical competitors.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a transformative moment in contemporary history, exposing the systemic fragilities of our interconnected world. It has exposed vulnerabilities in public health systems, marginalized informal labour, and eroded trust in multilateral institutions. Despite the trauma, the pandemic has also catalysed opportunities for renewal, forcing humanity to confront inequality,

unsustainable development, environmental degradation, and undervaluation of care and community. It has opened imaginative and policy spaces for constructing new futures that prioritize equity, sustainability, and collective responsibility over profit-driven growth and hyper-individualism. The call to "build back better" must now be rearticulated as "build forward differently." The road ahead must be informed by memory, empathy, and a vision of planetary well-being that transcends borders and privileges the collective good.

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Leadership through Partnership: Mapping the Evolution of India-Japan Third Country Partnership in the Indo-Pacific

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Introduction

The article examines the emerging third country partnership between India and Japan in the Indo-Pacific region, analysing it as a soft balancing instrument against China's growing regional influence. This practice is explored as a novel form of India-Japan bilateral relations, strategically designed to counterbalance Chinese assertiveness without direct confrontation. The study maps the development of India-Japan third country initiatives, including dialogues on Africa and the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor, demonstrating how these collaborations serve as subtle yet effective means of shaping regional dynamics. Through case studies of Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka, the article assesses the progress of infrastructure and connectivity projects, illustrating how this partnership offers alternatives to Chinese investments while upholding a rules-based regional order. Despite being in an exploratory phase and facing implementation challenges, this soft balancing approach has significant potential. The article concludes by discussing future prospects for deepening India-Japan cooperation in the Indo-Pacific within this strategic framework.

Historical and cultural ties have long interconnected India and Japan. The relationship initiated favorably in the post-World War II period between independent India and Japan. Japan valued India's endeavors to reinstate Japan's international standing with the signing of India-Japan peace agreement in 1952 which laid the groundwork for a bilateral relationship. There were promising political, trade, and commercial links. Nonetheless, the escalation of the Cold War and shifts in Asian geopolitics during the 1960s hampered the progression of these relations. The lack of leadership visits for the next three decades underscored this diplomatic chill. Following Prime Minister Hayato Ikeda's 1961 visit to India, the subsequent Prime Ministerial visit wasn't until 1984, by Yasuhiro Nakasone. It was

only in 1988 when Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi visited Tokyo, 30 years since the previous high-level visit from India.

The 1980s, however, saw a revival in the relationship after two stagnant decades. Japan significantly impacted India's economic history, particularly when Suzuki Motor Corporation made a groundbreaking investment in the country in the early 80s. This not only introduced advanced technology and revolutionized the automobile sector but also brought Japanese management systems to India. Indians remember Japan's reliable support in 1991 during India's balance of payment crisis. However, Japan's stern response to India's 1998 nuclear test resulted in another brief period of icy relations (Jaishankar 2000).

The dawn of the 21st century ushered in a transformative phase in India-Japan relations. Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori's visit to India in 2000 marked a significant milestone as it elevated the relationship into a Global Partnership (Jain 2008). Along with a new momentum in the bilateral relations, the Global Partnership framing also reflected a shift from a predominantly bilateral relationship to one that involved regional and global issues underpinned by changing strategic calculations of both nation in adjusting to regional and global transformations that were underway. The advancement from a Global Partnership in 2007 to a Strategic and Global Partnership, then to a Special Strategic and Global Partnership in 2014, underscored the evolution of regional and global dimension of the relationship.

Over the past two decades, the global scope of India-Japan relations has significantly evolved and has been manifested at different level. First, the global partnership meant a growing cooperation between India and Japan on the issues of global governance and multilateral issues. India-Japan collaboration on United Nations reform, particularly UNSC reforms through the G4, being a notable example. Second, global framing of India-Japan also meant a growing cooperation between India and Japan on regional affairs especially, especially through regional multilateral organizations like the EAS, ASEAN+6, ARF, ADMM, etc. Thirdly, another evolving dimension of India-Japan global partnership is the issue-based coalition or minilaterals like QUAD, India-Japan-US Trilateral, India-Japan-Australia trilateral, India-Japan-France Trilateral, India-Japan-Indonesia trilateral, etc., The fourth dimension of India-Japan cooperation is manifested through their Third Country Partnership. Both the minilateral and third country partnership frameworks are instrumental to the India-Japan cooperation on constructing peaceful and stable regional order in the Indo-Pacific.

This article examines the emerging India-Japan Third Country partnership, shedding light on an understudied dimension of their bilateral relations and its strategic implications in the Indo-Pacific region. The article is organised as follows. The second section of the chapter elaborate on the conceptual aspects of Third

Country Partnership highlighting its features and important attributes. The third section attempts to map the evolution of India-Japan Third Country Partnership in the Indi-Pacific context. The fourth section of the article undertakes a detailed empirical analysis of India-Japan Third Country Partnership through various country case studies. The last section of the article undertakes a discussion on the progress, challenges and the future aspects of the India-Japan Third country partnership.

Conceptualising Third Country Partnership

The concept of Third country partnership of late has been receiving significant attention international relations and foreign policy discourse and has increasingly been referred in the foreign policy deliberations of major powers as an emerging framework of international cooperation. Despite its growing usage in the practical world of international relations, it received very little attention among the scholarly community.

While bilateral cooperation in a third country is not a novel idea in international relations, it is only in recent years that it has received a significant attention as a form of international cooperation. Of late many countries especially, major powers see it as an instrument of their foreign policy. For since 2014, China has been exploring third country partnership as an instrument in promoting its economic interests. In the Chinese diplomatic lexicon, the format is known as the 'Third Country Market Cooperation'. China explored this format in the broader context promoting the Belt and Road Initiative (Wu 2021). Starting with France in 2014, China has signed Third Country Market Cooperation' agreement with more than 14 countries including Germany, South Korea, and Japan (Jetro 2018). Other countries like, the US, Japan, India, France, UK has also been exploring the third country format. In case of Japan, apart from China on third country market cooperation, Japan has been working with India, US, European Union in promoting third country partnership on various issues areas including, climate change, connectivity, development, capacity building. India also has been exploring third country partnership with US, EU, UK among others.

In essence a bilateral partnership in a third country refers to a scenario where two countries cooperate in activities or projects in a third country. This could involve cooperation in diverse sectors such as infrastructure development, humanitarian aid, peacekeeping, economic investment, security, etc. Theorizing such a partnership, one could argue that this arrangement may occur due to several reasons. First, it could be the case that both countries have strategic interests in the third country, and cooperation could help them achieve their goals more efficiently. This could entail sharing the costs and risks associated with their involvement in

the third country, while also pooling their resources and expertise. Second, such a partnership could be a way for the two countries to strengthen their bilateral relations. By working together on a project in a third country, they could deepen their mutual trust and understanding, which could have positive implications for their broader bilateral relationship. Third, the two countries might perceive that their joint involvement in the third country could yield more significant benefits for that country, compared to what each could achieve individually. This could particularly be the case if the third country is in need of substantial development aid or investment.

However, bilateral partnerships in a third country could also raise challenges and risks. For example, there could be disagreements over the division of responsibilities and benefits, or different perceptions about how to engage with the third country. Moreover, the situation in the third country itself, including its political stability and its relations with the two countries, could also affect the success of the partnership. Ultimately, the feasibility and effectiveness of a bilateral partnership in a third country would likely depend on factors such as the alignment of the two countries' interests and values, the nature of their relationship with the third country, and their capacity and willingness to manage the potential challenges and risks.

Indo-Pacific and the India-Japan Third Country Partnership

The concept of India-Japan third country partnership is based on the collaborative efforts between India and Japan in third countries, primarily in the context of their shared outlook towards the Indo-Pacific region (Banerji and Basu 2021). This partnership has manifested in various forms such as dialogues, development partnership, investment, capacity building, infrastructure development and connectivity. The earliest reference to India-Japan third country cooperation was found in 2010 with the establishment of India-Japan Dialogue on Africa.[1] It was initiated as a dialogue mechanism to exchange ideas and experience of two sides respective engagement in Africa particularly in the areas of development cooperation (Basin 2011). While it was a novel initiative reflective of India-Japan's shared interest in Africa, but remained as an academic exercise without contributing to any practical joint cooperation in Africa until the mid-2010s under the sheared vision of Indo-Pacific.

As mentioned earlier, at the dawn of the 21st century India-Japan relations has undergone significant transformation. During his visit to India in August 2000, Prime Minister Mori of Japan suggested a concept called the "Global Partnership". Notably, until then, this term was exclusively used by Japan in the context of its relations with the United States. The fundamental idea of this proposal was to

acknowledge India as a crucial collaborator not just for the mutual benefit of both nations, but also for the global community. The aim was to tackle a broad spectrum of international concerns, including UN reforms, maritime security, joint efforts to counteract terrorism, and environmental issues. Regionally and multilaterally, India and Japan have been open and active supporters of each other's agendas. A case in point is Japan's endorsement of India's membership in the East Asia Summit (EAS), which stirred some annoyance in China. Japan also holds an observer status in the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). At the multilateral stage, both nations have staunchly backed each other's bid for permanent seats on the UN Security Council.Several factors brought the two sides together, of which the structural factors have been crucial. The power transition that ensued in Asia with the rise of China and the need to find a new balance of power in the region has been the primary driver of India-Japan global partnership (Yamada 2008).

An evolution of the India-Japan global partnershipfound a new momentum with the new regional vision unveiled by the Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in 2007, the 'Confluence of Two Seas' concept that linked the Pacific and Indian Oceans asa single strategic space (Banerji and Basu 2021). Though the vision of Indo-Pacific was proposed in 2007, it took a decade for the idea to gain enough momentum to take shape the regional order. India and Japan's visions for the Indo-Pacific region are both rooted in their respective geopolitical interests, historical perspectives, and strategic aspirations, but they also display unique characteristics and foci.India's vision of the Indo-Pacific is largely shaped by its maritime interests and its historical sphere of influence. Its usage of the term 'Indo-Pacific' arose in naval circles when the Naval Doctrine spoke of 'the shift in global maritime focus from the Atlantic–Pacific combine to the Pacific–Indian Ocean region' in the second half of 2010 (Pandalai 2022).As such, for India, the Indo-Pacific (viewed as an extended Indian Ocean) is home: its backyard, considering India's historic sphere of influence; India engages with the region out of geographic, historical, and political necessity. For example, 97% of India's trade and 70% of its energy comes via the Indian Ocean (Taylor 2014). On the other hand, Japan's vision for the Indo-Pacific region has a strong maritime focus, which remained even after the Second World War, and was largely sheltered by the Pax Americana and could focus on economic development (Paskal 2021). The idea of connecting the Pacific and the Indian Oceans articulated in the Prime Minister Abe's 2007 speech at the Indian parliament, highlighted the importance of India. Hence "Indo-Pacific" instead of the "Asia-Pacific," which did not include India (Satoru 2021).While both India and Japan see the Indo-Pacific as a crucial region for their strategic and economic interests, their perspectives differ due to their unique geopolitical situations and

historical experiences. Nevertheless, both countries recognize the importance of a free and open Indo-Pacific region, which forms the basis for their growing strategic partnership.

In 2014, During the visit of Prime Minister Modi to Japan, India and Japan elevated the status of their cooperation to a 'Special Strategic and Global Partnership.' A year later, a joint regional vision for the Indo-Pacific was announced aligning India's Act East Policy with the Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) vision (Bakshi 2022). This joint effort is aimed at maintaining and enhancing the rules-based international order at sea, particularly in the face of China's maritime advancement (Tokuchi 2020). China's growing maritime presence and assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific have raised concerns among regional powers, including India and Japan (Hideshi 2020). China's territorial claims and militarization of the South China Sea have created tensions with neighboring countries, thereby threatening the stability of the region. Additionally, China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative, which seeks to connect Asia, Africa, and Europe through a network of infrastructure projects, has raised concerns about its intentions and impact on the regional balance of power (Lindley 2022).

A clear articulationof the Indian-Japan Third Country partnership initiative was the announcement of the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor in 2017.[2] The idea for the AAGC was first proposed in a joint declaration by Prime Ministers Shinzo Abe and Narendra Modi in November 2016.[3] It was envisioned as a platform for sustainable growth, with strategies and details developed through detailed consultations across Asia and Africa, engaging various stakeholders.[4] The AAGC is rooted in historical and enduring ties between India and Japan, coupling their respective "Act East" Policy and "Free and Open Indo Pacific" aspirations (Prakash 2018). Furthermore, the AAGC rests on four pillars: Development and Cooperation Projects, Quality Infrastructure and Institutional Connectivity, Enhancing Capacities and Skills, and People-to-People partnership, emphasizing the importance of people-centric partnerships in the success of the corridor.[5] The AAGC was also born from the private sector's needs. Japanese businesses expressed interest in utilizing India as a launchpad for ventures into Africa, aligning with both Tokyo and New Delhi's geopolitical intentions to offer an alternative to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) (Pajon and Mezard 2018).Despite its strategic significance, the AAGC has experienced sluggish progress since its conception. Critiques have pointed to the lack of concrete achievements, suggesting a potential need for the corridor's redesign or revival to uphold the expanding cooperation between Japan and India (Pajon and Mezard 2018).

The 2018 India-Japan Factsheet saw both nations pledge their commitment India-Japan Third Country Partnership aligning India's "Act East Policy" and Prime

Minister Modi's ten principles for regular, ongoing relations with African nations with Japan's "Expanded Partnership for Quality Infrastructure Initiative" and the TICAD VI Nairobi declaration.[6] New Delhi and Tokyo welcomed and agreed to consult further with host governments to boost tangible cooperation, with the focus being on the development of connectivity and other infrastructure in the Indo-Pacific region. The document also identified specific areas for cooperation, which included, but were not limited to: collaborating in Sri Lanka on the development of LNG-related infrastructure; synchronizing efforts in Myanmar, particularly in the Rakhine State, to advance housing, education and electrification projects; working together in Bangladesh to enhance connectivity through the four-laning of roads, the reconstruction of bridges on the Ramgarh to Baraiyarhat stretch, and the provision of rolling stock and construction of the Jamuna Railway Bridge over the Januma River; and finally, cooperating in Africa on initiatives such as organizing an SME development seminar in Kenya and exploring a potential health service project, like the development of a cancer hospital in Kenya.[7]

Furthermore, both nations recognized the need to broaden cooperation in areas such as human resource development, capacity building, healthcare, livelihood, water, sanitation, and digital spaces. They agreed to collaborate to increase access to education, health, and other amenities, and to support the people of the Indo-Pacific, including Africa, in realizing their developmental aspirations. They also decided to establish an India-Japan Business Platform to foster interactions between Indian and Japanese businesses, with the goal of developing industrial corridors and networks in the region. This initiative was reflected in the Memorandum of Understanding between NEXI and ECGC, which they believe will stimulate the development of concrete India-Japan business projects in the region.[8]

The Act East Forum, established in 2017 as dialogue mechanism to facilitate the development of India's Northeastern region (NER) through Japanese aid, also became a platform to foster connectivity both within this region and between the NER and Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Southeast Asia.[9] The establishment of AEF signified the harmonization of India's Act East Policy and Japan's free and open Indo-Pacific vision. So far, the Act East Forum has convened six times, while the coordinating team gathers more often to perform necessary groundwork.

During the visit of Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida to India in March 2022, New Delhi and Tokyo reaffirmed the significance of collaborative projects between Japan and India Third Country cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region. In this regard the two sides acknowledged the progress in ongoing projects in Bangladesh and looked forward to exploring expansion of such cooperation to ASEAN, Pacific Island countries and others. They also appreciated the importance

of their continued collaboration through the Act East Forum (AEF) for sustainable economic development of India's Northeastern Region and for enhancing the Region's connectivity with Southeast Asia.[10] During the visit of Prime Minister Kishida, New Delhi and Tokyo also exchanged views on cooperation with Sri Lanka and agreed to work closely together, including on Sri Lanka's debt issue (Chaudhury 2023).

India-Japan Third Country partnership: An Assessment

India-Japan Third Country Partnership is still very much in the exploratory phase, considering that very few projects have undertaken in this format. However, the scope and the significance of India-Japan Third Country Partnership will increase with the strengthening of the bilateral relations and their growing shared interest in the Indo-Pacific. The discussions of India-Japan third country partnership is primarily driven by strategic factors. It is an attempt synchronise Indian and Japanese resources and leadership in addressing regional challenge in the context where regional order is undergoing significant transformation especially with increasing Chinese assertiveness and quest for influence. The main rationale for India-Japan third country partnership has been to balance the growing China's influence in the region. India and Japan's collaborative efforts in Indo-Pacific, such as infrastructure projects and economic assistance, in this regard can be seen as an attempt to provide an alternative to Chinese investment and influence. By offering transparent, sustainable, and high-quality development assistance, India and Japan aim to balance China's growing presence in theregion and to serve as alternatives to China's BRI and promote diversified and sustainable connectivity in the region.

Both India and Japan are committed to upholding a rules-based regional order that ensures the freedom of navigation, open and transparent connectivity projects, and adherence to international law. The third country cooperation is an extension of their unilateral, bilateral, minilateral and multilateral efforts to counterbalance China's assertive policies in the region, which have raised concerns about the erosion of the rules-based order. India Japan collaboration in third country can also be seen as an attempt to encourage responsible investments that adhere to international standards, respect the environment, and promote social inclusivity. This approach contrasts with some of China's investment projects, which have faced criticism for their environmental, social, and debt sustainability impacts.

The strategic rationale of the third country partnership also pushed Japan and India to work together in the areas of development partnership, which otherwise was doing Individually. The India-Japan development partnership in third countries also complements Japan's triangular approach to development cooperation, that

promote partnership between Japan an OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) donor and India, a provider of South-South cooperation to implement development cooperation projects in beneficiary countries.[11] The third country partnership also aims to promote commercial partnership between Indian and Japanese companies in third country markets.

The following section will evaluate the progress in India-Japan third country partnership by undertaking cases of three south Asian countries- Bangladesh, Myanmar and Sri Lanka.

Bangladesh

Japan has been a long-standing and significant contributor to Bangladesh's economic development. Cumulatively, since Bangladesh's independence, Japan has provided a total of $24.72 billion and in the fiscal year 2020-2021 it provided more aid to Bangladesh than any other country, amounting to $2.63 billion (Hussain 2022). It is fostering practical collaboration with Bangladesh to further the Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)'s regional peace, stability, and development goal. While Japan's role has been significant, India's contribution to Bangladesh's development must not be underestimated. As a neighboring country with deep cultural and historical ties, India has an interest in the prosperity and stability of Bangladesh. The scope of India-Japan cooperation in Bangladesh is broad and multifaceted. A notable aspect is their collaborative efforts in infrastructure development and regional connectivity. For instance, New Delhi and Tokyo has been exploring possibilities for projects that provide the landlocked north-east of India access to the Bay of Bengal and, hence, to ASEAN countries. Such connectivity projects are expected to unleash enormous potential for growth and prosperity based on better access to the Indian Ocean (Chaudhury 2022). These initiatives not only enhance economic opportunities in the region but also serve as a strategic counter to China's influence (Bose 2023). By jointly investing in Bangladesh, India and Japan aim to foster a balanced power dynamic that respects sovereignty and promotes sustainable development.

While infrastructure and connectivity are vital aspects of the India-Japan cooperation in Bangladesh, it is also important to highlight their commitment to sustainable development. For instance, Japan's contributions could help Bangladesh accomplish the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Alam 2022). Japan's development assistance is based on the principle of supporting self-help efforts of developing countries. It intends to respect Bangladesh's own initiatives through close policy dialogues and provide support for capacity development, fostering enhanced ownership.[12] The India-Japan collaboration in Bangladesh epitomizes the potential of triangular cooperation in development. By combining

their strengths, India and Japan can facilitate substantial progress in Bangladesh's development journey. This collaboration is not limited to economic or infrastructural development but extends to building resilience against environmental challenges and achieving sustainable development goals.

In recent years, the collaboration between India and Japan in Bangladesh has taken on a strategic dimension, fostering regional economic development and stability. Here are some of the key recent developments in their cooperation:

- Industrial Hub Proposal: Japan has proposed the development of an industrial hub in Bangladesh, with supply chains extending to the landlocked northeastern states of India and further afield to Nepal and Bhutan. This initiative aims to enhance regional economic integration and connectivity, benefiting all stakeholders (Kumar 2023).
- Deep-Sea Port Development: A deep-sea port is under construction in southern Bangladesh, a project that both Japan and India see as a strategic linchpin. As members of the Quad, Japan and India view this port as a means to counter Chinese influence in the region (Mahmud and Satoh 2023). A key project under this cooperation is the Matarbari port complex in Bangladesh, supported by Japan. The completion of this project will facilitate an "industrial value chain" in the region.
- Enhancing People Connectivity: A dialogue themed "Development of India's North Eastern Region and Neighbourhood: India-Japan Collaboration for Fostering Entrepreneurship and People Connectivity" was organized. This event was a testament to the collaborative efforts between the two countries to foster entrepreneurship and enhance people-to-people connectivity in the region (Chaudhury 2022).
- Connectivity Initiatives: As part of their ongoing collaboration, India and Japan are working on enhancing connectivity in the Indo-Pacific region. Japan's strategic investments in Bangladesh aim to enhance this connectivity with India, thus creating regional economic opportunities (Bose 2023).In an attempt to promote economic growth and attract Japanese companies' interest in the region, Japan plans to build roads in Assam, Mizoram, and Tripura in India to connect to Japanese-assisted projects in Bangladesh.[13]
- Regional Economic Growth and Security: The cooperation also extends to discussions on regional economic growth, cooperation, and security among representatives from Indian Ocean nations. The focus on these areas underscores the growing importance of the Indo-Pacific region.

The India-Japan cooperation in Bangladesh signifies a strategic approach towards fostering regional economic growth and stability. It aims to facilitate an

interconnected regional infrastructure and bolster economic opportunities while ensuring a balance of power in the Indo-Pacific region.India-Japan cooperation in Bangladesh reflects the dynamism of the emerging order in the Indo-Pacific. It embodies an inclusive approach to regional development, grounded in the principles of mutual respect, shared benefits, and sustainability. As this partnership continues to deepen and evolve, it is set to create a ripple effect, contributing to stability, prosperity, and a balanced power dynamic in the region.

Myanmar

Myanmar holds strategic importance for both India and Japan due to its geographical location, economic potential, and regional stability. The country shares a long border with India and is a gateway to Southeast Asia, making it a critical partner in India's Act East policy and Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific vision. India-Japan cooperation in Myanmar is driven by various shared interests and objectives, including regional connectivity, economic growth, and stability in the Indo-Pacific region. However, the China factor plays a significant role in shaping the strategic landscape and the nature of India-Japan collaboration in Myanmar. China has pursued an active engagement strategy in Myanmar through its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), investing heavily in infrastructure projects, such as the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC), Kyaukphyu deep-sea port, and various energy and transportation projects. These developments have raised concerns in India and Japan about China's growing influence in Myanmar and the broader region.

Key sectors in which discussions on India-Japan partnership in Myanmar are the following. As mentioned earlier, connectivity and infrastructure development are key sector in which India and Japan share significant interest in Myanmar. Myanmar serves as a land bridge between South Asia and Southeast Asia. Both India and Japan have invested in infrastructure and connectivity projects in Myanmar, aimed at enhancing regional integration, promoting trade, and improving accessibility. For India, projects like the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway (IMTTH) and the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project (KMMTTP) are essential to realizing the goals of the Act East policy. Japan, on the other hand, has invested in the development of the Thilawa Special Economic Zone and the Dawei Deep Sea Port, aimed at boosting Myanmar's economy and regional connectivity. While India is the primary driver of the IMTTH and KMMTTP projects, Japan has played a supportive role in various ways: Infrastructure Financing, Capacity Building, Trilateral and Multilateral Cooperation and Complementary Infrastructure Projects. While Japan is the primary investor in the Thilawa SEZ, India has shown interest in investing and setting up industries in the SEZ, which could lead to a

convergence of interests between India and Japan.

Economic cooperation is another area of India-Japan partnership in Myanmar. Myanmar is endowed with abundant natural resources, a young workforce, and a growing market, making it an attractive destination for foreign investment. Both India and Japan see Myanmar as a vital economic partner and have sought to expand trade and investment ties. Japan has been one of Myanmar's largest sources of development assistance, while India has provided credit lines and technical assistance to support the country's development.

Japan and India also have convergence of security interest. Myanmar's stability is crucial to both India and Japan, as it has implications for regional security. India shares a 1,643 km long border with Myanmar, and security cooperation between the two countries is essential to address cross-border challenges, such as insurgency, terrorism, drug trafficking, and human trafficking. Japan's interest in Myanmar's stability is driven by its broader regional security concerns and its desire for a stable and prosperous neighborhood.With a long coastline along the Bay of Bengal, Myanmar plays a significant role in the maritime security dynamics of the region. India and Japan have an interest in maintaining a stable and secure maritime environment, given the strategic importance of the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea for trade and naval operations.Both India and Japan, as democracies, have a vested interest in supporting democratic development and institution-building in Myanmar. While the recent military coup in Myanmar has complicated the engagement of both countries, they continue to seek avenues to promote the return of democratic governance and support the aspirations of the Myanmar people

Another area of cooperation between India and Japan in Myanmar is capacity building. In this regard, in August 2020 India and Myanmar signed a Project Agreement, under which India would provide library material and create soft infrastructure in 15 schools constructed by Japan International Cooperation Agency(JICA) in Rakhine State.[14] The Project Agreement is the first initiative in Myanmar under which Indian funding would be used to develop infrastructure in JICA developed schools. This is the result of coordination between the two countries and discussions with Myanmar side.

Sri Lanka

In recent times, as mentioned earlier the strategic partnership between India and Japan has demonstrated a significant expansion beyond their bilateral relations, specifically in the form of collaboration within third countries. Sri Lanka has emerged as a potential destination of Indo-Japanese collaboration. For instance, during the visit of Prime Minister Kishida to India in March 2023, New Delhi and

agreed to offer their assistance to Sri Lanka, which has been suffering from the worst economic crisis since its independence (Sreenivasan 2022). The discussion on the collaborative effort was not limited to just economic aid; it encompassed a wide array of spheres including defense, clean energy, and investment.

Sri Lanka holds a unique strategic significance in the shared Indo-Pacific vision of India and Japan due to several reasons. Frist is Sri Lanka's strategic location in the Indo-Pacific as it sits astride the Indian Ocean's crucial sea lines of communication, making it a target of major powers competition (Senanayake 2019). As far as India and Japan are concerned balancing growing Chinese influence in Sri Lanka is crucial to their shared vision of building a free and open Indo-Pacific. Japan, under former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, was keen to expand its influence in the Indo-Pacific, with Sri Lanka being a key part of this vision. This was evident from Abe's visit to the island nation, the first Japanese Prime Minister to do so in 24 years (Dardenne 2018). For India, Sri Lanka is a primary area of competition with China in the South Asia region (Rajagopalan 2020). India and Japan enhanced their individual and collective attention towards Sri Lanka especially in light of a Chinese-state owned company gaining a 99-year lease to the Hambantota port in Sri Lanka, which straddles the key sea lanes of communication in the Indian Ocean (Borah 2018). Strengthening Sri Lanka ability to navigate the regional geopolitics, further underscoring its importance in the Indo-Pacific vision of India and Japan.[15]

Key among the initiatives of this Indo-Japanese partnership in Sri Lanka has been their commitment to infrastructure and connectivity in the Indo-Pacific region.[16] These joint endeavors are largely perceived as a response to China's assertiveness and growing influence in the region. Despite some challenges, such as the scrapping of the India-Japan agreement on developing the East Container Terminal at Colombo Port due to local protests, the countries managed to negotiate an alternative solution (Mallawarachi 2021). This agreement to develop a different new terminal indicates the mutual respect and understanding underpinning the India-Japan partnership, as well as their shared commitment to Sri Lanka's welfare. Despite the interest shown by India and Japan in doing joint projects in Sri Lanka, it is yet to materialize. The partnership is still at the exploratory stage. Potential areas of cooperation are the following,

- Colombo Light Rail Transit (LRT) Project: Japan has provided financial and technical support for the construction of the LRT system in Colombo. While not a direct India-Japan joint project, India has expressed interest in investing in the project's operational phase and offering technical expertise. The Colombo LRT Project is primarily a Japan-funded initiative, with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) providing financial

assistance in the form of a soft loan. This project aims to develop a 15.7 km long elevated light rail corridor connecting the Colombo city center with the suburb of Malabe, aiming to ease traffic congestion, improve public transportation, and promote sustainable urban development.

- LNG Terminal and Power Plant: India and Japan have been in talks to jointly set up a Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) terminal and a power plant in Sri Lanka. This project aims to enhance Sri Lanka's energy security and promote clean energy initiatives. The proposed LNG terminal aims to facilitate the import of LNG to meet Sri Lanka's growing energy demands and support the shift toward cleaner energy sources, reducing the country's dependence on oil and coal. The terminal would provide LNG to the power plant and other industries in the country, contributing to the diversification of Sri Lanka's energy mix. India's Petronet LNG Limited and Japan's Sojitz Corporation, along with other stakeholders, have been involved in negotiations and feasibility studies for the project. India and Japan have a shared interest in promoting energy security, clean energy, and regional connectivity in the Indo-Pacific region, and the joint development of the LNG terminal and power plant is a prime example of this cooperation.
- Trincomalee Oil Tank Farm: India and Japan have been discussing the possibility of jointly developing the oil storage facility in Trincomalee to strengthen Sri Lanka's energy infrastructure and improve regional connectivity. The farm has historical significance as it was built by the British during World War II and comprises 99 storage tanks, with a majority of them currently unused. India has had a presence in the Trincomalee Oil Tank Farm since the 2000s through an agreement with the Sri Lankan government. Indian Oil Corporation's subsidiary, Lanka IOC, has been operating 15 of the 99 tanks for its regional fuel storage and distribution operations. This cooperation aligns with the strategic interests of both countries in promoting energy security, enhancing regional infrastructure, and counterbalancing China's influence in the region. Joint development of the Trincomalee Oil Tank Farm would not only contribute to Sri Lanka's energy security but also create synergies between India and Japan in the energy sector, fostering closer collaboration and partnership. While the project is still in the negotiation stage, it highlights the potential for further cooperation between India and Japan in Sri Lanka and the broader Indo-Pacific region.
- Development of Industrial Zones: Both countries have shown interest in jointly developing industrial zones in Sri Lanka, which can promote investment, economic growth, and job creation.

- Disaster Management and Resilience: India and Japan have cooperated in providing disaster relief and assistance to Sri Lanka during natural disasters, such as floods and landslides, and have collaborated on capacity-building initiatives related to disaster management.
- Capacity Building and Technical Assistance: Both India and Japan have offered capacity-building programs, scholarships, and technical assistance to Sri Lanka in various sectors, including healthcare, transportation, and agriculture.

While there are no direct India-Japan joint projects currently underway in Sri Lanka, their respective efforts in the country have often converged or complemented each other. By enhancing cooperation and coordination, India and Japan can jointly contribute to the development and stability of Sri Lanka and the broader Indo-Pacific region.

Conclusion

The idea of India-Japan Third Country Cooperation has gained significant attention not only in the strategic community but also at the government level. This has been reflected in the growing discussions of collaboration especially in South Asia- Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka but also in Africa, ASEAN and Pacific Island countries. The framework of third country cooperation is an outcome of the strategic alignment of interests and vision between India and Japan, triggered largely by the emergence of the Indo-Pacific as a crucial geopolitical concept and a growing convergence against China's increasing influence in the region, This partnership reflects their shared concerns and has evolved into a strategic relationship defined by common interests, especially in regards to security, economic development, and regional influence. Furthermore, the partnership between India and Japan is nested within broader strategic partnerships: bilateral (India–Japan), trilateral (India–Japan–United States), and quadrilateral (India–Japan–United States–Australia). These multilateral partnerships amplify their collective capacity to maintain regional balance, promote shared democratic values, and address common security threats. However, it is important to acknowledge that only few projects in this framework have been materialized, that too in the low-key areas. In this regard, the third country partnership between India and Japan is still in the exploratory phase.

The Third Country Cooperation brings ample opportunities. The combined strengths of India and Japan, especially in technology and finance, allow for comprehensive, effective projects that also respect local needs and aspirations. Moreover, these projects contribute to the partners' shared vision of a free, open, and rules-based Indo-Pacific by enhancing regional connectivity and fostering economic

interdependence. Quality infrastructure and connectivity remains a key area of India-Japan third country partnership. With Japan having a strong background in infrastructure development and India's growing commitment, their collaboration can bring about significant improvements in the quality of infrastructure in these third countries. This can include areas like transportation, energy, and other vital infrastructures, thereby increasing regional connectivity and socio-economic growth. The cooperation creates a platform for quality infrastructure development in these countries, contributing to their economic development. For instance, India and Japan have been working on specific projects to modernize India's north-eastern region and improving connectivity with Bangladesh and Myanmar. Collaboration between Japan and India on development and capacity building in third countries are also potential areas. In this regard, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and India's development cooperation arm have worked jointly on various projects, emphasizing local ownership and sustainable development.

The third country partnership framework is not without challenges. A critical aspect in this regard is the challengedominating from the geopolitical complexities in the region, particularly those arising from China's assertive behavior. The strategic partnership is implicitly aimed at countering China's influence, and therefore, could invite unwanted pressure or resistance from China.Political instability and socio-economic challenges in the third countries could pose significant obstacles to the successful execution of joint projects. This includes concerns related to governance, corruption, and conflict in these nations. Disparities in the developmental approach and differing perceptions about democracy and human rights may pose challenges to the bilateral cooperation in third countries. There are also logistical and administrative challenges in coordinating activities across three countries, particularly in the context of infrastructure development. These can be due to bureaucratic hurdles, diverging regulations, and other systemic obstacles. Furthermore, the initiative encounters limitations in its scope and resources. While India and Japan collectively bring substantial resources to the table, they might be dwarfed by the scale of development needs in the region and the expansive reach of competing initiatives like the BRI. Moreover, the initiative is currently limited to a few countries and sectors and might need to broaden its horizon to make a substantial impact.Despite these challenges, there are ample opportunities for the Third Country Cooperation. The model presents an opportunity to provide an alternative to China's debt-trap diplomacy. It also provides an opportunity to strengthen democratic institutions in the region and promote a rules-based order. Furthermore, increased cooperation between India and Japan could promote regional integration and socio-economic development in the host countries.

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India's Development Assistance In Africa: Analyzing India's Aid And Developmental Projects

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Abstract

The articleanalyses the role of India as a provider of aid in Africa by considering the different forms of aid- financial, technical, capacity building, and infrastructure development and analyzing both the political, economic, and geopolitical motives behind such moves. The study investigates the objectives of India in this respect; it explores how the principles of development cooperation, South-South, and mutual growth articulate India's strategy in giving aid, which affects poverty alleviation, regional goals, and community empowerment. This paper explores India's approach to sustainable development, transparency, and accountability in African projects through available secondary data. It contributes to the literature on international development by providing insights into India-Africa relations and the broader international aid architecture.

Keywords: India, Africa, developmental assistance, aid projects and South-South cooperation

Introduction

This article examines India's developmental assistance to Africa, focusing on the objectives and strategies of India's initiatives. Primarily, Indian development cooperation was highly ideological and political. Since India's economic liberalization, privatization, and globalization reforms, geo-economics factors have been increasingly influential in the country's foreign policy. Against this backdrop, India bolstered its economic activity by promoting regional integration and economic linkages with various African countries(Katti and Kaushik, 2009). Speaking of history, the development cooperation between India and Africa illustrates the idea that directed India's engagement with other developing nations throughout the postcolonial era.

Early on after gaining political independence in 1947, India made a concerted effort to see that colonial domination was finally and completely eradicated

worldwide. Leaders in India and other emerging nations realized that their ability to exercise political freedom would be restricted unless they also assumed responsibility for their economic future. India responded to this challenge with a two-pronged approach (Khan, 2012). Given India's historical importance as a vital partner for the area, the researcher planned to look at the changing commerce and interactions between India and Africa. There is a rising passion for this partnership, as seen by the increased frequency of two-way visits by leaders, politicians, and scholars from both sides. The study's objective is to understand and assess the depth of India's ties to Africa by a detailed analysis of bilateral investment and trade, with an emphasis on the role that economic interactions play in the two nations' growing understanding and closeness. There is a claim that the study emphasizes the economic significance of these connections by demonstrating how they provide a foundation for resource exploitation that is advantageous to both India and African nations.Consequently of its historical links and active commercial exchanges, India is said to have developed strong relations with Africa, opening up important new perspectives on the complex dynamics of this developing alliance (Horwitz and Kamoche, 2023).

The bilateral economic connections and Indian agricultural investments in Ethiopia after 1991 are critically examined in this essay. With the use of primary and secondary data, as well as a qualitative research approach, the study shows that India benefits economically from trade and agricultural investments. Ethiopia and India have a persistent trade deficit, which is mostly the result of unfair trading arrangements. While increasing government income and opening up job possibilities, Indian agricultural investments also raise worries about the relocation of smallholder farmers and the destruction of natural resources(Belayneh and Belayneh, 2017). The results highlight Ethiopia's need to rectify trade imbalances by expanding its export base and enhancing the business environment. To ensure the intended advantages while minimizing negative effects, it is also crucial to support and oversee agricultural investments made in India(Ibid). Diplomatic relations between Ethiopia and the newly independent India were established in the early 1950s and have been strengthened throughout the past seven decades, establishing India as a partner in South-South cooperation. Even though the two nations have had diplomatic contacts for a long time, they have been more interested in strengthening their relationship over the past 10 years and have been working harder to do so through ongoing business collaborations and diplomatic initiatives.Ethiopia's development has received significant funding, lines of credit (LOC), and help from New Delhi under the Indian Industrial and Financial Assistance (IIFA) program. These initiatives, which span a variety of sectors including setup progress, farming, schooling, scope constructing and

resources production and provide, have substantially benefited the improvement of bilateral ties (Purushothaman and Purushothaman, 2021). India is becoming more and more well-known in the sphere of development cooperation.Its growing scope and volume of South-South collaboration are highlighted, as is its advocacy and leadership for a development discourse and knowledge production that is uniquely southern. In this, the development of Indian development cooperation is tracked and examined, with a focus on the worldwide relevance and efficacy of this tool for Indian foreign policy. The book travels through the evolution, genesis, and difficulties experienced in the contemporary world situation, with a focus on India's critical role in assisting partner nations in South Asia and beyond in their development endeavors. Contributions in the form of government and academic ideas, policy and practice insights, and Indian and external viewpoints provide a rich combination(Chaturvedi and Sidiropoulos, 2012).

The authors set out to scrutinize India's "Global South" strategy, homing in on its diplomatic overtures with Africa during its G20 presidency in 2023(Gaur and Sharma, 2024). By delving into official statements, speeches, and documents from the G20 summit, we aim to comprehend the strategic underpinnings behind India's proposal for the African Union's permanent membership in the G20, officially accepted in September 2023.With a focus on India's diplomatic outreach to Africa during its 2023 G20 presidency, this research aims to examine the country's "Global South" policy. The objective of the study is to understand the strategic rationale of India's request designed for the everlasting association of the African Union in the G20, which was formally approved in September 2023, by examining official comments, speeches, and documents from the G20 summit. We use academic publications and historical records to show how India's diplomatic interaction beside African nations gain developed, with the 2005 launch of the CII-EXIM Bank Conclave serving as a significant turning point.Through the use of qualitative analysis, their study seeks to interpret the rationale and consequences of India's Global South approach, specifically in relation to mitigating China's sway over Africa(Gaur and Sharma, 2024). The study, in conclusion, sheds light on the complex dynamics of India's foreign policy by demonstrating how diplomatic efforts and economic development are combined to enhance India's reputation globally, with Africa being a key consideration in our strategic planning during the G20 presidency (Gupta and Bhardwaj, 2023).Africa's growth depends heavily on trade and investment, as demonstrated by the long narration of support linking India and Africa trendy the area of occupation and funds assistance for economic development.Because of Africa's expanding consumer market and growing reputation as a hub for commerce and investment, this cooperation has attracted more attention(Shukla, 2024). The researcher focuses on trade and investment

while analyzing trends of India-African cooperation in the modern globalized period. Exploration of conceptual and empirical issues through the use of secondary data is part of the approach used(Konstantinova, 2023). To improve relevance, the study employs suitable econometric instruments for analysis.The great prospects of India-African collaboration are emphasized by the potential for economic growth, improvements in the business climate, and investment rules, together with good returns on investment. The breadth of this relationship is demonstrated not only by its economic dimensions but also by its public-to-public contacts, social connections, then cooperative efforts on the mainland, neighboring plus mutual turns;these factors emphasize how durable and complex India-African relations are in the context of economic development(Godara *et al.*, 2020).In exploring how new types of contacts between nations with different economic levels are included in international collaboration, the researcher explores the complex and dynamic global process of South-South collaboration. With India while a major participant, an emphasis is on up-and-coming funders in Africa. The role of India, the unique features of its development cooperation in Africa, and its use of soft power are highlighted. Emerging contributors' foreign policies toward Africa heavily rely on South-South cooperation, especially the win-win strategy (Thakur, 2023). Each nation is free to interpret South-South cooperation in accordance with its own historical, political, and cultural context because there isn't a dominant paradigm for it. South-South aid is an exchange of information besides technology, a setting of shared objectives and coordinated activities, and the collaboration of developing nations to meet shared development concerns. Implemented by up-and-coming donors such as the BRICS, this cooperative approach functions beyond the standard channels established by the Improvement Assist Board of the OECD.There are notable distinctions between China's favorable India's approaches to growth mutual aid in Africa, even whereas they share many characteristics that might provide India's initiatives more long-term viability and local support(Melchionni and Testoni, 2018). The sustainability and rights-compatibility of investments must be prioritized from the start, even though redress procedures are crucial. More rights-consistent results that support the right to food rather than undermining it might be fostered by regulatory and monitoring initiatives undertaken by host and home governments(Cordes *et al.*, 2024).

The main goal of this research paper, to put it briefly, is not to investigate in depth the history of relations between Africa and India, nor is it to discuss the impact of India on the postcolonial development of developing nations.

But it is focused on India's developmental assistance in Africa, aiming proceeding the goals besides modalities of India's aid and developmental projects. The research article is organized into the following sections: This section provides

the background, followed by the historical context of India-Africa relations, conceptual framework, discussion, conclusion, and recommendations.

Review Of Literature

Links among wandering traders using an Indian Oceanic wet season airstream to traverse among South Asia and Africa have occurred for millennia, and this past is continually referenced via current Indian and African representatives, as well as the increasing quantity of multicultural Indian Ocean scholarship. Indian dissenters in eastern and southern Africa petitioned the Indian National Congress on behalf of governmental constitutional rights in relation to diverse sets of white' colonists' beginning in the 1920s, with varying results (Mawdsley and McCann).After examining the changing aspects of Africa's engagement beyond "South-South collaboration," this paper aims to compare and contrast the global discourse emphasizing this nomenclature with the limited take-up among African stakeholders. In order to discover how socially constructed definitions of reality, specifically the use of "South-South cooperation," change when Northern partners are present compared to interactions with developing countries, the study uses a frame analysis approach, drawing proceeding understandings after the United Nations, cross-provincial partnership setups, and joint collaboration. For multilateral organizations and conventional funders hoping to increase participation with "South-South" ties, this term's low resonance presents a hurdle. According to the paper, examining the use and consequences of frames is essential to clarifying the underlying assumptions of international cooperation. It highlights the complex contextual dynamics that affect the deliberate use of particular terminologies in Africa's engagement with non-traditional contexts(Haug and Kamwengo, 2023). From 1997 to 2016, the study intends to examine the patterns and factors that influenced Ethiopia's FDI from China and India. It uses a gravity model to identify the main variables affecting FDI flows, such as trade agreements, economic indicators, and government spending. With average growth rates of 82% and 202%, respectively, the report shows rising FDI patterns from China and India. It is noteworthy that conventional considerations, such as resource rent, are shown to be negligible. Policy implications include macroeconomic reform for India-Pakistan ties and a focus on GDP growth, commerce, and cheap labour for China-Ethiopian relations(Ergano & Rambabu, 2020).They also include government spending and economic indicators.

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growth, and cheap labour in relations with China in Ethiopia. economic metrics and public spending(Ergano & Rambabu, 2020). The analysis shows that China and India are leading the way in FDI trends, with average growth rates of 202% and 82%, respectively. Notably, it is discovered that conventional considerations like resource rent are negligible. Implications for policy include macroeconomic change in ties with India and a focus on trade, GDP growth, and cheap labour in relations with China in Ethiopia (Ibid).Africa may see major changes to its development funding environment as a result of its expanding economic connections to the BRICS countries, notably through trade and investment. The goal of the research is to shed light on the many scenarios that can occur and create a useful road map of prospective outcomes based on World Bank practices and those seen in Brazil and China's national development banks(Muresan, 2023). The study offers a prism through which to see the different ways that the BRICS Bank might engage with the World Bank, influencing the future development finance scene in which African countries are vital players, by taking into account the BRICS Bank's possible adoption of practices akin to those of Brazil or China(O'Neill of Gatley, 2023).Mawdsley & Mccann (2010) further go to assert that, Poetic and prosaic India-Africa relations grew rapidly following Indian independence, particularly in the charming governance of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. Indian leaders with authors emphasize their connection beside African causes. For instance, in 1967, India granted the African National Congress diplomatic recognition and a base in Asia. Despite the statement of Afro-Asian solidarity, extensively of India's early upright-Liberation foreign policy was distinguished by regional introversion. The piece examines India's changing position in development cooperation and aid, focusing on its historical evolution and current escalation consequently of growing governmental and financial might on the world stage. One notable difference between India and the DAC and OECD nations is that no publicly disclosed policy papers are available(Chaturvedi *et al.*, 2014).The Ministry of External Affairs serves as the leader of a decentralized consortium of governments that engage in development cooperation, which is guided by the Panchsheel/Bandung Principles.

Dependence on estimates from several sources is necessary since Indian Development Cooperation (IDC) lacks a single agency. In addition to examining India's proactive participation in regional integration through commercial links and increased expenditures in regional infrastructure, emphasis is focused on the country's prioritizing of neighboring and African nations (Katti and Kaushik, 2009). According toKareem (2017) through a research study, the effect of trade agreements between Africa and India on Africa's exports was examined. To examine trade trends, tariffs, and agreement compliance, both quantitative and qualitative methodologies were used. According to the data, trade agreements had a modestly

favourable effect on trade, implying that trade relations and the possibility of higher exports from Africa to India had improved. Remarkably, it was discovered that Africa's access to the Indian market was not severely hampered by high Indian tariffs. According to the study, non-tariff constraints were more important than tariff barriers for fostering better trading ties between the two regions (Ibid). For the majority of the postcolonial dated, India held an honorable stance arranged the South Asian diaspora inward Africa. Through the goal of improving the efficacy of South-South Cooperation (SSC) partnerships for Africa, this research will offer a situational analysis and make policy suggestions.In sharp contrast to rivals like China, Brazil, and India, the report highlights the meagre financial efforts made by African governments to promote SSC, highlighting the lack of funding provided for SSC facilitation and relationship development. According to Meja (2014), the continent mostly depends on multilateral organizations like the Africa Development Bank and the UNDP Special Office for SSC as well as bilateral South-South assistance providers. African nations are looking at using triangular cooperation as a finance tool to help them mobilize development solutions and technical experience. This is especially true through the South-South Cooperation Trust Fund, which is primarily sponsored by the Brazilian government. In vital sectors including renewable energy, health, social development, and agriculture, the research emphasizes the Fund's dedication to fostering South-South collaborations and information exchange. Furthermore, it examines organized policy forums started by financially developed SSC aid providers outside of Africa, emphasizing the necessity for thorough policy proposals to improve the effectiveness of SSC partnerships on the continent of Africa (Meja, 2014).

The research presented by Kumar *et al.* (2022) provides an extensive examination of the current environment and historical economic circumstances surrounding free trade agreements (FTAs) among the BRICS countries. Trends in GDP, unemployment, and inflation before and after the introduction of free trade agreements are examined, with an emphasis on the evolving global economy.The BRICS nations, which collectively account for 17.2% of global trade and 22.2% of global production, are home to 40% of the world's population.In 2014, the 6th BRICS Summit in Brazil highlighted the importance of commerce and GDP within the BRICS group, setting the stage for discussions on stronger economic ties and collaboration in trade and investment(Kumar, Ananth and Senapathy, 2022). The commerce between the ancient Kingdom of Aksum and ancient India is the basis of the long-standing historical connections between Ethiopia and India, which date back 2,000 years. This study examines these relationships. Indian recipients received gold and ivory as part of the trade, while Aksumites imported spices and silk. Portuguese influence reached Ethiopia as a result of increased European commerce with India in the late 15th and early 16th centuries, which was made possible by

explorers like Vasco da Gama. Ethiopia now is home to about 8,000 individuals of Indian descent, primarily descendants of the teachers and businesspeople who settled there in the late 1800s.Trade, technology, and sociocultural interactions are all part of the developing relationship between Ethiopia and India. The examination and forecast of these bilateral ties' future course complete the paper(Banda, 2021). To determine the expected effects of aid from China and India on Africa's development. The main way that these growing nations affect individual industries, specially, manufacturing, is via aid. There are some clear trends: China offers a wider range of monetary and non-monetary help packages linked to the usage of Chinese goods and services, whereas India focuses on non-monetary aid such as technical support and scholarships. Trade, FDI, assistance, and migration all have influence routes that overlap, particularly when it comes to China. The second phase of the research looks at how manufacturing assistance from China and India affects development outcomes including growth, distribution, governance, and the environment. While highlighting that the actual benefits rely on the institutional and structural conditions of the receivers, the researcher highlights the potential relevance of Chinese and Indian aid for Africa(McCormick, 2008).

According to the current analysis, Ethiopia is receiving development aid from China and India, which presents both possibilities and hazards. In order to reduce risks and enhance advantages from development cooperation, the researcher also suggests policy actions. Ethiopia, China, and India can follow these recommendations individually or in concert(Jalata, 2014).According to economists, India has the potential to have a more stable and wealthy economy than China in thelong run, which might lead to more fruitful relationships for a variety of African nations, industries, and constituencies in the near term(Taylor, 2014). India's participation in bilateral ties, multilateral polity, and global economy, as well as its involvement in African economic relationships, provide concerns. Four subject areas are examined critically regarding current India-African relations:The evolving geographical landscape of Indo-African ties; 2. External direct investing furthermore commerce; 3. Growth assistance; also 4. Geopolitics with international relations(Mawdsley and Mccann, 2010). India's African diplomacy and engagements show confidence in its ability to operate on the global political and economic scene, but the country's claims to uniqueness in comparison to Chinese and Western players are not as clear-cut as some have made them. Uncertainty over the results surrounds whether the recent changes in relations will benefit the relevance of with a reduction of fortunate individuals, labourers, in addition customers trendy both Africa and India(Ibid).

In the post-reform period, India took an aggressive approach toward Africa. India, like the supplementary Asian powerhouse, China, has unexpectedly

occurred while a significant "competitor" in Africa, competing designed for vital reserve besides setup developments, offering original outlines of recognition then charge reduction, extending the issue political system, besides strengthening the situation sanctuary rewards on the mainland(Dubey and Biswas, 2015). According toDubey & Biswas (2015), the best explanation of India's Africa program, which is based entirely on Afro-confidence, was provided by former Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh during his opening remarks at the major India-Africa Set Summit in New Delhi in April 2008."Africa is our mother continent." The mechanics of geology could have caused our native land to flow separately, however, past, beliefs, in addition the developments of postcolonial progress have taken us mutually once more."With this context in mind, this conference paper will examine India's developmental assistance in Africa, with a focus on the reasons, mechanisms, and outcomes of India's aid and development programs. To accomplish this goal, the subsequentsub-section will focus on clarifying the notion of development assistance in general, and aid for development projects in particular, which in turn will guide the discussion part of this paper.

Development Assistance: Focus on Aid and Developmental Projects

Development assistance, also known as global growth backing, is a challenging idea headed for a run alongside. Likewise, the term has a word-laden code word like 'foreign aid' besides technically definite standings like 'official expansion assistance' are frequently used as uncooperative alternatives, creation it more problematic to define change support in a method that is together adequately wide-ranging and cutting-edge in scope besides critically particular in submission(Jayaraj, 2015). The other debatable issue within development assistance is related to its motive. As rightly noted by the intentions for progress aid have long been debated in the advancement funding narrative. Arguments have centered on the contrast between egoistic actions, which link aid to the donor's self-interest, and altruistic behaviors, which relate it to the recipient's needs and qualities (Berthélemy, 2006).

According to empirical data, the main objectives of development assistance are to reduce poverty and promote sustainable development in underdeveloped countries. Furthermore, it is widely known that development assistance has a mixed but generally unsatisfactory history of achieving these objectives.There is a long history of critique about donors seeking self-interest under the guise of doing good, which can lead to exploitation and poverty. In more recent times, scholars have continued the argument, stating that development assistance is primarily geared to deliver economic benefits to donors while also serving 'domestic special interests'(Berthélemy, 2006).Hitherto, when it comes to foreign aid, India has its own set of norms that frequently differ from international ones.Agarwal (2016),

states that "overseas development assistance" in India usually refers to a variety of government-funded projects, purchase subsidies, credit lines, travel expenses, and technical training costs. Sub-Saharan Africa's (SSA) economic growth and poverty reduction rely heavily on agriculture, and this is the primary goal of the study, according to researcher Modi. Daniel notes that although this sector employs a sizable portion of the labour force, the growth of SSA's agricultural GDP has only marginally improved. The study mostly examines the effectiveness of programs that are carried out at the national, regional, and continental levels, paying special attention to the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP). Modi identifies a number of ongoing issues facing the agricultural industry, such as the prevalence of subsistence farmers, a lack of funding that prevents mitigation measures, and productivity losses due to climate change(Mogess, Eshete and Alemaw, 2023). The relevance of regional alliances like the East African Community (EAC) is emphasized by the researcher as a possible remedy for food shortages. Modi also believes that in order to achieve sustainable and equitable growth, which is in line with the goals of the AU Summit, more investments must be made in the agriculture sector and protection against unfair trade practices should be prioritized(Modi, 2016).Furthermore, India's uncertain plug-in of backing to other emerging countries was severely harmed by its persistent rejection of the donor-recipient paradigm in favor of development partnerships. First, rather than promoting a patron-client relationship, which suggested unequal dependency, development cooperation embraced the idea of partnership, or working for mutual benefit. Second, rather than depending on resources or technical ability, development cooperation was determined by the partner's priorities. Rather than being dictated to by a "donor", the project selection and implementation strategy were decided through a participatory process. Thirdly, the objective of this kind of collaboration would be to increase capacity so that the connection could be updated and expanded in later phases. The objective would be to promote mutually beneficial interdependence rather than long-term dependency.

Methods

In this qualitative study methodology, it evaluated and understood India's development assistance as well as its assistance for development projects in Africa solely on the basis of secondary sources. Books, book chapters, scholarly journals, conference papers, policy briefs, official government documents, and trustworthy online sources were used as the principal data sources. Content analysis was also used in the study to select major points, dominant themes and thrusting trends of India's development aid to Africa. To put it succinctly, this paper, as stated in the introduction, provides an investigation into the motivations and mechanisms of

India's developmental aid for Africa by means of a wide-ranging examination of the efforts the country has made through secondary sources and a number of expert opinions and perspectives.

Discussions and Findings

This section, which is based on an analysis of India's aid and development projects in African nations, presents and discusses the paper's major findings. India has a stake in Africa's prosperity, as the previous sections have indicated. The idea of "development together as equals" defines this two-way relationship. Additionally, growing economies in India and Africa could reinforce the supposed South-South Cooperation by addressing issues in clean technology, marine security, connectivity, climate-resilient agriculture, and the blue economy. That partnership, however, has not yet reached its full potential, as stated by Viswanathan & Mishra (2019). Something new and tangible with a clear purpose and direction is what's required a burst of energy (Ibid.). In contrast to China and the other major traditional donor nations, India's development cooperation has been and remains negligible thus far. However, India is supporting numerous projects in Africa through its development assistance. The most well-known initiative has been the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC), which was started in 1964 and is still going strong (Kragelund, 2010). According to the Indian Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), $10,3 million (roughly Rs. 500 million) in transfers from India are involved in this project each year. This plan primarily benefits the countries on India's near periphery, though it also targets African nations. The primary method used by ITEC to distribute aid is a slots system. Five categories can be used to separate India's development assistance from Africa. They consist of study abroad opportunities, project assistance, technical support, training in India, and humanitarian aid (Kragelund, 2010). Based on their political and/or economic significance, the MEA allots slots to India's cooperating partners.

The slots are modified once a year, and a number of African nations have lately had their ITEC slots raised (to a significant extent coinciding with the TEAM-9 countries, as seen below). This scheme has sent a total of US$1 billion from India to other developing countries over the course of nearly 50 years (Kragelund, 2010). All in all, India's attractiveness to African countries stems from its capability to develop easy setups such as IT properties and medicinal items, the international presence of companies such as the TATA Assembly, Mahindra & Mahindra, and Acerlhor Mittal, and its growing supporter position. Some observers even claim that India's existence makes it a key factor in countering China's regional and global dominance (Davies *et al.*, 2008).Furthermore, India has also pioneered attempts to marry growth with social justice concerns, exploring the links between growth and poverty reduction; as noted earlier, India was the first nation to develop

an official poverty line. The impact of these cumulative experiences appears in a number of Indian cooperation policies and practices, which exhibit the following five characteristics (Agarwal, 2016):

- *Respect for the country's sovereignty*. This is evident in the lack of requirements for receiving help. Reforms must be developed through research and conversation.
- *Avoiding judgements on partner ventures*. This also prevents disagreements. India provides support in response to partner requests; it assumes the partner's competence to construct a cohesive plan.
- *Development cooperation with reciprocal benefits*. A significant amount of the support is provided through letters of credit for the purchase of Indian goods. Mutual benefit should prevent the emergence of aid fatigue.
- *Enhance technological capabilities*. After focusing so much on its own capacity building, India now devotes enormous resources to giving scholarships at Indian. Furthermore, India offers numerous local training programs that are open to or designed specifically for foreigners.
- *Reduced aid limits*. Despite India's pioneering efforts in untying aid, its cooperation assistance still requires the purchase of Indian commodities. However, aid is not double-edged, which impeded India's reform efforts in the 1960s.

All these five Indian cooperation policies and practices are sort of a deviation from the hitherto policy-buying approach of the west. The debate and findings, taken together, offer a comprehensive picture of India's developmental support to Africa. This research adds significant value to the literature on international development cooperation by dissecting the complexities of individual projects and analysing the larger picture. Based on the common developmental goals of Africa and India, the findings provide a basis for well-informed policies that will enable partnerships that are both durable and productive.

Conclusion

This section summarises the main arguments and contributions of the paper and even offers some policy recommendations in terms of enhancing India's developmental assistance in Africa. As broadly discussed throughout this paper, it is a historical one. Yet since 1947, India's 'one world' worldview and historical support for anticolonial movements, particularly in Africa, have moulded its foreign policy and defined the broad outlines of economic diplomacy and developmental cooperation. Indeed, India has preferred synergistic modes of participation that fit the essential development compact framework and the predominantly project-oriented' mission approach'. This mentality differs from

that of 'traditional' Association for Financial Assistance and Expansion's Growth Aid Board (AFAE-GAB) contributors, meaning that there may not be continuity between India's experience as a giver and as an aid receiver. Few mechanisms seem to demonstrate lessons learnt from the latter; India was a participant in triangular cooperation with the DAC donors during the 1950s and 1960s, but such programs have since disappeared from the landscape. However, Indian collaboration evolved in tandem with recipient experience that, in turn, resulted in a new perspective of donor and receiver as mutual beneficiaries and equal partners, as is demonstrated by the chapters in this collection. This, in turn, gives rise to the India development compact consisting of five elements: capacity building and skills transfer, technology and technical support, development finance, grants, and trade and investment. Capacity building was the base of India's collaboration in the early years. Besides, the Indian Technological Programme, along with the Financial Support Programme, was established to meet the requirements as well as aspirations of partner countries. ITFS initiatives have now been expanded to encompass 10,000 scholarship opportunities to be availed of by 179 countries. ITFS remains the bedrock of all activities under Indian South-South cooperation.

Recommendations

1. Thus far, India's development in Africa is trivial when compared with China and Western nations. To that end, India has to increase its development assistance both in quality and quantity.
2. Thus far, India's development in Africa is mainly training in India, yet Africa and India need to develop mechanisms on the possible mechanisms/ways to deliver these trainings in Africa so as to reduce the cost.
3. India and Africa Team up to address issues of global emergence such as climate change and terrorism, and space science as well. Sustained investments in infrastructure development push the incorporation of provinces for economic ties on the power and transport subject and likewise connecting digitally.
4. Local communities would be empowered and the workforce skilled so that sustainable growth can take place while placing more emphasis on education, training, and skill-building programs.
5. Reliance can be reduced, and economic relations can be made stronger by diversifying outside commodities and traditional industries.
6. Manufacturing, geoprocessing, and value addition are likely to be emphases of economic relations. If stable policy frameworks are ensured, the regulatory procedure is streamlined, and transparency is encouraged, the long-term relations will be sustained, and investor confidence enhanced.

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Media as a Tool of Public Diplomacy: A Comparative Study on USA, Russia and China

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Abstract

"Whoever controls the media, controls the mind." _ Jim Morrison

Physical control over the geography of a country is often complicated and excruciating. It is easier than control over the minds of the people, but if possible, have a lasting impact over centuries. As colonization progressed, nations emphasized soft power rather than hard power in the modern era. In this case, the media played a growing role in global politics. The world's major powers have paid attention to how they can control the world over the last few decades, using a combination of hard and soft power. Regarding this, actors in international politics and the global arena are always trying to balance and counter each other by creating influence through the promotion of ideologies and values. Most of the time, this is done through peripheral diplomacy as part of public diplomacy, utilizing media and online platforms. The main discussion of the paper is to analyze the majors' power strategy over the global media, controlling the information flow to preserve national interests for peripheral countries or regions, and how it has been used to increase their influence and boost the branding of the national image. This paper aims to discuss three major questions: 1. What are the aims and strategies of a significant power in global politics regarding the application of soft power diplomacy in global media? 2. Why does a metropolitan/significant power play the strategy of controlling the information flow in global media? How is this strategy working with periphery countries in the international arena? This research is entirely conducted based on secondary sources.

Keywords: Media, Public Diplomacy, Information War, Global Politics, USA, Russia, and China.

Introduction

In the modern era, access to information is a right for citizens. Otherwise, it creates inequality among people. Furthermore, the importance of media platforms (print, electronic, and social media) is gradually increasing. Information is a powerful weapon; sometimes, it is more powerful than arms. Those who have

control over the information flow can dominate the world. In this case, the media serves as a channel to extend and share information globally. Public diplomacy, or the official communication between nations, is not a new phenomenon in world politics. Since ancient times, public diplomacy has been a familiar concept in the global arena, particularly in Greece and Rome. Some scholars mentioned it as "old wine in new bottles." But its application method and arena are new and broader than before. The central argument of public diplomacy as a soft power tool for a country is one of direct communication with foreign peoples, aiming to influence other governments to maintain relations in the country's favor(GILBOA, 2007). It is worth noting that after the Second World War, the global power structure, security arrangements, and balance of power strategy were more nationalist than before, with ideology playing a crucial role. During that period, the world was dominated by two ideologies: capitalism and socialism. The West dominated one, specifically the USA, and the other by the East, specifically the USSR. Following the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, the geopolitical landscape underwent significant changes, shifting to a Western-dominated system primarily led by the United States. Over the period, the world`s superpowers widely engaged with peripheral nations and utilized public diplomacy in international politics, where media played a vital role in extending their dominant ideology and influence worldwide. Due to the advancement of Information and Communication Technology, information and its accessibility have become essayer than ever before. The online platform (social and online media) creates an opportunity to share information. As a result, the information is spread globally within seconds. In that case, the media and online platforms have emerged as ways to spread information in favor of respected countries or blocs, extending their national influence beyond their territory.

Over the period, information flows, and sectors were dominated mainly by a capitalized bloc of the Western world, more specifically by the United States. China's rise in global politics and its steadily increasing influence over peripheral nations through the application of public diplomacy in its giant project, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Besides China, Russia also gained momentum in global politics under Putin's administration. The Kremlin initiated a conventional war against Ukraine and adopted a military expansion policy to counter NATO's policy of expansion in Europe and beyond. Besides conventional wars or traditional wars, non-conventional wars, such as information wars, have also begun to emerge in global media and social platforms initiated by the Kremlin. The rise of China and Russia has reshaped global power dynamics, shifting from unilateral to multilateral frameworks, particularly in the realms of information warfare and media influence. This shift raises the question of whether the Western world's dominance in these fields is starting to decline.

Media and Public Diplomacy: A Conceptual Analysis

> *"Using the hard power to win a hundred battles is not the best option; those who subdue the enemy without hard power fighting are the best."* Sun Tzus'1

Power is the ability to change the behavior of states. Soft power or public diplomacy is not a new phenomenon in global politics, but it hashad momentum as an academicdiscourse since 1990 through the academic discussion byJoseph. Nye developed the soft power concept in public diplomacy in his book,titled*Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*and*Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*.

Nye coined the term soft power and explained it as one of the three ways of exerting power. According to Nye, power means soft power, as a country's ability to alter others' behavior to get what it wants. Moreover, there are three methods of altering behavior: coercion, payment, and attraction. Public diplomacy is closely related to the third category. A country has three main sources of soft power: "its culture (in places where it is attractive to others), its political values (when it lives up to them at home and abroad), and its foreign policies (when they are seen as legitimate and having moral authority)" (Nye, 2006).

To be identified the sources of soft power as a part of public diplomacy is difficult. Based on the resource-based approach, two kinds of soft power are usually used by nations to other countries: inherent soft power and induced soft power. Every nation-state has some inherent resources as a state or nation that can be applied to build inter-state relations. In this context, Metropolitanstates can influence periphery nations in particular tofurthertheir national interest. These resources are called inherent soft power tools.In alignment with Joseph Nye's soft power theory, there is a prevailing viewpoint that a nation's soft power is inherently ingrained in its cultural, historical, and political resources. According to this perspective, governments do not necessarily need to exert extra effort, as the appeal already exists globally. The key lies in strategically leveraging these inherent elements to achieve foreign policy goals—a resource-based strategy where the effectiveness of attraction hinges on the nation's cultural resources. On the other hand, Induced Soft Power, A strategic application of soft power, entails adopting a *behavior-based approach* to scrutinize a nation-state's foreign policy. In the process, a nation-state tries to develop its national image and brand it in front of the global community through engagement with the global community in different ways. In this case, Li argues that soft power need not to be seen from the lens of resources or power; rather, it must be seen through how a state uses its power.Regarding this, Li illustrates two points: one is that if a nation-state

1. Sun Tzu was a famous Chinese military strategist about 2,500 years ago.

effectively employs its soft power and resources through diverse domestic, cultural, economic, and political initiatives, resulting in the well-being of its citizens, it can harvest appreciation from other nations. The second point contends that a state can amass soft power by judiciously, cautiously, and considerately utilizing its power resources in interactions with other states. A state can earn respect, goodwill, and positive reciprocity from other nations by leading in providing public goods to the international community. For example, economic assistance or economic aid during crisesin other nations creates a good national image(Zafar, 2022).

In most cases, a nation (metropolitan)uses the resources mentioned above and tools for applying diplomacy to change othernations and their people's behaviors, attitudes, and identitiesby pushing their ideologies,values,and culture through the media as a part of soft power diplomacy.Considering this, the media plays a crucial role.There are three kinds of reasons beyond public diplomacy or why a nation might control or influence the media:

I. Preserve national interests

II. Promote cultural imperialism

III. Advance an interventionist ideology and values

Preserving the national interest is the core agenda for nationsin global politics. World politics and strategic arrangements have become more complex in recent years.Fromthe Second World War to the Cold War, the world was bipolar; it became unipolar after the reunion of Germany. Now, rising China and Russian intervention in global politics are again reimaging and re-structuring the world politics and power structure,becoming bipolar to multipolar. In this sense,periphery diplomacy becomes more popular for the respective global superpower`s intervention in international politics. In most of the cases, public diplomacy becomes more effective than hard power. Worldsuperpowers like the USA and its Western block use media advantage to the extent of their ideology (Democracy, Human Rights, the war against terrorism, capitalism, etc.). Beyond it, the ultimate goal is to create their influence over the world, boasting and branding the national images, to be made a path of new colonization for exploiting the periphery`s wealth with the name of investment and hold the superpower crown forever.Like ideology the culture is another strong element in foreign policy formulation, and it applies to others through media and online. It is long-lasting, durable, and effective as well. Cultural influence of a nation is also given advantages of a nation particularly on the favor of metropolitan nation to create influence over periphery nation.

MajorPower'sCompetition Over the Global Media

The global power structure in politicshas undergone a significant increase in complexity at present. Following the withdrawal of the US military from

Afghanistan and the Russian intervention in Ukraine, there has been a widespread debate in mainstream politics about the question of which nation holds the status of a superpower. This debate primarily revolves around whether the United States and its alliances are undergoing a decline in their absolute power within the realm of global politics. Globally, it is predicted thatRussiahas shownan aspiration to recoveritssuperpowercrown under Putin's leadership due to his assertive and proactive roles in global politics. On the other hand, although Chinamaintained a neutral position over the decades, its stance has been shifting due to its economic progress, military strength, and gradual engagement in global politics, proving itself to be a game changer and poised to becomea superpower soon.In this context, like the USA and Russia, China is alsoapplying public diplomacy in the media to preserve its interests by influencing the public opinions of the global community.

The USA and Global Media

There is a long history of public diplomacy in American politics, with various progressive steps formalized by President Woodrow Wilson through the establishment of the Committee on Public Information. During the Second World War, American President Franklin Roosevelt played a crucial role in media diplomacy by establishing several state-sponsored agencies, including the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (CIAA), which was formed in 1940 to counter Axis propaganda, namely the false propaganda of Germany and Italy in Latin America. This agency's primary objective was to enhance solidarity, including cultural relations with Latin American countries. After the USA participated in World War II, Washington established the Voice of America (VOA) in 1942 to counter German and Japanese propaganda. Later, the activities and influence expanded worldwide by including other government-authorized broadcasting networks to reach a global audience, notably Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, which covered Eastern Europe and Eurasia—the Radio y Televisión Martí broadcasts to island states, especially in Cuba. Radio Free Asia broadcasts the news for East and Southeast Asia, and Middle East Broadcasting Networks covers the Middle East and North Africa as an essential part of OWI's Program. Initially, it started broadcasting in four languages- English, German, Italian, and French. By 1967, the VOA was broadcasting in 38 languages to approximately 26 million listeners(Yelena Osipova-Stocke, 2022).

During the Cold War, public diplomacy regainedmomentum by formalizinga permanent Bureauunder the Department for Public and Cultural Affairs. Media broadcasting policy and strategy had been radically changed in the Middle East and North Africaafter 9/11 to counter violent extremism by increasing people-to-people conduct through the media to make consciousness to counter terrorism

by declaring the 'War on Terror'. Establishing the Middle East Radio Network (MERN), within the VOA broadcasting framework, focused on reaching the voice of the young generation to raise awareness against terrorism. Aiming to extend public diplomacy through media widely, the US government formulated the Middle East Broadcasting Networks (MBN), under the BBG framework. In this process, prominent media outlets namely Alhurra Television and Radio Sawa,havebeen supervised by the MBN (Weed, 2021).

After the Cold War, the United States gained absolute supremacy in the global information flow, primarily due to the commercialization of international media, which was dominated by a multinational company alliance controlled mainly by the Western bloc, specifically the United States. In this context, a report titled *"The Global Media Giants*" was published in 1997 by the network-based media Watchdog group FAIR. The report noted that global media are increasingly commercial, and the international media system is dominated by a small number of super-powerful, mostly U.S.-based transnational media corporations. Nine of the firms are giant firms among 50 firms, mostly dominant in the media and communication sectors. About one-half of them came from North America, including Westinghouse (now part of CBS), The New York Times Company, Hearst, Comcast, and Gannett. Most of the rest come from Europe, with a handful based in East Asia and Latin America (Mcchesney, 1997).

In the wake of proclaiming the "war on terror," the United States significantly escalated its intervention and financial commitment to accelerate capitalism within the global media landscape. This strategic move aimed to mold the interpretation of news related to the USA and its alliances, effectively targeting millions of audiences worldwide. This initiative was an integral component of the broader public diplomacy strategy.

Table-1: U.S.AInvestment on International Broadcasters, FY2015-FY2022(Weekly audience in millions)

Network	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	Target FY2022
VOA	187.7	236.6	236.8	275.2	280.9	278.0	305.0	310.0
MBN	25.7	27.5	25.7	24.7	25.7	27.5	32.0	34.0
RFE/RL	23.6	26.9	25.8	33.9	38.1	41.1	36.2	36.6
RFA	7.5	6.4	6.9	50.7	50.7	49.5	55.0	57.5
OCB			1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.2	1.2

Sources: *USAGM Report: 2022*

The U.S. Agency for Global Media (USAGM) requested an $ 810.396 million budget for the year FY 2022 against the international broadcasting operations, which was among the total budget of $ 496.281 millionallocated for Federal

Entities, $ 257 million for the VOC, $12.973 million Office of Cuba Broadcasting, $ 48.793 million for International Broadcasting Bureau, and $304.415 million for allocated for Non-Federal Entities, $126.5 million for the Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, $ 47.603 million for the Radio Free Asia, $110.312 million for the Middle East Broadcasting Networks,$ 20 million Open Technology Fund (Weed, 2021). Finally, the overall budget allocated for the USAGM for FY 2022 is $969.06 million (USAGM, 2022).

So, the USA's proactive global intervention policies and investment in global media make the USA a patron state in the worldwide arena, promoting its ideology and supremacy over peripheral nations, particularly.

Russia and Global Media

Media is a key tool and will continue to play a significant role in Russian foreign policy. In the early 1990s, Moscow initiated its media diplomacy and influence through the formation of the CIS, a nine-state agreement, to enhance its influence with its neighbors. In the case of Kazakhstan, most of the leading newspapers are published in Russian, although one-third of the country`s population is Russian. Russian television channels are the most popular among other foreign media, with "Russia" ranking as the most viewed. Prime Minister Yevgeniy Primakov said in 1998 that the single information space was 'significant for Russia, for strengthening the unity of Russia and for the development of integrationist processes. According to a survey report, although in Central Asia, 38.7% of people belong to the Russian ethnicity, around 79% of people communicate in the Russian language. Throughout the Soviet era, the media played an important role in Russian foreign policy. In recent years, particularly since the Russian intervention in Ukraine, the Kremlin has usually been using media to counter Western influence in global media against Russia. To counter the Western influence, Russia has allocated $1 million to an international program that promotes a free press in developing countries over the next five years. The funds will be allocated toward UNESCO's International Program for the Development of Communication (IPDC), with a yearly budget of $250,000 each in Africa, Latin America, Asia, and post-Soviet countries from 2022 to 2025(The Moscow Times, 2021). In order to understand Moscow's influence on the global media, we need to understand its strategies and policies. There are three objectives behind Russia's global media strategy.

1. Undermine liberal democratic norms and institutions
2. Weaken cohesion among democratic allies and partners
3. Reduce U.S. global influence
4. Advance Russian and Chinese positions.(Daniel Kliman, 2020)

During the 2016 presidential election in the USA, there was a significant shift in the playing field between democracies and autocracies, due to the use of digital interference by Russia in the campaign to influence the election. The Kremlin's adapting its global strategy in media to extend its influence from Beijing to Montevideo, from 2015 to 2020 signed over 50 media cooperation agreements with Asia, Africa, and Europe including China, India, Iran, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Pakistan, Japan, Malaysia, Philippine, Japan, Egypt, Turkey, Italy, Mexico, etc**.** agreements focus on content sharing, provide media training for journalists from other countries and some of To increase Moscow's influence over South Asia, another similar agreement was reached between Sputnik and United News of Bangladesh (UNB) on November 7, 2022, to exchange information and content and implement joint projects. Digital Development, Communications, and Mass Media and its foreign counterparts(Nataliya Bugayova, 2020).

Russia has shifted its focus towards South Asia, initiating media diplomacy and cooperation as a countermeasure to other regional players. In this context, a private media agency under Kremlin supervision signed several agreements with South Asian countries, namely India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan. In pursuit of this strategy, the Sputnik Moscow-based international media outlet, sponsored by the Rossiya Segodnya media group, which the Russian government operates, aims to establish 22 hubs worldwide. Recently, an agreement was signed between Sputnik and ANI (Asian News International). The ANI is one of the largest news agencies in India and South Asia. Based in New Delhi, it has more than 100 bureaus around the world and supplies news content to the media in India and across Asia(Sputnik International, 2018). To increase Moscow's influence over South Asia, another similar agreement was reached between Sputnik and United News of Bangladesh (UNB) on November 7, 2022, to exchange information and content and implement joint projects.

In September 2018, China Media Group and Russia's Rossiya Segodnya signed a strategic cooperation agreement witnessed by President Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin in Vladivostok. The agreement includes news exchange, joint reporting, and promoting each other's humanities, economy, and sports reports. They also agreed to strengthen cooperation in new media fields and develop a common social media platform called "Sinorusfocus" (CGTN.COM, 2018).

So, the Kremlin`s mission is clear that Russia is strongly committed tocountering the Western media influence through collaboration with other regional and global powers like China and India, to retain a global image as a superpowerbyundermining the capitalist and Western intervention in global politics.

China and Global Media

> *"Wherever the readers are, wherever the viewers are, that is where propaganda reports must extend their tentacles."* —Xi Jinping, 2016

Xi Jinping is considered a prominent and visionary leader among communist leaders and presidents, following in the footsteps of Mao. Zedong. Under his leadership, China has gained momentum in global politics, and due to his assertive and proactive public diplomacy, it is accelerating a massive campaign to influence media outlets and news consumers worldwide. China has raised global politics, the issue of using public diplomacy in media, and increased its influence over peripheral nations. At the same time, Beijing's tactics are becoming more sophisticated(Freedom House, 2002).

Since 1949, China's diplomacy has focused on the socialist bloc and developing nations of Asia, Africa, and Latin America, and it was mostly against "USA imperialism." At first Chinese government started its public diplomacy in the media by establishing the branches of the Xinhua News Agency (the official state news agency of the People's Republic of China). In the early stages, some issues were published in various languages, including English, French, Russian, and Japanese, worldwide, notably in China in 1950, China Construction in 1951, and the Beijing Review in 1958. Until today, the Beijing Review has served as the spokesman for the Communist Republic of China (PRC) to the rest of the world, presenting news on political, economic, and cultural developments.(Behari, 2017). Before 1990, the CRP had given less focus on controlling and censoring information in global media. Under the leadership of President Xi Jinping, the Chinese government began projecting China's national image through public diplomacy with media outlets worldwide. For example, the South China Morning Post reported on China's investment in global media, which has totaled around $6.6 billion since 2009. As per China Daily's figures, it paid the Wall Street Journal over $6 million, the Washington Post nearly $4.6 million, and the New York Times roughly $50,000 in ad revenues between 2016 and 2020. Chinese authorities signed a series of agreements with the ANSA (Italy's leading news-wire service firm), several of China's agreements signed with Italy under China's initiatives, among these the agreements between Xinhua (China's state broadcaster) and the ANSA (Italy's leading news-wire service firm), the agreement between RAI (Italy's state broadcaster), and China Media Group are mostly critical(Chauhan, 2022).

China's narrative underwent a significant shift in Australian media in 1999 in response to China's "Go Out" campaign. A prominent and one of the leading Australian-based media outlets called Global CAMG Media Group, founded by a local entrepreneur, Tommy Jiang, is by a Beijing-based group called Guoguang

Century Media Consultancy, sharing 60% ownership, resulting in China Radio International (CRI). Global CAMG and another of Jiang's companies, Ostar, operate at least 11 radio stations in Australia, broadcasting CRI content and producing Beijing-friendly shows to sell to other community radio stations catering to Australia's large Mandarin-speaking population(Yang, 2021).

Another strategy of the Chinesegovernment regarding enhancingChina`s influence in global media is sharing free content with the local media and agencies underagreements. In this context of applying public diplomacy in Periphery nationsparticularly Southeast Asia is one of the core regions and a great exampleof China's media diplomacy, for example,Xinhu is the state-run news agencythat sponsoredby Chineseto promote the Beijingnarrative ona global platform have a print bureauin every Southeast Asian County. Notably, Xinhu is the state-run news agency that sponsored China to promote the Chinese narrative on a global platform, and the agency has established its presence in each Southeast Asian country through print bureaus, effectively extending its reach and influence. Asurvey-based report published by Freedom House says that half the countries in a 30-nation analysis were experiencing a "very high" or "high" degree of media influence efforts by China across the world, from East to West(Aamir, 2020).

Like Southeast Asian countries, South Asia is one of the focused regions for China`s foreign policy. China has already appeared as a giantamong foreign investorsin South Asia. Apart from massive investments in economic development, China has significantly increased its media influence in South Asia.In this case, a regional superpowerlike India is a competitor actorto counter China's cultural intervention, but the Chinese governmenttakes slow and strategicpolicy regarding extent the of China's public diplomacy in South Asia throughextending the Confucius ideology, or exchanges and fellowship program, investment in local media, an employed international journalist from peripherycounties on behave of work China and it national agency such as C*hina Daily* and CGTN to emphasize the "Rise of China" by highlighting its economic breakthroughs; and the cultural centers, which it has established centers and working in 162 countries across the world. Chinagradually increasedBenjie's influence across South Asia, particularly (Barthwal, 2022).

Under Xi Jinping's leadership, Beijing's intention is abundantly clear: to systematically expand its influence across the global media landscape, either independently or through strategic partnerships, as part of its Go Out policy. This strategic pursuit aims to effectively challenge and diminish the prevailing influence of Western superpowers, particularly in regions extending from the East to the West.

Table 2: Comparative Analysis of Global Media Influence Strategies and Policies: USA, China, and Russia

Comparison criteria	USA	China	Russia
Strategy	Engages both state and non-state actors, encouraging global privatization of media sectors. Implements Track-II and Track-III diplomacy, focusing on unofficial diplomacy through evolving media agencies and civil society with bottom-up approaches.	The state is the primary actor, implementing a strategy of incremental and diffuse digital influence operation	Kremlin's image-branding initiatives counter negative coverage in Western media with state-backed media networks. The state is the main actor.
Ideology	Promotes liberal democracy, human rights, and the war against terrorism. Encourages freedom of the press and the privatization of media.	Promotes authoritarian values of economic development over democracy, aiming to weaken the cohesion among democratic alliances.	Promotes authoritarian values and seeks to undermine the Western model of democracy.
Vision	Aims to maintain its superpower status by promoting democracy and human rights worldwide.	Seeks to counter Western absolute power in the global economy by promoting its model of socialist economic development.	Aims to counter the Western-dominated information flow and retain its global image.
Focused areas	Global reach, with significant influence in North America, Europe, Asia, and the Middle East.	Across the world, but primarily focuses on Africa and Asia, extending its influence through economic investment and infrastructure projects like the Belt and Road Initiative	Focuses on Africa, Latin America, Asia, and post-Soviet countries, utilizing state media to influence public opinion.

Implication Actors for Controlling Information Flow	Both state and non-state actors are engaged, promoting the privatization of media sectors and encouraging a diverse media landscape.	The state is the primary actor, tightly controlling media narratives and promoting state-sponsored content.	The state is the primary actor, with strong control over media narratives and extensive use of state-backed media networks.
Tactics to Share Digital Influence Tools	Utilizes a broad range of digital information operations, including social media campaigns, digital diplomacy, and engagement with non-state actors to influence global narrative	Employs an incremental and diffuse strategy in digital influence operations, focusing on long-term engagement and subtle influence in target regions.	Implements confidential and often aggressive digital influence operations, leveraging government-backed media and online platforms to shape narratives.

Conclusion

Due to China's rise and Russia's comeback in global politics, the crown of superpower will likely be transferred from the West to the East, and China will become a significant factor in international politics. Without success in applying public diplomacy to the superpower's periphery nations, sustainability and durability will not be possible. As for that, the media is an essential tool for applying a nation's public diplomacy towards other countries in the international arena. In the premises, the world's superpowers, like the USA and its Western bloc, use media advantage to the extent of their ideology (democracy, human rights, the war against terrorism, capitalism, etc.). The ultimate goal is to create their influence over the world, boasting and branding national images to pave the way for new colonization.

In contrast, Russia employs information warfare to reshape global perceptions. Despite differing methods, a common objective emerges: promoting authoritarianism to undermine democratic alliances on the periphery. This analysis sheds light on the intricate interplay between media, diplomacy, and global influence, particularly in peripheral regions, offering crucial insights into contemporary international relations.

Correspondingly, to counter the USA and its alliance's absolute presence in global media, Beijing's multifaceted approach combines socialist ideology, language diplomacy, culture, and tradition to create a global narrative that challenges Western dominance. In this regard, Xi Jinping's leadership has ushered China into the realm of international media influence, reshaping global perceptions and signaling a new

era of diplomacy and soft power projection. China prioritizes economic growth and challenges Western economic dominance in regions like Africa and Asia.

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Navigating Diplomatic Crossroads: The Future Trajectory of India's Relations with Afghanistan, and China in the Era of the Taliban Islamic Emirate

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Abstract

This abstract focuses into the complex dynamics of India-Afghan relations political, diplomatic, and historical, with a special emphasis on the years after 1947 and the notable changes in India's strategy that followed the Taliban's rise to power. This article explores India's position on Afghanistan's independence, including its early backing for the Mujahedeen and its later strategic change in response to the establishment of the Taliban. The regional dynamics are made more difficult by the shifting geopolitical scene, which is exemplified by China's growing connections with the Taliban. The paper emphasizes China, India, and the Taliban's changing dynamics as well as India's careful distance from the Taliban government beyond 2021. The study highlights the security implications and predicts that the current situation will significantly influence the future dynamics of relations between Afghanistan, India, and China as these countries negotiate a complex web of opportunities and obstacles. The aim of the author's work is to present a thorough knowledge of the ways in which these variables interact to shape the development of diplomatic relations in the area.

Keywords: China, Diplomatic Crossroads, Future Trajectory, India's Relations, Taliban Emirate.

Introductions

India and Afghanistan have a long-standing historical and cultural relationship that predates the creation of the country that is now Afghanistan. But after 1947, there was a noticeable upsurge in the political links between the two countries. India has been an outspoken advocate for Afghanistan's independence and a democratic Afghanistan. India changed its approach to Afghanistan after the Taliban emerged as a result of the Mujahedeen, who were first given backing from India. The diplomatic ties between India and the Republic of Afghanistan prospered for more than 20 years in spite of obstacles.

When the Taliban took over in August 2021, the situation drastically changed and India's strategy was completely redesigned. China established strong connections with the Taliban at the same time, resulting in a complicated geopolitical situation. India has refrained from acknowledging the Taliban administration and has instead kept a careful distance. The complex web of foreign diplomacy in the area continues to be shaped by geopolitical factors, the way that China, India, and the Taliban are interacting now raises interesting issues about how their relationship may develop in the future and how it would affect regional geopolitics. India is taking notice of China's involvement with the Taliban and the parallel developments in Afghanistan as it looks to increase its influence in South Asia. The future of relations between Afghanistan and India is being shaped by a multitude of possibilities and challenges. One the one hand, India's strategic interests in the area are seriously threatened by the security implications of the Taliban's revival and the possible collaboration between China and the militant group. On the other hand, Afghanistan offers India economic advantages, especially when it comes to trade routes and connectivity initiatives. Achieving a careful balance between resolving security issues and harnessing economic opportunities is imperative while navigating this complicated situation. With wider ramifications for regional security, how these variables interact will surely be a major element in shaping the course of ties between China, India, and the Taliban.

Overview of India's historical relations with Afghanistan

India and Afghanistan developed a strong and long-lasting friendship based on a multitude of shared political, cultural, and historical experiences. This deep relationship dates back to the era of the Indus Valley Civilization, which flourished some 3,500 years ago. The historical course from that time through the middle Ages saw an ongoing flow of cultural influences, which fostered a strong sense of kinship between the two countries (Bhatti, 2018).

This cultural fusion has not only survived but flourished throughout the centuries, serving as the cornerstone of a friendly and long-lasting alliance. The relationship between India and Afghanistan is a prime example of how strong historical relationships can be, since it has shaped a history of respect and collaboration that has persisted far into the modern day (Khalil, 2016). India purposefully promoted cordial ties with Afghanistan after attaining independence in 1947, setting the stage for a robust bilateral alliance. The foundation for a relationship founded on independence and common ideals was laid by Afghanistan's courageous 1948 vote against Pakistan's admission to the UN and its principled position on the Pakhtunistan question (Siddique, 2014). Furthermore, the connection between Afghanistan and the newly established Republic of India

was strengthened by Afghanistan's unwillingness to support Pakistan in the divisive Kashmir dispute. During the Cold War, as India progressively turned more and more towards Moscow, Kabul's dependency on Soviet assistance grew, further solidifying the relationship between Kabul and New Delhi. The relationship, which reflected a shared commitment to sovereignty and mutual respect, remained cordial despite geopolitical challenges, supported by strong cultural affinities and moderate economic collaboration. The early diplomatic exchanges between Afghanistan and India continue to influence their long-lasting friendship. (Sharma, 2011).

During the 1980s, India became an important ally of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan, which was sponsored by the Soviet Union. It was the only nation in South Asia to recognize and support the communist government in Kabul (Bajoria, 2009). However, India's relationship with Afghanistan deteriorated as the 1990s saw a change in the geopolitical environment due to the Soviet retreat and the advent of the Taliban. India changed its position throughout the tumultuous era of wars and the rise of the Taliban. India enthusiastically backed US troop engagement against the Taliban government and provided support to the fighters in the Northern Alliance against the Taliban. India's support of coalition administrations in the area served as another evidence of its dedication to stability and democracy in Afghanistan. This varied trajectory, in spite of obstacles posed by shifting alliances and conflict dynamics, illustrates India's strategic agility and steadfast determination to supporting security and democratic government in Afghanistan (Ali, 2019).

Following the 9/11 attacks and the U.S.-led war in Afghanistan, there was a noticeable improvement in the relationship between India and Afghanistan. India aggressively reestablished full diplomatic relations with Afghanistan after realizing the importance of regional stability and was instrumental in assisting the war-torn country's growth and rehabilitation. India committed hundreds of millions of dollars in help with the goal of promoting economic and diplomatic cooperation as well as aiding Afghanistan's recovery. Pakistan, on the other hand, saw India's increasing influence over Afghanistan as a direct danger to its own regional strategic objectives. This view stoked a struggle for influence among the countries in the area, especially considering the precarious post-war situation in Afghanistan. Experts are becoming more concerned about how India and Pakistan's competition for influence can affect Afghanistan's stability, which highlights the need for a careful balance while negotiating the region's intricate geopolitical dynamics (Bajoria, 2009).

Leading the way in providing humanitarian aid to Afghanistan, India established itself as a major collaborator in the nation's reconstruction efforts. As

the largest donor, India committed itself to reconstructing the war-torn country by actively participating in infrastructure projects, such as the restoration of roads and airlines, which are essential for the resuscitation of an integrated and functioning society (Ali, 2014).Understanding that nation-building is a comprehensive process, India collaborated widely on health and women's empowerment projects in addition to physical infrastructure. Across national boundaries, India's efforts were essential in the establishment of a stable and self-sufficient Afghanistan by providing training to Afghan police and public personnel. With these diverse efforts, India shown a sincere desire to support the Afghan community's resilience and long-term development (Affairs, 2012).

India emphasized regional collaboration in its 2005 advocacy for Afghanistan's participation in the South Asian Association for Regional collaboration (SAARC). Significant progress was achieved during Hamid Karzai's visit to India in April 2006, as the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) and the Afghan National Standardization Authority signed three memorandums of agreement centered on standardization, education, and rural development. The signing of a Strategic Partnership Agreement between India and Afghanistan in October 2011 gave the relationship further impetus (Ali, 2019). The agreement called for projects including infrastructure reconstruction, support for education, and technical aid.

Prime Minister Modi of India dedicated the recently built Afghan parliament in Kabul in December 2015, demonstrating India's dedication to the country's progress. In 2016, India sent the Afghan Air Force four Mi-25 Attack helicopters, beginning in a new age of bilateral cooperation and a military turn to the partnership. In August 2019, Prime Minister Modi sent warm wishes to Afghanistan in honor of the country's 100th anniversary of independence, demonstrating the long-lasting friendship between the two countries (Testbook, 2023).

Impact of the Taliban Islamic Emirate on regional geopolitics

Afghanistan faces a disconcerting and unpredictable future in august 2021 as a result of the Taliban's return to power. The course of Afghanistan's future now depends on how its neighbors adjust their ties to the recently installed government (Conrad, 2022). Development of comprehensive systems addressing the socio-economic difficulties of Afghanistan might potentially alleviate the current financial and humanitarian crises in the nation, with cooperation from neighboring governments. The consequences of the current situation in Afghanistan vary depending on the country. The most susceptible states, such as Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, and Tajikistan, face particular difficulties and possible knock-on effects. In order to promote stability, alleviate the humanitarian crisis, and stop further damage to Afghanistan's socio-economic fabric, the international

community must work together as it navigates this complicated scenario (Kumar, 2023).

The geopolitical environment around Afghanistan creates a risky situation in which close states are more exposed than far-off nations with political ties to the area, including China, Russia, and India. There is a real risk that violence and militancy would spread from Afghanistan to its neighboring nations and neighboring states if the situation there worsens (Shahi, 2022). The possibility of a large-scale migration out of Afghanistan makes these neighboring countries' problems worse. The Taliban's recent gain in strength in Afghanistan represents a strategic win for Pakistan and significant setbacks for the US and India. Even if the Taliban claims to have modest political goals, other countries are nevertheless concerned about the repercussions that may extend beyond Afghanistan's borders. Fear mongering among neighboring and regional governments stems from the threat of extremism, terrorism, drug trafficking, refugees escaping humanitarian crises, transnational crimes, radicalization of Islam, arms trade, and Taliban backing for civil conflicts. The interdependence of these problems highlights how urgent it is for nations to work together to handle the complex problems arising from the Afghan crisis (Shweta, 2022). A number of nations, motivated by geopolitical and economic interests in the area, have decided to cooperate with the Taliban in spite of their contentious and turbulent past, acknowledging them as the official government of Afghanistan. Some countries have even gone so far as to hold in-person talks with the Taliban in Kabul and Doha in an attempt to promote diplomatic ties and normalize their standing in the international community. However, some countries express alarm about the inclination to interact with the Taliban. There is a general fear that the consequences might go beyond the borders of the Afghan nation-state, even if the Taliban maintains that its political goals are exclusive to Afghanistan. The international community is still wary, trying to strike a careful balance between advancing economic goals and dealing with the wider ramifications of dealing with a group that has a troubled past and an uncertain future. (Radfar, 2022).

Challenges and opportunities in redefining ties with the Taliban-led government

When the Taliban moved quickly to take over Kabul and all of Afghanistan, India decided it would be best to get out of the area. Reopening its embassy in Kabul was not an option for the Indian government, which made it evident that it was concerned about the changing circumstances. Along with this decision, all visas—including student visas—were cancelled, indicating a thorough retreat from Afghan matters. This action reflects India's concern that the Taliban's rise to prominence may open the door for Pakistan to exert more influence in Afghanistan. In order

to reduce possible risks and uncertainties related to the shifting geopolitical environment in Afghanistan, the government adopted preventive measures out of concern that such influence may endanger Indian interests and presence in the area (Kumar, 2023).

India faces a significant risk from the changing circumstances in Afghanistan after the Taliban regained control, as certain terrorist groups headquartered in Pakistan would condemn the Taliban for forging stronger connections with India. Long-standing geopolitical tensions in the area make things more difficult and might lead to instability. Realistic engagement with the Taliban is hampered by their unwillingness to modify their views on gender equality, human rights, and ethnic representation in politics. This ideological divide makes it difficult to have a positive conversation and makes it difficult for India to manage its ties with the Taliban while defending its interests in the area. It becomes imperative to resolve these ideological differences in order to promote fruitful diplomatic relations as both nations strive for peace and security balancing act, driven by pragmatism, (Kaura, 2023).

The Taliban has received help from China, Russia, and Iran in the complicated geopolitical environment of Afghanistan; each country is motivated by its own regional interests. India has unintentionally given China a chance to increase its diplomatic and economic clout in the region by taking a passive stance and taking minimal action in Afghanistan. India is carefully calibrating its approach to the Taliban because it understands how important it is to have a stable and controlled Afghanistan. Although New Delhi accepts the realities of the situation, it is hesitant to support the Taliban government, which is frequently condemned for its repressive practices. India emphasizes the need for stability and peace in the area in its efforts to build cooperative ties with the Taliban. Nonetheless, India must interact with the Taliban while maintaining a delicate diplomatic balancing act, so as not to appear to approve or condone their dubious governance methods (Mohan, 2021).

India committed to strengthening its relations with Afghanistan by announcing in the Union Budget of 2023–24 that it would provide 200 corore rupees in developmental support for the country. This was a major diplomatic step. The Taliban has welcomed this financial contribution, which will be used to promote a number of programs and projects related to development. This act comes after India gave $24 million in aid to Afghanistan in the 2022–2023 fiscal year. The Indian government is nevertheless on guard against security risks in spite of these encouraging measures, especially with regard to possible terrorist strikes in Afghanistan against Sikh sites of worship like gurudwaras. Maintaining good bilateral ties requires addressing these security issues. India can be a key player in

helping the next generation of Afghans and advancing the country's rehabilitation by overcoming these obstacles and seizing chances (Shende, 2023).India's relationship with Afghanistan presents both significant potential and difficulties. Positively, there is a great chance to improve India-Afghan relations bilaterally. This partnership may be essential for India to keep projecting its soft power throughout the area (Bhatti, 2018). India has the potential to be a key player in Afghanistan's socioeconomic growth by offering substantial help in the areas of development, infrastructure, empowerment, employment, and education. But there are also major obstacles that cast a shadow over this promising environment. Security risks continue to be a significant barrier, and the influence of nearby nations like China and Pakistan presents a difficult geopolitical problem. Furthermore, the Taliban's rebirth threatens regional security and advancement due to their ideological opposition to humanitarian norms. India's involvement with Afghanistan will need to take a measured and deliberate approach in order to navigate these obstacles and seize the benefits (Rumel, 2012).

China's influence on how the Islamic Emirate and the Taliban may interact in the future

Between 1996 and 2001, China handled relations with the first Taliban government in Afghanistan with caution, especially when it came to the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) and what it meant for the western Chinese province of Uighur. In this time frame, China received guarantees from Taliban commander Mullah Omar that no militant organization, including ETIM, would use Afghan land as a base of operations for strikes against China. China and the Taliban leadership did not have formal diplomatic relations, but their representatives met often in Kabul. China was able to preserve some influence over the Taliban's operations in Afghanistan while simultaneously defending its interests in the area because to this careful balancing act. In the years that followed, as geopolitical upheavals and worldwide concerns altered the terrain of international relations, the dynamics of this connection would undergo profound transformations (Jiayi, 2022).

After the Taliban withdrew in December 2001, the Chinese government was crucial in assisting Hamid Karzai's Afghan Transitional Administration. China showed its dedication in 2002 when it contributed a sizeable $150 million to help the Karzai government come into power. China's contributions to Afghanistan's development went much beyond financial aid; they included the provision of commodities and materials, debt relief, capacity building, and help in constructing governmental and educational facilities. The Kabul Declaration on Good Neighborly Relations, which was signed in December 2002 and placed a strong emphasis on cordial and cooperative relations between the two countries, further solidified

the diplomatic ties between China and Afghanistan. The Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Good Neighborly Relations, which China and Afghanistan signed in 2006, marked a critical turning point in their alliance by reaffirming their commitment to mutual cooperation and regional stability (Bashardost, 2019). The announcement by the Obama administration in 2014 that it would be ending the U.S. mission in Afghanistan marked a significant change in the geopolitical environment, especially in light of China's growing influence in Afghan politics. The relationship between China and Afghanistan was first formed in the field of security, but it took off in 2011 when a joint venture in the Amu Darya oil basin was announced. China's financial aid increased significantly in this connection, from $197 million to $326 million between 2013 and 2017. China has deliberately maintained diplomatic connections on a bilateral basis with the Taliban as well as the Afghan government; in 2014, China's cooperation with the Taliban became more noticeable. China demonstrated its rising influence and strategic posture in the area by actively participating in the Quadrilateral Coordination Group and, in a noteworthy step, holding a high-profile meeting with Taliban leaders in July 2021, shortly before the Taliban took over Afghanistan (Cipto2, 2023).

China's dealings with the Taliban present opportunities and challenges.

There will be significant consequences for China in the areas of economy, security, and humanity from the United States' exit from Afghanistan in 2021. China's internal stability may face problems in the wake of the U.S. exit, as the unstable situation in Afghanistan might impact the wider regional security environment. But in the middle of these difficulties, China has a chance to demonstrate its power and make a constructive contribution to the growth and rehabilitation of Afghanistan. China has the potential to be a major economic force, contributing significantly to the reconstruction of Afghanistan's economy after the war. In addition, the country may become a major player in the mining sector, providing stability and economic progress in Afghanistan. China has the power to safeguard its interests and advance the peace and prosperity of the region at large by actively participating in the reconstruction of Afghanistan (Jiayi, 2022). Since the Taliban took control of Afghanistan, the topic of security and its possible ramifications has emerged as a major concern in bilateral talks between China and the group. China's Foreign Ministry, represented by Wang Yi, emphasized its adherence to a long-standing non-interference policy amid mounting worries about the potential for terrorist strikes and regional instability. In May 2022, Wang Yi made a clear declaration during his visit that "China would never interfere or fear Afghanistan's internal affairs," indicating a conscious attempt to curtail China's security involvement in the nation. Although this commitment to non-interference

is in line with China's diplomatic ideals, it begs the question of the region's overall insecurity, which continues to be China's top priority. Stability in the area depends on striking a careful balance between upholding Afghanistan's sovereignty and tackling the larger security issues while both countries hold negotiations (Sayed, 2022).Through a number of notable concessions, China has shown that it is committed to promoting economic cooperation and bolstering diplomatic relations. During discussions over the Mes Aynak copper mine and the Amu Darya oil project, China showed remarkable economic generosity by cancelling a whopping 98% of tariffs. This action highlights China's strategic interest in gaining access to important resources and shows a desire to participate in cooperative partnerships. Furthermore, the fact that more a greater focus is being placed on encouraging increased trade in agricultural products emphasizes how complex these agreements are. Notwithstanding the potential economic benefits, the obstacle for Chinese investments is to efficiently allocate funds towards the promotion of sustained economic growth. China continues to face a significant challenge in attempting to increase its market share in international markets: striking a balance between economic expansion and social and environmental concerns (Manish, 2023).

Afghanistan may be included to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a major infrastructure undertaking intended to improve economic ties between China and Pakistan, according to reports from Chinese authorities. China's desire to expand the corridor's scope and promote regional economic cooperation is reflected in this plan. Afghanistan's possible admission might help the war-torn country recover and prosper by providing a route for stability and economic expansion. But doing so would probably present diplomatic difficulties and need carefully assessing the geopolitical environment in the area (Mingyang, 2023). Pragmatic factors dominate the relationship between China and the Taliban administration. As seen by a number of public declarations supporting the reformation of Taliban government, China has deliberately positioned itself as a major participant in the rehabilitation of Afghanistan. As a result, the Taliban have publicly recognized China as their main ally in the process of reconstructing the country, highlighting China's function as Afghanistan's entry point into the international market.

However, because other extreme organizations could criticize the Taliban's security collaboration with China as a betrayal of fundamental convictions, China faces increased dangers in this partnership. Strong support for the building of an independent, impartial, unified, democratic, and peaceful Afghanistan, free from the grip of terrorism, conflict, and narcotics, was stressed in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Joint Declaration of Heads in 2022. The statement called for the establishment of an inclusive administration, indicating a group effort to promote stability and growth in the area (Morisco, 2023).China's

attitude to Afghanistan now is a strategic move away from the unilateral strategies that both the US and the Soviet Union had previously used in favor of a regional one. China is careful not to repeat past mistakes, having learned significant lessons from these initiatives' failures. China finds itself in a difficult predicament due to Afghanistan's historically difficult foreign policy dynamics and the country's growing economic and security involvement in Central Asia. China views the reformation of Afghanistan and the establishment of peace and security as a perfect chance to demonstrate its leadership on the global arena, taking into account the possible threats and possibilities present in the area. China hopes to contribute to the larger objective of regional security and prosperity by fostering stability in Afghanistan through the implementation of a regional strategy (Jiayi, 2022).

The Role of Taliban Islamic Emirates in Shaping India - China Dynamics

India-China relations have been profoundly impacted by the Taliban's comeback in Afghanistan. Afghanistan had an economic downturn and a decline in ties with the West following the Taliban's return. China and India attempted to build stronger relations with the newly installed government as a result. India had first intervened in Afghanistan after US forces invaded the country in 2001, all while being under US protection (Jacob, 2014).While China remained mostly reluctant to become engaged in Afghan politics, and India took advantage of this chance and played a crucial role by using soft power strategies. But the geopolitical environment changed with the Taliban's takeover in August 2021, forcing China and India to reevaluate their stances and approaches in the area. As a result of the shifting geopolitical landscape in Afghanistan, the growing influence of the Taliban Emirates has shaped the complex relationship between China and India (Manish, 2023). India has grown more concerned about China's growing influence in the area after the US withdrew its soldiers from Afghanistan. India is keeping a close eye on China's involvement in Afghanistan due to the geopolitical implications for regional security left by the United States' withdrawal (Ghosh, 2022).Nevertheless, despite these worries, there could be a bright spot. India and China may work together more if they have the same goal of promoting peace in Afghanistan.

Given the significance of maintaining stability in the area, both Asian powers might collaborate to tackle the emerging possibilities and difficulties. In the case of Afghanistan, cooperation between China and India might not only help the much-needed peace process but also open the door for economic growth that would benefit both countries domestically and promote prosperity across borders. Thus, the circumstances surrounding the US exit provide China and India a chance to unite in support of the promotion of their own interests as well as the interests of the larger regional community.

Afghanistan has the capacity to feed a sizable population due to its rich and productive agricultural soil; only 12% of its arable land could sustainably generate enough food for up to 160 million people. (Jacob, 2014). Global investors have taken note of this agricultural wealth, especially those from China and India, who have started to engage in the Afghan agricultural industry after seeing the profitable prospects. International attention is also drawn to the nation's abundant natural resources, which one previous minister of mines estimated to be worth up to $3 trillion. With so many precious minerals and metals at its disposal, Afghanistan is a prime destination for partnerships and strategic investments. These changes might be rather significant in determining Afghanistan's economic environment and promoting international cooperation for mutual gain, as the country works to exploit its agricultural and natural richness (Reuters, 2021).

Conclusion

India has continuously shown that it is willing to stand behind the people of Afghanistan by using different tactics and approaches in different circumstances. India has demonstrated its commitment to supporting Afghanistan in its quest for an autonomous and stable government by investing billions of dollars and making significant commitments over the years, therefore establishing itself as a genuine ally of the Afghan people. India has a difficult situation as a result of the recent US pullout and the Taliban takeover. There is genuine fear that China and Pakistan may try to influence the geopolitical environment in Afghanistan. India has the difficult challenge of negotiating a complicated geopolitical chessboard in Afghanistan, even with Pakistan's long-standing support for the Taliban. India must have a strong presence in the area to fend off threats and protect its interests in the face of shifting regional dynamics since the nation cannot afford to cede its influence to China.

The validity of the Taliban as a new government is still a hotly debated topic across the world. Many claim that the group will only receive limited recognition internationally if it has the backing of important Asian nations and neighboring countries. Afghanistan is a war-torn country that needs significant political, economic, and humanitarian help, especially from powerful powers in the area, in order to achieve stability and rebuilding. India has been instrumental in providing this kind of help, having been an unwavering ally of Afghanistan for more than 20 years. It is impossible to ignore the close historical links that exist between India and Afghanistan, and the Afghan people have always shown their gratitude for India's assistance. The Taliban cannot afford to overlook India's substantial contributions and the goodwill it has built with the Afghan people over the years, especially given the present geopolitical environment. The relationship between the Taliban and India continues to be a crucial element in determining Afghanistan's future

course, highlighting the complex network of regional alliances and the significance of obtaining backing from significant Asian nations for the Taliban's international legitimacy.

China's involvement in Afghanistan has been mostly directed on gaining access to the nation's abundant natural resources, especially its mineral riches, rather than cultivating ties with the Afghan people or attending to the concerns of the Taliban. This strategy, motivated by China's geopolitical objectives and a desire for financial benefit, makes one wonder if its engagement will be sustainable in the long run. China runs the danger of inciting instability by putting its security interests ahead of the welfare of the Afghan people, which may not be consistent with the past experiences of long-lasting alliances. Furthermore, China faces a significant obstacle since it only pays attention to its goals in Afghanistan, ignoring India's sway over the region. China's ambitions to create a stable and long-lasting presence in Afghanistan may be hampered if it ignores the local emotions and the larger geopolitical factors.

And the last Both China and India priorities security above all else in the complicated geopolitical context of South Asia, with economic concerns coming in close second. The Taliban's recent rise to power and subsequent revival in Afghanistan have created a special threat to the region's security dynamics. For differing reasons, both countries are forced to interact with the Taliban. India considers it unethical and economically detrimental to distance itself from the Taliban and the people of Afghanistan. India must strike a careful balance between negotiating economic relations with the Afghan people and engaging the Taliban for protection due to the strategic requirement for security. On the other side, Beijing appears eager to interact with the Taliban without giving any thought to the possible security ramifications for its neighbor, which presents a conundrum for India. Their differing approaches to dealing with the Taliban highlight the complicated interaction between security and economic reasons in influencing foreign policy decisions in the area as these countries negotiate the tight web of regional dynamics.

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Punctuated Equilibrium Theory, Higher Education and the COVID-19: An Analysis of India

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Abstract

Of late, higher education in India has witnessed a radical paradigm shift due to the onset of COVID-19. A policy change occurred in the higher education, shifting focus from traditional face-to-face learning to online learning. The paper narrates how the higher education scenario in India has undergone the rapid transformation. It describes Indian political leaders' readiness and introduction of online educational programmes to cope up with the disruption caused by the emergence of the Covid-19. The framing of the Covid-19 as a threat to physical education and immediate demand for introduction of online education set the background to transform the emergency online educational learning as a norm. Thus, the central argument of the paper is that how the Covid-19 emerged and framed as a dramatic or triggering event, and the triggering point shaped India's higher educational policy. This argument is explained from the analytical framework of the punctuated equilibrium theory.

Keywords: India, public policy, Punctuated Equilibrium Theory, online education, COVID-19, emergency learning

Introduction

Of late, India's higher education faces unprecedented challenges from multiples fronts, particularly the massive and extraordinary dependence on digital means of learning due to the onset of the COVID-19. The emergence of the COVID-19 and its severe impact on education compelled India's state and central governments to halt the traditional face-to-face interaction and pedagogy. High dependence on technology-driven learning significantly lowered students' ability to grasp knowledge. Teachers face unexpected and sudden challenges to meet the expectations of their students as many teachers are unfamiliar with technological means of education. It means the COVID-19 outbreak completely transformed teachers impart of knowledge and students' learning process. As a direct

consequence of social distancing and, simultaneously maintaining educational service during the time of lockdown, India's higher educational institutions call off traditional classroom teaching and shift onto digital learning. As the virus is highly transmissible, the framing of COVID-19 pandemic as a threat to physical education and the sudden shift to online education is known as "Emergency eLearning" (Murphy 2020).

Digitalization of higher education is not new in India's higher education. However, digital education was not mandatory, imposed, immediate and overwhelming. The COVID-19 pandemic suddenly led to the closure of all educational institutions and digital learning is imposed as the only means of education. The sudden imposition of online education is a 'paradigm shift' that redesigned the role and learning process of teachers and students. This sudden and radical transformation of education is the emerging challenge in the present educational systems.

Against this setting, this paper analyses the digital learning phenomenon to understand the nature of higher education in India as the country faced an immediate challenge to rapidly redesign the educational system from physical learning to e-learning. To examine the recent radical and rapid transition of digital learning in the Indian higher education, this study applies the punctuated equilibrium theory (PET). The punctuated equilibrium theory is widely applicable and therefore, understood as an appropriate framework for defining this phenomenon. The theory demonstrates why certain policies remain stable for a long time and how a dramatic event triggers a sudden change in longstanding status quo policies. It aims to explain why public policies tend to be characterised by long period of stability and interrupted by dramatic development. Looking into the PET, this paper underlines the dramatic event i.e., COVID-19 and its implications for India's higher education and how policymakers accelerate the mode of digital learning.

There has been ample literature on PET to study multiples issues in the context of Western countries. However, with reference to India, PET is mostly studied to analyse nuclear issues. India's higher education is not examined in detail by looking at PET. As COVID-19 is an external and a dramatic event, PET is applied to examine the impact of the pandemic on India's higher education that induced a major shift in the country's educational policies. This paper is divided into four sections. Apart from the first section that includes introduction, the second section analyses the conceptual aspect of PET. The third section establishes the connection between PET and India's higher educational system. The final section summarizes the major conclusion of the paper and challenges associated with the higher education in India.

Punctuated Equilibrium Theory: A Conceptual Analysis

Punctuated equilibrium theory (PET) is a framework to understand the process of change in complex social, economic and political structures. The term punctuated equilibrium evolved from biological sciences (Givel 2010). In the policy studies, PET originated from the agenda setting theory. Examining the agendas and policy dynamics in the US, Frank Baumgartner and Bryan Jones developed the PET to study the evolving nature of public policy. In their book, *Agendas and Instabilities in the US Politics,* Baumgartner and Jones underline the concept of 'punctuated equilibrium'. The word punctuation means interruption or break and equilibrium relates to the stability or a kind of balance. It mainly contends that any social structure or social system exists for some time but sometimes it might be punctuated by a sudden shift that leads to radical change. Policy equilibrium or stability is important to witness the potential benefits or risks of that policy in the long-run. However, policy stability might be disrupted by a short period of sudden change that can be studied by applying the PET (Matzke 2020). In other words, PET contends that 'Political processes around policy issues are characterized by long periods of stability interrupted by short intervals of rapid and significant change – punctuations. This idea implies that change in attention and public policy is not gradual or incremental, but substantial when it happens' (Beyer *et al.,* 2022).

This theory of policy change was first introduced by Frank Baumgartner and Bryan Jones in 1993. It was associated with the long-term analysis of American national policymaking, but its structures have been useful in understanding public policy making more generally. According to PET, stability and policy change are two sides of the same coin. We can see either punctuation or equilibrium at a time. Punctuation or a radical change occurs as policy needs to respond to emerging, urgent and complex problems of the society. Some policy requires incremental change or adjustment. However, in some cases, sudden and abrupt developments demand to deviate from the existing policy and redesign the policy to deal with a complex problem.

Political processes tend to be slow-moving. We usually witness incremental changes in public policy as they always resist change. Kingdon argues that major policy change happens when the problem, policy and political streams converge concerning any policy issue (2013). It means a particular issue or problem is interpreted and responded by multiple policy entrepreneurs. Here, policy entrepreneurs mean individuals who are ready to invest their time, money, fame, resources in the hope of friendly policies for them in the future (Kingdon 1984). They may be state or non-state actors to determine public policy. Sometimes, policy entrepreneurs take urgent action due to 'focusing events' or 'dramatic events' to handle a crisis, and sometimes, they adopt a gradual change in a policy. It is also evident that influential policy entrepreneurs (for example, influential or powerful

political party or political leaders) attempt to monopolise to take policy decisions. Thus, policies usually change due to political leaders' interests, public opinions, dramatic events, elections, unforeseen or sudden crisis such as environmental disasters, riots and protests which can turn out to be a 'triggering event' (Cairney, 2012). The occurrence of one event can be the reason for another event that gets sufficient public, media and government attention. For example, after the Bhopal gas tragedy in 1985, the Indian government passed and implemented the Environment Protection Act, 1986.

Agenda setting, conflict expansion, policy image/framing are some of the important elements of the PET that are mainly responsible for any kind of punctuation in any political system. Agenda setting is a process which focuses on the issues with more public, media and government attention, and the need of addressing the problem. The top policy-makers do not widely discuss all issues as only a few get the priority. Sometimes, an issue receives policy attention due to its 'technical feasibility', low cost, 'value acceptability within the policy community' or urgency (Cairney & Zahariadis, 2016). The main idea behind agenda setting is that political attention is a necessary pre-condition for change (Simon 1957). The policy image is created or articulated by multiple actors to determine the nature of a policy (Baumgartner & Jones, 1991). In other words, it can be understood as the justification of that policy or how a policy is projected in public. If the image is negative then ultimately it will force the system to change the policy and if the image is positive then the system does not require any punctuation. So, the sub-system (consisting of bureaucrats, media, spokespersons, block-level officers etc.) always tries to project a positive policy image. It is also noticed that the sub-system manipulates policy image to maintain their position and influence. With changing policy images, the possibility to achieve radical policy transformation also increases. Conflict expansion relates to growing public discontent over a policy that might challenge the policy sub-system. Both people and media play a major role in highlighting and fostering the change. Thus, the central argument of the PET is policy stability might be challenged and disrupted with sudden emergence of new and complex problems. Policy entrepreneurs push that 'triggering events' to bring an issue to the policy agenda and, subsequently, policy decision. The next section examines the radical shift in the higher education due to the outbreak of pandemic, from the theoretical lens of punctuated equilibrium theory.

Punctuated Equilibrium Theory and Digital Learning in India

There are many policy problems that exist in a society at any point of time. But all those problems cannot grab the attention of policy-makers. Political leaders filter the policy problems, identify the crucial problems, and formulate policies to

contend with the problem. However, the identification and formulation of policy hinge on political will to resolve the problem. Political leaders must be willing and interested to handle the problem. One of the factors that propel the political leaders' will to identify and formulate policy is the onset of COVID-19 and its massive infliction on higher education. The COVID-19 seriously inflicted or punctuated the educational system in India.

India's higher educational system was punctuated or disrupted. The normal face to face learning was projected as a serious challenge as the COVID-19 infectious disease might rapidly spread within the educational institutions. To prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus, governments around the world imposed strict policies of maintaining social or physical distance which consequently led to the closure of higher educational institutions. On 23 March 2020, the Government of India suddenly declared 21 days complete lockdown. Citing the severity of the health emergency, PM pronounced that '*If situation is not handled in these 21 days, the country and your family could go back 21 years. If situation is not handled in these 21 days, several families will get devastated forever*' (Modi, 2020). The official declaration of health emergency in the country indicated punctuation (a disruption) in all sectors of the economy, including education.

Against this backdrop, on 5 March 2020, the higher education body University Grant Commission (UGC) issued a strong warning to higher educational institutions to take preventive measures such as monitoring of recent travel history of faculties, following the health advisory, health status of hostel students and so on (UGC, 2020a). Subsequently, educational institutions were closed for students for more than a year. This exceptional policy decision of closing university is due to extraordinary health emergency. According to Murphy, "Following the logic of the exception—that extraordinary times call for extraordinary measures—one common trend in education systems around the world has been to respond to the pandemic with "emergency eLearning" protocols, marking the rapid transition of face-to-face classes to online learning systems" (2020: 492). The COVID-19 outbreak affected 1.6 billion learners and 63 million teachers at different levels of education across the globe (United Nations, 2020). The sudden shift to emergency online education was perceived as an urgent alternative to face-to-face learning.

Due to the sudden lockdown and closure of universities in March 2020, the regular practice of face-to-face teaching was abruptly stopped. In a short notice, students were instructed to leave the university campuses. Scientific laboratories were closed. Without any formal and regular training on online education, university authorities instructed faculties to follow online teaching on urgent basis. Academic calendar was rescheduled. On 23 March 2020, UGC instructed university faculties and researchers to work from home, which is another 'new normal' in the

work culture and develop on-line content, online teaching and online evaluation (UGC 2020b). On 25 March 2020, UGC again issued an order to expedite ICT related teaching and learning methods by stressing on the exploitation of existing online available opportunities like SWAYAM, e-PG Pathshala, VIdwan and so on (UGC 2020c). The Government started the "Bharat Padhe Online" campaign to promote online education. Students were under huge pressure to attend online classes fearing for their shortage of attendance and potential deprivation of knowledge. Transportation was suspended. This sudden shift is historical and unprecedented in India's educational system. Many researchers, academicians and media began to talk about this in various public platforms regarding the urgency to adopt alternatives in pedagogies. However, the health emergency also affected the students' aspiration, emotion and career ambition to join in international universities as travel restriction and infectious nature of virus restricted students' movement. 'Those students who got admission to international universities could not join academic programmes due to travel restrictions and global lockdowns, causing great emotional distress to students and parents. At the same time, the inability of foreign universities to admit international students has not only affected the income of those reputed universities but also campus diversity which has a decisive impact on the intellectual emotional and multicultural milieu they enjoyed' (Tilak and Kumar, 2022). The urgency brought by COVID-19 caught the political attention. Prime Minister Narendra Modi says, online classes become the 'culture' of the COVID times and the people of India must accept the online education as 'the new normal' (cited in Sharma, 2020). This exceptional and extraordinary situation of COVID-19 drove Indian political leaders to transform the emergency to normal situation to legitimise the online education.

Considering the health emergency and ramifications for higher education, government started to normalize the situation by introducing innumerable measures to expedite online education in India. The current government is more focused on the Digitalization of India, which it extended to the aspect of education. The government recognizes the idea that for imparting digital literacy and to be in par with the standardized innovations in educational sector, exposure to digital education is necessary for Indian students. This will also lead to betterment of India's human capital formation which will benefit the economy. In order to project its capability of solving the learning crisis, politicians acted like 'policy entrepreneurs' and pushed the idea of online education on the educational institutions. For instance, after the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 was published, from July 2020 Ministry of Education presented Alternative Academic Calendar guidelines on continuing formal education online in the 2020–21 academic year. This virtual mode was adopted through online teaching methods, software applications from

governments, Direct-to-Home (DTH) channels etc. The PM e-Vidya Programme was implemented by the Central Government with the aim of bringing together all the initiatives taken up for stimulating the digital education till May 2020, in order to facilitate equitable multi-mode access to education.

As a part of the program, government took up a series of initiatives namely Bharat Padhe Online campaign, Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing Portal (DIKSHA), the National Mission on Education through Information and Communication Technology (NME-ICT), Swayam Prabha, Mukta Vidya Vani, Shiksha Vani Podcast and Vidya Daan 2.0. All India Radio and Doordarshan broadcasted digital content and other educational content through regional language on TV, Radio and YouTube (Ministry of Information and Broadcasting 2020). While the e-Vidya program was initiated by the government in May 2020, the digital education was not popularized in a significant manner. While some experts suggested the option of choosing a zero academic year for 2020-21, the University Grants Commission (UGC) which regulates the Indian educational sector instructed all the institutes for adopting online-mode approach to maintain the learning process of students (Rozario 2020). These governmental interventions were employed to resolve the sudden disruption in the learning process. Though this could have been done earlier, the educational institutions and the government perceived COVID-19 as the event to boost digital learning.

As the problem aspect is highlighted by the dramatic event i.e. COVID-19, with the students struggling to meet their right to education, and while the variety of policy options were available to deal with the learning gap, the political leaders chose digital learning to solve the problem as the policy aspect, identifying that digital education is the mechanism which can ensure learning and safety of individuals. This identification is drawn through the suggestions of policy communities which include political leaders, bureaucrats and specialists. Finally, political leaders have shown their willingness to implement digital learning by introducing a series of initiatives. The convergence of all these important streams of policy (problem, policy and political) triggered a radical shift from conventional to digital learning in India. COVID-19 has worked as a catalyst for the educational institutions to grow and opt for platforms with technologies, which have not been used before. Thus, the emergence of the Covid-19 and its threat to face-to-face teaching forced the government to accept the online education as a norm rather an emergency.

Conclusion

Higher education in India witnessed an unprecedented change in the wake of COVID-19. The declaration of health emergency in the country brought a series of abrupt changes in both the teaching and learning process, having a bearing on

the stakeholders. On the one hand, the higher education institutions (HEIs) had to search for new avenues to keep the teaching and learning going on. This led to the adoption digital educations as the means of teaching in place of face-to-face classroom teaching. On the other hand, students were compelled to accept the digital learning without any option. The changes triggered by the novel corona virus, had put pressure on the policymakers, teachers, students and parents too. The Government of India's policy response to the learning in the HEIs received inadequate attention in policy sciences. To fill this gap, the paper reviewed the efforts of UGC in managing the HEIs with the analytical framework of Punctuated Equilibrium theory. A series of digital initiatives, which are in vogue, have been used by the government extensively to impart education through online platforms. The policy communities have efficiently used this policy option, not only to plug the gaps in learning, but also popularize the GoI's digitization campaign. The paper concludes that the policy change (shift to digital education) is not possible without triggering event and the convergence of three streams: problem (of teaching and learning), policy and political will (of the policymakers).

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Indian National Congress in Assam's Political Landscape: Exploring the Challenges and Future prospects

Jilly Sarkar and Vidhika Choudhury

Abstract

The Indian National Congress (henceforth Congress) with its long historical legacy and its ability to create a support base cutting across the several identities, has enjoyed the status of a 'dominant party' in Assam since independence. However, questions about the continued dominance of Congress were raised since the general elections of 1967. The party became significantly weak post 1991 as it could never form government entirely on its own. The consecutive parliamentary elections of 2014 and 2019 have merely consolidated the conspicuous decline of the party, raising serious doubts about its revival. Assam being a traditional stronghold of the Congress, provides an appropriate context to understand the Congress Party in terms of its decline, revival or resilience. The paper seeks to situate the Congress party's position in Assam's political scenario in an attempt to understand the challenges which explains its decline in the state and to apprehend whether the party has any chances of revival.

Keywords: AGP, Assam, Congress, Decline, Regional Party, Regional Politics

Introduction

The political landscape of Assam is shaped by its varied societal landscape. Assam is characterized by multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and multi-linguistic population which cuts across each other in a crisscross manner. The Indian National Congress (henceforth Congress) with its long historical legacy and its ability to create a support base cutting across the several identities, has enjoyed the status of a 'dominant party' in Assam since independence. The freedom struggle led by the Congress party largely contributed to its existence and operation, with such resilience in the post- independence era. The party's organization and extensive support base was firmly rooted in the nation's freedom struggle. However, questions about the continued dominance of Congress were raised since the general elections of 1967 when its dominance was challenged in 9 states. Its decline, however, was

postponed by its comeback in 1980 with Indira Gandhi as the Prime Minister, since the Janata Party could not provide a decisive government at the centre owing to internal factions and rivalry; and in 1984, when Rajiv Gandhi got a massive victory, riding on a sympathy wave, post Indira Gandhi's assassination. The party was significantly weakby the time it came back to power again in the year 1991 (Palshikar, 2015)and in subsequent elections as itcould never form government entirely on its own. The consecutive parliamentary elections of 2014 and 2019 have merely consolidated the conspicuous decline of the party, raising serious doubts about its revival. However, the vote share of the party in Assam's 2024 parliamentary election which is 37. 48 per cent and is slightly higher than the BJP's 37. 43 per cent demonstrates a possibility of its resurgence in the state. Assam being a traditional stronghold of the Congress, provides an appropriate context to understand the Congress Party in terms of its decline, revival or resilience. As mentioned already, the party has demonstrated its resilience in the General Elections of 2024 in terms of garnering vote share which is more than the BJP. The paper, thus, seeks to situate the Congress party's position in Assam's political scenarioin an attempt to understand the challengeswhich explains its decline in the state and to apprehend whether the party any has chances of revival based on the outcomes of the General Election 2024.

The paper begins with a brief background of the Congress in Assam followed by an understanding of the different challenges faced by the party whichhas led to its decline. The challenges have been categorized as the regional challenge from the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), the communal challenge from the AIUDF, the nationalist's regional challenge from the BJP and the Congress' internal organizational and leadership challenge in the state. The conclusion explores the electoral prospects of the Congress in Assam based on an understanding of the various challenges outlined in the paper.

The paper is foregrounded on available theories on demise of political parties which consider a political party as dead only when it permanently ceases to participate in elections by nominating candidates. Thus, party survival hinges on participation in elections- local, state or national level (Rose and Mackie, 1988: 539; Spoon 2011:16-17). Secondly, as argued by Bolleyer *et al.* (2019), relative electoral decline, as long as it is moderate, might not affect a party's prospects for survival. This relative decline is measured as against the historical performance of the party. Third, the importance of 'historically grown loyalties' remains central in the life of established parties in democratic states which explains their resilience (Bolleyer *et al.* 2019). Based on the above theoretical insights, the paper seeks to argue against demise of the Congress in Assam.

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History of Congress in electoral politics of Assam

The Congress party's unabated dominance in Assam's politics continued for almost three decades since the first general elections in 1952 till 1977. Exhibiting its 'catch-all'support base, its vote bank comprised of Assamese and Bengali Hindus, Assamese and Bengali Muslims, tea tribes and other linguistic minorities. It is noteworthy that people of Assam voted for the Congress party in 1977 in the aftermath of Emergency of 1975, when most of the other Indian states had rejected the Congress in favour of the Janata Party. With a vote share of over 50 per cent, Assam returned 10 out of 14 parliamentary seats in favour of the Congress party in the 1977 general elections. Defending the cause of Assamese language and culture in the initial days post-independence, the party had to 'redefine its support base' to incorporate the numerically crucial and thus 'electorally significant' Bengali Hindus and Muslims of the Bengali speaking districts like Cachar(Goswami, 2020: 38-39). Predominantly represented by the Assamese upper caste, the party also saw the rise of Sarat Chandra Singha, a non-upper caste Koch-Rajbonshi as the Chief Minister in 1972 (Saikia, 2020: 3) This considerably diluted the upper caste's influence on the Congress party as Singha 'succeeded in mobilizing the support of the Muslims, scheduled castes and Hinduized plains and hill tribes, Bengalis, tea-garden labour community, Ahoms, Rajbangshis and other backward communities in his favour' (Hussain, 1988:412) ensuring Congress' continued dominance in Assam's politics for about three decades. However, the Congress' 'catch-all' support base gradually eroded owing to a host of issues, viz. , continuous influx of refugees from east Pakistan, linguistic chauvinism of Assamese middle class/ upper castewho insisted on making Assamese the official language of the state, and the consequent identity assertion by the tribals (Khasis, Garos and Bodos) as they felt alienated and threatened by the hegemonic tendencies of the Assamese middle class (Goswami, 2020: 40). All these made the political space ripe in Assam for rise of regional political parties which challenged the dominance of the Congress in the state. It is noteworthy that Assam's politics revolves around two issues, viz. , the issue of Assamese language which culminated in the Language movement of the 1960s and 70s and the issue of illegal immigration of people into the state which led to the anti-foreigner's movement or Assam movement in the 1970s and 80s. As will be evident in the paper, the way these issues are played out by the political parties determines their political fortune.

The Regional Challenge: Rise of AGP

The assembly election of 1985 that saw the unpredicted rise of Asom GanaParishad (AGP), a culmination of the Assam Accord, is one of the most crucial factors that initiated the process of decline of Congress in Assam. In the late 1970s,

the matter of illegal influx of people into Assam cropped up as names of illegal immigrants were detected in the voters list for the bye-election in Mangaldoi constituency. This led theAll Assam Students Union (AASU) to demand deferring of elections till the voters' list was updated by deleting the illegal names from it. The movement was widely supported by the Assamese middle class which mostly included students, teachers and lawyers. The rural people too actively backed the movement, ensuring its huge success. The Assam movement which 'articulated the regional aspirations of the Assamese people' and culminated in signing of the historic Assam Accord in 1985, led to the formation of the AGP in October 1985 (Goswami, 2020: 64). The AGP successfully challenged and in fact ended the dominance of the Congress in the state with a decisive victory in the assembly elections of 1985. The invincibility of the Congress in Assam was for the first time challenged in 1978 Assembly elections when the Janata Party formed the government with Golap Borbora as the Chief Minister. However, due to internal rifts between the MLAs who supported the government, the Janata Party government failed to complete its term and collapsed prematurely. It is noteworthy that it was towards the end of the Janata Government that the Assam movement was initiated.

Defections during this period helped the Congress party to increase its seats from merely eight in 1978 elections to 45 MLAs by 1980, enabling it to from a minority government on December 6, 1980. Mrs. AnuwaraTaimur, was made the Chief Minister by Mrs. Indira Gandhi in order to appease the Bengali Muslims whose insecurity due to the Assam Movement made it an ideal vote bank for the Congress party (Goswami 2020: 47). The politics of appeasement by the Congress did not go down well with the All Assam Students Union (AASU) which called for *bandhs* in the state as it protested against the Taimur government (Hussain, 1993:147). The vernacular print media spread the news that the Muslim chief minister would provide the Muslim immigrants government jobs, giving further impetus to illegal immigration (Hussain 1993: 301). Such policies of the Congress alienated its traditional Hindu Assamese vote bank, which now threw its weight behind the AGP, leading to its success in 1985 assembly elections. For Assam, the 1985 election was crucial because it resulted in a permanent realignment of socioeconomic groups with political parties and a reorganization of the party structure. There was a great deal of enthusiasm and public participation in this election. The new political party, AGP gained a definite majority after successfully rallying its core Assamese-dominated constituency. Voter turnout increased to 79 percent, 12 percentage points more than the previous record achieved in the 1978 elections (Goswami, 2020: 65).

Despite riding a wave to power on the issue of foreigners, it should be noted that even at its heyday, the AGP was only able to gain 65 seats, one more than the bare minimum needed for a majority in the assembly, and less than 35%

of the total votes. The national parties were forced to the sidelines as the party became the centre of non-Congress mobilization. However, this achievement also highlighted the catchment area's limitations. The Congress received 23% of the vote and won 25 seats. The pro-Assamese nationalist votes consistently supported the AGP throughout the election, which contributed to the party's win, but the votes which went against the AGP got divided amongst other parties such as United Minority Front (UMF) which secured 17 seats with the help of 12 per cent votes (Goswami2020: 66). This is, notes Saikia (2020), a limitation of multi-ethnic society with cross-cutting cleavages, where focus on only one community alienates the others, creating a dent in electoral fortunes. As the Assam movement and AGP failed to cater to the demands of several communities, it led to the birth of multiple parties and organizations such as Autonomous State Demand Committee (ASDC), United Minority Front (UMF) and All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU) articulating the interests of smaller ethnic and cultural communities. This further weakened the Congress' catch-all vote bank. It was only the tea tribes and Bengali Hindus who continued to vote for the Congress (Saikia, 2020).

The AGP came to power twice i. e. , from 1985 to 1989 and 1996 to 2001. The intermediary phase is marked by President's rule from 1990 to 1991 and then the re-emergence of Congress in 1991 to 1996 under the Chief Minister HiteswarSaikia and later for a brief period, under Bhumidhar Barman.

The AGP like the Congress party proved to be inefficient to meet the demands of the majority Assamese population. It failed to bring about political stability as hoped by the majority, as situation of political chaos and instability at the time of its victory remained almost unchanged at the time of its defeat. This eventually paved the way for the smooth return of Congress. The reemergence of Congress in the state's political landscape under the leadership of Tarun Gogoi, who has the record of being the longest serving CM in Assam, from 2001 to 2016, incorporates both success and failure of the party. The initial phase of the Gogoi-led government undoubtedly brought significant developments to the state. However, the later period saw the failure of the government to tackle the major issues of the state, notably assuring the protection of the identity of the majority Assamese as well as safety of the insecure Muslims. The downfall of the party intensified to a great extent in the Gogoi era. Thus, the coming back to power by the party, merely consolidated its failure that can be attributed to a significant extent, to the poor record of governance of the CM in terms of his alleged inefficient and corrupt rule (EPW, 2016). One of the greatest failures of Congress in Assam, as pointed out by Nani Gopal Mahanta (2014) was the Congress' inability to contain ethnic and group clashes in areas such as North Cachar Hills, Karbi Anglong, Bodoland, Darrang and Udalgiri. Moreover, the majority population was unhappy with the party due

to its indifferent attitude towards detection and deportation of illegal immigrants. The party's reluctance and inability to revoke the Illegal Migrants Detection Tribunal (IMDT) Act proved to be counterproductive in its objective of detection and deportation of the Bangladeshi migrantsleading to dissatisfaction among the people(Beg2012). Although the Act was abrogated in the year 2005 by the Supreme Court it was not initiated by the Congress party. The serious differences of the hill tribals and plain tribals with the Assamese did not obstruct their unification on the issue of anti-foreigners (Mahanta, 2014). These factors cumulatively resulted in growing dissatisfaction among the majority population that perceived Gogoi as incompetent for the office of CM with the image of the party as one that favours the minority Muslims as its vote bank.

The Communal Challenge: Rise of AIUDF

The AllIndia United Democratic Front (AIUDF) is a Muslim political party founded in response to the Supreme Courts' striking down of the Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunal) [IM(DT)] Act in 2005. Under the IM(DT) Act, the onus to prove someone as illegal foreigner was on the accuser and the prosecution and not the accused. The accuser just had to produce his/her ration card to prove citizenship. This made the process of detecting illegal foreigner extremely difficult. The Congress government at the centre had passed this act in 1983 to appease the Muslim minorities in Assam during the Assam movement. After the Supreme court struck down the Act, Badruddin Ajmal, who was the president of Jamiat in Assam, gathered 13 Muslim organizations and formed a new regional political party, the AUDF in 2005, which was in 2009 relaunched as a national party, the AIUDF.

The established support base of the Congress i. e. , the Muslim voters gradually petered out, who saw the party as incapable of protecting their lives and liberty. This was a result of three factors: one, the already prevalent discontentment resulting from the party's failure to ensure their protection; two, the discontentment intensified with the abrogation of Illegal Migrants Determination by Tribunal (IMDT) Act, in the wake of 2006 assembly election. The Congress tried to placate them by passing the Foreigners (Tribunal for Assam) Order of 2006, but in vain (Beg 2012); three, the rise of the AIUDF under Badruddin Ajmal provided the Muslims with an alternative other than the Congress. After the abrogation of the IM(DT) Act, Ajmal tactfully exploited the insecurities among the Bengali Muslims, who are usually considered immigrants, turning it in his favour. Raising the issue of D-Voter or Doubtful Voter1and security for the Muslim community, Ajmal had

1 D-voters or doubtful voters are those persons who are identified as such, during revision of electoral roll and against whom cases are pending with the Foreigners Tribunals or as declared as foreigners by the Tribunal.

successfully split the Muslim vote-the Bengali Muslims of both the Brahmaputra and the Barak valley rally behind AIUDF while the Assamese Muslims vote split between the Congress and AGP (Saikia, 2020:10)In short, Ajmal was successful to the extent that the vote of Muslims split up between AIUDF, Congress and the AGP making the victory of Congress difficult. The Muslims that make up an important section of the population of Assam, either deeply split or no longer vote for the Congress in large numbers today (Palshikar, 2015).

Till the rise of the AIUDF, there was no major Muslim political party in Assam which could challenge the Congress, as the Jamiat turned non-political after independence and the Muslim League discontinued in Assam. Sir Syed Saadulla, the first Assamese Chief Minister, along with some other Muslim League leaders joined the Congress, initiating the mutually beneficial alliance between Congress and Muslims in Assam. It helped the Congress maintain its image of being a secular party (Kar, 1990: 350–355). Even the Jamiat helped the Congress mobilise Muslim votes during elections till Assam movement ended in 1985 (Nath, 2019: 36). The Supreme Court's judgement invalidating the IM(DT) Act shifted the allegiance of the immigrant Muslims towards the AIUDF. Unable to retain its vote-bank, Tarun Gogoi-led Congress adopted soft Hindutva to counter the rise of AIUDF. This paid dividend to both the Congress and the AIUDF as the former achieved success in the Assembly elections of 2006 and 2011; while the latter emerged as the main opposition in 2011 in the Assam Legislative Assembly. The rise of AIUDF also created a conducive situation for the Hindu organizations to grow as they sought to mobilise the Hindus against domination of AIUDF in Assam's politics. The rise of BJP in this context has further complicated electoral politics for the Congress.

The Nationalist's regional challenge: Rise of BJP

Two important but interlinked situationswhich helped the BJP in Assam are: one, the continued relevance of identity and regional politics; and two, the rise of AIUDF which helped BJP to communalize Assam's politics on a Hindu-Muslim fault line and garner the support of the Hindus. The identity and regional politics of Assam which made the ground ready for AGP's victory remained intact even after the decline of AGP, which the BJP tactfully made use of, by shedding its ideology of Hindu nationalism (Saikia, 2020: 4-10). The issue of illegal immigration, and the consequent fear that the Assamese would become a minority in their own state continued to be relevant. In this indigenous vs the 'other' dichotomy, the 'other' included the Bengalis, both Hindu and Muslims as well the Marwaris and Biharis from other parts of India. However, over the period, the narrative and the 'other'changed from being 'anti-bahiragat (outsiders) to being an anti-videshi (foreigners) movement' (Saikia, 2020: 6). The Rashtriya Swayam Sevak (RSS),

which got an impetus during the Assam movement, played an important role in this. It is noteworthy that the BJP did not initially come up with its mainstream Hindutva ideology in the state. It had been consciously avoiding its ideology, with an intention to leave the very basis of Assam's political landscape untouched. The fact that the party could come to power with the facade of identity and regional politics, speaks volume about its strategic strength (Misra, 2016). The party projected tribal leader SarbanandaSonowal as the Chief Ministerial candidate against Gogoi to attract and retain the face of the majority population, while its alliance with the AGP had further neutralized its ideology of Hindu nationalism (Misra, 2016). It had skillfully hijacked the principle electoral plank of detection, deletion and deportation of foreigners of AGP, as a part of its electoral strategy (Mahanta, 2014) and came to power with the promise of protection of the Assamese identity, annulment of the IMDT Act and policies of development. It had added a new regional dimension to its nationalist stance to make itself relevant in Assam. The 'phenomenal' growth of the BJP, argues Nani Gopal Mahanta (2014) points to the expanding support base enjoyed by the party that encompass the majority section of the population. The 2014 Lok Sabha election results made it evident that the party has moved beyond its traditional strongholds of Bengali speaking Lower Assam and Barak Valley regions, making its presence felt in Upper Assam, the traditional stronghold of Congress and AGP. The local election results in Assam like most other states, are a continuation and consolidation of the trend that began with the 2014 Lok Sabha elections (Goswami and Tripathi, 2015). The majority community of Assam comprising the hill and plain tribes, the Assamese caste Hindus and tea tribes have opted for BJP to protect their identity in the face of growing demographic changes due to infiltration. The differences of the plain and hill tribes with the ethnic Assamese did not obstruct their unison due to the growing threat to their identity. The election results have confirmed that the various ethnic groups in the states and the larger Assamese society shared the concern of eventually becoming a minority in their motherland (Misra, 2016). Moreover, the BJP won in constituencies that have major concentrations of tea plantation workers and were traditional strongholds of the Congress. Apart from the tea garden votes, the party gained most among the Assamese Hindus and among the tribals. Although the Autonomous Districts (ST) have gone to the Congress, plain tribes, the Mishings and to some extent the Bodos have voted for BJP (Mahanta, 2014). BJP's coalition with the Rabha and Tiwa section has also supported its victory (Misra, 2016).

The growing discontentment of the majority with the Congress party coincided with the attractiveness of the BJP, resulting ingain for one and loss for the other. As Mahanta (2014) claims, the Assam election of 2016 was anti-Congress rather than

pro BJP. At present, the party's base has been firmly rooted in the soil of Assam politics. It's ability to recover itself after the major setback in the 2011 assembly electionthat saw much of its support base tilting towards the Congress party, is a testimony to this fact. It has contradicted the historically proven reality, that 'non-Congress government has not been able to win consecutive terms in Assam (Pandey and Ranjan, 2021). Moreover, there is lack of an ideology strong enough to counter that of the BJP. Similar to what the mainstream politics holds, the Congress and left parties have failed to uphold the secularist ideology in Assam. The BJP had been alert enough and eagerly waiting for long to make the best out of the prevalent circumstances. Thus, both situation as well as the party's own strength enabled the party to emerge as a strong force in the nation and in particular Assam's electoral politics. The Congress party's reluctance and the anti-incumbency sentiment against the party and the BJP's preparedness have congruently created the present situation in Assam.

The Organizational and Leadership Challenge

The crisis of leadership within Congress in Assam reflects similar crisis that the Congress at the national level has been confronted with for a very long time. The crisis at the Centre started with the end of the Nehru era with a solution bought about for a brief period, by the rule of Indira Gandhi. The crisis re-emerged, with the end of her era. It lacked a strong organizational base even during her leadership. As noted by Palshikar (2015), the rise of Indira Gandhi backed merely by her charismatic rule, without any organization strength or network, made the party operate efficiently in the presence of broad social support.

The party in Assam faces multiple issues, *viz.* weak organization, rise of factions within the party, demotivated cadre, defection of leaders to other parties seeking better prospects, and a lackadaisicalattitude of the Congress' central leadership towards resolving the crisis in the party (Bashir, 2022). All these became very prominent after Gogoi's demise. Gogoi's ability to accommodate both senior leaders as well as his competitors like Bhumidar Barman and Bhubaneswar Kalita, while making space for emerging leaders like Rakibul Hussain and Himanta Biswa Sarma, contributed to the organizational strength of the party in the state. His relationship and accessibility to the party high command in a scenario where no other political party seemed attractive enough to its leaders to defect, ensured order within the Congress party in the state (Tripathi and Sharma, 2021).

However, the crisis of leadership which mars the Congress at the centre became visible even in the state with the party facing anti-incumbency in the 2016 assembly elections, defection of Himanta Biswa Sarma to BJP following differences with Gogoi as well as the central leadership, and a strong challenge from the BJP

which emerged asviable alternative to the Congress. In Assam, the leadership of HimantaBiswa Sarma has been one of the primary reasons for the electoral catastrophe of Congress as well as the current growth of BJP. The resignation of the former MLA, resulting in intra party schism, and his anti-Gogoi campaign intensified crisis within the Congress party. The organizational preparedness of BJPwhich could accommodate Sarma and other MLAs of the Congress compensated for the otherwise limited impact of the Modi wave in the state. (Goswami and Tripathi, 2015; EPW, 2016). One reason behind the rise of BJP in Assam can be attributed to its local leaders, in particular, HimantaBiswa Sarma, as he played an important role in forging alliances with regional parties like the AGP and BPF and successfully dislodged the Congress in the state. Also, the personal appeal of Sarma backed by his oratory skills akin to Modi remains crucial even as the Assamese population affectionately address him as 'mama' (maternal uncle). On the other hand, the absence of a strong leader within the Congress after Gogoi's demise hurt the Congress profoundly as leaders vied for the top post within the party. In the run up to the assembly elections of 2021, several leaders competed to be the face of the party: Ripun Bora who served as President of Assam Pradesh Congress Committee, Gaurav Gogoi, son of Tarun Gogoi and erstwhile Kaliabor MP (presently MP from Jorhat), Debabrata Saikia, erstwhile leader of Opposition and son of former CM HiteshwarSaikia andPradyutBordoloi, Lok Sabha MP from Nagaon. An experienced leader with mass appeal and command over the organization like Gogoi was what Assam Congress lacked. Well aware of this lacunae, the party was careful not to project a CM face during the campaign (Tewari, 2021).

Adding to the woes is the fact that several stalwarts of the party have crossed over to other parties. For instance, Ripun Bora who served as President of Assam Pradesh Congress Commitee in Assam joined TMC in 2022, Sushmita Dev, a well-known women face of Congress in Assam also joined TMC in 2021, Bhubaneswar Kalita joined BJP in 2019, Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) secretary GauravvSomani, APCC general secretary Manash Borah, Leader of Charaideo district Congress committee Anuj Barkataky and Rupjyoti Kurmiwho was the Congress' face of tea tribes too joined the BJP, sending a message of disorder and discord within the party. Kurmi's exit in particular has hurt the Congress more than any of the leaders mentioned above. The four term sitting MLA of the Congress had defeated BJP's Ramani Tanti in the 2021 Assembly elections. While the Congress expelled him from the party for anti-party activities, Kurmi too resigned from his membership citing the reason of voices of marginal communities and young leaders being ignored by the party. He particularly, like HimantaBiswa Sarma, targeted central leadership under Rahul Gandhi as the primary reason behind crises of Congress across the country (Nath, 2021). The Congress thus lost the sole MLA

from the tea tribe community creating a dent in an important erstwhile vote bank of the Congress. The tea tribes remain crucial in Assam politics as they constitute 17 per cent of the population and is decisive in around 40 out of 126 assembly constituencies. On the other hand, the BJP is strongly making inroads within the community both organizationally as well as with its welfare schemes specifically directed towards them. With schemes such as free rice, direct benefit transfer under Assam Chah Bagicha Dhan Puraskar Yojana, and increased wages, the community stands benefitted by the BJP government (Saha, 2021). These developments are a cause of concern for the Congress as it dims the hope of revival of the party in a context where the central leadership seems less interested in resolving the crisis in the party.

Conclusion: Looking into the electoral prospect of the Congress

The communal polarization of politics in terms of religion has not helped the Congress in Assam. Therefore, presently, limited alternatives exist for the party to renew itself: one, as party of the majority- it has the opportunity of attracting the majority population with strong policies of identity protection on linguistic lines that has been presently transformed on religious lines (Mahanta, 2014) under the BJP-led government; two, as party for minorities it can revive its image by advancing promising policies for the minority Muslims as a whole since the AIUDF seem to be losing ground amongst the Bengali Muslims. This would enhance the chances of support by the minority that constitute an important section of the state's population. In between these two, the party also needs to rebuild its hold amongst the various tribes. If the party opts for the first alternative, its revivalist strategy would run along awakening of Assamese nationalism in the state. The party's second alternative would help countering the growth of its another regional adversary, the AIUDF. However, re-creation of a rainbow coalition would entail in reviving the secular credentials of the party as against minority appeasement and Gogoi era's soft-Hindutva in order to find support across all sections of the population.

The recent Lok Sabha election of 2024 seems to have provided the Congress some reasons to rejoice as its vote share at 37. 48 per cent is slightly higher than BJP's 37. 43 per cent. The vote share of the Congress rose by a higher percentage by 1. 69 per cent from 35. 79 per cent in 2019 election as against BJP's gain by 1. 02 per cent from 36. 41 per cent. It is noteworthy that the difference between the vote shares of Congress and the BJP is only marginally dissimilarexcept in 2014 Lok Sabha election where BJP was in dominating position and in 2011 Assembly election where Congress held sway over BJP (Table 1). While this is a positive factor for the Congress, for the BJP it would be a cause of worry, given that it goes into

next assembly elections with incumbency concerns staring at it. Thetask at hand for the Congress is to try to convert the vote share into seat share. A feature of first-past-the post system, the results of 2021 assembly elections show that with a difference of just around 4 per cent vote share, the difference in number of seats between the BJP and the Congress increased by 30. Therefore, focus on merely vote share would not be enough to consolidate its position in terms of electoral victory.

Table 1

	Lok Sabha Election						Assembly Election					
	2014		2019		2024		2011		2016		2021	
	Vote share	Seat	Vote share	Seat	Vote share	Seat	Vote share	Seat	Vote share	Seat	Vote share	Seat
Congress	29.9	3	35.8	3	37.48	3	39.4	78	31.3	26	30	29
BJP	36.9	7	36.4	9	37.43	9	11.5	5	29.8	60	33.6	60

Source: *IndiaVotes.com*

The defeat of AIUDF both in Dhubri and Nagaon to Congress candidates and its defeat even in Karimganj against a BJP candidate shows that AIUDF is not the first choice amongst the minority Bengali Muslims. What Sanjib Barua (2006) had argued in the context of the rise of AIUDF (then AUDF), that the Muslims 'voted strategically for the most likely winner', applies to the Congress candidate Rakibul Hussain who defeated Ajmal in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections by record margin of 10. 12 lakh votes. This time 'minority prudence' (Baruah 2006) preferred the Congress over the AIUDF, perhaps due the grim chances of the latter to form a government at the centre, and possibly also due to the failure of AIUDF to counter the rise of BJP.

Further, the winning margin of its prominent leader Gaurav Gogoi is likely to give its cadres a moral boost and help revive the organization. Gaurav Gogoi's win by 1. 44 lakh votes against the sitting BJP MP in a high-octane campaign led by Assam's Chief Minister HimantaBiswa Sarma, have revived the hopes of a Congress' comeback in Assam. In addition, the fact that Jorhat constituency from which Gaurav Gogoi won is dominated by the Hindus opens the possibility of the Congress reviving the support of the majority population.

Given that various theories on party mortality highlight the importance of 'social rootedness' and 'historically grown loyalties' as factors which ensure the resilience of political parties (Bolleyer et al 2019), declining support of the people

for a certain period and remaining out of power in the centre or the states should not be construed as signaling death or demise of a political party. The favorable vote share confirms that the Congress is still a major force to reckon with in the state. With regard to the challenges highlighted, the AGP is no longer strong enough to pose a formidable challenge all by itself. The AIUDF, as the recent Lok Sabha elections show, can be counteracted by the Congress. The only effective challenge for the Congress seems to be from the BJP and its own internal organisation. With an effective narrative which focuses on development, the BJP can be countered since the vote share for the Congress is favorable. Much work however must be done in order to strengthen the internal organization of the Congress.

As a party with a 'dominant' past in the state as well as nationally, a country-wide network of party organizationand the advantage of 'historically grown loyalties' in terms of its contribution to the national movement and the support which it garnered amongst the people, the re-emergence of Congress remains a distinct possibility in Assam. The rich background of Congress in Assam, a counterchallenge to the challenges which the party faces, the dynamics of vote share-seat share in a first-past-the-post system, and the factor of anti-incumbency against the current regime can in fact help the Congress re-establish its hold in Assam.

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India's Approach to Multilateralism: Reimagining Global Governance through South–South Cooperation

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Abstract

This study critically examines India's approach to multilateralism and its contribution to reinvigorating global governance and strengthening South–South cooperation. It explores how India's evolving diplomatic strategy reflects both its historical commitment to the principles of the Non-Aligned Movement and its contemporary role as a key actor in shaping global norms. The paper analyses how India's leadership in major international forums has advanced inclusive development, climate action, digital governance, and equitable economic cooperation, areas that underscore its broader vision of a participatory and just international order. Employing a qualitative and comparative framework, the study draws upon policy documents, official statements, and case studies to assess India's achievements, challenges, and enduring influence within the global governance landscape. The analysis argues that India's multilateral engagement represents not merely a continuation of its traditional foreign policy ethos but a strategic recalibration that positions the country as a bridge between developed and developing worlds. In an era marked by geopolitical transitions and growing demands for reform in global institutions, India's approach offers a model for inclusive, responsive, and cooperative global governance.

Keywords: Multilateralism, Global Governance, South–South Cooperation, India's Diplomacy, Inclusive Development, Emerging Powers

Introduction

Multilateral institutions have become central to shaping the contemporary global order, providing platforms for dialogue, policy coordination, and collective responses to transnational challenges. Among these, the Group of Twenty (G20) has evolved since its establishment in 1999, from a crisis management forum into a significant arena of global economic and political governance. Its rotating presidency allows member states to shape the global agenda and steer conversations on growth, sustainability, and equity. Within this context, India's leadership has gained particular significance, reflecting its growing economic

strength and diplomatic influence in the international system. India's approach to multilateralism is rooted in its long-standing commitment to inclusivity, equitable development, and South–South solidarity. Drawing from its historical engagement with the Non-Aligned Movement and the principles of collective self-reliance, India's multilateral engagements seek to reform global institutions while amplifying the voice of the developing world. Through active participation in diverse international platforms, India has promoted themes such as climate action, public health, digital transformation, and sustainable growth, issues that resonate with the needs and aspirations of emerging economies. This paper analyses India's evolving multilateral strategy as a case study of how a rising power can reconcile national interests with global responsibilities. It evaluates India's diplomatic initiatives, achievements, and constraints in promoting a more inclusive and participatory model of global governance. The study also examines how India's leadership contributes to revitalising South–South cooperation as a framework for mutual growth and collective resilience among developing nations. By situating India's actions within the broader transformation of global governance, the paper highlights how New Delhi's approach exemplifies a pragmatic balance between idealism and strategic adaptation. In doing so, it contributes to wider debates on the role of emerging powers in building a more equitable, cooperative, and sustainable international order.

Global Governance and the G20: Contextualizing India's Multilateral Engagement

The G20, a pivotal platform for worldwide economic coordination, has attracted considerable scholarly interest. According to Cooper (2010), the G20 is a contested "steering committee" and improvised crisis committee, emphasising its importance in tackling global challenges. Moreover, Cooper (2021) delves into the distinct ambivalence demonstrated by China and India in their involvement with the G20/BRICS, illuminating their intricate connections with their status as "rising" powers and their support for the Global South. India's leadership and active involvement in the G20 have been the focus of extensive scholarly examination. Gautam (2022) examines India's involvement in the G20, particularly emphasising its endeavours to enhance and influence global governance. In the interim, Mahida and Chauhan (2023) undertake a SWOT analysis of India's G20 presidency, wherein they offer significant observations concerning the country's leadership's strengths, vulnerabilities, opportunities, and challenges. The ramifications of India's G20 presidency transcend economic concerns and incorporate more extensive matters of global governance. Mathur (2022) provides an analysis of the governing principles that underpin India's G20 presidency. This framework

enables one to comprehend the country's stance on global governance throughout its term in leadership. In his study, Ogden (2023) examines the promotion, preeminence, and perceptions related to India's G20 presidency. This research illuminates the complex nature of India's influence over the G20. Additionally, to comprehend India's diplomatic involvement within the G20, knowledge of the literature concerning South-South cooperation is crucial. In his analysis, Cheru (2011) investigates the potential for a fresh Bandung consensus, offering valuable perspectives on the dynamic nature of South-South collaboration. In evaluating the convergence of South-South cooperation via the Delhi process after five years, Fues (2018) makes a scholarly contribution to the conversation by emphasising the dynamic characteristics of cooperative endeavours among developing countries. Rodrguez, Ranjan, and Torterolo (2023) examine the Latin American viewpoint regarding India's G20 presidency, offering valuable insights into the ramifications for the Latin American region in the context of the Global South. Singh and Radha (2023) examine the potential of India's G20 presidency to advance the global health agenda by placing emphasis on the intricate and diverse aspects of its diplomatic involvement. Upon reviewing the pertinent scholarly works, it becomes apparent that researchers have examined the G20 and global governance from various perspectives, thereby documenting the intricate details of India's leadership position and the broader ramifications for the field of international relations. The cited references demonstrate an extensive examination of the G20, encompassing its crisis management capabilities and the complex dynamics of South-South cooperation during India's presidency of the G20.

South–South Cooperation: Historical Roots and Contemporary Dynamics

Prior research on South-South cooperation has contributed to a thorough and nuanced comprehension of the dynamics of collaboration among developing countries. Cheru's (2011) research investigates the potential for a new Bandung consensus in South-South cooperation and functions as a historical anchor. Through analogies to the Bandung Conference of 1955, Cheru emphasises the dynamic nature of developing nation collaborations and the urgent requirement for a revitalised consensus to tackle present-day global challenges effectively. Expanding upon this historical backdrop, Cheru's subsequent research (2020) explores the strategic utilisation of South-South cooperation for development. With a particular focus on economic transformation in Southern Africa, this study underscores the capacity of collaborative endeavours to act as a catalyst for constructive progress in the area. Fues (2018) contributes to the ongoing discussion by analysing the convergence of South-South cooperation five years later via the Delhi process. The assessment provides significant insights regarding the advancements and

obstacles encountered in collaborative endeavours, thereby illuminating the dynamic characteristics of cooperation among developing countries. Jouili (2021) presents a more comprehensive viewpoint by conceptualising South-South Cooperation as an emerging paradigm in the development field. The present study investigates the evolving dynamics of global development in the twenty-first century, focusing on the significance of cooperative endeavours among nations in the Global South. Including various viewpoints in these research papers enhances the comprehension of South-South cooperation by encompassing its historical origins, present-day obstacles, and the capacity of cooperative approaches to effectuate economic and social change. Furthermore, Singh (2017) provides a detailed analysis of the BRICS model of South-South cooperation, which situates this collaborative framework within a particular context. Singh's research offers valuable insights into the collaborations of the BRICS nations by examining their distinctive dynamics. These studies establish a solid basis to understanding the intricacies and potential advantages arising from cooperative endeavours between developing countries. As such, they provide a valuable context for subsequent examination of India's involvement in South-South cooperation throughout its G20 presidency. The knowledge acquired from these scholarly works enhances the collective comprehension of the dynamic international development arena and how countries in the Global South can cooperate.

India's G20 Strategy and the Reinvigoration of South–South Cooperation

The extant body of literature provides valuable insights regarding the intricacies of South-South cooperation and the G20's influence on global governance. However, apparent deficiencies in the literature highlight the critical nature of the present investigation. The examined studies, which encompass Cheru's investigation into a novel Bandung consensus and Fues' evaluation of the Delhi process, collectively offer a comprehensive insight into the historical backdrop and dynamic characteristics of cooperative endeavours among developing countries. Despite this, a more particular analysis of the consequences and function of India's G20 presidency in promoting South-South cooperation is needed. The extant body of literature predominantly examines overarching trends and patterns in South-South cooperation, allocating insufficient attention to India's distinctive contributions and obstacles within the G20 framework. The present study aims to address this disparity by focusing on India's particular contribution during its G20 presidency: examining how its policy initiatives and diplomatic strategies have impacted and moulded South-South cooperation. While the SWOT analysis performed by Mahida and Chauhan (2023) offers a fundamental framework, further investigation is warranted to delve into the complexities of India's proactive initiatives, accomplishments,

and obstacles faced throughout its G20 presidency about promoting cooperation among developing countries. Additionally, the literature review underscored the increasing significance of South-South collaboration amidst the evolving global environment. However, more is needed to know the precise ramifications of India's G20 presidency on South-South cooperation. This study aims to make a scholarly contribution by examining the complexities of India's strategy in the G20. It seeks to illuminate the subtle ways India has either empowered or encountered obstacles in its efforts to nurture stronger relations among developing countries. The research makes a scholarly contribution by conducting a concentrated analysis of India's position within the G20 and its influence on South-South cooperation. This addresses a lacuna in the existing literature, frequently treating these subjects in isolation. Through an in-depth examination of India's diplomatic engagements, accomplishments, and obstacles throughout its G20 presidency, this study offers a more comprehensive comprehension of the intricate relationship between South-South cooperation and global governance related to the G20.

Existing literature on previous G20 presidencies reveals recurring themes and trends that have influenced the organisation's trajectory. Cooper (2010) offers valuable insights into the G20's contested ' steering committee' and improvised crisis committee functions, emphasising the organisation's emergence as a pivotal forum for confronting worldwide challenges. This recurring motif appears in the platforms of numerous G20 presidencies, demonstrating the organisation's flexibility in addressing crises such as economic recessions and other urgent matters. Cooper's analysis provides the foundation for comprehending how the crisis management function of the G20 has remained a recurring motif throughout various presidencies. In a more comprehensive analysis of the involvement of prominent world powers in the G20, Cooper (2021) investigates the engagement patterns of China and India. His findings unveil a distinct ambivalence between the status of a "rising" power and the commitment to supporting the Global South. This illuminates a recurring motif in which developing nations, including India, negotiate their positions within the G20, reconciling their rise to prominence on the international platform with their historical ties to the developing world. The themes discussed have presumably impacted the agendas and positions of numerous presidencies as emerging powers strive to establish their dominance while advocating for the issues of the Global South. The SWOT analysis (2023) of India's G20 presidency by Mahida and Chauhan proposes a methodology for discerning opportunities, threats, strengths, vulnerabilities, and opportunities. Although this framework is particular to India's presidency, it exemplifies a more general tendency among member states to evaluate their positions and strategies throughout their mandates critically. Presidency terms frequently encounter the

dilemmas of capitalising on opportunities, addressing challenges, leveraging strengths, mitigating weaknesses, and leveraging strengths; this indicates that strategic evaluation and adaptation is a recurring theme within the G20. Ogden (2023) examines the concepts of preeminence, promotion, and perceptions about India's G20 presidency. The study underscores a growing tendency to assess the reputational dimensions of presidencies. This implies that in addition to policy results, the G20 presidencies are assessed based on the extent of influence attained on the international stage, promotional endeavours, and the perception of leadership. A prevalent motif that permeates presidencies is the active participation of member states in diplomatic endeavours aimed at bolstering their international reputation. Rodríguez, Ranjan, and Torterolo (2023) analyse the consequences of India's G20 presidency on the Latin American region in the context of the Global South, with a particular focus on the Latin American perspective. This highlights a recurring pattern in which G20 presidencies influence regions with varied economic and developmental priorities beyond their immediate term. The interdependence of the Global South and the transregional repercussions of G20 decisions highlight a consistent pattern in the organisation's worldwide impact. In brief, upon examining past G20 presidencies, recurring motifs emerge, including crisis management, the changing responsibilities of significant powers, strategic assessment, reputational concerns, and worldwide ramifications for various regions. The cumulative effect of these trends enhances our comprehension of the G20's intricacies and the persistent patterns that influence its influence on worldwide governance.

The G20 as a Platform for Inclusive Global Governance

The Group of Twenty (G20) is an influential organisation in modern-day global governance, serving as a forum for significant economies to discuss crucial matters of international concern. The G20, which was formed in 1999 as a reaction to the Asian financial crisis, is composed of the European Union and 19 member states that collectively represent a wide range of economic influence. Cooperation in the economy and policy coordination among its member nations are the principal goals of the G20, which seeks to advance sustainable development and global financial stability (Cooper, 2010). The G20 functions structurally using yearly summits, ministerial meetings, and working groups, wherein member countries participate in dialogues to tackle urgent issues and influence policies that significantly impact the global economy. The mandate of the G20 transcends economic concerns and encompasses a wide range of matters about global governance. Climate change stands out as a prominent subject of concern, and the G20 functions as a pivotal platform for deliberations concerning environmental policy and sustainable development. In addition, the G20 acknowledges the

interdependence of development assistance, trade, and financial regulation as significant issues in the global arena (Cooper, 2021). Constraints regarding global economic policies frequently emerge from G20 deliberations in joint statements and agreements; thus, the organisation is a significant force in determining the course of international governance. As a notable participant in the G20, India has perpetually espoused the cause of a comprehensive and just international governance system. The nation's position on critical matters demonstrates its dedication to confronting the obstacles encountered by developing countries and promoting collaboration among nations in the Global South. India has been a vociferous advocate for sustainable development that takes into consideration the requirements of emergent economies about climate change. During the Paris Agreement negotiations under the auspices of the G20, India emphasised the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities in supporting an equitable distribution of the burden of mitigating climate change (Gautam, 2022). The G20 also addresses financial regulation as a crucial matter of global governance, and India has been actively involved in influencing policies about this sector. India has placed significant emphasis on inclusive financial practices that consider the varied requirements of developing nations, given its status as an emerging economy. In light of the 2008 financial crisis, the G20's dedication to fortifying the worldwide financial system corresponds with India's objective of fostering inclusive growth and financial stability (Kumar, 2023). Trade policies serve as an additional domain in which the impact of the G20 on international governance is significant. Due to its substantial and multifaceted economy, India has actively promoted equitable trade practices that are advantageous to all countries. Trade-related deliberations within the G20 frequently encompass negotiations to rectify trade imbalances, curb protectionism, and promote a more inclusive global trade landscape (Gautam, 2022). The G20 plays a pivotal role in development assistance by facilitating the coordination of initiatives to tackle worldwide issues, including poverty, inequality, and public health. Acknowledging the significance of global cooperation, India has deliberated about development assistance within the G20 structure. The nation's commitment to South-South collaboration, exemplified by its past participation in the Non-Aligned Movement, is consistent with the objectives of the G20, which foster international cooperation. In summary, the structure and objectives of the G20 establish it as a significant factor in modern global governance. As a substantial member of this framework, India has consistently contributed to formulating policies and resolving critical issues. The nation's position regarding development assistance, financial regulation, climate change, and trade demonstrates its dedication to fair and inclusive international governance, underscoring the interdependence of the issues confronting countries on a global scale. The G20,

where India actively participates, is crucial in influencing global policies and promoting cooperation among countries with varied economic conditions and objectives.

India's Agenda for Inclusive and Sustainable Global Governance

The G20 presidency assumed by India in 2023 was a momentous occasion during which the country established and advanced a series of objectives that reflected its dedication to inclusive development and international collaboration (Mahida & Chauhan, 2023). A principal area of emphasis for India throughout its tenure was resolving the urgent issue of climate change. India, placing considerable importance on sustainable development, strategically positioned itself as a prominent proponent for climate action within the G20 framework. This is consistent with the wider challenges in global governance, given that climate change continues to be a critical concern that demands collaborative endeavours. India's initiative to foster sustainable practices, resilient infrastructure, and renewable energy is a prime illustration of its proactive approach to confronting a transnational challenge (Gautam, 2022). An essential component of India's G20 agenda was its commitment to promoting inclusive development, specifically focusing on the Global South. The SWOT analysis (2023) conducted by Mahida and Chauhan highlights India's acknowledgement of its capabilities in advancing inclusive growth and its resolve to capitalise on this benefit throughout its presidency. The congruence between this priority and the challenges of global governance is apparent, given the growing recognition that inclusive development is a crucial component in attaining sustainable and fair worldwide expansion. India's commitment to mitigating economic inequalities and advancing social welfare aligns with the overarching objective of the G20, which is to ensure a more equitable distribution of the advantages derived from international economic collaboration (Gautam, 2022). India's dedication to promoting dialogues regarding public health was another significant topic of discussion throughout its G20 presidency. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought to the forefront the interdependence of worldwide health issues. India's proactive stance in this area corresponds with the overarching principle of global governance, which emphasises the need for increased international cooperation to tackle health emergencies. The country's endeavour to ensure fair and equal availability of vaccines and medical resources and foster cooperation in addressing forthcoming health issues demonstrates an awareness of the collective obligation to safeguard against worldwide health risks (Singh & Radha, 2023). India significantly influenced dialogues and resulted from its efforts to promote a cooperative and inclusive global order. India utilised the G20's trade policy deliberations to express its position regarding equitable trade

practices, underscoring the importance of a transparent, regulation-driven, and impartial trading system (Gautam, 2022). India's participation in trade dialogues is consistent with the overarching objective of global governance, which is to create a favourable atmosphere for international trade. This is of the utmost importance for ensuring economic stability on a global scale. In addition, India's presidency sought to direct G20 deliberations towards the resolution of economic inequalities, thus making a contribution to the overarching objective of global governance, which is the mitigation of inequality. India endeavoured to sway the G20's economic cooperation stance by advocating for inclusive development policies and emphasising the necessity of employing strategies that benefit all countries, regardless of their economic standing (Mahida & Chauhan, 2023). India also scrutinised the digital economy agenda of the G20 throughout its presidency. In their article, Samson and Medhora (2022) warrant an evolution of the G20's digital economy agenda, and India's active participation in shaping this dialogue is highlighted. The digital economy represents an uncharted territory within the realm of global governance, necessitating collaborative efforts on an international level to tackle issues including cybersecurity, data governance, and digital inclusion. India's active participation in dialogues concerning the digital economy demonstrates its cognisance of the dynamic characteristics of worldwide issues and the imperative for cooperative structures to traverse this intricate landscape successfully. In summary, India placed significant emphasis on crucial matters of global governance throughout its G20 presidency in 2023. These issues comprised climate change, inclusive development, public health, trade policies, and the digital economy. The congruence between these priorities and more extensive global issues highlights India's dedication to contributing to resolutions surpassing domestic boundaries. India's proactive involvement in addressing the international community's interrelated challenges is evident in its influence over discussions and outcomes. This signifies the country's dedication to promoting a global order that is more inclusive, cooperative, and equitable.

Achievements, Challenges, and the South–South Dimension of India's G20 Leadership

The G20 presidency held by India in 2023 was characterised by significant accomplishments in furthering its agenda for global governance, as well as obstacles that influenced the course of its initiatives (Mahida & Chauhan, 2023). One of the noteworthy achievements pertains to India's proactive engagement in promoting climate action within the G20 framework. The dedication to sustainable development was demonstrated through concrete results, including dialogues and accords concerning environmentally friendly energy sources, robust infrastructure, and the

preservation of the environment. India's capacity to amass backing and cultivate agreement regarding climate-related matters signifies a constructive influence on the international governance sphere and an indication of a cooperative endeavour among G20 member states to tackle urgent environmental dilemmas (Gautam, 2022). Promoting inclusive development came to the forefront as an additional noteworthy accomplishment throughout India's presidency. India's active support for policies that advance social welfare and economic inclusivity has significantly influenced international economic collaboration discourse. The recognition by the G20 of the significance of inclusive growth in promoting sustainability and stability demonstrates that India's initiatives to steer the international economic agenda towards a more equitable system have been fruitful (Mahida & Chauhan, 2023). On the other hand, India encountered difficulties managing the varied concerns and priorities in the G20, particularly about trade policies. The discourse surrounding equitable trade practices, non-discriminatory trading systems, and open markets was fraught with intricacies as member countries navigated their unique economic circumstances and goals. Conquering these contrasting viewpoints presented a formidable obstacle for India to exert substantial influence over G20 trade policies. This challenge highlights the intrinsic complexities that arise when attempting to harmonise the economic interests of various nations within a framework of collaboration (Gautam, 2022). An additional noteworthy obstacle was present within the realm of public health, specifically about the COVID-19 pandemic. In its pursuit of equitable vaccine access and cooperative approaches to health emergencies, India encountered the challenge of addressing the immediate and long-term consequences of the pandemic while simultaneously managing intricate geopolitical dynamics and implementing diverse national strategies. The inherent complexities in promoting international cooperation, even within the G20 structure, became evident when confronted with coordinating a cohesive reaction to a worldwide health emergency. Diverse national interests and methodologies can hinder the achievement of successful collective efforts (Singh & Radha, 2023). In order to achieve an inclusive digital economy agenda, India encountered difficulties reconciling divergent perspectives regarding digital inclusion, cybersecurity, and data governance. According to Medhora and Samson (2022), the G20's digital economy agenda constantly evolves. India encountered challenges in its attempts to influence these dialogues by reaching a consensus on the intricate and swiftly changing matters in the digital domain. This difficulty exemplifies the complex process of managing international governance in developing sectors like the digital economy, where divergent national strategies and interests can hinder timely collaborative decision-making. In brief, India's tenure as G20 president was marked by noteworthy advancements in pursuing global governance objectives, specifically

concerning inclusive development and climate action. The difficulties encountered, regardless of whether they involve addressing public health emergencies, traversing trade policies, or influencing dialogues regarding the digital economy, highlight the intricacies accompanying the coordination of global initiatives within a cooperative organisation such as the G20. The successes attained foster a more harmonious and all-encompassing international system. In contrast, the obstacles underscore the perpetual intricacies involved in tackling matters of global governance in a globally interconnected society.

South-South cooperation, an idea founded on countries' solidarity in the Global South, denotes concerted endeavours to advance one another by capitalising on common obstacles and experiences. South-South cooperation holds considerable importance due to its capacity to cultivate self-sufficiency, diminish reliance on conventional aid mechanisms, and advance partnerships that mirror developing countries' distinct requirements and priorities (Cheru, 2011). Throughout its G20 presidency in 2023, India made concerted efforts to advocate for the fundamental tenets of South-South cooperation. India, guided by its commitment to inclusive development and a historical legacy rooted in the Non-Aligned Movement, perceived its G20 presidency as a favourable occasion to elevate the concerns and perspectives of developing countries. The G20 agenda's emphasis on public health, climate action, and inclusive growth reflected India's commitment to tackling issues prevalent in many countries of the Global South (Gautam, 2022; Mahida & Chauhan, 2023). The manifestation of India's endeavours to foster South-South cooperation was evident in its diplomatic engagements conducted within the G20 framework. The nation proactively endeavoured to foster understanding and cooperation between developed and developing countries by promoting policies that consider the distinctive conditions of nations in the Global South. According to Gautam (2022), India's dedication to establishing a more equitable global order consistent with the tenets of South-South cooperation was evident in its prioritisation of fair-trade practices, climate justice, and access to vital resources. One can examine the effects of India's G20 presidency on promoting cooperation among developing countries from many perspectives. To begin with, India's influence on the discourse surrounding pivotal worldwide matters, including inclusive development and climate change, furnished an arena for developing countries to express their apprehensions and ambitions. India's active support for policies that target the requirements of the Global South facilitated a more comprehensive discourse within the G20, thereby cultivating a spirit of collaboration and collective accountability (Gautam, 2022). Furthermore, it is worth noting that the policies and initiatives put forth by India throughout its presidency possessed the capacity to impact the course of global collaboration. For example, dialogues concerning

equitable trade practices and comprehensive economic development not only attended to the pressing issues faced by developing countries but also established a foundation for subsequent cooperative efforts. The ramifications of these policies extend beyond the G20 summit, fostering collaboration among nations confronting comparable developmental obstacles and influencing global governance (Mahida & Chauhan, 2023). Nevertheless, the promotion of South-South cooperation in the context of the G20 also presented obstacles. Developing nations' divergent economic priorities and interests presented challenges in attaining consensus on specific matters. Effectively managing these intricacies necessitated diplomacy and deliberate involvement to guarantee that the agenda of the G20 accurately represented the varied requirements and viewpoints of developing countries (Gautam, 2022). To sum up, India's G20 presidency significantly advanced the cause of South-South cooperation through its proactive support of policies addressing the unique difficulties developing countries encountered. The emphasis on equitable policies and the inclusive nature of discussions within the G20 framework are tangible manifestations of the impact of India's efforts. Although there are obstacles to overcome when juggling multiple objectives, India's dedication to promoting collaboration among developing countries throughout its G20 presidency highlights the enduring significance of South-South cooperation in influencing the global governance arena.

Case Study: India's Initiative on Inclusive Solar Energy Access

The transition to sustainable energy sources and the global climate crisis are critical issues that require international cooperation. Sareen (year) presents an agenda item during India's G20 presidency that underscores the critical nature of confronting these challenges internationally. This initiative is consistent with the G20's capacity to influence a more sustainable future, as Gao and Wouters (2022) argue regarding the organisation's prospective contribution to sustainable development. Cooperation from the South to the South is vital to sustainable development. Roberts (2011) examines rural renewable energy development strategies and emphasises the importance of international cooperation among nations in the Global South. Chakrabarti and Chaturvedi (2021) thoroughly examine the dynamic notion of development cooperation, offering unique insights into the 2030 agenda. The complexities inherent in development cooperation are emphasised in the Palgrave Handbook of Development Cooperation, which further underscores the contested nature of the concept. Sinha (2023) expands the discourse by incorporating science diplomacy, arguing that novel strategies are necessary to tackle worldwide challenges. This is consistent with utilising scientific and technological advancements to promote global cooperation, specifically within

the framework of South-South cooperation. These initiatives make a valuable contribution to the overarching objective of accomplishing the 2030 Agenda, as emphasised by Chakrabarti and Chaturvedi. About global governance and India's perspective within the BRICS framework, Sharma (2022) examines India's understanding of its influence on global governance. The BRICS nations, of which India is a member, are acknowledged as emerging powers capable of exerting significant influence over global affairs. Agarwal (2012) further underscores the economic dimensions of South-South cooperation, providing insight into its capacity to influence a more favourable future. In his publication from 2023, Srivastava offers a forward-looking outlook on the progress of India, outlining twenty-one visions of a developed India by the year 2050. This is consistent with India's ambitions and contributions towards international progress, indicating a proactive stance in influencing the future trajectory. In her 2021 study on renewable energy cooperation between Brazil and India, de Miranda Mousinho emphasises the significance of bilateral cooperation by demonstrating how nations can collaborate on specific projects.

Outcomes

The results of this endeavour were substantial and diverse. Initially, it formed a collaborative fund comprising G20 member contributions to bolster solar energy initiatives in developing countries. The provision of dependable electricity in areas devoid of photovoltaic infrastructure was made possible through this financial investment, which benefitted the local communities. Additionally, the initiative facilitated mechanisms for the exchange of knowledge and technology transfer. As an advocate of South-South cooperation, India has been actively disseminating solar technologies and knowledge to other developing countries. Consequently, these nations gained a better capability to utilise solar energy to advance their societies and economies. A comprehensive examination of these case studies would yield valuable insights regarding the results and insights gained from India's endeavours, thereby enhancing our comprehension of the ramifications for South-South cooperation and global governance. Guha (2022) highlights India's non-traditional security challenges, particularly emphasising the implications of climate change. The possibility of employing soft power diplomacy to remedy anthropocentric abuses is investigated. This viewpoint contributes to the discourse by emphasising the complex and diverse characteristics of worldwide issues, underscoring the necessity for all-encompassing approaches. As Gethmann et al. (2020) discussed, the cooperation in energy governance between China, India, Brazil, and the European Union/Germany exemplifies the interdependence of nations in addressing energy-related issues. This collaboration highlights the

significance of international cooperation. The references furnish an exhaustive synopsis of India's involvement in sustainable development, South-South cooperation, and global governance. The endeavours executed throughout India's G20 presidency, particularly about ensuring universal access to solar energy, offer significant instances for examination. Analysing the results and insights gained from these endeavours would enhance comprehension of India's influence on international affairs and collaboration between South-South countries.

Lessons Learned

India's G20 Presidency-era Initiative on Inclusive Solar Energy Access provides invaluable insights into the development of successful international collaborative undertakings. To begin with, the case study emphasises the importance of proactive leadership and capitalising on domestic expertise. By assuming the initiative and leading the way in advocating for inclusive solar energy access, India demonstrated that effective initiatives are possible when proactive leadership at the national level and local capabilities are effectively utilised. From this case study, the effectiveness of G20 presidencies emerges as a decisive lesson. This exemplifies the ability of G20 forums to address worldwide challenges using targeted and innovative proposals. The initiative undertaken by India throughout its presidency serves as a prime example of how significant contributions to global governance can be generated from this platform. It underscores the criticality of taking advantage of the distinctive prospects that arise from G20 presidencies. An essential lesson pertains to the necessity of adopting inclusive and sustainable methodologies, specifically in the context of South-South collaboration. The endeavour not only attended to an urgent worldwide dilemma but also cultivated a shared sense of accountability among the members of the G20. This highlights the significance of collaborative endeavours that align with principles of inclusivity and sustainability when tackling worldwide issues. Furthermore, the case study emphasises the significance of technology transfer and capacity building. The initiative's emphasis on inclusive solar energy access signifies a dedication to fostering the exchange of knowledge and technologies between developed and developing countries. This lesson underscores the criticality of facilitating the transfer of expertise in order to tackle energy challenges effectively. Furthermore, the case study highlights the importance of fostering a shared sense of responsibility among the members of the G20. In order to confront global challenges, nations must acknowledge their mutual obligations and engage in cooperative efforts. The insights gained underscore the significance of cultivating a sense of shared responsibility within global forums to tackle intricate global issues comprehensively. Finally, incorporating case studies and initiatives from various countries throughout the G20 presidency imparts a

significant insight into the value of gaining knowledge from various viewpoints. This underscores the significance of incorporating and integrating diverse methodologies and experiences to develop all-encompassing and efficacious global resolutions. In summary, the knowledge acquired from India's Initiative on Inclusive Solar Energy Access highlights the significance of proactive leadership, the effectiveness of G20 presidencies, inclusive and sustainable methodologies, capacity development, collective responsibility, and the value of incorporating diverse viewpoints when formulating forthcoming global cooperative endeavours.

Comparative Perspectives on India's G20 Leadership and Global Governance

The G20 presidency of India in 2023, which took place in New Delhi from September 9th to 10th, presents an exceptional occasion to conduct a comparative analysis with prior G20 presidencies. This assessment aims to provide insight into the possible consequences of India's leadership on South-South cooperation and global governance. A nuanced comprehension of India's influence on the G20's agenda can be attained by analysing historical contexts and iconic attributes of previous presidencies. India's presidency is distinguished from some of its predecessors by its historical dedication to confronting socio-economic disparities, exemplified through its emphasis on inclusive development. An examination compared to the G20 presidencies of France (2011) and Australia (2014), which were predominantly concerned with economic matters, can illuminate the changing priorities within the organisation and underscore India's unique strategy in promoting comprehensive development. Moreover, India's dedication to climate action throughout its G20 presidency is exceptional and merits scrutiny compared to presidencies prioritising environmental sustainability in distinct ways. For example, the presidency of Russia in 2013 can be used as a comparative point, enabling an analysis of the increasing significance attributed to climate action in recent G20 agendas. Aside from environmental considerations, the presidency of India offers a chance to strengthen South-South collaboration within the G20. An examination in contrast with the 2016 presidency of China, which prioritised global economic governance, can shed light on the varied strategies each country implements to promote cooperation among developing countries. This comparative analysis will offer valuable perspectives on how India manoeuvres through the intricate dynamics of diplomatic relations within the G20 framework. Regarding a comparative analysis of the effects on South-South cooperation and global governance, Italy's 2021 presidency, which centred on the worldwide reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic, offers valuable insights. Gaining insight into India's strategies regarding vaccine distribution, economic stimulus, and international

collaboration will contribute to the ongoing academic conversation surrounding post-pandemic economic resilience. Furthermore, an examination compared to Germany's presidency in 2017, during which concerns such as digitalisation and free trade were given prominence, can shed light on India's position regarding trade policies and digital governance. This comprehension is of the utmost importance in evaluating India's influence on global economic governance through the lens of the G20. In conclusion, how Saudi Arabia conducted its 2020 presidency virtually in light of the pandemic offers a pertinent analogy to India's approaches concerning worldwide health and readiness for pandemics. By conducting this analysis, significant insights will be gained regarding India's strategy for addressing global health challenges in the context of the G20. As a culmination, this comparative examination, utilising knowledge gained from prior G20 presidencies, shall furnish an all-encompassing comprehension of India's potential ramifications on worldwide governance and collaboration among nations in the South. By examining the influential G20 forum's evolving dynamics and emerging economies' impact on the global agenda, this research will make a valuable contribution by situating India's presidency within the broader historical framework.

Future Implication

The forthcoming G20 presidency of India in 2023 will have profound ramifications for global governance and collaboration between nations in the South-South. This segment explores the potential enduring consequences that India's leadership could impose on these pivotal aspects and evaluates how the results might influence the dynamics of the G20 in the future. To begin with, Transformation in Global Governance is an essential aspect. Throughout its G20 presidency, India's focus on inclusive development, climate action, and diplomatic collaboration may contribute to paradigm shifts in global governance. India can establish the groundwork for forthcoming G20 agendas by placing emphasis on concerns such as post-pandemic economic resilience, climate change mitigation, and inclusive growth. Under India's leadership, implementing inclusive and sustainable policies can foster a more collaborative, fair, and robust global governance system. Secondly, the impact of India's dedication to promoting South-South cooperation within the G20 on the future dynamics of collaboration among developing countries is significant. Further, G20 presidencies might be motivated to prioritise comparable endeavours if India's efforts to foster closer relations among emergent economies prove fruitful. A more balanced and cooperative international order might result from the increased solidarity and mutual support among developing nations as an enduring consequence of India's leadership on South-South cooperation. The third aspect is Shaping Future G20 Agendas**.** The consequences

of India's G20 presidency have the potential to exert a significant impact on forthcoming G20 agendas. Should India's approaches to tackling worldwide issues like climate change, the pandemic, and economic inequalities be deemed effective, they may establish standards for subsequent presidencies. India's approach, which is characterised by the incorporation of diverse perspectives, has the potential to stimulate a more thorough examination of matters that impact both developed and developing countries during subsequent G20 discussions. Fourth is the Multilateral Diplomacy and Partnerships**.** The diplomatic engagements and partnerships India established throughout its G20 presidency may influence the trajectory of multilateral diplomacy. Through the promotion of cooperative endeavours and the establishment of diplomatic ties among countries, India can positively contribute to a more interconnected and cooperative international community. Establishing and reinforcing relationships throughout India's term may serve as a foundation for long-lasting partnerships, facilitating diplomatic endeavours beyond the G20 framework. India's strategic contributions to global challenges throughout its G20 presidency, including in sustainable development, digital governance, and global health, may pave the way for the resolution of forthcoming global issues. Last but not least is the Strategic Contributions to Global Challenges. The proactive position taken by India on crucial matters exemplifies the potential for emergent economies to assume a leadership position in identifying collaborative resolutions. The results of India's presidency could inspire G20 members to adopt a more proactive and involved stance in addressing emergent global challenges. In summary, India's G20 presidency has the potential to stimulate lasting impacts on global governance and South-South cooperation and is not merely a transient occurrence. The trajectory of forthcoming G20 dynamics will be contingent upon the efficacy of India's endeavours and the degree to which they foster cooperation, inclusiveness, and flexibility in response to ever-changing worldwide obstacles. The consequences of India's leadership can significantly impact the course of global collaboration and the influence of developing economies on the global agenda.

Conclusion

This study has critically examined India's evolving approach to multilateralism and its implications for global governance and South–South cooperation. The analysis demonstrates that India's leadership within multilateral frameworks, particularly through the G20, signifies not merely a continuation of its traditional foreign policy ethos but a strategic recalibration aimed at reshaping global institutions to reflect inclusivity, equity, and sustainability. In doing so, India has emerged as a bridge between developed and developing nations, leveraging its growing diplomatic influence to advocate for a more participatory and just

international order. India's conduct during its G20 presidency illustrates a multidimensional and pragmatic model of leadership that combines normative commitment with strategic diplomacy. Through initiatives on climate action, digital inclusion, public health, and equitable growth, India has sought to embed developmental justice and cooperative governance into the G20's agenda. Its persistent advocacy for inclusive development and its emphasis on collective problem-solving demonstrates how emerging powers can employ multilateral platforms to advance both their national interests and the shared priorities of the Global South. India's diplomacy thus exemplifies a new mode of engagement, one that privileges collaboration over confrontation and reform over rhetoric. At the same time, India's presidency was not devoid of challenges. Reconciling diverse economic priorities, navigating geopolitical tensions, and ensuring consensus on complex issues such as trade, digital governance, and climate finance underscored the inherent difficulties of global leadership in a multipolar world. Yet, India's ability to maintain constructive engagement across ideological divides reflects its growing maturity as a responsible stakeholder in international affairs. Its success in fostering cooperation despite fragmentation validates its approach to multilateralism as both adaptive and inclusive.

The G20 experience also reinvigorated the spirit of South–South cooperation, reaffirming solidarity among developing nations as a cornerstone of the global governance agenda. By amplifying the concerns of the Global South, from equitable vaccine access to sustainable energy transitions and fair-trade practices, India revitalised the ethos of collective advancement that once defined the Non-Aligned Movement. Its presidency underscored that South–South cooperation is not a counterweight to North–South relations, but a complementary framework for shared progress and mutual empowerment in an increasingly interdependent world. Comparatively, India's presidency injected a distinctive normative and developmental thrust into the G20's trajectory. Unlike several earlier presidencies that focused predominantly on crisis management or financial stability, India's leadership integrated economic, environmental, and social dimensions into a holistic vision of global governance. This multidimensional orientation reflects a paradigmatic shift in how emerging powers conceptualise leadership, not through dominance or isolation, but through inclusive agenda-setting and institutional reform. Ultimately, India's approach to multilateralism provides an instructive model for reconciling national development goals with global responsibilities. Its foreign policy vision, grounded in civilisational pluralism, cooperative federalism, and developmental partnership, reinforces the transformative potential of emerging powers in shaping an equitable international order. As the global community faces renewed geopolitical competition, climate insecurity, and technological disruption,

India's experience demonstrates that constructive multilateral engagement, rooted in inclusivity and shared responsibility, can serve as a blueprint for building a more resilient, humane, and sustainable world. In essence, India's G20 presidency has not only reaffirmed its place as a pivotal actor in global governance but also revitalised the ideals of South, South solidarity and inclusive multilateralism. It stands as a testament to how principled yet pragmatic leadership can illuminate new pathways for cooperation and reform in the evolving architecture of global governance.

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Global Liquidity and the International Monetary System

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Abstract

The series of crises in the global economy: Global Financial Crisis, European Sovereign Debt Crisis and the COVID-19 crisis exposed the severe symmetries in the international monetary system. With the rising share of dollar borrowings from the part of the non-financial corporations by the emerging market economies in the course of the low interest environment in the global economy till a year back, there has been large demand for dollar liquidity towards rollover of the liabilities. As per the 2022 Triennial Survey of the Bank for International Settlements, the daily foreign exchange turnover is at $7.5 trillion. Understandably, the share of foreign exchange swaps has risen to 51%. Indeed as the developing countries were forced to resort to the sales of US Treasuries in March 20220, the Fed Reserve has to intervene opening up facilities of swap lines and repo financing. Even as the demand for dollar liquidity was met both during the time of the global financial crisis as well as during the outbreak of COVID-19, the same was due to initiatives from the part of the Federal Reserves through swap line facilities as well as repo facilities. In the contemporary global economy where the resources at the command of the IMF in terms of the total external liabilities of the world has been on a decline in comparison to the eighties, wouldn't it be desirable to think in terms of reform of the international monetary system. This paper explores the same.

Introduction

Global liquidity refers to the ease of international financing. It has been an important matter of concern ever since the global financial crisis when the central banks had to undertake urgent steps to restore liquidity. Beyond their usual bequeathed mandates of the employment and price stability, considerations of financial stability has been of utmost importance of the central banks as well as of international organizations ever since. In fact, the international regulatory institutions like IMF which were set up as part of the post-war Bretton Woods regime lack resources to exercise their duties in a world inundated with two-way gross capital flows. Since the collapse of the Bretton Woods, the international monetary regime which came into vogue has had "flexible" exchange rates with

freer capital mobility. This was under the premises that the economies would have autonomy over monetary policy. However monetary policies of these economies continue to be linked to the US monetary policy.

This paper reflects on the contemporary concerns on global liquidity in the light of three important developments. Ever since the nineties, there has been a large increase in the share of the emerging and developing economies in the world economy and a growing demand for safe assets as growth has picked up momentum . Two, the co-ordinated effort of the Central Banks (in particular Federal Reserve, ECB , BoJ and BoE)through the unprecedented purchase of bonds in the backdrop of the two crises (The Global Financial Crisis as well as the Covid-19 crisis) had helped in keeping the global economy liquid even as the pressures of fiscal austerity without any rationale has been very strong. However, this has also resulted in a large flow of short-term capital with an intent of search for yield, further triggering asset price bubbles even when the world is not out of the deflationary environment. We explore the consequences of the same on developing countries. Thirdly, in the light of the dollar credit outside United States rising up to levels of more than $ 13 trillion, would the United States and its Fed Reserve be able to continue providing the emergency liquidity requirements as required? Would its exorbitant privilege in the international financial markets continue? This paper explores the same in the light of the concerns of the rising debt concerns triggered by the search for yield as well the growing balance of payments and debt sustainability concerns of the developing world. Would the recent unprecedented increase in the allocation of SDRs suffice to address these issues, it asks.

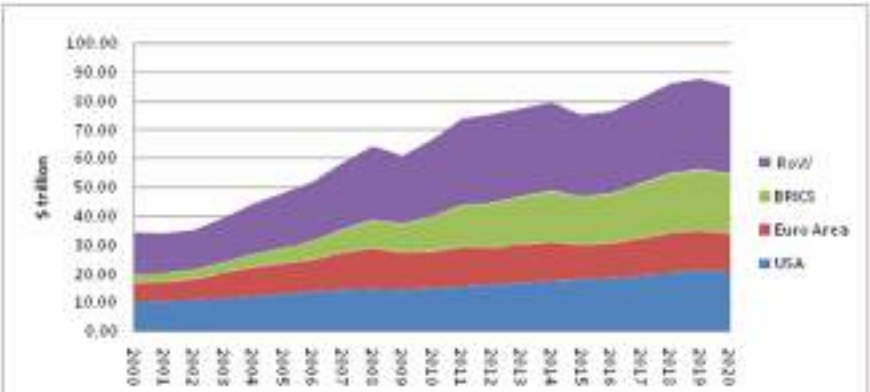
The paper is divided into four sections. In the first part, an attempt is made to sketch the changing contours of the global economy with a focus on global imbalances. The next traces the transition from the Bretton Woods system of fixed exchange rate system to the regime of managed/ flexible exchange rates which from 2000s have been characterised as Bretton Woods II. In the third section the policy steps from the central banks during the global financial and pandemic crises with respect to global liquidity is discussed. It ends with some remarks on the necessity of the reform of the international monetary system.

Changing Contours of the Global Economy

A stocktaking of some of the important changes in the global economy over the last twenty years would be of good purpose as we explore the issues of global liquidity in the international economy. Firstly, the last two decades have been witness to a realignment in the world economy with a perceptible increase in the share of the output generated in the emerging market and developing economies. The national output of China has reached levels comparable to that of the euro

area. Even as the share of the United States had marginally decreased during this period, its position remains reasonably intact. The euro area which was comparable in size to the United States in 2000, however, has been witness to a distinct decline in its relative share. There has been a rising share of BRICS in the global economy (Figure 1). In fact, as has been observed by Amsden, the dominance of the advanced economies could be restrained only through the growth in the continental economies of India and China, which has become possible through the autonomous policy space which has facilitated the same (Amsden, 2007).[1]

Figure 1: Composition of output of the world economy: 2000 to 2020



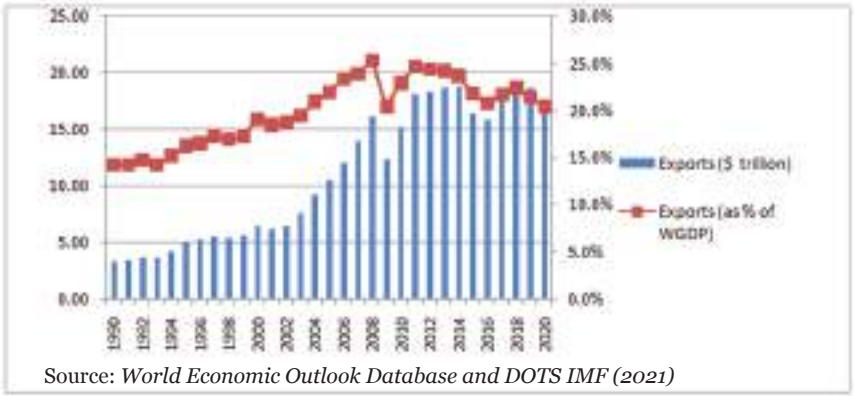
Source: *World Economic Outlook Database 2021*

Second, there has been a rise in the level of exports of goods in the global economy, it has risen from $ 6.48 trillion in 2001 to $17.37 trillion in 2020. Though in 2020, the exports accounts for 20% of the world GDP, it has reached 26% of the world output in 2008. As per the data of Direction of Trade Statistics of IMF, the share of EMDEs in the total exports has increased from 22.4% to 37.1% during this period (Figure 2). Given that we are producing as part of the global value chain, these values in terms of gross exports tend to overstate the gains of the developing economies, the trade in value added is far lower.

With segmented production in different parts of the world, production has moved from the Fordist mode of assembly line to the global value chain of production. The asymmetries in the global value chain is too important to ignore, trade in value added share of developing countries has not increased by as much.[2] A substantial share of the value added happens in the advanced economies, with the role of the developing economies being confined to mere activities of assembly much to exclusion of design of the product or the marketing or retail.[3] Trade through the global value chain of production has resulted in large violation of labour rights,

this has resulted in different initiatives particularly with respect to the sanitization of global value chain from the part of the ILO.[4] Subcontracting the work through contractors like Foxconn, the organisation of production is getting internationalized. The competitive race to the bottom has been keeping the wages from rising in the developing world. Even the labour in Europe too is now far from the social compact which was in vogue during the Golden Age of Capitalism with ideas of labour market flexibility picking up momentum. Hung up with the common currency of euro, the sole way out to improve their exports is to reduce their price levels which have been happening through nominal wage reduction. Most importantly, the growing share of the emerging and developing economies under the multilateral framework has been viewed with caution resulting in the mushrooming up of number of bilateral treaties between nations. The proliferation of regional trade agreements and megaregionals would have its own impact on the level of trade.

Figure 2: Exports in the global economy



Source: *World Economic Outlook Database and DOTS IMF (2021)*

Thirdly, the multinationals account for one-tenth of the global GDP, their sales account for one-half of the world GDP and the intra-firm transactions account for one-third of the global exports (UNCTAD, 2016). All economies in the world have been in a competitive race to bottom towards attracting the multinationals which have manipulated this to their advantage and resorted to practices like transfer pricing, i.e., under-invoicing of exports and over-invoicing of imports resulting in huge tax losses for the country where production is undertaken. The studies by OECD have revealed that an annual loss of $100 to $240 bn for economies (roughly 4 to 10% of the global corporate revenue) on account of Base Erosion and Profit Sharing(BEPS).[7]

And, most importantly, far disproportionate to the level of output or trade in the global economy has been the increase in the external assets and liabilities of

economies. According to the Ninth Triennial Survey of Foreign Exchange of 2019, foreign exchange transactions on a daily basis has increased to $ 6 trillion, far disproportionate to the annual value of world trade (18 trillion annually) or world output ($80 trillion). A substantial share of the same is on account of forwards and derivatives. ever since the global financial crisis, As per the BIS data after the steep increase in the gross notional value of the derivatives outstanding to $ 34.94 trillion in December 2008(it literally doubled from its value in December 2007) , ever since it has decreased to $12.6 trillion in June 2021. While the derivatives have been referred to as the weapons of massive financial destruction by Warren Buffet, others like Greenspan among others find in them an efficient mechanism to facilitate the diversification of risk.[5]

It is pertinent to note that the large rise in income inequalities within countries have resulted in the rise of money managers who have at their disposal huge funds under their management. They are the new purveyors of global liquidity. Among the diverse groups of money manager firms are asset management funds like Black Rock, insurance companies like Allianz SE, AXA, Berkshire Hathway, Nippon, Metlife to Aviva, sovereign wealth funds like Temasek Holdings, pension funds worldwide from the both the developing and advanced economies like CPPIB have been flush with funds under management which have been in search for yield.[6] All of this is over and above the fund flows in the form of loans from the part of the banks. Ever since the large asset purchases made by the different central banks in the aftermath of the global financial crisis, there has been a huge increase in flow of capital for these funds crisis-crossing the world in search for yield.

Transition from Bretton Woods system to "flexible" exchange rates

The post-war international monetary system characterised by capital controls and fixed exchange rates came to an end with the United States not being able to honour the demand for gold as against the dollar liabilities from the rest of the world. The system which was the outcome of the Bretton Woods Conference in which Keynes and Harry Dexter White represented Britain and United States respectively was under the structured under the premises that the currencies shall be pegged to the dollar, and for every $35 of liabilities surrendered to US, an ounce of gold would be given in exchange. Only under conditions of fundamental disequilibrium would the exchange rate be changed. United States, which in the immediate aftermath of the world war has started with formidable stock of gold found it getting depleted fast in the course of the sixties, with the gold stock with United States being far lower in comparison with the dollar liabilities which it has with the rest of the world. The issue which Robert Triffin had raised long before regarding the durability of the Bretton Woods system has proven out to be true.[8]

The world was moving out of the fixed exchange rate regime and making its entry into a world of largely flexible exchange rates. The regime in the post-war period was run driven by the arguments and concerns about the currency experience in the inter-war years by Ragnar Nurkse and the ideas of Keynes. Friedman's case that the flexible exchange rates would allow for methods of automatic equilibrium as well as permit autonomy over monetary policy gained currency. The fear of destabilising speculation was set aside and the regime of Bretton Woods came to an end and an era of flexible exchange rates was born, with Richard Nixon announcing the closing of the Gold Window.

Far from being "flexible", the period from the eighties could at best be characterised as a system of managed float. Foreign exchange intervention by the central banks of advanced economies were orchestrated towards managing the value of the dollar. After the Volcker shock which resulted in the interest rates in United States rising to very high levels, there was a large flow of capital to the United States resulting in the relative value of the dollar increasing vis-à-vis the other currencies. This had a deleterious impact on the savings organisations in United States. Given the appreciation of the dollar against the other currencies, US manufacturing exports suffered significantly. As part of the 1985 Plaza Accord, it was decided that the other advanced economy Central Banks would resort to the selling of dollar thus bringing down its value. Further while the competitiveness of the Japan and Germany were at risk too, there were interventions done. All of the same happened with the Plaza and Louvre Accord.[9]

With the restrictive capital controls which were in vogue under the Bretton Woods system coming to an end, the period was witness to steep increases in the stock of external assets and liabilities. The international financial integration ratios of economies increased, those of the international financial centres increased even more.[10] As economies liberalised and their exchange rates were no more rigidly linked like in the past to the peg, there were words of caution from economists across the world from Diaz Alejandro to Patnaik and Rakshit that the propensity to crisis would be on the rise.[11] It was argued by the proponents of capital account convertibility and untrammelled mobility of capital that capital would flow downhill.[12] The 1991 World Bank Conference ended up celebrating and making Thailand as Asia's fifth tiger. Through its openness to capital flows in the 1985 to 1995 period with high growth rate, it was projected as model for the rest of the world. In fact, this was being done despite the aversion of the Fund and the Bank to the high current account deficits of developing economies. Part of the reason why they found the external deficit to be acceptable was that the same was not on account of government deficits but because the private investment was more than

the level of private savings (Jomo, 1998).[13]

The east Asian region and growth it experienced was big break for the developing world; other than the oil producers who stood to benefit from the quadrupling of oil prices there were no other economies in the developing country stable which were able to register rates of growth to have significant impact on the lives of people in the course of two generations. With unfavourable expectations not only were there capital outflows, debt-creating in particular, from Thailand, but, due to similarity in the export baskets in the region, the currencies of the rest of east Asia also came under speculative attack, which could not be explained by any of the macroeconomic parameters.

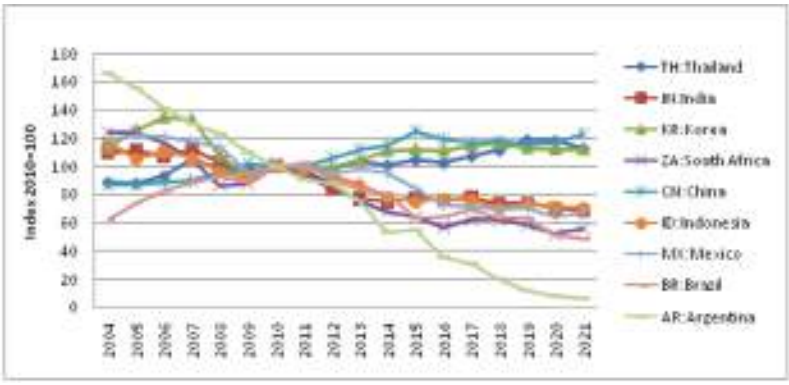
Right from the time of the Plaza and Louvre Accord, it has been very clear that the international monetary system after the collapse of the Bretton Woods system was not a flexible exchange regime as usually mentioned. Through these accords, there were interventions towards managing the value of the dollar to begin with. Given that capital controls were removed by many of the economies, it was clear that the economies would be susceptible to crisis. Number of developing economies were witness to crises in the course of the nineties. The 1994 Mexican crisis, the Asian financial crisis which followed the crisis in Thailand in 1998 and the crises in Russia(1999) and Argentina(2001) were interspersed with the collapse of the Long Term Capital Management and the collapse of the dotcom bubble, which had repercussions for the global economy. With the emergency liquidity support from the IMF not being forthcoming for the developing economies embroiled in crises, they had to take upon themselves the responsibility of securing themselves against speculative currency attacks.

The East Asian currency contagion resulted in severe macroeconomic costs to the region and became the rallying point for those opposed to capital account liberalisation. India, too was readying with its proposals of capital account liberalisation with the Tarapore Report, but now things had to be shelved with Bhagwati arguing that "markets for foreign exchange should not be compared to the markets for widgets" (Bhagwati, 1998). Contrary to the extraordinary briskness with which the United States acted during the Mexican crisis, such efforts were not forthcoming from the part of the international organisations like the IMF. In fact, the developing countries were exposed to a peculiar situation wherein they had to think in terms of their own risks incurring costs. Even as the programmes were finalised and the grants been made, it was more inclined to support the international bankers who have burnt their balance sheets by lending to the region.

The immediate effect of the same has been in the form of large scale accumulation of foreign exchange reserves done by the developing countries, they only knew so very well that they could not count on the IMF for liquidity facility

during extraordinary times. Experience has taught them that that they should be least bothered about the social costs involved in the accumulation of foreign exchange reserves.[14]

Figure 3: Foreign exchange reserves (excluding gold): $ billions



Source: *International Financial Statistics, IMF*

In India, when there was an inundation of capital flows in the 2003-08 period, not only had the the RBI done a large amount of intervention in the foreign exchange market, but had also initiated steps towards the promotion of investment abroad. Further, towards facilitating sterilisation of the same so that the money supply does not increase beyond a limit, there was the issuance of Market Stabilisation Scheme(MSS) bonds, the interests on which would be paid by the government. The financial flows to the emerging market economies were driven by all those institutional investors, private equity funds, pension funds and hedge funds, reflective of the growing inequalities and declining government-directed social security measures.[15]

The first decade of the century was witness to steep increase in the accumulation of foreign exchange reserves from the part of the east Asians. At present, the stock of foreign exchange reserves in the world economy is at $13.94 trillion; 14.5 % of the world GDP, out of which the central banks in the EMDEs account for $7.9 trillion (Figure 3). This preference for the safe asset to hedge against speculative currency attacks from the part of the developing countries was not infrequently being characterised by economic policy circles in United States to be deliberate efforts towards enhancing the competitiveness of their exports.

The foreign exchange reserves of the emerging and developing economies witnessed a steep increase from $ 725 bn in 2000 to $ 4.25 trillion in 2007. In others words it increased from 10.1% of their GDP to 25.5%. As of 2021, the stock of forex reserves with the EMDEs is at $ 7.82 trillion. Three points are to be noted

here. Firstly, a lion's share of the foreign exchange reserves is on account of China which has a stock of $ 3.3 trillion in 2021. Two, other than small subset of the developing country exporters in east Asia as well as the oil exporters in the Middle East, very few of the economies have their accumulation being done on the basis of current account surpluses; most of the accumulation is done on the basis of the net inflows on the capital/financial account. Thirdly, as part of the policy steps which are initiated towards nullifying the impact of the external capital inflows, the central banks in co-operation with governments are forced to undertake sterilisation exercises incurring heavy fiscal costs.

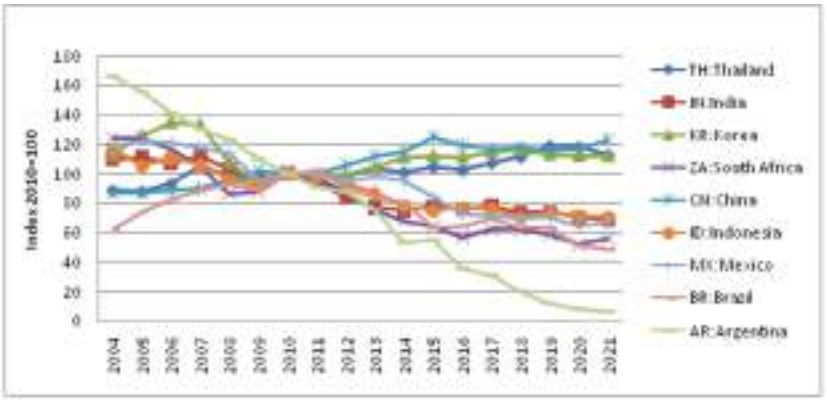
Here again, the foreign exchange reserves of India has been on the rise riding the tide of net inflows on the financial account. Worse, while the forex reserves as share of the external debt used to be at 135.5% in 2007, it has shrunk to 104.6% in 2021(Figure 4), whereas the absolute amount of the foreign exchange reserves of the country has increased from $ 266.98 bn in 2007 to $ 594.35 bn in 2021. Moreover, the short term external debt of residual maturity accounts for, as per the RBI estimates, 41% of the foreign exchange reserves in 2021.

The developing countries have been alleged as resorting to the accumulation of forex reserves towards enhancing the competitiveness of their exports. In the various editions of the Report of Macroeconomic Policies, attempts were made to draw attention to the same on the basis of the bilateral trade surpluses which the United States has with the country concerned, ignoring the very fact that the United States continues to have large balances on the services front.[16] Moreover, the extent of share of intra-firm trade in the global economy which accounts for 30% of the total trade also works to the advantage of economies like United States contributing to its net investment income.

Figure 4: Forex reserves as share of external debt stocks of India. Source: International Debt Statistics, World Bank 2021

Notwithstanding the foreign exchange reserves, the effective exchange rates of set of developing economies as reported by BIS database reveals that other than China, Korea and Thailand their currencies have been depreciating (Figure 5). With the decision of the Federal Open Market Committee(FOMC) recently towards increasing the targeted federal funds rate, the currency markets of different emerging economies are already in disarray with huge capital outflows from them as expected.

Figure 5: Effective exchange rates of EMDEs: 2004 to 2021



It is important to note here that in contrast to the period before the global financial crisis, the pace of foreign exchange reserve accumulation of the advanced economies have been on the increase. While it increased from $1 trillion to $2.5 trillion between 1995 and 2007, it was a steep increase from there to $ 6.1 trillion in 2021, i.e., 10.9% of their collective GDP. This rise in forex accumulation from the part of the advanced countries had resulted in their share of the total foreign exchange reserves increasing from 37.2% during GFC to 43.9% in 2021. In other words the rapid pace of forex accumulation done by the EMDEs which resulted in their share increasing from 36% in 1997 to 65% in 2008 has been reversed ever since. While a part of the reserve accumulation could be attributed to the reluctance to resort to investment given the risks and uncertainties, the rest of the same is also due to complications which two-way gross capital flows had had on the euro periphery, with the European sovereign debt crisis. This demand for safe assets and reserves from the part of the central banks has now added to the safe asset shortage problem in the global economy. It should be remembered that the unsatiated demand for safe assets in the run-up to the global financial crisis was met with the increase in the private labelled securities which were issued by the process of securitisation which had picked up momentum in the US economy in an unprecedented pace.

For any country *per se* the accumulation of safe assets would be best option, given the uncertainties in the international economy. But, one should not forget the fact that while all the economies resort to the same, the demand for safe assets would increase, the price of the same would rise up and the return decreases, typically reflective of slowing global economy. The collective reserves of the global economy at present being at around 14% is also reflective of the sort of shortage of demand which is generated in the system, adding to the deflationary tendencies.

The Bretton Woods fixed exchange rate system had as one of its most important problems the issue of the exorbitant privilege which the United States had enjoyed by virtue of the fact that the rest of the world had to keep acquiring the low interest yielding bonds of the United States in order to maintain the peg with dollar. This, they did, knowing only too well that the United States did not have the gold stock through which it could honour the huge pile of external liabilities which were accumulating. Needless to say, the French Finance Minister Estiang had drawn attention to the exorbitant privilege with which United States was shopping the world.[17] But did this exorbitant privilege which was also instrumental in bringing down the Bretton Woods system disappear with the regime shift to flexible exchange rates? Before we undertake a calculation of the same on the basis of the data from the Bureau of Economic Analysis, let us look at some facts of the external balance sheet of the United States.

The United States has had net international investment position which has been negative ever since the 1989. At present, the NIIP of the USA is at (-)$18 trillion, which is -78% of the US GDP(Figure 6). The pace at which the external assets of United States has increased has been lower in comparison to the pace at which the liabilities of the United States has increased.

The external liabilities of the United States increased from $9.2 trillion (i.e., 90% of the GDP) in 2000 to $ 53.3 trillion (i.e.,232% of the GDP) in 2021(Figure 7). During the same period, the external assets of United States has increased from $7.6 trillion (i.e., 74% of the GDP) in 2000 to $ 35.2 trillion (i.e.,154% of the GDP) in 2021(Figure 8). It is pertinent to note here that the large scale accumulation of US Treasuries which gave them low rates of return from the part of the developing economies pick up in the beginning of the century. The United States was in this process reinforcing its role as the provider of safe assets in the global economy. Despite the external liabilities of the country far outstripping the external assets, the investment income inflows have been more than sufficient for all these years towards meeting the payments to be made on its external liabilities.

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Figure 6: Net International Investment Position of United States.

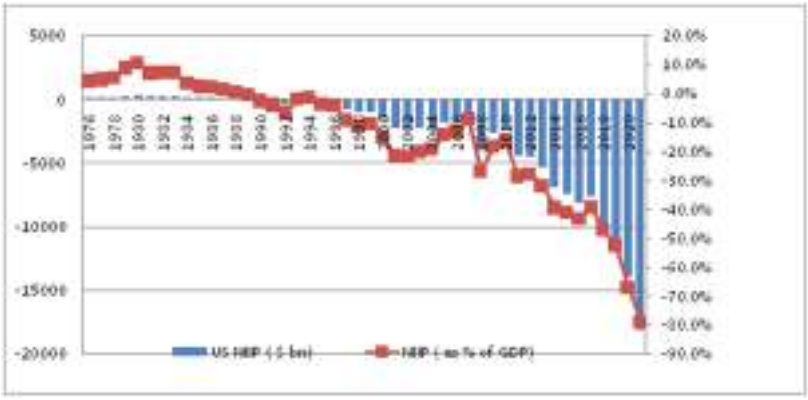
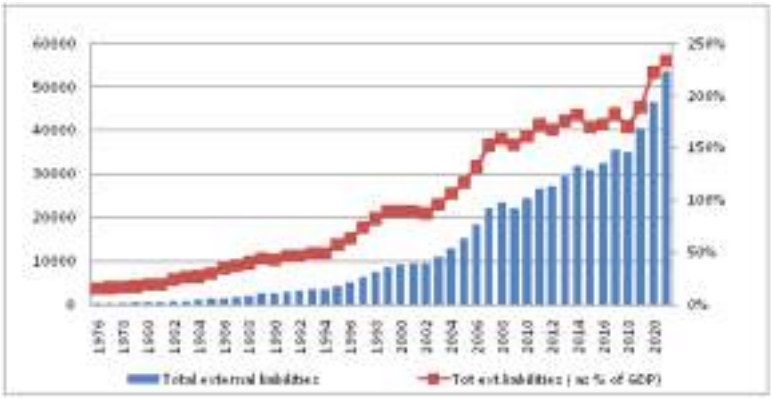


Figure 7: Total external liabilities of USA



To examine as to whether the exorbitant privilege of United States dollar continues, we try to calculate the rate of return on the assets and liabilities of the United States. For this we use the data from the Bureau of Economic Analysis of the United States.[18] Towards calculating the rate of return on the assets in year t+1, we divide the investment income in year t+1 by the value of the external assets in year t, and similarly we divide the investment income outflow in the year t+1 by the external liabilities in year t. We find that the exorbitant privilege, i.e., the difference between the return on assets and liabilities of the United States continues to hold. Though compared to the seventies both the returns on assets as well as liabilities have registered a decline, the difference in the return on assets as against the liabilities has consistently been positive. It is important to note that the return on the external assets have increased in the period after the global financial

crisis compared to the return on assets. In fact, the wedge between the returns on assets as well as on liabilities has increased in the period post global financial crisis thanks to the extremely low yields on Treasuries (Figure 9).

Figure 8: Total external assets of USA($ bn)

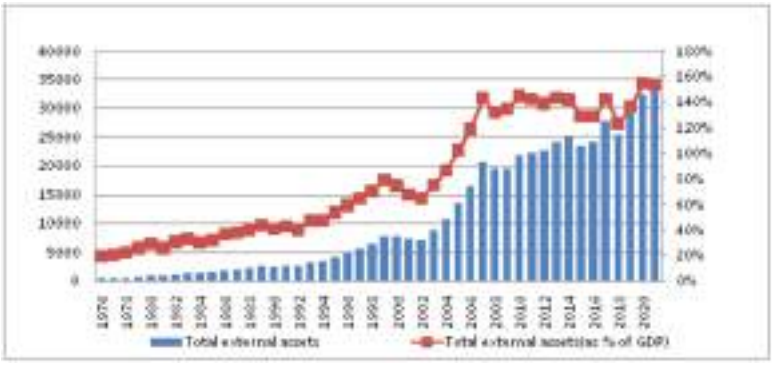
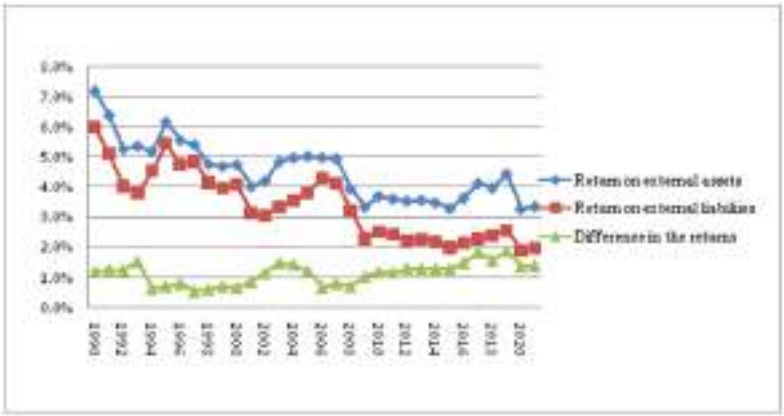


Figure 9: Difference in the rate of return on external assets and liabilities



In other words, the rate of return on the external liabilities continue to be far less in comparison to the returns received from external assets that the exorbitant privilege of the United States which was the major bone of discontent during the Bretton Woods period continues to hold under the new regime. Though the share of the foreign direct investment in the liabilities of the United States were at 13% of the total external liabilities in 2008, it has increased to 29% in 2021. Is this to be seen just

as a result of high increase in the market valuation of Untied States stocks, or is the world viewing United States an important avenue of investment like in the 1994 to 2000 period. With the advantage which United States has in the field of technology and digital platforms as well as in the business of retail and fintech, we would have to watch in the immediate future for the changes in this regard.

It should also be noted that as the trade or current account deficit of United States increases, the exchange rate of the same depreciated, but by virtue of the huge assets which it holds abroad by virtue of the appreciation of those assets abroad, its net international investment position (NIIP) did not deteriorate by as much as the deterioration in the current account.[19] Moreover, during the time of crises like the global financial crisis, there is the flight to the dollar by virtue of which dollar appreciates resulting in the decrease of the value of the assets abroad decreasing in value and their being a net wealth transfer to the rest of the world during extraordinary times.

The informal international monetary system of sorts which took shape in the course of the initial part of the current century is referred to as Bretton Woods II. This has the United States continuing to be centre and the emerging economies like Asia being major resource accumulators. Dooley and others characterised this as the Bretton Woods II model in which there is the core, i.e., USA, the trading economies and the capital account economies. The objective of the core economy USA in this system is to retain its reserve currency status in the international financial market, notwithstanding its growing current account deficit. With its surplus labour and cost advantage, the trading economies are willing and only too ready to accumulate dollars to preserve the value of their currency against the dollar. They do not want their currencies to appreciate with their trade surpluses. So we have system wherein the trading economies use the surpluses, both on account of current and financial account towards accumulation of dollars in such a manner that currency does not appreciate and the peg is maintained. The US, on the other hand benefits from the source of finance it receives from the rest of the world by virtue of the demand for its Treasuries. The leader country did not have anything to bother about the burgeoning current account deficits on the value of the dollar, the surplus economies of east Asia and the oil-rich Middle East as well as the others with net financial account surpluses were only too willing to accumulate the US Treasuries indeed to keep the exchange rates of their currencies at a depreciated value. This system is modelled as Bretton Woods II by a set of authors (Dooley, Folkerts-Landau, & Garber, 2003). They argue that with the labour reserves in some of the current economies getting exhausted, there would be others who would graduate in as the periphery trade account economies.

Though the set of developing and emerging economies which have been accumulating dollar securities are doing it with a self-insurance motive, this has

been characterised as enhancing their competiveness of exports (trade account countries). The capital account economies, which includes the rest of the advanced economies would invest only for better returns. This system worked significantly in favour of United States which as a centre country was only interested in shoring up the price of its dollar and reaping the advantage of the reserve currency despite the growing current account deficits.

The source of demand provided by the United States in the post-war period had played an important role in the initial development of the east Asian economies. In the new system, the US treasuries in which the developing economies stay invested would serve as some sort of a collateral against the foreign direct investment which US and other advanced countries are undertaking despite the political uncertainties. Not only does this preserve the value of the dollar as against weaknesses but also enable the developing countries to get larger markets abroad for their currencies are not appreciating despite trade surpluses. For a brief period, though this conceptualisation was true also, as is evident from the figure on current account imbalances in the global economy, matters have gone for big change ever since the global financial crisis.

The current account surpluses of China and the east Asian economies increased in the first decade of the century, in particular, till the global financial crisis. The surplus of China increased from $ 21 bn in 1999 to $ 420 bn in 2008. The MECA group which include the oil producers also saw their surplus increasing to $ 350 bn in 20008. It is also to be noted that the EMDEs other than China and oil producers also had a surplus, though small in the run-up to the financial crisis. In this period , though we find that the current account surpluses of Germany has been on the rise from a deficit of $31 bn in 1999 to a surplus of $ 213 bn in 2008, the rest of euro area was in deficit. During this period the current account deficit of the United States has increased from $286 bn to $ 696 bn, with deficit being the maximum at of over $ 817 bn in 2006, i.e., 6% of the US GDP (Figure 10). In others words, the leader country of the world was able to assure higher level of consumption than its level of output with the assurance that the Asian developing countries with far lower per capita incomes would be ready to continually accumulate US Treasuries ensuring a lower level of interest rates. We had the advocates of financial liberalisation making a case against capital controls suggesting that capital would flow downhill to the developing countries. Per contra, we have significant net resource transfers occurring to the United States, i.e., adding up the current account deficit with the net income earnings had indeed been formidable during this period which is modelled as Bretton Woods II.[20]

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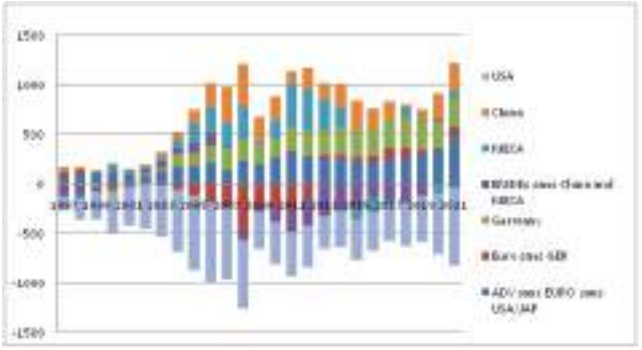
Figure 10: Global Imbalances in the world economy ($ bn)



It is important here to note that the abundance of global liquidity was triggering growth and demand in the system during the period prior to the global financial crisis. There was a burst of activity with financial innovation in the creation of securitized products and associated derivatives. The sudden downturn in the American residential prices, and with it, the reduction in the prices of the asset backed and mortgage backed securities *pari passu*, resulted in the number of European banks which had a heavy exposure to the same suffering a severe loss landing them in crisis. Indeed, the banks in Europe were to go through long process of deleveraging reflected in the large decrease in the international claims of banks to world GDP ratio which fell from 66.8% to 40% as per the BIS data (Figure 11).

Figure 11: International claims of banks on all sectors (as % of world GDP)

Not only did Germany have a current account surplus in the runup to the crisis, but the current account of the whole of the euro area was also in balance. Nonetheless they ended up in a severe crisis.[21] This brings us to the fact that even when the current account is reasonably balanced, the countries could end up in crises, for most of the crises in these days of financial globalisation are associated with the capital or financial account. In this case, the European banks had borrowed

short in the wholesale dollar market to invest long in these securitised products and their derivatives. When suddenly, it could not be rolled over, the European banks had their balance sheets in disarray.

Post-global financial crisis with the reduction in the current account deficit of the United States, it is important to note that the surplus of China has dwindled from $ 420 bn in 2007 to $ 103 bn in 2019. During the same period, we find the current account balances of the MECA registering high level of volatility with changes in the price of oil. Most importantly, the EMDEs other than China and MECA which used to have small surplus in the period prior to the global financial crisis found the same registering deficits from 2011 to 2019 and are finding the financing of their deficits a significantly difficult task. The outbreak of the pandemic has made things even worse, there have been various efforts in the direction of the rescheduling of the debt. In other words, even as the accumulation of foreign exchange reserves has been keeping the dollar away from trouble, the financing problems of the developing countries have come back with a redoubled strength. Over and above this, Germany has been able to consolidate on its current account surpluses. The rest of the advanced economies have also been improving on the current account surpluses, though the deflation in those economies is responsible for the same.

In sum, the phase after the collapse of the Bretton Woods system was characterised by freer mobility of capital. Though generally characterised as a period of flexible exchange rates, the exchange rate of even the leader country was managed. With the preponderance of financial crises which rocked the emerging economies across continents, there was an unprecedented accumulation of foreign exchange reserves from the part of the developing economies. Given the large demand for US Treasuries from the part of the central banks across the world, the cost of financing became cheaper for the United States. It was the exorbitant privilege of the United States dollar which was contested by Estiang and Schmit during the Bretton Woods period, but the same continues with the rate of return on external assets of United Sates being far more than the rate of return on its external liabilities. It is in fact the compulsions of the emerging economies of accumulating foreign exchange reserves which has been allowing the dollar to hold fort. Given that it was the inability to receive emergency liquidity assistance during times of crises from the international financial institutions like IMF which were pushing them to this compulsion, shouldn't the intentional monetary system be reformed to suit the grammar of international finance in the contemporary world? About the same we came to in the next two sections.

Global liquidity and the Policy Initiatives During the Global Crises

Global liquidity refers to the ease of international financing. If in a period, one is successfully able to dispose of an asset without incurring any capital losses, it

implies that there is a favourable tide of global liquidity. The sudden shifts in the risk perceptions gets transmitted from one part of the world to another with such speed that in the current global economy, the conditions in one part of the world gets transmitted to the rest of the world fast. Such swift transmission has its implications on asset and property prices, and, most importantly on exchange rates. Most of the developing countries who have been basking in the glory of the huge inflows of debt creating inflows would be caught in a risky situation under these circumstances. It is known fact that a large share of the capital flows in the global economy has been of a debt-creating nature, and, a lion's share has been of a short-term nature which is done towards benefiting from the interest rate differentials across countries.

Given the denomination of liabilities in foreign currencies, this sudden shifts in global liquidity could very well push different corporations to a state of illiquidity and bankruptcy, particularly so, if they have not hedged against the risks involved. Both in the case of banks as well as non-financial corporations which rely on short-term borrowings, the renewal and rollover of their loans becomes very risky under unfavourable conditions. The rollover of short term liabilities is of paramount importance for the big banks for most of them rely in the current world on wholesale liabilities rather than retail deposits towards financing their deposits.

Institutions should have a more nuanced understanding about the liquidity/ illiquidity of their assets. The quick transformation of market illiquidity to funding illiquidity with even traditionally highly liquid interbank markets finding severe squeeze in liquidity was unprecedented during the global financial crisis.

Increase in international assets of banks worldwide happened in the first round with the quadrupling of oil prices in the seventies. The international banking system was inundated with petrodollars and interest were at lower levels. Through syndicated deals, consortium of bankers were pushing loans to the developing country governments, particularly so, Latin America. All of that came to an end with the increase in interest rates, the Volcker shock, which hiked the targeted federal funds rate with an intent of fighting inflation. The increased interest rates in the global economy coupled with the deterioration in the terms of trade pushed he Latin American economies to the debt crisis.[22] There was yet another upswing with respect to global liquidity which ended with the Asian financial crisis.

There was steep increase in the international bank claims which picked up momentum after the lull after the Asian financial crisis. The reduction in the US federal funds rate in the period just after the bursting of the dotcom bubble (the collapse of the hyped values of the tech stocks in United States) added to the same. As per the Consolidated Banking Statistics of the BIS, the international claims of banks was witness to steep increase from $ 8.3 trillion in 1999 to $ 32.3 trillion in 2008, the stock of international claims have almost quadrupled during this period.

(Figure 12). Our calculations show that the international claims as a ratio of the world GDP increased from 33% to 66.8% during this period.

The years of boom which were running piggyback on the great credit upswing was coming to a halt. Even when the median wage earnings in the United States had not registered much of an increase since the eighties, the debt-driven boom with low interest rates as well as the private wealth effect which many of the citizens in United States experienced with the rise in the asset prices of property and stocks as well the easy availability of credit more than substituted for the stagnant rate of growth of real wages (Brenner, 2000). The favourable conditions of global liquidity which used to facilitate large scale leveraged buyout operations in the international economy suddenly waned. Such huge swings in global liquidity pushing the global financial system to risks and uncertainty forced the central banks to experiment with new tools.

Figure 12: Amount outstanding ($ bn) of international claims of all reporting nationalities

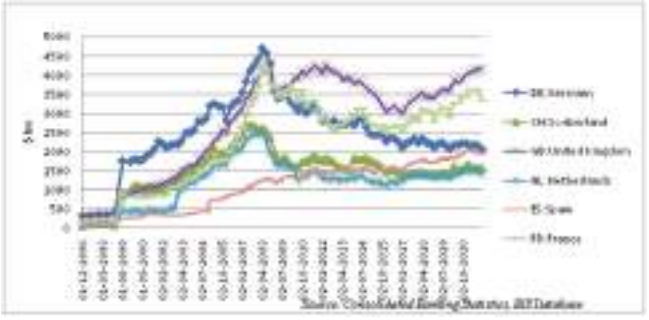
The European banks which had a big exposure to the assets based on the sub-prime mortgages in United States suffered a severe setback in their balance sheets. The big European banks which were the major intermediaries of global liquidity through the wholesale borrowing which they did in the US money markets found that the markets for the asset-backed and mortgage-backed securities had become illiquid with the collapse of the property prices in United States. The situation became even worse with the inability of the banks to rollover their loans from the wholesale money market (funding illiquidity) forcing them to sell-off their securities resulting in the spiraling down of the asset prices. This quick transmission of the decline in property prices in United States to the market for ABSs and MBSs and from there to the markets which funded them resulted in number of European banks being forced to go through the process of deleveraging.

With the global financial crisis, the stock of international claims have been on the decline particularly so due to the deleveraging of the European banks, and it

was only in recent past that with the stock of international claims have crossed the levels which they have reached in 2008(Figure 12).

Being unable to renew their liabilities in the US money markets, the European banks which had a big exposure in the market of asset backed and mortgage backed securities had to resort to selling them sustaining losses. The great deleveraging resulted in the international claims of the German banks decreasing from $ 4.7 trillion in 2007. As of 2021, it is at $2.05 trillion. The same holds true with respect to banks headquartered at France, Switzerland as well as Netherlands (Figure 13). In the case of Britain though the international claims has decreased between 2008 and 2017, ever since it has increased to $ 4.15 trillion in 2021.

Figure 13: Deleveraging of European banks during the Global Financial Crisis



The intensity of deleveraging was not the same across nationalities. The banks headquartered around Spain did not suffer much due to their reliance worldwide on local liabilities towards the conduct of the international banking activities rather than relying on cross border loans which were linked more to the conditions of global liquidity. Since the crisis, its international claims have witnessed an increase, marginal though. In fact the global financial crisis was also witness to the international claims of other banks being on the rise. The international claims of the Japanese and Canadian banks have been on the rise; while the international claims of the Japanese shave increased from $2.29 trillion to $5.03 trillion between 2007 and 2021, that of the Canadian banks have increased from $724 bn to $2.5 trillion. We are not able to capture the effective rise of the Chinese banks in the international system because they have not been reporting data under the Consolidated Banking Statistics to BIS. Given the growing trade relationships which they have with a number of emerging market economies, the Chinese banks have been able to make it to the list of the banks in the current world economy.[23]

Figure 14: Amount outstanding of banks on a nationality basis ($ bn)

The table illustrates the details relating to foreign claims of the different reporting banks of various nationalities as of end December 2021 of $34 trillion, Japan(14.9%) , United States(12.4%), United Kingdom(12.3%), France(9.8%) and Canada(7.5%) account for the largest share (Table 1).

With the squeeze of liquidity in the international financial markets, given the interconnected nature of the global economy it was not possible for the central banks to watch this spectacle, they had to put their act together in co-ordination. The Federal Reserve had to take up the responsibility for the provision of dollar liquidity, they had opened up dollar swap lines with number of central banks. All the central banks had resorted to massive purchases of securities.

Table 1: Foreign claims of banks of different nationalities

Summary of Foreign claims of immediate counterparty (as on Dec 2021)		
	$ bn	as %
All bank nationalities	34007.9	
Japan	5078.7	14.9%
United States	4227.6	12.4%
United Kingdom	4195.7	12.3%
France	3342.1	9.8%
Canada	2535.8	7.5%
Germany	2053	6.0%
Spain	1955.1	5.7%

Switzerland	1571.4	4.6%
Netherlands	1403.1	4.1%
Italy	1009	3.0%
Australia	811.9	2.4%
Singapore	649	1.9%
Austria	471.3	1.4%
Finland	460.5	1.4%
Chinese Taipei	424	1.2%
Sweden	360.2	1.1%
Denmark	331	1.0%
Belgium	268.3	0.8%
Korea	246.3	0.7%
Brazil	118.7	0.3%
India	109.8	0.3%
Portugal	104.3	0.3%
Ireland	101.7	0.3%
Greece	85.1	0.3%
Panama	28.1	0.1%
Turkey	24.1	0.1%
Chile	16	0.0%
Mexico	4.7	0.0%
Hong Kong SAR	NA	
Luxembourg	NA	

Source: *Consolidated Banking Statistics; BIS Database*

The Federal Reserve was pushed to resort to this unconventional monetary policy because there was no scope left in federal funds effective rates which has reached zero level with the interventions made to address the sub-prime market issues from August 2007. It is in this context that the Fed Reserve took to the large scale asset purchases (LSAP) of agency mortgage backed securities(AMBS), agency debt and long term bonds of the government , with the maximum of purchases being of the AMBS. This part of the purchases done starting in 2008 is referred to as QE1. In fact, lending was done by the Fed Reserve against commercial paper too. Further under QE2, in October 2010, only purchases of long-term government bonds, that too, at smaller quantities was undertaken. Further there was an attempt towards sterilization of the purchases of long term bonds through the sale of short term bonds, popularly called the Operation Twist,

which was initiated in September 2011. The FOMC decision on QE3 in 2012 was made in the context of the looming European sovereign debt crisis, there was an open-ended commitment from the part of the Federal Reserve to keep purchasing $ 40 bn a month of mortgage backed securities indefinitely and also to assure that the interest remains at near to zero levels till 2015.[24]

The purchases of assets continued till assets of the Fed Reserve reached $ 4 trillion by 2013. It was during this period that the remarks made by President Ben Bernanke with respect to the tapering of bond purchases being in the offing as the conditions in the economy improved created a havoc with large outflow of capital from different emerging market economies. This resulted in the massive depreciation of the exchange rates resulting in the corporate balance sheets of EMDEs being in disarray due to the accumulation of foreign liabilities in a low interest environment. Another round of expansion occurs with the Covid-19 outbreak, with the assets of the Federal Reserve reaching $ 8.9 trillion, almost 40% of the US GDP (Figure 15).

Figure 15: Total Assets of the Federal Reserve ($ trillion)

Though massive asset purchases were resorted towards the provision of liquidity through asset purchases both in the aftermath of the global financial crisis as well as the Covid-19 period, the ECB was far slower with respect to the taking decisions. Though the balance sheet of the ECB has expanded to 8.7 bn euros, there were litigations with respect to whether it was within its mandate towards resorting to specifically buying up securities of certain government bonds of which the yield weren't falling as desired by the ECB. In this context, the pathbreaking intervention made by Mario Draghi through his speech *Whatever It Takes*, the ECB has tried to exercise its level of autonomy notwithstanding the differences with the Bundesbank.[25]

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Indeed far before the world was struggling with the issues of the conduct of the monetary policy with zero interest rates, Japan has been witness to the deflation since the nineties and, its policy rate were near to zero even back into the nineties. The central bank policy rates touched near to zero levels by 2008 that they all had to take to unconventional monetary policies. The figure gives the central bank policy rates of Federal Reserve, ECB, Bank of Japan and Bank of England (Figure 17). Asset purchases by the Bank of Japan have resulted in its balance sheet expanding to more than 100% of its GDP. These exercises of bond purchases have not been supplemented with fiscal expansion, without which it is difficult to achieve recovery. There have been many adherents to the doctrines of fiscal austerity who fail even to distinguish between the differences of public debt and private debt.

Figure 16: Assets of the European Central Bank (bn euros)

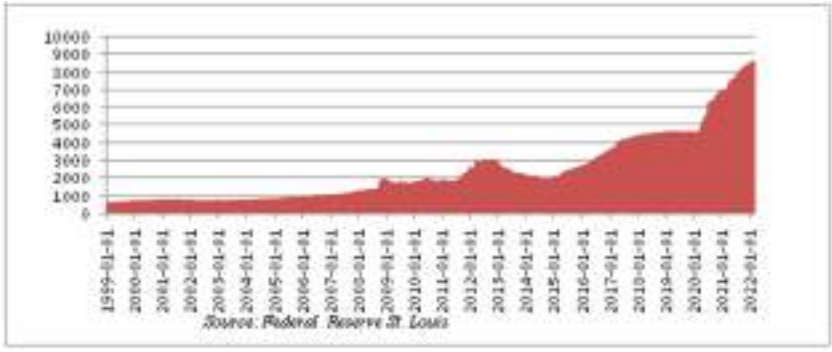
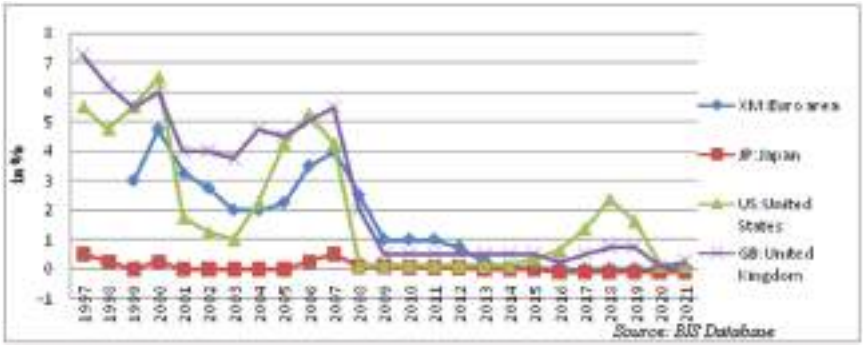


Figure 17: Central Bank Policy Rates: 1997 to 2021



As per the Bank for International Settlements, the credit outside the main currency regions to non-banks is considered to be a major indicator of global

liquidity. The 2021 Q3 data from BIS reveal that the stock of dollar credit outside United States is at $ 13.4 trillion, of which $4.2 trillion is held by emerging market economies. For the euro and the Japanese yen the corresponding figures are €3.7 trillion and €0.8 trillion; and ¥45.9 trillion and 6.99 trillion respectively.

Table 2: Total credit to non-bank borrowers by currency of denomination

Total credit to non-bank borrowers by currency of denomination, 2021 Q3			
	$ bn	**€ bn**	**¥ bn**
Total credit outside currency region to non-banks	13414	3681	45924
Bank loans	6209	1555	25659
Debt securities	7205	2126	20265
Emerging market economies	4212	799	6996
Bank loans	2118	476	4287
Debt securities	2094	323	2709

Source: *Global Liquidity Indicators, BIS Database*

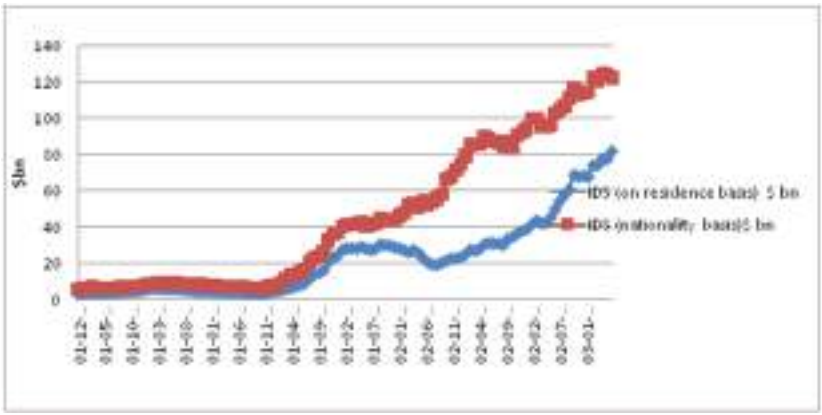
By converting the yen and euro at the prevalent exchange rates, the stock of euro and Japanese Yen credit outstanding in dollar terms is $ 3.9 trillion and $ 0.34 trillion respectively, implying that between these three main currencies, dollar credit accounts for 75.97%, and euro and yen credit outside their borders accounts for 22.1% and 1.9% of the total credit. Collectively, of the credit extended outside their main currency regions as per the stocks outstanding of 2021 Q3, 28.94% of the same is to the emerging market economies.

The loose monetary policies in the advanced economies have been pursued with a policy objective of increasing the rate of growth of credit within United States. Data from BIS reveal that the dollar credit outside United States has been increasing at a faster pace in comparison to within United States. Moreover, with the low interest rates in the advanced economies, these currencies have served as funding currencies through which large borrowings have been undertaken by the non-financial corporations in the emerging markets.

Given that the intermediary role of banks suffered a setback in the immediate aftermath of the global financial crisis, there was an upswing with respect to mobilization of funds by different corporations (both financial and non-financial) through the issuance of international debt securities. Needless to say that joining their counterparts in the advanced economies, different firms from the developing and merging economies have also been successful in the same and have ben

benefiting from the lower interest rates. Indeed, while the outstanding stock of international debt securities issued by India is $122.71 bn in 2021(Figure 18) and has been witness to an increase from $ 36 bn in 2007. On a residence basis, it is only $78 bn, implying that the rest of the bonds were issued abroad towards financing investment or acquisitions elsewhere. Given that this does not enter into the balance of payments record of the country, the policymakers have to be cautious about risks undertaken.

Figure 18: International debt securities outstanding of India ($ bn)



Moreover, there has been an array of institutional investors with huge funds at their disposal. Some authors categorise the institutional investors like sovereign wealth funds, hedge funds and exchange traded funds and private equity funds as "alternative" institutional investors given that the data of theirs with respect to various matters is not forthcoming as against the other traditional institutional investors like the pension funds, mutual funds and insurance funds (Çelik & Isaksson, 2013). All of these with huge assets under management have been looking upon the emerging market universe as providing opportunities to gain from short term-interest rate differentials, thus exposing the emerging market economies to huge capital inflows. Certain estimates suggest that the assets under management of these organisations are far more than the assets of the banks at the international level.

As per the OECD Global Pension Statistics, the assets under management of the pension funds in the OECD block increased from $ 29.1 trillion in 2010 to $ 54.1 trillion in 2020. As per the data, United States leads the list with over $ 20 trillion in the asset sunder management of pension funds, amounting to 95.8% of its GDP. Among the OECD block where the assets under the pension funds as share of their GDP is very high are Netherlands (210.3%), Iceland (194.3%), Switzerland (149.1%)

and Australia (128.7%). With the defined benefits scheme giving way to the contributory pension scheme, it is only logical that their amount under management of these funds have increased from $ 10 trillion in 2001 to $54 trillion in 2020 . In this regard, it is important to note that in a study on the returns on public pension reserve funds for a ten year period from 2009 to 2019, a high level of volatility with respect to returns on funds is observed . The ten year average for these OECD funds range from 11.3% to 1.8%, with the maximum values ranging from 24.1% to 5.4% and minimum values ranging from -9% to 2.6%. Paradoxically, the social security system in itself is now subject increasingly to the volatility of finance as against the defined benefits scheme which had a large element of certainty.

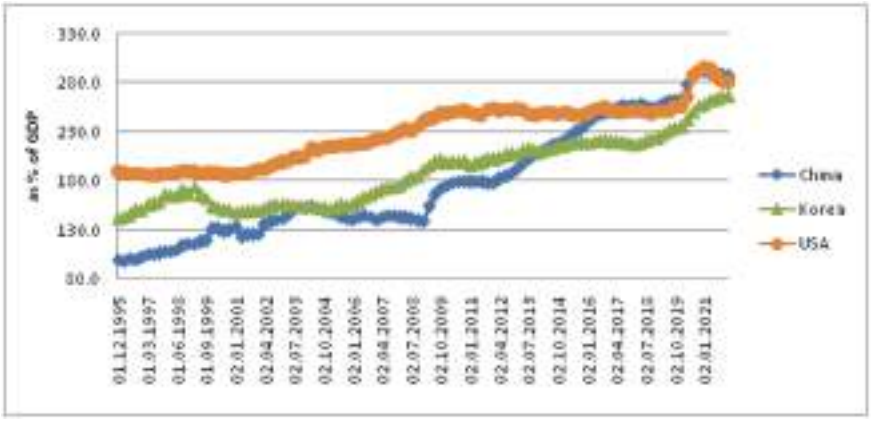
The flows in the private equity which has entered into the startup ecosystem into India has not been solely from the usual financial firms of the North American region like Sequoia Capital, Blackstone, Black Rock, Tiger Global, Warburg Pincus, KKR and Silver Lake Investments. The firms from the rest of the world like Soft Bank from Japan, sovereign wealth funds from east Asia (like Temasek Holdings of Singapore and Khazana of Malaysia, Korea Investment Authority) and the different funds from Middle Eastern oil-rich economies like Saudi Arabia and Qatar like the Abu Dhabi investment Authority, Qatar Investment Authority, Mubbadala Investments have also been putting their funds in India. Needless to say, they have played a role in transforming 2021 as the year of unicorns for India. All of them expect quick returns as these firms go for listing in the bourses. They have been important players in the bourses of number of emerging economies. But what drives them is their search for yield, which makes the reversal of unconventional monetary policies in 2022 to be of serious consequence for not just India, but other emerging market economies too. The recent pronouncements of the Fed Open Market Committee with respect to increase in interest rates is sure to lead to an unwinding of investments by these portfolio investors.

As per the Global Private Equity Report 2022, the buyouts deal values has tripled between 2016 and 2021, it almost doubled in 2021 to $1.121 trillion. Most importantly this is higher than the value before the global financial crisis of $804 bn. In fact, the Global Private Equity Report of Bain & Co. itself acknowledges the monetary stimulus for the same . ".... public and private investors have benefited mightily from the trillions in monetary stimulus that central banks have pumped into the global economy since March 2020 to combat the effects of Covid-related shutdowns" But all of this risk loving nature of activity is happening because of the high leveraging which could be done at such low interest rates, even when the real activity worldwide has not been showing robust signs of recovery. We will have to watch out for the changes in the coming year.

The low interest rates in the international economy has triggered a search for yield resulting in different economies being inundated with capital flows. The

borrowing done by the non-financial corporations to benefit from carry trade has also added to increase in the money supply (M3) of these economies, thus triggering a faster process of credit creation in economies even when the rates of growth of these economies are far from desirable. To worsen matters, there have also been bouts of appreciation of the currencies in countries where there has not been sufficient intervention in the foreign exchange markets by the central banks. Unimpressive growth and deflationary tendencies apart, there has been a steep increase in the credit to GDP ratios of developing economies, which has been a matter of serious concern from its impact on financial stability. The BIS has been publishing data related to credit to GDP ratio as well credit-GDP gaps keeping in mind the consequences for financial stability in case of some exogenous shocks. In this case, the data with respect to China is of importance. The credit GDP ratio of China which had increased from 99.7% of its GDP to 140.8% in the period from 1995 to 2008 has been witness to a steep increase ever since. In 2021, it is at 288.7% of the GDP, implying that the credit to GDP ratio of China is now comparable to that of the United States (Figure 19). Though the credit to GDP ratios of Korea has also been on the increase and is to levels close to that of USA and China, it has been increasing over these years at a slower pace.

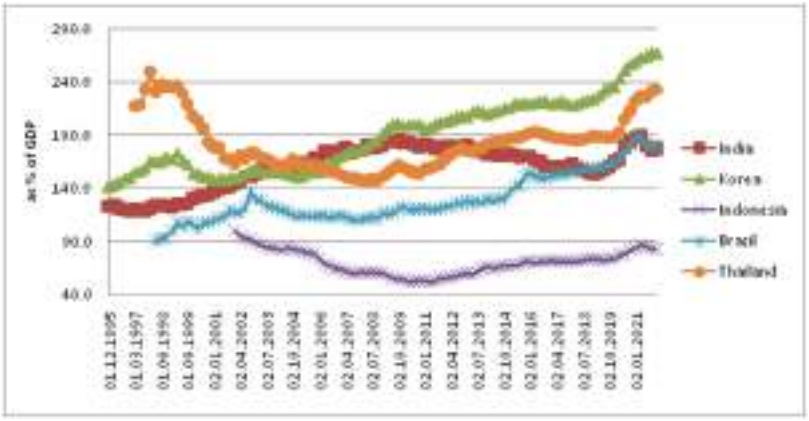
Figure 19: Credit to GDP ratios of China and Korea



One would be curious to know as to what would be the credit to GDP ratios of the India and the other developing economies. In fact, the credit to GDP ratio after having increased during the early phase in the run-up to the global financial crisis from 138.3% in 2001 to 185.5 % in 2009, when there was a growth regime in the country which was underwritten by the banks. That period from 2003 to 2008 is elsewhere referred to as India's Dream Run (Nagaraj, 2013). The period which was witness to unprecedented inflow of foreign capital was characterised by large increases in

investment ratio, savings ratio, and rates of growth and the highly leveraged private corporate sector was supported by the banks. Ever since the global financial crisis, the credit to GDP ratio has not changed much, it has been at 175% of the GDP in 2021. Might be the reversal of the rates of growth and the accumulation of non-performing assets in the banking system in the aftermath of the global financial crisis as well as the taper tantrum episode has made the Indian bankers wary. It is important to note that the current period has been witness to Thailand reaching its high credit to GDP ratio of the 1997 just before the Asian financial crisis. Its value of 230.5% is close to that of 249.3%, which was its value in 1997 , prior to the crisis. Indonesia was witness to only marginal changes in credit GDP ratios which increased from 51.5% in 2010 to 83.4% in 2021 (Figure 20). Though historically at far lower credit GDP ratios in comparison to India, the figures of Brazil are almost close to that of India's in 2021 at 179%. Are all these increases in credit to GDP ratios occurring in tandem with real rates of growth in the macroeconomy?

Figure 20: Credit to GDP ratios of developing economies



A number of empirical studies on non-financial corporations have revealed that in this wave of global liquidity, these firms have become more like financial intermediaries tapping funds from abroad through the issuance of debt securities and gaining from the high interest rate prevalent within their domestic economies (Shin & Zhao, 2013). Given the low level of economic activity as well as sagging investment ratios, at best ,some of them have resorted to prepayment of the loans which they have taken earlier. Though of course, with the experience of the depreciation of exchange rates which many of them confronted in 2013 during the taper tantrum, it is expected that they would have hedged against the exchange rate risks. Needless to say, the possibility of hedging becomes less during favourable times of global liquidity, but the quick disappearance of the same had resulted in huge corporate deleveraging in 2013.

Apart from this is the new issue associated with the rising importance of institutional funds in Asia which invest on behalf of their customers in dollar denominated securities. Given that the hedge instruments in the foreign exchange market are of short term duration and the assets are of long-term nature, there is problem associated with the rollover. This has been due to a steep increase in the external portfolio assets of different Asian economies. (McGuire, Shim, Shin , & Sushko, 2021) This has now been taken to a different level with a sudden spurt in the demand for dollars which in March 2020 resulted in sales of huge US Treasuries forcing the United States Federal Reserve to keep open the option for the holders of Treasuries to go ahead with repo borrowing against the same.

With private non-financial sector debt to the world GDP reaching unprecedented levels of 170%, the Committee on the Global Financial System (CGFS) has brought a report on the implications of the same (CGFS, 2022). Many economists , particularly of the Post-Keynesian tradition, have highlighted the role played by the steep increase in credit ratios in the runup to the crisis. This report suggests the importance of macroprudential policy requirements to stabilize the system. It recommends proper maintenance of capital requirements of the banks as well maintaining reasonable loan to value ratios to be given priority. It expresses caution at the rising share of non-banking institutions as lenders in the system. Further, it highlights the growing share of zombie firms who have been in receipt of loans during this large upscaling of credit. It further expresses caution on the short-term foreign currency denominated loans. One fails to understand as to why despite a nuanced understanding of the issue, particularly on the basis of the feedback from different central bankers, it stops short of making an advocacy for capital controls.[26]

Concluding thoughts on the international monetary System

Ever since the global financial crisis and the sudden liquidity squeeze which forced coordinated action from the part of the leading central banks through the expansion of their balance sheets, there has been demand for the designing of a new international monetary system. In a world with a stock of dollar credit outstanding to non –bank borrowers being at $13 trillion dollars, dollar liquidity has become of utmost importance. The efforts from the part of the Federal Reserve during extraordinary situations to go ahead with the expansion of dollar swap lines with other central banks was of immense benefit, but it has been limited to a set of central banks. Thanks to the low interest environment in the global economy prevalent till the last year, with the growing search for yield, at least 30% of this dollar debt outside is that of non-financial corporations based in emerging market economies like India. With the recent pronouncements of the Federal Open Markets Committee with respect to increase of interest rates, as we have seen the exchange rates of emerging economy currencies have been witness to

steep depreciation. Two of the global crises have clearly exposed the interdependent nature of the global economy and how the international financial institutions have not been able to address the pressing liquidity concerns of the developing world. Therefore some of the recent developments provide some hope.

Highlighting the compulsions of the developing country central banks, Dr Y V Reddy had once opined "It is noteworthy that the developing countries had to contend with excessive volatility in the current and capital accounts with little assurance of safety net from the global financial institutions. Hence they had to seek self-insurance in the form of forex reserves ..... (p.25)" (Reddy, 2011). The Chinese counterpart Xiaochuan (2009) opined that it was due to the reluctance to adopt the suggestion of Keynes for bancor which resulted in the collapse of Bretton Woods. He further opined that due the new Triffin Dilemma, it would not be possible for the current system to cater to the demand for the growing demand for reserves (Xiaochuan, 2009).[27] Though American foreign policy experts like Bergsten had opined that the suggestion of Xiaochuan for the expansion of SDRs would be good option not just for the world but also for the United States (Bergsten, 2009), the leadership of the country was never ready to endorse the same. Their faith and hope in the dollar centered international monetary system was strong as ever, and, it knew only so well that the demand for reserves from the rest of the world could help maintain the value of the dollar too and it could benefit from being the dominant source of provision for reserve services.

In the interregnum, the growing demand for liquidity came to be addressed by the three rounds of quantitative easing in United States as well as the expansionary monetary policies pursued by the other Central Banks. To support the demand for liquidity, the Federal Reserve have even expanded the swap facilities to a number of its friendly central bankers. But the dollar could not stand on its feet when in March 2020, different central bankers desperate for liquidity had to sell off Treasuries, which forced the Fed Reserve to open the facility of repo financing as against the reserves held, over and above the swap lines facility with central banks.[28] In the context of this precarity, the United States found that it would be opportune to support the call for an increase in the allocation of SDRs, that it extended its support for the unprecedented increase in SDRs announced in August 2021. As per the recent allocation, the advanced economies are in receipt of SDRs worth $ 400 bn, middle income countries of $230 bn and the low income countries $ 21 bn. With the world economy in the grip of Covid-19 and growing demand for debt suspension from the part of the developing countries, the issuance of the SDRs, it was hailed by the international community would serve as big solace.

Given the large private dollar debt which has accumulated worldwide, any shortage of liquidity would end up hurting the developed country bankers for sure, and, so too, for this round of SDR issuance of IMF, the United States had to extend its support.

There is serious question posed by the large accumulation of foreign exchange reserves which has been adding to the process of deflation. As as of late, the advanced economies have also started accumulating foreign exchange reserves in a big way.

During the March 2020 crisis of liquidity, the swap line facility was made available by the US Federal Reserve to some of the central banks, that too at a lower interest rate, during the 2020 March crisis, and the repo facility of borrowing against US Treasuries was permitted under Foreign and International Monetary Authorities Repo facility,[29] the demand for dollar liquidity was met. Is this ad hoc arrangement sufficient, is this mechanism of relying on the Fed reserve as the elder of last resort desirable either? Aren't there asymmetries in this system? Shouldn't there be a serious engagement with respect to the reorganization of the international monetary system?.

Notes

1. In her work Amsden argues that more policy autonomy do the developing economies have in determining their growth trajectory, the faster would they grow. This, she says, is clearly evident from the growth of economies of India and China.
2. https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/ecidc2013misc1_bp8.pdf (Banga, 2013).
3. An illustrative study in this regard is the oen by University of California Davis which exposes the asymmetry in value addition through the case study of production of i-phone.
4. The collapse of the textile cluster at Rana Plaza had claimed over thousand lives necessitating the enhancement of inspection of labour rights in factories. Through outsourcing of activities, it has become possible for multinationals to wash their hands off these issues. However certain initiatives like Asia Floor Wage has been floated by certain organisations. For a critical appreciation of the same (Krishnakumar, Asia Floor Wage, International Labour Standards and 21st Century Issues, 2019).
5. For Warren Buffet's argument in 2007 see this link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7nHQzSpDncA ' [n]ew financial products –including derivatives, asset backed securities, collateralized debt obligations and collateralized mortgage obligations to disperse risk toward those able and willing to bear it, and ensure that economic shocks did not lead to cascading credit failure' (Greenspan, 2002).
6. Norfield's book give a lucid exposition to the diverse institutions in the word of finance, the fourth chapter on Power and Parasitism would prove to be particularly useful (Norfield, 2017).
7. https://www.oecd.org/tax/beps/.
8. If United States ran deficits and provided for dollars, then its ability to honour its commitments in terms of gold would be under threat, and, if it did not provide for this, it would affect world trade and international liquidity. (Triffin, 1947).
9. After the Plaza Accord, the dollar depreciated by as much as 25% against the other currencies and the exchange rate of yen as against dollar became 150 Yen to the dollar in 1987, compelling the leaders to meet towards stabilising the value of the dollar. This was the Louvre Accord. In 1988, with US interest rate increase, the dollar appreciated in value.
10. The international financial integration ratio refers to sum of the external assets and liabilities divided by the GDP of the country concerned.

11. In the haste with which the developing countries were resorting to financial liberalisation , Diaz-Alejandro cautioned that they might very well be getting rid of financial repression and ending up soon in financial crash (Diaz-Alejandro, 1985).
12. For a critique of the same see (Rakshit, 2001).
13. Discerning the crises which occurred in east Asia, this argument in specific was put forward by Chandrasekhar, Sen and Ghosh.
14. Given the spread between the yields on reserve assets and costs of foreign borrowing, Rodrik estimates that the social cost of holding reserves to be at 1% of the GDP. Though this he considers to be a reasonable insurance against the occurrence of financial crisis, the developing countries could have reduced risks by reducing short term foreign liabilities. (Rodrik, 2007).
15. For more on the financial flows to the developing world and on details with respect to the same about India (Chandrasekhar, 2011).
16. For a critique of the same see (Krishnakumar, 2018).
17. For a brief biography on Valery Giscard d' Estaing who popularized the usage of exorbitant privilege(earlier coined by Jacques Rueff) to mention about the undue American advantage and whose whose interventions had gone into the making of the SDR and euro later, see https://www.omfif.org/2020/12/giscard-destaing-architect-of-euro-and-sdr/.
18. Specifically the data of the external assets and external liabilities of United States from Table 1.2: US Net International investment Position as well as the data relating to investment income from Table 1.1 US International Transactions.
19. Though between 2002 and 2006, the current account deficits of the United State were around 5% of the GDP annually, during this period there was no change in the net international investment position of the United States. If the cumulative current account deficits of the United States from 1983 to 2005 totaled at $ 6 trillion, the NIIP only deteriorated by $3 trillion. Drawing attention to the same in detail are (Lane & Milesi-Ferretti, 2009).
20. Borrowing from the Greek epics, in an important work, Yanis Varoufakis characterises the ability of the United States to gobble surpluses from the rest of the world in his work Global Minotaur.
21. In his recent work on the crisis Crashed, Adam Tooze uses the word Great Atlantic Financial Crisis rather than Global Financial Crisis. He attributes this nomenclature to Rakesh Mohan.
22. The efforts towards rescheduling the loans picked up momentum when it was discovered that number of American banks too had a large exposure to the region. The Brady Plan and the Baker Plan and the shifts in the terms of negotiation is history. Nonetheless, the debates around the international debt crisis, needless to say , evoked arguments ranging from profligacy of governments in Latin America to the readiness to banks to shoulder any risk under the surety that the governments and international financial institutions would stand up for them, the similarities of the negotiation strategies continue even when the countries involved in the recent past included advanced European economies. Any case the debt driven growth of Latin American economies had pushed them to two decades of no or slow growth.
23. Among the leading banks headquartered in China which figure in the list are Industrial and Commercial Bank of China Ltd., China Construction Bank Corporation, Agricultural Bank of China Ltd and Bank of China Ltd.

24. All of these details from the relevant minutes of the Federal Open Markets Committee accessed from the Federal Reserve.
25. For this see the conference proceedings of the paper presented by the author on Whatever It takes to Coronabonds: Exploring Asymmetries in the Eurozone at the 25th Annual Conference of the Indian Political Economy Association held on 24th to 25th March 2022.
26. For a detailed overview about the importance of capital controls, see (Korinek, 2011).
27. "The frequency and increasing intensity of financial crises following the collapse of the Bretton Woods system suggests the costs of such a system to the world may have exceeded its benefits. The price is becoming increasingly higher, not only for the users, but also for the issuers of the reserve currencies. Although crisis may not necessarily be an intended result of the issuing authorities, it is an inevitable outcome of the institutional flaws."Xiachoun remarks giving a call for the reform of the international monetary system through the larger issuance of SDRs.
28. For the details on this see the special writeup on the same in the Financial Stability Report 2020 November.
29. The FIMA repo facility enabled the foreign central banks and other foreign monetary authorities to temporarily raise dollars by selling U.S. Treasuries to the Federal Reserve's System Open Market Account and agreeing to buy them back at the maturity of the repurchase agreement. This addressed significantly the demand for dollar liquidity.

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Women's Rights in West Asia: Reform or Cosmetic Change?

Archa Arun

Abstract

This study critically examines the trajectory of women's rights reforms in West Asia, focusing on whether these changes represent genuine progress or merely symbolic gestures aimed at appeasing international scrutiny. By analyzing developments in countries such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan, and Lebanon from 2000 to 2024, the study examines the legal, socio-economic, political, and cultural dimensions of gender equality. Employing a multidisciplinary theoretical framework including state feminism, intersectional feminism, and postcolonial feminism, the research reveals that many reforms are top-down and often lack substantive implementation mechanisms. Despite notable progress in female education and workforce participation in some nations, patriarchal legal systems, selective law enforcement, and cultural resistance continue to hinder meaningful empowerment (Strachan & Adikaram, 2023). The study also highlights the increasing role of digital activism, grassroots movements, and international pressure as catalysts for change. Through a systematic literature review and comparative analysis, this work contributes to the broader discourse on gender justice and the complexities of reform in authoritarian or semi-authoritarian contexts in West Asia.

Keywords: Women's rights, West Asia, Gender equality, Cosmetic reform, Middle East.

Introduction

West Asia, encompassing countries such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan, and Lebanon, is a region marked by an intricate tapestry of cultural heritage, religious diversity, and complex political frameworks (Donert, 2023). For decades, it has remained a focal point in global discourse surrounding women's rights and gender equality. Historically, many of these nations have maintained deeply patriarchal social orders, influenced by conservative interpretations of religion, traditional customs, and authoritarian governance

models. However, in recent years, a visible shift in legal and policy landscapes has brought women's issues to the forefront of public debate (Akter et al., 2017).

In the past two decades, governments across the region have introduced a series of reforms that are often portrayed as progressive milestones toward gender justice (Strachan & Adikaram, 2023). For instance, Saudi Arabia, one of the most conservative nations in the world, garnered international attention when it lifted the ban on women driving in 2018 and later allowed women to travel without a male guardian. Similarly, the United Arab Emirates has implemented legislative changes to promote gender equality in the workplace and protect women from domestic violence. Countries like Jordan and Lebanon have also repealed laws that previously allowed rapists to escape punishment by marrying their victims (Alizadeh et al., 2022). These measures have been heralded by both domestic authorities and international observers as signs of modernization and commitment to women's empowerment.

However, these reforms, while symbolically important, often fail to translate into substantive change in the daily lives of women. Gender inequality remains deeply entrenched in societal structures, with legal reforms frequently undermined by poor enforcement, lack of institutional support, and persistent cultural resistance (Widjaja, 2023). For example, despite formal legal rights, women may still need male permission to access certain services or may face social backlash for exercising their rights. Moreover, political and judicial systems in many West Asian countries continue to be dominated by male elites who resist deeper structural changes that could challenge their authority.

The cosmetic nature of many of these reforms raises critical questions: Are these changes genuine attempts at gender justice, or are they strategic moves designed to improve international standing, attract foreign investment (Pennington et al., 2023), and pacify domestic demands without fundamentally altering patriarchal systems? This study seeks to critically examine the nature, scope, and impact of women's rights reforms in West Asia, interrogating whether they signify real progress or serve primarily as symbolic gestures aimed at shaping global perceptions while maintaining the status quo at home.

Despite a notable surge in legal reforms and policy initiatives aimed at improving the status of women in West Asia, significant disparities remain in the lived experiences of women across the region (Madi et al., 2023). These disparities manifest in various forms ranging from restricted access to justice and limited political representation to systemic economic exclusion and social subjugation. The foundational problem lies in the entrenched patriarchal norms that pervade every layer of society, from family structures to state institutions (Basmechi, 2019). These norms are often reinforced by rigid interpretations of religion and bolstered

by authoritarian regimes that use selective reforms as tools of political expediency rather than genuine social transformation.

Although laws have been introduced to advance gender equality, their implementation is frequently superficial, hindered by a lack of institutional will, inadequate legal frameworks, and cultural resistance (Shah, 2019). In many cases, reforms exist only on paper, offering women symbolic victories while maintaining the dominance of male-centric power structures. For instance, a woman may legally be permitted to work or travel independently, yet societal expectations or familial pressure may prevent her from exercising these rights. Furthermore, legal reforms are often top-down initiatives, enacted without meaningful engagement with women's grassroots organizations or civil society (Metcalfe, 2008). This lack of inclusivity further weakens the impact of reforms, as they fail to resonate with or address the actual needs and struggles of ordinary women. The disconnect between legislative change and societal acceptance results in a persistent gap between the promises of gender equality and the reality experienced by women in everyday life (Zafar, 2022).

Thus, the central problem this study seeks to investigate is whether these recent reforms truly represent a shift towards empowerment and equality or if they are primarily cosmetic measures aimed at placating international observers, improving state reputations, and preserving existing power dynamics. This inquiry is essential to understanding the depth, sincerity, and transformative potential of gender reforms in West Asia.

A growing body of scholarly literature has critically assessed the status of women's rights in West Asia, often revealing a complex relationship between reform and control. The literature can be broadly categorized into the following thematic areas:

State-Driven Reforms and Political Agendas

Several scholars argue that reforms across the region tend to be state-directed and designed to serve political and economic objectives rather than promote gender equality. These reforms are often top-down and carefully framed to preserve the authority of ruling elites (Menon, 2006). For instance, in Saudi Arabia, education and employment reforms are primarily guided by national interest and economic goals, rather than feminist or rights-based agendas. In such contexts, reforms allow the state to appear progressive while retaining control over the scope and pace of change.

Authoritarianism and Symbolic Politics

Other research highlights the strong influence of political regimes in shaping women's rights. In many countries, reforms are not driven by grassroots movements

or societal consensus, but by regime survival strategies (Ashwarya & Alam, 2019). Authoritarian rulers may enact symbolic changes to appease international partners or placate internal dissent, without committing to real structural transformation. These reforms thus serve as façades for legitimacy rather than platforms for gender justice.

Patriarchal Norms and Cultural Resistance

A significant portion of the literature critiques how reforms mask ongoing patriarchal control. Scholars examining Iran, for instance, demonstrate how selective legal amendments may create an illusion of change while underlying discriminatory practices remain intact. Similarly, in Jordan and Lebanon, tribal customs and religious jurisprudence continue to influence gender laws despite formal legal advancements (Banerjee, 2024). Cultural resistance and societal attitudes often undermine the enforcement and effectiveness of pro-women legislation.

Role of Religion in Shaping Gender Norms

The role of religion, particularly its politicized interpretations, is another recurring theme. Many researchers highlight how Islamic jurisprudence is selectively interpreted to reinforce male authority. In contrast, attempts by feminist scholars to reinterpret religious texts in ways that support gender equality are often sidelined or dismissed. This ideological contest over religious meaning becomes a battleground for the legitimacy of reforms.

Implementation Gaps and Legal Inertia

Studies from Afghanistan, Egypt, and the Gulf States show that reforms often face resistance from entrenched cultural norms and institutional inertia (Ahmad, 2014). Even when pro-women laws are enacted, their enforcement is minimal or non existent, rendering them ineffective. In such cases, reforms are largely symbolic and fail to alter the socio-economic realities of women. This implementation gap reveals a disconnect between legal intentions and practical outcomes.

International Image and Strategic Reform

Another major concern raised in the literature is the co-optation of women's rights discourse by authoritarian regimes to improve their international image(Madi et al., 2023). Governments may adopt the language of empowerment while simultaneously restricting civic space and repressing women's activism (Basmechi, 2019). This dual strategy creates a dissonance between policy and practice, wherein reforms exist more as diplomatic tools than as genuine instruments of change.

Political Participation and Tokenism

Scholars also draw attention to the limitations of quota systems and token representation (Marsden & Mostowlansky, 2019). While some Arab countries have introduced women's quotas in political bodies, these measures are often implemented without empowering women to influence policy decisions meaningfully. As a result, women's political presence becomes more symbolic than transformative.

In summary, the literature indicates that while there have been formal improvements in legal rights and visibility of women in public life, the reforms are frequently cosmetic, selective, and insufficient. They are shaped by authoritarian governance, economic motives, cultural constraints, and international pressures. There remains a significant gap between legislative frameworks and the lived realities of women in West Asia, highlighting the need for deeper, more inclusive, and grassroots-driven reform efforts.

This study undertakes a comprehensive and comparative analysis of women's rights reforms across five key West Asian countries: Saudi Arabia, Iran, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Jordan, and Lebanon. These countries were selected based on their diverse socio-political systems, religious interpretations, reform trajectories, and international visibility in women's rights discourses. The temporal frame of the study spans from 2000 to 2024, capturing the significant legal, social, and political developments over the past two and a half decades.

The scope of this research extends across four core dimensions of gender equality. This includes an examination of national legislation related to personal status laws, labour laws, political participation, family law, criminal codes, and protections against gender-based violence. The study investigates both the content of these laws and their implementation on the ground. The study analyses women's roles in formal political institutions such as parliaments, municipal bodies, the judiciary, and executive offices. It also explores their representation in policy-making positions and the impact of political quotas or reserved seats. Attention is given to women's participation in the workforce, access to education and healthcare, ownership and inheritance rights, and financial independence. The study explores whether economic reforms have created meaningful opportunities or reinforced gendered labour hierarchies. The study critically engages with how religious interpretations (particularly within Islamic jurisprudence), customary traditions, and societal norms shape, resist, or facilitate gender reforms. Both conservative and reformist discourses within religious and secular frameworks are examined. The study also includes perspectives from state actors, civil society organizations, religious scholars, women's rights activists, and international institutions. It places

particular emphasis on how top-down policy changes intersect with grassroots movements and everyday lived realities of women.

Ultimately, the study aims to contextualize reforms within each country's unique political and cultural framework, allowing for a nuanced understanding of the depth, breadth, and authenticity of these gender-related changes. By doing so, the study provides a grounded assessment of whether reforms are truly transformative or merely symbolic gestures shaped by strategic interests.

This study holds substantial academic, practical, and policy-level significance in the ongoing discourse on gender equality and women's rights in West Asia. At a time when states in the region are increasingly showcasing legal reforms to project modernity and openness, it becomes critically important to question the depth and effectiveness of these reforms. The present research does precisely that by peeling back the layers of official rhetoric and analyzing the true impact of reforms on women's lived experiences.

The research makes an important scholarly contribution by bridging the gap between policy rhetoric and social reality. While much of the existing literature either focuses on legislative progress or critiques patriarchal structures in isolation, this study brings both dimensions together in a comparative and contextualized analysis. It adds to feminist and political science scholarship by interrogating the ways in which authoritarianism, religion, and cultural norms intersect to mediate women's rights. Furthermore, the study contributes to gender studies in non-Western contexts, providing insights into how gender justice is negotiated in environments marked by authoritarianism and religious conservatism.

This research challenges the dominant celebratory narrative often associated with state-led reforms. By interrogating whether these reforms are substantive or merely cosmetic, it encourages a more critical and nuanced understanding of gender policy. This is especially important in international policy circles, where such reforms are often cited as indicators of progress without thorough scrutiny. The study equips readers to distinguish between symbolic gestures and genuine institutional change.

The findings have direct relevance for national and international policymakers. For governments in the region, the study provides feedback on the gaps between legal reform and enforcement, helping to identify areas where policies have failed to translate into practice. For international organizations such as the United Nations, UN Women, and various human rights NGOs, the study offers a critical framework to evaluate government claims and adjust advocacy strategies accordingly. It encourages these bodies to prioritize grassroots engagement, legal enforcement mechanisms, and cultural transformation alongside formal legislation.

Another vital significance of this study lies in its effort to bring the voices of women and grassroots organizations into the policy discourse. Top-down reforms often exclude the very groups they are meant to empower. By examining the social and political environments in which women live and work, this study highlights the importance of inclusive, bottom-up approaches to reform. It underscores the need for state institutions to collaborate with women's movements, activists, and community leaders to ensure that reforms are rooted in the lived experiences and needs of women.

The study also advances discussions on intersectionality by recognizing that women's experiences in West Asia are not monolithic. Factors such as class, religion, ethnicity, rural-urban divides, and education levels all shape how women experience rights and reforms. Understanding this complexity is essential for developing more effective and equitable gender policies. By presenting a multi-country, multi-dimensional analysis, the study helps to capture these intersectional realities in a region that is often treated as a uniform political bloc.

In a geopolitical context where Western governments and international investors are increasingly partnering with West Asian regimes, often citing social reform as evidence of progress, this study provides a cautionary lens. It helps international actors assess whether engagement with these states genuinely supports women's empowerment or inadvertently legitimizes authoritarian control cloaked in progressive language. The research encourages the global community to be more vigilant and critical in evaluating reforms within complex political settings. By highlighting the gaps in implementation and the resistance to reform, this study sets the stage for future research on comparative feminism, state feminism, authoritarian modernity, and the politics of gender reform in the Global South. It invites scholars to further investigate how real change can be achieved in environments constrained by authoritarian politics, religious conservatism, and entrenched patriarchy.

In sum, this research not only contributes to academic knowledge but also serves as a valuable tool for policy intervention, advocacy, and public awareness. It seeks to foster a more critical, inclusive, and action-oriented dialogue on the status of women in West Asia—moving beyond the superficial narrative of reform to advocate for transformative justice.

Theoretical Perspective

This research is grounded in three interconnected theoretical frameworks that offer a multidimensional lens to analyze the complexities surrounding women's rights in West Asia:

a. State Feminism

State feminism refers to the efforts by governments to implement policies that ostensibly promote gender equality, often through state-sponsored women's institutions, laws, and policies (Baviera, 2015). However, in authoritarian regimes, such reforms may be used less for advancing women's rights and more as a strategy for political legitimacy and international appeasement. In West Asia, governments like those of Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Iran have introduced women-centric reforms while simultaneously maintaining authoritarian control. This paradox highlights how gender equality can be co-opted by the state to project modernity, suppress dissent, and secure foreign investment or diplomatic favor. This theory helps interrogate whether reforms are truly emancipatory or state-controlled instruments of soft power.

b. Intersectional Feminism

Coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw, intersectionality provides a critical tool to understand how various forms of oppression (based on gender, class, race, religion, ethnicity, etc.) intersect to shape individuals' experiences. In the West Asian context, not all women experience inequality in the same way (Aminuzzaman, 2014). For example, a wealthy urban woman in the UAE has vastly different opportunities and constraints compared to a refugee woman in Jordan or a rural woman in Iran. This framework ensures that the study doesn't treat women as a homogeneous group and instead accounts for the layered, overlapping inequalities that affect women's access to rights and resources.

c. Postcolonial Feminism

This perspective critiques the dominant Western feminist narratives that portray Middle Eastern women as oppressed, voiceless victims awaiting rescue by liberal Western democracies (Tamon, 2023). Such perspectives often ignore the historical, religious, and cultural contexts of the region and fail to recognize indigenous feminist movements. Postcolonial feminism emphasizes the agency of women in West Asia and calls for localized understandings of gender justice (Tamon, 2023). It also critiques how international actors sometimes support authoritarian regimes in the name of stability, while overlooking grassroots feminist voices. This theory guards against the imposition of Western norms and highlights the importance of context-specific, culturally informed reforms.

Current Challenges

Despite legislative advancements and increased global scrutiny, women in West Asia continue to grapple with numerous challenges that hinder the practical realization of their rights:

a. Patriarchal Legal Systems

Most West Asian countries maintain personal status laws (related to marriage, divorce, custody, and inheritance) that are grounded in patriarchal interpretations of religion (Anas, 2021). Even where civil reforms exist, religious courts often have the final say, which severely restricts women's autonomy and decision-making. In countries like Iran and Saudi Arabia, a woman's testimony in court may still be considered half that of a man's, illustrating the gender bias embedded in judicial structures.

b. Cultural Resistance and Social Norms

Reforms, even when implemented, often encounter resistance at the societal level especially in rural and conservative areas where patriarchal values are deeply entrenched (Anas, 2021). Family structures, tribal customs, and religious orthodoxy collectively shape a cultural environment that discourages female autonomy. As a result, women are frequently discouraged from claiming their legal rights due to fear of backlash, ostracism, or even violence.

c. Selective Law Enforcement and Institutional Gaps

Many progressive laws in the region lack clear implementation mechanisms. For instance, while laws against domestic violence may exist, there are often no shelters, legal aid, or trained personnel to support survivors (Donert, 2023). Police and judiciary may be unwilling or untrained to handle gender-sensitive cases, leading to underreporting and impunity. This creates a glaring disconnect between rights guaranteed on paper and their realization in practice.

d. Authoritarianism and Limited Civic Space

In authoritarian regimes, women's movements are often monitored, co-opted, or outright suppressed. Independent civil society organizations face funding restrictions, surveillance, and bureaucratic hurdles(Strachan & Adikaram, 2023). Activists, especially those who address sensitive issues like sexual rights or political participation, risk imprisonment or defamation. This stifling environment prevents the organic growth of grassroots feminist advocacy.

e. Digital Harassment and State Surveillance

As women increasingly take to online spaces for activism, they are subjected to targeted harassment, cyberbullying, doxxing, and surveillance. State apparatuses often monitor digital activity, and women expressing dissent are labeled as traitors

or accused of violating public morality. This digital crackdown disproportionately affects outspoken women, journalists, and human rights defenders, pushing many into self-censorship.

Table – 1.1: Key Gender Equality Indicators in Selected West Asian Countries

Country	Female Labor Force Participation (%)	Women in Parliament (%)	Maternal Mortality Rate (per 100,000 live births)
Saudi Arabia	36.2% (2024)	19.90%	~15
United Arab Emirates (UAE)	55%	50% (via quota system)	~7.7
Jordan	15%	15.40%	~58
Lebanon	29%	6.30%	~15

Source: *World Bank Gender Data Portal, 2024.*

Future Prospects

Despite the challenges, there are promising developments and emerging opportunities that could shape the future of women's rights in West Asia:

a. Grassroots Feminist Movements

In recent years, local and regional feminist collectives have grown in strength, often led by young women who reject state-led narratives (Alizadeh et al., 2022). From protests in Iran and Lebanon to legal campaigns in Saudi Arabia and Jordan, these movements are redefining feminism from within. They prioritize intersectional justice and community-based solutions, bypassing formal politics to mobilize around lived experiences.

b. International Advocacy and Strategic Alliances

Global organizations such as UN Women, Human Rights Watch, and Amnesty International play an important role in putting pressure on West Asian states to fulfil their commitments to international treaties like CEDAW (Zafar, 2022). Cross-border collaborations and diaspora activism also amplify local voices and bring international visibility to grassroots issues. However, these alliances must be mindful of avoiding neo-colonial narratives and instead focus on supporting local agency.

c. Legal and Constitutional Revisions

There is a growing push for comprehensive reform in family law, labor codes, and anti-discrimination legislation. In countries like Tunisia (although North African, often compared in MENA discussions), Morocco, and Jordan, constitutional amendments have opened new debates about gender equality (Ashwarya & Alam, 2019). Future prospects may include mandatory quotas for political representation, equal pay laws, and gender-sensitive education reforms.

d. Technology and Digital Empowerment

Digital platforms, despite their risks, offer powerful tools for awareness, mobilization, and support (Ahmad, 2014). Social media campaigns, online legal aid services, and mobile applications for reporting abuse are becoming more common. Tech-savvy younger generations are using the internet to challenge gender stereotypes, document injustices, and create virtual spaces for solidarity and learning.

Conclusion

Although West Asian countries have undertaken a range of reforms related to women's rights such as granting voting rights, expanding workforce participation, and revising family laws these measures often fall short of producing deep and transformative change. In many cases, the reforms appear to be strategically implemented to improve international reputations, attract foreign investment, or satisfy minimal requirements for global alliances, rather than emerging from a genuine commitment to gender justice.

The superficial nature of many reforms is evident in the gap between legislation and implementation. Rights may exist on paper, but they are frequently undermined by weak enforcement mechanisms, bureaucratic resistance, and deep-seated patriarchal norms. Furthermore, reforms tend to focus on high-visibility areas—such as driving rights or political appointments while leaving more entrenched issues, such as personal status laws and domestic violence, largely untouched.

True progress requires more than token gestures. It demands the dismantling of patriarchal legal and social structures, the cultivation of gender-sensitive institutions, and the amplification of women's voices in both public and private spheres. Only through bottom-up mobilization, sustained legal reform, cultural shifts, and genuine political will can West Asian societies move beyond cosmetic change and toward meaningful, lasting gender equality.

This study contributes significantly to the academic discourse on gender reform in non-democratic and semi-democratic settings, particularly within the context of West Asia. By combining state feminism, intersectional feminism, and postcolonial feminism as analytical lenses, the research deepens scholarly understanding of how authoritarian regimes selectively embrace gender reforms to legitimize political control. It encourages future research to move beyond surface-level analyses and interrogate the political motivations behind legal reforms, as well as their differential impact on women based on class, religion, ethnicity, and geography. The study also enriches comparative political and feminist theory by offering a regional perspective that has often been overlooked or generalized in global gender studies.

For policymakers, this study underscores the need to move beyond symbolic gestures and address the structural barriers that prevent women from enjoying full rights and freedoms. It calls for comprehensive, gender-sensitive policies that ensure not only legal reform but also robust implementation, monitoring, and public accountability. It suggests that policymakers in West Asia must involve women meaningfully in the reform process especially those from marginalized communities and ensure that reforms are not just reactive measures to international pressure but part of a larger, sustained commitment to gender equality. Furthermore, the study highlights the role of international organizations in encouraging transparent and verifiable progress, rather than accepting cosmetic changes at face value.

At the societal level, the research has powerful implications for civil society organizations, women's groups, and grassroots movements. It emphasizes the importance of sustained advocacy, awareness campaigns, and community engagement to shift public attitudes and cultural norms that continue to marginalize women despite legal reforms. The study empowers activists with the analytical tools and empirical evidence needed to challenge state-led narratives of progress and advocate for reforms that genuinely reflect women's lived realities. It also calls on society at large, including men and youth, to participate in the movement for gender justice, recognizing that sustainable change must come from within communities as well as from legal and policy interventions.

While West Asian governments have introduced a range of legal reforms relating to women's rights, such as allowing women to drive or participate in elections, these changes often appear to be top-down and politically motivated. The nature of these reforms is largely symbolic, aimed at improving international standing or pacifying public pressure without addressing the deeper structural causes of gender inequality. The state continues to exert control over the narrative and pace of change, often limiting genuine participation from women's rights organizations.

Despite the enactment of progressive laws in areas such as labour rights, education, and family law, enforcement remains weak and inconsistent. Many women face legal and bureaucratic hurdles when trying to access their rights, particularly in rural and conservative areas. Additionally, mechanisms for reporting violations, seeking justice, and protecting victims are either underdeveloped or deliberately obstructed, undermining the effectiveness of legal reforms.

Personal status laws in many West Asian countries are still based on patriarchal interpretations of religious texts, which reinforce gender hierarchies within marriage, inheritance, divorce, and custody. These norms, deeply embedded in both law and societal attitudes, act as significant barriers to genuine equality. Even where secular legal reforms exist, societal resistance, particularly from conservative religious groups, limits their practical impact.

Local women's movements and activists play a pivotal role in pushing for legal and cultural reforms. However, their efforts are often constrained by limited civil society space, surveillance, digital harassment, and fear of political retaliation. In many countries, activism is criminalized or heavily regulated, stifling the potential of grassroots efforts to create transformative change. Nevertheless, the persistence of such movements demonstrates both the resilience and the central role of local agency in achieving gender justice.

To ensure that reforms in women's rights are more than symbolic, there must be robust legal and institutional frameworks in place to implement them effectively. This includes training judiciary and law enforcement officials in gender sensitivity, establishing independent monitoring bodies, and providing accessible legal aid services for women. Uniform enforcement across both urban and rural areas is essential to bridge the gap between legal rights and lived experiences.

Educational reform is key to transforming societal attitudes. Governments and educational institutions should integrate gender equality and human rights into school curricula at all levels. Promoting inclusive and critical thinking through formal education can help challenge patriarchal norms, reduce gender bias from a young age, and create future generations that support equality and justice.

Women-led civil society groups are at the forefront of advocating for rights, raising awareness, and providing support services. Governments, international donors, and NGOs should prioritize funding and capacity-building for these organizations. Reducing bureaucratic and legal barriers for NGOs and protecting activists from harassment will strengthen the role of civil society in pushing for systemic change.

Women's inclusion in decision-making bodies both at the local and national levels is crucial for shaping policies that reflect their realities and needs. Quotas,

mentorship programs, and leadership training can enhance women's political participation. Beyond numerical representation, women must be empowered to influence policy agendas meaningfully and hold institutions accountable.

As more women use digital platforms for advocacy, they face increased threats of surveillance, doxxing, cyberbullying, and state censorship. Governments and tech companies must collaborate to develop digital safety protocols, while international organizations can provide digital literacy training and emergency support. Protecting women's digital presence is integral to safeguarding their voice in the public sphere.

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Liberalism and Migration: A Moral and Political Dilemma

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Abstract

This article explores the theoretical and moral debate within liberal political philosophy on the question of immigration. It engages with the writings of Stephan Macedo, Daniel Weltman, Seyla Benhabib and Thomas Christiano as instances of how liberal tradition is theoretically engaging with the rising concerns of international migration. It also critically analyses their basic arguments, similarities and differences. The study argues that there is a crisis in the liberal democratic states on whether to accommodate the needs of migrants at the expense of their own citizens by neglecting emerging domestic demands to control the migration and closing the borders.

Keywords: Liberalism, Democracy, Migration, Security, Border, Citizenship

Introduction

International migration has been one of the most debated topics in twenty-first century world politics. In spite of being a phenomenon accompanying human history itself, the advance of globalisation has really intensified the scale of migration in recent times. The masses in motion have profoundly altered the socio, cultural, ethnic, political and economic landscape of the world.

At the present juncture, the rising graph of migration and the brimming category of refugees have triggered a new found interest in migration and its many bearings on citizenship. We live in an age in which migration is widespread and therefore, that identity is increasingly fragmented, overlapping and complex. The immigrants are allegedly the fountain of multiple antagonisms in many liberal democratic nations today. The influx of migration and its reaction in today's liberal democratic nations have raised variegated questions related to status, belongingness, rights, participation, recognition and security.Hence, Governments and people in liberal democracies got the opportunity with the refugee crisis of 2015, to rethink what kind of immigration policies and ideals they should strive for.

There is a wide variety of theoretical stands on the question of liberalism and migration within the liberal theoretical tradition. It varies from one extreme to another on whether borders should be open or restricted or closed for migrants. These debates also deal with the moral aspects of the same question. this paper engages with the writings of Stephan Macedo, Daniel Weltman, Seyla Benhabib and Thomas Christiano as instances of how liberal tradition is theoretically engaging with the rising concerns of international migration. It also critically analyses their basic arguments, similarities and differences. Finally, the study argues that There is a crisis in the liberal democratic states on whether to accommodate the needs of migrants at the expense of their own citizens by neglecting emerging domestic demands to control the migration and closing the borders. In other words, liberal democracy across the globe faced a moral and political dilemma, whether to accommodate the global poor over the interests of the least well-off people within the country or vice versa.

The mid-twentieth century witnessed an increase in immigration and it has triggered racial and cultural anxieties in nations which have experienced rapid increases indiversity. According to the World Migration Report, "the number of international migrants is estimated to be almost 272 million globally."[1]Of course, there had been intervening periods of largescale migration in the past. But the worldwide scope, diversity, and sustained quantity of modern migratory developments are unprecedented. Liberal democratic states have faced various challenges, both ideologically and practically, as migratory pressures have grown. Some of this stress has come from asylum seekers, pushed out of their nations owing to strife, warfare or oppression. The key trouble is whether, or not it is legitimate for governments to restrict growing needs from this second group.[2]Through various ways, wealthy, liberal democratic countries have put limits on immigration, by imposing provisions like home prerequisites for three to four years, language test, and tests on history, customs, and foundations, and supported talented migrants like doctors and professionals.

These exclusionary immigration policies and controlling migration through border controls are against the basic principles of liberalism, like- all human beings are born free and thus entitled to be treated with a degree of concern and respect. The moral responsibility of the citizens of the developed world towards the world's poor for benefitting from the fruits of globalisation through exploiting the least developed nations also arose. It went beyond the mere distribution of humanitarian aid. After all the large-scale migration have created theoretical and moral crisis in many liberal democratic nations.

The Liberal Democratic States and the Immigration Crisis

In his now legendary Berlin speech of 1987, President Ronald Reagan of the United States called upon Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, to 'tear down this wall!' and after just three decades, another American president, Donald Trump—who claims to adore Reagan—promised to build a "brand-new wall, running along the entire US border with Mexico."[3] The crowds at Trump rallies in the US chanted, 'build that wall!' converse to Reagan in Berlin.

In the late spring of 2019, the boat 'Sea Watch' moored in Italy after having saved forty Africans from the ocean close to Libya. Its young commander, Carola Rakete, didn't get a legend's welcome for her philanthropic endeavours. She was taken to prison where she would anticipate preliminary charges for carrying unlawful transients to port. "In a stream of angry tweets, Italy's nativist populist Interior Minister, Matteo Salvini, called Rakete a pirate and an outlaw."[4]

Most recently, the early month of November 2021, the world has witnessed the presence of thousands of migrants along the border with Poland who are forced to live in camps. They are mostly from the Middle East, who travelled recently to Belarus in hopes of reaching the European Union, but have been prevented by Poland and Lithuania, E.U. member countries, from entering. "The standoff over migrants camped along the European Union's eastern flank grew more precarious, with political leaders on both sides of the razor wire fence using more belligerent language."[5]

The three recent political instances point to the similar political crisis faced by liberal democratic states around the globe, namely, the migration crisis. The first instance shows how US liberal politics has transformed from the earlier policy of opening up borders in 1987 at the end of the cold war to closing the border by building a wall across the Mexican border in order to prevent migration. Thus, the question that arises is how they ended up with these two contradictory policies within a short span of thirty years. What are the major factors which led to this political situation in the US? In the Italian case, a humanitarian act of a captain which involved the rescuing of forty African migrants and landing them safely was seen as a grave security threat by the government official. In the third instance, the response of European Union countries and consequently escalation of border tension in eastern EU border on the issue of migrants clearly shows that these countries are giving priority to their border security and the issue of migration is playing a central role in this. Surprisingly, this kind of response from a liberal democratic state makes one wonder whether the ideals of humanity and justice, said to be at the core of liberal democratic states, exist only for so-called citizens. How far have the liberal democracies travelled from upholding human rights and natural rights to life and dignity? How did the refugees and political asylum

seekers from politically unstable African and Asian countries become a threat to the national security of the liberal democratic nations of Western Europe?

While coming directly to human migration, which is the common factor in these cases, we can plainly see a new pattern emerging in worldwide human relocation, where the world is currently going through another immense rush of human movement with huge scope. This new wave of an enormous part of the total populace is a blend comprising both wilful and constrained movement. In this trend, individuals are not just migrating to different parts of the world looking for a better life, but a significant portion of people are also moving to newly developing regions. Many people are internally displaced because of restrictive migrant receiving policies imposed by many liberal democratic states across the globe. They are forced to live within their respective countries as internally displaced migrants even though they have lost their homes and occupation due to war, violent struggles or catastrophic events. As a result, there is a growing relevance for international migration in 'scope, complexity, and impact'. The continuous worldwide migration has additionally represented a few "critical policy challenges to the receiving states, from border control mechanism to national integration process."It has often become the significant reason for the "populist upsurge" in most of the immigrant-receiving liberal democratic nations.

Therefore, the issue of migration has generated several moral and theoretical debates within the liberal political tradition.

Liberalism and Migration: Some Moral and Theoretical Questions

Stephan Macedo, in his article, *The moral dilemma of US immigration policy: open borders versus social justice?* tries to find a possible solution to the moral dilemma which we were discussing above, that is, the liberal ethical conflict between "the cosmopolitan humanitarian impulse to admit less well-off persons from abroad who wish to immigrate to the United States and the special obligations we have to less well-off Americans, including or especially African Americans?"[6]To answer this moral and theoretical question, he draws insights from the distributive theory of John Rawls and compares it with the present situation of the US in relation to immigration policy.

Macedo raises some serious questions about U.S. immigration policy from a procedural justice perspective, which includes their obligations to the least benefited. Is a defensible immigration policy guided (in part) by recognition that we have particular obligations to 'our own' poor, our less fortunate citizens? Or, on the other hand, are our moral duties nothing but defending the interests of the world's poorest, not placing any particular weight on the interests of the less affluent Americans?"[7]He describes the different positions taken by various scholars on this

particular question. Where those with liberal sensibilities stood for "humanitarian concern for the world's poor, an openness to an ever-widening social diversity, and concern for distributive justice within our political community – necessarily go together,"[8] where there are favourable conditions. Although, he argued that the state has special obligations to its fellow citizens, who are part and parcel of their political community. Therefore, the state has to choose its own citizens over non-members from outside. He acknowledges the moral responsibility towards poor people from abroad. Still, the obligation which the state and government owe its fellow citizens is much higher than the former. He is also aware of the fact that a tightening up of the border can do more harm than good. Hence, he has suggested that suitable policies could control the high levels of immigration by low-skilled workers, so as to "fulfil moral obligations to the poorest Americans."[9] In other words, immigration policy should be seen through its distributive impact.

He scrutinises American immigration policies for the last 40 years and concludes that it was more accommodating to the less well-off abroad and that it had "a significant cost in terms of social justice at home."[10] While economic inequality in the US increased sharply from the 1970 onwards, there is no equivalent public funding to support social welfare and redistributive programmes. Therefore, U.S. immigration policies appear to be tilted towards the less well-off abroad (or at least some of them) which has resulted in injustice towards poorer native-born Americans, especially towards African Americans. He observed that the state had 'special obligations' to their poorer fellow citizens. From this position, it is hard or impossible to defend U.S. immigration policy. He considered the first moral obligation of the state to help the least well-off citizens and then helping or protecting the least well-off in the world. Special obligation to the world's poor at the cost of their fellow citizens is injustice. "The question is whether, and if so, how, national borders matter with respect to our fundamental moral obligations to one another."[11]Broadly, there are two different lines of thought in this question. They are:

> One emphasizes the moral arbitrariness of borders and the universality of our obligations to the less well-off. The other argues that borders are morally significant; that we have special obligations to poorer fellow citizens, and that obligations of distributive justice in particular apply only among citizens. The first position is often called a form of 'moral cosmopolitanism'.[12]

According to Macedo, the second position what he calls is the 'civic view'.

Like Michael Walzer, he rejected the cosmopolitan obligations of distributive justice and argues that "common values are shared within the particular political communities but not across them"[13] if it goes against their own members or is causing injustice against them. But he is not completely against "limiting obligations of distributive justice to particular political communities"[14] and he considered it to

be non-moral. For Macedo, since borders are a "bound system of collective self-governance"[15] thus they are 'morally significant'. For Michael Blake, borders can be of "great moral significance" even if it is arbitrarily.[16] He classified moral duties towards non-citizens into three.

> First, societies have general duties of fair-dealing with one another, and this would include non-exploitation, the avoidance of force and fraud, and the duty to curb the capacity of one's citizens or corporations to harm or exploit others. Second, societies have specific obligations to other countries or groups growing out of particular relations of exploitation, oppression, or domination, which give rise to specific obligations of rectification and redress. Finally, it seems right to say that well-off societies have general humanitarian duties to relieve those in destitution or distress and to respond to gross and systematic violations of human rights. Our duty is to do what we can to relieve distress, to end suffering, to stop gross violations of human rights, and to get a society on its feet so that it can look after its own affairs.[17]

Thus, he argued that the state had special obligations to fellow citizens, as they were members of this self-governing community. So, while shaping immigration policies, it is quite important to keep an eye on the notion of distributive justice. Policies have to be inward-looking rather than cosmopolitan, and it should emphasize special obligations towards poor fellow citizens. He suggested a few methods to curb and limit the illegal migration of poor workers to U.S by instituting national identification cards, increasing "penalties for forging identification papers, and vigorously [punishing the] employers who hire undocumented people."[18]

In *Immigration, Political Community, and Cosmopolitanism* (2008),Thomas Christiano investigates if there is "any good reason from within moral cosmopolitanism to limit immigration into political societies?"[19] From a moral cosmopolitan standpoint, he tries to answer this puzzling question. He argues that there is a moral cosmopolitan for the sake of time and not a political cosmopolitan, and he advocates for a global political community in the near future. For establishing this, the existence of liberal democracies is really important, as they are the only political ideology which upholds a vision for the creation of a global political community. Therefore, he supports the responses of liberal democracies towards the global migration crisis, by limiting immigration.

Christiano puts forth the proposition that liberal democratic states have played a significant role in the realization of justice and ideals of common good for humanity, however, its scope has remained limited in terms of its jurisdiction. Therefore, in order to realize the goal of moral cosmopolitan, the establishment of global institutions and eventually a political community at the global level is indispensable in which the liberal democratic states shall have a pivotal role to exercise.[20]In the short term, it is important to ensure that forces which could undermine the democratic character of liberal democratic states and the normal functioning of their political systems, such as

large-scale immigration, should not win.

He asserts that immigration policies should be assessed as to whether they undermine the political reality in terms of the existence and the various practices associated with the liberal democratic states. Hence, evaluating from the vantage point of cosmopolitanism, immigration policies having a detrimental impact on the functioning of liberal democracies must be dismissed as they seek to derail the hopes of realization of cosmopolitan justice in the near future through these liberal institutions across nation states.[21]There are some important reasons behind limiting immigration such as the fear of living with 'uncomprehending strangers', losing control over the community and even leaving the task of "social justice to their own society."[22]

He also discusses two recent contractualist arguments which "defend the constitutive conception of the relation between political community and distributive justice"[23] and the resulting right of political communities to participate in the limited marginalisation of poor immigrants in their societies. He critiqued the political contractualistdefense of a non-cosmopolitan political community argued by Macedo. The moral obligation is not restricted towards fellow citizens, but it also extends to all human beings in general for him. The functional conception of distributive justice is also not limited to any particular political community which we are part of. It is extended to all, and he holds to the idea of global distributive justice. According to him, the creation of a global political community is a time-consuming process and "democratic societies are the key to the creation of a global political community."[24]Hence, it becomes important to protect liberal democracies from threats through maintenance and proper functioning.

According to him, liberal egalitarians or classical liberal cosmopolitans hold a position that political societies or the state have no right to limit or control immigration into their political communities. The cosmopolitan thought is that if all persons could participate in the wealthy economies and stable political societies of the world, then justice could be attained. The conception of the political community which he wishes to defend accepts the moral principles of the cosmopolitan international order. "It also accepts that modern democratic states are the institutional lynchpin in the development of a just cosmopolitan political order."[25]

The main argument he proposes for protecting democracy is based on:

> The importance of democracies to the long run establishment of a just cosmopolitan order. To put the argument in the crudest possible form, the idea is that if democracies are essential to the long-term realisation of a just cosmopolitan order, and if open immigration would threaten democracies either in constitutional structure or proper functioning, then open immigration amounts at most to a short-term gain at the expense of much greater long-term gains. It amounts to killing the goose that will lay the golden egg in the long run.[26]

Immigration can increase the level of distrust as the result of "very large influx of persons into a society from a different society with different traditions."[27]This is the result, not necessarily of xenophobia, but of uncertainty and misunderstandings regarding the willingness of the new groups to participate in society.

To summarise, Christiano argues that moral cosmopolitans ought to accept that if open immigration undermines the proper functioning of liberal democratic states, we will have to accept implementing limiting immigration policies for the short term, to achieve the long-term goal of establishing "cosmopolitan political community which can fully implement the global distributive justice."[28]

Seyla Benhabib (2002), in her article, *Transformations of Citizenship: The Case of Contemporary Europe,* tries to explore the theoretical implications of political incorporation of citizenship through immigration. She argues that there is an inherent tension at the core of "norms and practices of liberal democracies" across the globe regarding politically involving immigrants or granting them citizenship. This tension or contradiction can be seen as "the commitments of liberal democracies to universal human rights on the one hand and sovereign self-determination claims on the other; the latter is invoked to control borders as well as to monitor the quality and quantity of those who are admitted across these borders."[29] In the first part, the author takes the standpoint of normative theory to examine political membership, and in the second part, she develops a "sociological model of citizenship and examines the 'disaggregation' of citizenship within the contemporary European Union in the light of these normative concerns."[30]

According to her, political membership or citizenship is the principle of incorporating aliens, immigrants and newcomers into existing policies. She classified the existing approaches to citizenship, which grant citizenship to immigrants into three. They are moral cosmopolitanism, deterritorialised and post-national citizenship, and the decline of citizenship. Her argument differed from these three dominant theoretical standpoints. Moral cosmopolitanism, advocates open borders and a vision of a world without borders. They had a moral vision of incorporating immigrants. In her words, this group was unclear about the corresponding political practices and institutions. Whereas, the advocates of post-national citizenship like Rosenau andSoysal argued that "the nation-state is waning; the line between human rights and citizens' rights is being corroded and new modalities of deterritorialised citizenship are emerging."[31] They argued that citizenship is no longer identified in state-centric terms. The third standpoint, namely, decline of citizenship school, has consisted of both civic republicans and communitarians like Michael Sandel, David Jacobson and Michael Walzer. They focussed on how the rise of international human rights norms or the spread of

attitudes of cosmopolitan politics is diminishing the nature of the nation-state. Because of this, citizenship as an institution and practice has diminished.

Benhabib critiqued all three approaches on citizenship as they avoided or had not considered the paradox of democratic legitimacy. In other words, "the tension between universal human rights claims and particularistic cultural and national identities is constitutive of democratic legitimacy. Modern democracies act in the name of universal rights which are then circumscribed within a particular civic community."[32]Although international human rights norms and decisions have been transformed recently, decisions regarding the incorporation of immigrants into liberal democracies are still confined by this democratic paradox. To face new challenges posed to the democratic sovereignty of the state by worldwide migration, democratic institutional developments and policy changes are necessary.

Benhabib while upholding the idea of a universal humanity through the recognition of the intrinsic worth of every human being affirms her belief in cosmopolitan rights by associating the same with membership within political boundaries and their democratic attachments.hence, moving towards the same, she seeks to respect the claims of various human communities towards forging democratic diversity through their distinct cultural, constitutional and legal understanding of their selves while simultaneously augmenting their commitment to norms and values of cosmopolitan justice. This would eventually culminate in the emergence of regimes of differential rights for various socio cultural groups and realization of the idea of disaggregated citizenship. Therefore, the institution and practice of citizenship would unravel and manifest through elements of collective identity, benefits of political membership and various social rights.[33] She notes that the present citizenship and immigration practices in liberal democracies are ready to grant social benefits to all, but they have blocked the transition of political rights and privileges of membership from the residents to the legal aliens. Even in the EU, implementing uniform immigration policies granting political membership to the immigrants is becoming difficult.

Even after the treaty of Amsterdam, which tried to make a uniform immigration and asylum policy framework throughout the EU, the member states retained their sovereign discretion over these policies. Immigration and asylum are the "time-bombs", as can be seen through the political changes since 2000 in Italy, Austria, Spain, Denmark, the Netherlands and Portugal, "in the hands of demagogues and right-wing politicians, ready to explode upon very short notice."[34]The resurgence of right-wing politics and anti-immigration sentiments retarded developing institutions of the EU by the revitalisation of "right-wing politics and anti-immigration sentiments."[35]Thus, the present is not projecting the ideals of cosmopolitan citizenship, but "herald a swing of the pendulum back from

human rights commitment to the assertion of political sovereignty, be this at the national, inter-governmental, or supranational level."[36]

Thus, current developments within the European Union have shown the breakdown of different dimensions of citizenship. Benhabib suggests that citizenship can only be transformed into a cosmopolitan outlook, through extending rights to individuals by considering their virtue of residency rather than their cultural identity. Whereas existing political practices are treating these migrants as criminals, there is a strong need to decriminalize migration and treat each person with dignity. "This implies [recognizing] that the right to cross borders and to quest for entry into different polities is not a criminal act, but an expression of human freedom and the search for human betterment in a world which we have to share with our fellow human beings."[37]

Daniel Weltman, in his article titled, *Illiberal Immigrants and Liberalism's Commitment to Its Own Demise,* revolves around the question, "can a liberal state exclude illiberal immigrants in order to preserve its liberal status?"[38] He argues that liberalism is destined for its own downfall under certain circumstances, and this simply reflects the fact that "it must take into account the rights of outsiders, not just the rights of existing citizens,"[39] and that situations of injustice may at times leave liberal societies without the right choice.

He examines two different streams of thoughts based on whether liberalism is compatible with restricted borders or not. He uses the argument of Hrishikesh Joshi to show how scholars have tried to support the view that liberalism is compatible with restricted borders. According to Joshi, to protect and maintain the existence of the liberal state, it is lawful to prohibit the right to immigrate. He claims that to prevent the degeneration of the liberal state from liberal to illiberal because of immigrants who hold and act in accordance with illiberal standards and beliefs, the Liberal state can inhibit immigration.[40]Joshi takes this stand to attempt to demonstrate the contestability of the argument that "liberalism is incompatible with restrictions on immigration"[41] as put forward by the likes of Christopher Freiman and Javier Hidalgo.

He uses Freiman and Hidalgo's argument as the proponents of open borders. Freiman and Hidalgo argue, "The freedom of movement is plausibly on a par with other liberal freedoms…so if a state's right to self-determination grounds prima facie the right to restrict immigration, then it also grounds prima facie the right to restrict liberal freedoms such as speech, religion, sexual choice and more."[42] They also argue that it cannot be a justification, which is offered by liberal states, regarding restricting freedom of movement by limiting immigration as it infringes upon individual freedom. "Thus, a society which restricts immigration is an illiberal society. A state can be liberal or restrict immigration, but it cannot do both."[43]

Freiman and Hidalgo give a strict interpretation of negative liberty and limitations that are not inconsistent with liberalism; "the libertarian conception of freedom of movement."[44]

Joshi provides two reasons to believe that "liberalism cannot commit itself to policies that are foreseeable leading to its own demise"[45] and that therefore it is not true that liberalism advocates the opening of frontiers or any other immigration policy that could signify the end of a liberal state. His first argument is that:

> Liberal societies are intrinsically valuable given the relationships between co-residents that they embody. Liberal societies are also instrumentally valuable insofar as they promote certain kinds of cultural and scientific achievements, given the ability of individuals to speak, think, and associate in a relatively free way. They also stand as a model for other, less liberal societies to emulate.[46]

Joshi's second, and more compelling, argument is that:

> ...there seems to be liberty- based reasons to restrict the freedom of movement of people from theocracy seeking to migrate to liberal democracy—namely that doing so will preserve the liberties that citizens of liberal democracy enjoy. The aim of maintaining and promoting the existence of liberal polities is a liberty-based aim.[47]

Hence, he aims to show that the commitment to the demise of liberalism is not a reaction against liberals who advocate open borders. Assumptions should not be made in advance that a liberal society cannot commit itself to self-destruction and "a liberal society could face insurmountable challenges."[48] It is difficult to make a choice between opening borders and restricting borders.

Conclusion

Thispaper analysed the divergent theoretical views within the liberal political tradition through the writings of Macedo, Christiano, Benhabib, and Weltman. Although these four scholars were somewhat engaged with the same question, whether liberal democracies have to be open to migration or not, there was no scholarly consensus over this. Still, they all agreed to have some restrictions on immigration in varying degrees through different standpoints within the liberal tradition. This shows that there is an inherent tensions at the heart of the norms and practices of liberal democracies around the question of migration across the world. This is a tension, and sometimes an open contradiction, between liberal commitments to universal human rights on the one hand and democratic sovereign self-determination claims on the other. The latter is used for border control and for monitoring the quality and quantity of people entering these borders. As there is a commonly agreed theoretical framework to deal with growing migration within liberal traditions, these liberal democratic nations see migration as a crisis and

also a security threat. These academic theoretical debates became more active in the post 9/11 period and grew even further after the economic crisis of 2008 and finally reached its peak during 2015 refugee crisis. The emergence of anti-migration sentiments and the recent escalation of security concerns in liberal democratic states have multiplied the layers of these discussions. Finally, it could be argued that the theoretical debate in liberal tradition on the question of migration reveals that there is a huge moral and political dilemma around liberal philosophy, whether immigrants are to be accommodated or not within a liberal state.Needless to say, these discussions and debates have serious policy implications on the liberal democratic nations across the world.

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Tourism Industry in Propelling Economy: The Kerala Experience

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Abstract

Kerala tourism has garnered an array of national and international recognitions, primarily due to the region's awesome beauty and the State's responsible tourism projects. The Kerala tourism model is heralded as one of the most relaxed tourism models where the private sector leading tourism development and the state performing as a facilitator rather than a regulator. The tourism industry is one of the strongest segments of the Kerala economy in the generation of employment and income. Government of Kerala, in its budget allocation, also offers priority to tourism as it is one of the largest foreign exchange sources of Kerala economy. It should be noted that tourism has emerged as one of the few economic alternatives to develop the Kerala economy. Moreover, tourism industry was recognised as a crucial sector in generating income and employment for both urban and rural economy of the State. Government initiatives such as Responsible Tourism, Ecotourism and Adventure Tourism initiatives of Kerala Tourism developed deep roots in the community by generating employment and empowering the local people economically, socially and environmentally.

Keywords: Rural Tourism, Five Year Plans, Kerala Tourism, State Exchequer

Introduction

The targeted growth of an economy is achieved by the successive development happened in the core and the complementary sectors of the economy. No sector is considered as an independent one and that is why the five-year plans adopted by our country focuses on the growth and development of the sensitive sectors of the economy. Now a days the tertiary sector of the economy exhibits dominance in its share in the national income of our country. The openness and the liberalised policies followed by the country attract foreign exchange earnings into the country. In this arena, the tourism industry of the tertiary sector plays a prominent role. The paradigm shifts which happened in the Kerala economy is a widely discussed and a debated issue among the economists all over the world. It started from the concept of 'Kerala Model

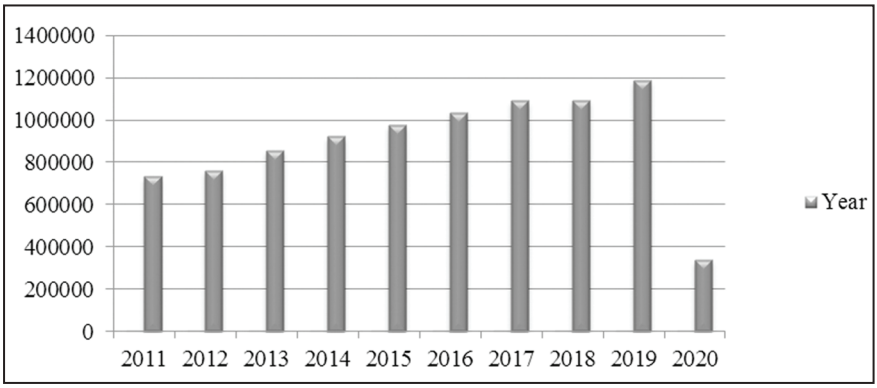
of Development' and was an appraisal to the socio-economic development of the state (Franke and Chasin, 1998). From a low-income economy, the state exhibited an economic growth which depends on the growth of the tertiary sector. Among the various sub sectors in the tertiary sector, the tourism industry plays a dominant role in the state exchequer and it is one of the important tourism destinations in India.

Time has shown that India is a massive tourist and travel market. India offers an extensive selection of tourism offerings, including cruises, meetings, adventure, health, sports, ecotourism, cinema, rural, and religious tourism. India is also renowned as a centre for spiritual or pilgrimage tourism for both domestic and international travellers. Kerala is internationally acknowledged as India's tourism capital as the state possesses myriad landscapes and cultures. It is a magnificent place with a long coastline, backwaters, lakes, rivers, wildlife sanctuaries, hill stations, tourist spots and so on. Kerala has been placed on the list of 50 must-visit sites in the world by National Geographic magazine. Kerala has been recognised by Travel and Leisure magazine as one of the 100 must-see destinations of the 21st century. The key factors that draw tourists to Kerala are its world-famous brand, consistent growth, array of of products and the presence of local enterprises in infrastructure development, marketing, human resource development, promotion, and hospitality (Edward and George, 2008). According to the 2019 Economic Impact Report of the World Travel and Tourism Council, the contribution of the travel and tourism sector to India's GDP increased by 4.9%. The number of international visitors to India in 2019 was 10.93 million. However, as a result of COVID-19 repercussion, a steep decrease was recorded and in 2020, just 27.4 million foreign tourists visited India.

Kerala tourism with its tag line 'Gods Own Country' is well recognized globally as it offers unforgettable experiences with its beautiful beaches, serene backwaters, cool mountains and forests. The rich culture and heritage is an added attraction to anyone visiting Kerala beyond the natural beauty. The appealing landscape and climate, offers new vistas of tourist attractions. Tourism has emerged as a lead sector of the Kerala economy, with its impact increasing in terms of economic growth and employment generation in both rural and urban landscapes (GoK, 2002). The state government views tourism as the most promising alternative available to propel the economy, especially in the context of limited panoramas of the manufacturing sector, intricacies in the agricultural and traditional sectors, and the uncertainties in overseas employment (Pushpangadan, 2003). The tourism industry in Kerala has witnessed extensive growth in the past few decades especially after granting of industry status for tourism.

The tourism industry is intertwined with other aspects of development, since it generates jobs, supports manufacturing businesses, generates revenue, and links society to the rest of the globe. Kerala is a well-known tourist destination on the international stage and one of India's most popular tourist attractions (GoK, 2020). The tourist arrival in Kerala is showing an increasing trend in all the years in absolute terms. But, when delve into the actual figures over the years, the increase in the tourist arrival in the state exhibit decreasing rates.

Fig 1: Tourist arrival in the State of Kerala in various years



Source: *Kerala Economic Review 2021*

The tourism industry is one of the strongest segments of the Kerala economy in the generation of employment and income. According to the report of Kerala Economic Review 2021, a total of 1.5 million people are directly and indirectly found employment in this sector. The report also pointed out that, even though the economy had experienced a drastic flood in 2018, the revival of the sector was registered with the highest rate of growth in the overall tourist arrival in Kerala after 24 years in 2019 (GoK, 2021). In 2011, Kerala's share in the total tourist arrival in the country was 3.76 per cent which increased to 4.35 per cent in 2012 and show a continuous fall in the share and reached 3.79 per cent in 2019. Ernakulam and Thiruvananthapuram are the major destinations of the tourists and these districts recorded largest foreign tourist arrivals in the state. The month of January and February are generally recorded the largest tourist arrival month in the state. Tourists from the South Indian states comes forefront in terms of the number of domestic tourist visits to Kerala. United Kingdom ranks first among the countries from where the foreign tourists are arrived to the state.

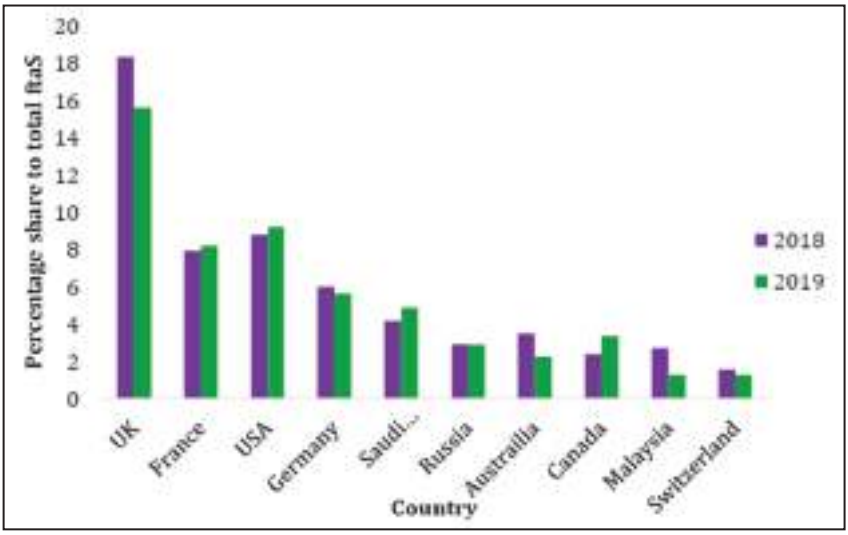
Table 1: Domestic and Foreign Tourist Arrivals in Kerala

Year	Foreign Tourist Arrival	Domestic Tourist Arrival
2011	732985	9381455
2012	763696	10076854
2013	858143	10857811
2014	923366	11695411
2015	977479	12465571
2016	1038419	13172535
2017	1091870	14673520
2018	1096407	15604661
2019	1189771	18384233

Source: *Department of Tourism, Government of Kerala*

In 2019, around 14% of all international tourists visited the state in January, followed by December (around 13 per cent). The highest number of international tourists arrived in the state in January 2018, followed by December. The month of June saw the lowest international visitor traffic in 2019, with 3.83 percent, and this trend has been continuing for the past 12 years (GoK, 2020).

Fig 2: Share of foreign tourist arrival from top ten countries of the world to Kerala in 2019



Source: *Economic Review, Government of Kerala*

The total number of international visitors to Kerala in 2019 was 11,89,771, where an increase of 8.52 percent when compared to the total number of international visitors to the state in 2018. In 2018, there were 10,96,407 international visitors (GoK, 2020).

Table 2: Share of Major International source Markets of Kerala Tourism

Sl No	Country	2018	2019
1	U.K	201258	186085
2	FRANCE	87200	97894
3	U.S.A	96522	109859
4	Germany	66194	67425
5	Saudi Arabia	46089	58422
6	Russia	32366	35066
7	Australia	38617	42089
8	Canada	26342	27228
9	Malaysia	29825	40197
10	Switzerland	17476	15658
11	Others	454518	509848
	Total	1096407	1189771

Source: Department of Tourism, Government of Kerala

The percentage increase in the number of international visitors to Kerala from 2010 to 2013 and again in 2015 was higher than the corresponding figure for India overall. In 2014, 2016, 2017, and 2018, it had a value that was lower than the average for the nation. Since 2010, the state has been experiencing a slowdown in terms of its overall growth rate. Ernakulam and Thiruvananthapuram have been the two districts in the state with the highest number of foreign tourists in recent years. In 2019, there were 5,22,232 international tourists in Ernakulam, up from 3,68,437 in 2018. In 2019, 310451 foreign tourists visited the District of Thiruvananthapuram. In 2019, Pathanamthitta (2042) and Palakkad (2147) had the lowest number of foreign tourist arrivals. The situation remains unchanged in 2018. In 2019, 57 percent of all foreign visitors visiting the state visited the central part of Kerala, 37 percent visited the southern portion of the state, and only 6 percent visited the northern part of Kerala, according to regional data (GoK, 2020).

In the context of globalization, Bozorgaghideh and Beegam (2014) adumbrated the effectiveness of Kerala's tourism in the growth of the economy of Kerala and its contribution to stringing Indian economy. According to Yamuna (2016), Panchakarma, the rejuvenation therapy in Ayurveda and Ayurveda, the traditional

Indian medical system, contributed to Kerala's rise to international recognition as a worthwhile medical tourism travel destination. According to Thanikkad and Shanimon (2021), Kerala is a well-known brand worldwide in the travel industry. Because it draws investment, the tourism industry is increasingly environmentally conscious. Kerala tourism is one of the most well-liked travel destinations worldwide, according to Archana (2021). Varma (2023) noted that experiential tourism is a unique form of travel in which the visitor has firsthand encounters with the cultural, social and emotional enrichment is present in Kerala tourism.

Types of tourism in Kerala

Kerala is a veritable treasure trove of tourism assets of diverse nature. National Geographic's Traveller magazine listed Kerala in the 'Ten Paradises of the World' and '50 must visit places of a lifetime'. Tourism is one of the few sectors where Kerala has clear competitive advantages as Kerala is nestled on the foothills of the Western Ghats covered with dense forests to the backwaters to the Arabian Sea. Moreover, its antediluvian rich culture including traditional dance forms and the strong presence of alternative systems of medicine add to its allure. Thus utilizing every possibility, the State of Kerala has the following types of tourism

- *Cultural and historic tourism*

  Heritage tourism is a type of tourism that concentrates on visiting places of cultural, historical or natural significance. Cultural tourism, on the other hand, is a form of tourism that emphasises the exploration of the cultural and artistic aspects of a destination. These places are typically regarded as valuable assets for a community or a nation, and they are preserved and maintained for future generations. This may involve visiting museums, art galleries, historic sites, festivals, and other cultural activities.

  The rich cultural and historical heritage ranks Kerala's tourism industry as premium on heritage and cultural tourism. Heritage tourism in Kerala concentrates on showcasing the state's rich cultural heritage through its architecture, art, and crafts. Popular heritage destinations in Kerala include Fort Kochi, Mattancherry Palace, Hill Palace Museum, the Jewish Synagogue, and Padmanabhapuram Palace. Cultural tourism in Kerala aims to promote the state's rich cultural diversity, which is evident in its music, dance, festivals, and cuisine.

  The art forms of Kerala are so unique to the State's folklores and rich culture. Art forms like Kathakali, Koodiyattam, Oppana, Mohiniyattam, Theyyam and Chavittunatakam are inspired by age-old traditions, customs and even

the diverse ways of life of the people. Interestingly, some of these art forms are performed as religious practices while others are performed for various special occasions. All these legendary art forms will enrich the visitors visual and experiential spectacles.

Kerala also has a rich history of Ayurveda, an ancient Indian system of medicine, which is considered a form of cultural tourism. Tourists can visit Ayurvedic centres and Spas throughout the state to receive traditional Ayurvedic treatments and therapies. Overall, heritage and cultural tourism play a pivotal role in Kerala's tourism industry, attracting visitors from around the globe who are interested in experiencing the state's rich cultural heritage and diversity.

- *Ecotourism*

  The International Ecotourism Society describes ecotourism as "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of local people, and involves interpretation and education." Kerala is a popular ecotourism destination due to its abundant biodiversity, distinctive landscapes, and cultural history. Ecotourism in Kerala focuses on promoting sustainable tourism practises that contribute to the preservation of the environment and the welfare of local communities. Thenmala ecotourism project was established in and around Shenduruney Wildlife Sanctuary was considered as the first planned ecotourism destination in India (Thampi, 2005). Likewise, the diverse wildlife sanctuaries and national parks across the State of Kerala harbours are well suited for more such ecotourism destinations. Exploring wildlife is possible *via* guided nature treks, nature camps etc. The sanctuary can be explored *via* jeep safaris, trekking and camping excursions. The hill stations are renowned for its tea plantations, forests and biodiversity attracts numerous travellers from national and international.

  In addition to these destinations, Kerala offers numerous other ecotourism activities and attractions, such as tours of organic farms, spice plantations and village cultural tours. Kerala is committed in promoting sustainable tourism practises that benefit local communities and safeguard the environment, making it an ideal destination for ecotourism.

- *Medical tourism*

  Medical tourism is the practise of travelling abroad for medical care or procedures as it entails integrating healthcare services with tourism activities. People choose medical tourism for a variety of reasons, including cost savings,

access to medical treatments unavailable in their native country and faster availability of medical procedures. Medical tourism can encompass a vast array of procedures, ranging from cosmetic and dental procedures to complex operations such as organ transplants and cancer treatments.

Medical tourism in Kerala has grown in prominence as a result of the availability of modern medical facilities at reasonable prices and the opportunity to combine medical treatments with a relaxing vacation. In Kerala, numerous hospitals and clinics offer packages that include medical care, lodging, transportation, and sightseeing. Kerala provides a variety of medical procedures and treatments, including traditional Ayurvedic treatments, dental treatments, cosmetic surgeries, eye surgeries, fertility treatments, cardiac surgeries, and joint replacements, among others. The advantages of medical tourism in Kerala include high-quality medical care at a fraction of the cost compared to western countries, easy access to treatments that may not be available in the home country, and the opportunity to combine medical treatments with a relaxing holiday. Moreover, the traditional medical systems like Ayurveda, Sidha, Naturopathy, Panchakarma, Kalari, etc. have appealed people from every nook and corner of the world (Toni and Joseph, 2019).

- *Hill station tourism*

  The hilly terrain across Kerala offer a delightful experience as they offer awesome experience and these hill stations are nestled in the lap of the Western Ghats with a multitude of undulating terrain. Hill station tourism refers to the type of tourism that typically entails visiting and exploring scenic mountainous regions at high altitudes and are known for their cool climate, beautiful landscapes and outdoor recreational activities such as trekking, hiking, and mountain biking.

- *Rural tourism*

  Rural tourism refers to travel activities that take place in rural or pastoral areas where visitors can experience the local culture, tradition and natural environment. It is a form of tourism that focuses on exploring the unique features of rural areas, such as farms, villages, and natural landscapes. Rural tourism can have significant economic benefits for rural communities, as it can provide income opportunities for local residents and enterprises. The state has a flourishing tourism industry and rural tourism initiatives have become increasingly popular in recent years. Each rural tourism initiative seeks to promote sustainable tourism practises while highlighting the state's

distinct pastoral and cultural heritage. Here are some of Kerala's rural tourism initiatives:

- ☐ In 2008, Kerala introduced the Responsible Tourism Initiative to promote sustainable tourism practises in rural areas. The initiative emphasises community engagement, local product procurement, and eco-friendly practises. Tourists can tour local communities, immerse themselves in their culture and feel the
- ☐ The Village Life Experience allows tourists to stay with local families in rural areas and experience their daily lives. Tourists can learn about local traditions and customs, engage in agricultural activities, and sample regional cuisine.
- ☐ Kumbalangi Integrated Tourism Village is a model for sustainable tourism practises. The village is located near Kochi's backwaters and offers tourists the chance to learn about local fishing techniques, visit coconut plantations, and partake in cultural programmes.
- ☐ Wayanad Tribal Tourism fosters ecotourism in the Wayanad district of Kerala. The initiative concentrates on the preservation of tribal culture and offers tourists the chance to learn about tribal communities, their customs and traditions
- ☐ Spice Tourism: initiative seeks to promote sustainable tourism in rural areas by highlighting the state's spice culture. Tourists can visit spice plantations, partake in cooking demonstrations and learn about the cultivation and processing of spices.
- ☐ Farm tourism offers visitors the chance to remain on a farm and experience rural life. Visitors can engage in agricultural activities, learn about organic farming techniques, and sample farm-fresh produce.

- *Water tourism*

Water tourism can take many forms, such as yachting, fishing, surfing, swimming, scuba diving, snorkelling, water skiing, kayaking, rafting and sailing. It can entail passive or active participation and range from solitary to group pursuits. Destinations for water tourism can be coastal regions, island communities, riverfronts, or lakefronts that offer a variety of water-based activities and experiences. In recent years, water tourism has grown in popularity, with many nations and regions promoting their water-based attractions to attract travellers. Houseboats, also known as Kettuvallams, are the most prevalent form of water-based tourism in Kerala. Kerala is also

famous for its beaches, including Kovalam, Varkala, and Chera where tourists can engage in aquatic sports. Kerala is home to a number of cascades, including Athirappilly, Vazhachal, and Meenmutty. These waterfalls are surrounded by verdant green forests, allowing visitors to witness the splendour of nature.

- *Wildlife tourism*

  Wildlife tourism is a popular type of tourism in Kerala that centres on exploring the state's abundant and diverse wildlife. Kerala's verdant forests, grasslands, and wetlands are home to numerous species of flora and fauna. The state has 5 national parks, 17 wildlife sanctuaries, 2 tiger reserves and 1 community reserve. Wildlife tourism in Kerala not only offers a unique and unforgettable travel experience but also plays a vital role in conserving the state's natural resources and promoting sustainable tourism. Overall, wildlife tourism in Kerala is a must-visit for nature enthusiasts and adventurers who want to experience the grandeur and diversity of the state's flora and fauna while also contributing to its conservation.

- *Spiritual tourism*

  Kerala has a spiritually rich history and culture. Spiritual tourism in Kerala is a thriving sector of the travel industry, with many visitors travelling to experience the state's tranquil and spiritual atmosphere. The Guruvayur Temple is one of the most significant Hindu pilgrimage destinations in Kerala. The Lord Krishna-dedicated sanctuary is renowned for its elaborate rituals and ceremonies. The Sabarimala Temple is situated in the Western Ghats and is another important Hindu pilgrimage site. It is known for its annual pilgrimage, which attracts millions of devotees and is dedicated to Lord Ayyappa. The Sri Padmanabhaswamy Temple in Thiruvananthapuram is a well-known temple dedicated to Lord Vishnu. The sanctuary is renowned for its intricate architecture and is regarded as one of the world's richest temples. Religious sites in the charismatic areas such as Sabarimala, Malayatoor, Mangala Devi etc. have the potential to attract devotees which have positive impacts on the economy too. The potential of mass pilgrimage activities and its contribution to the local and state economy are already well documented (Baby, 2003; Libison and Muraleedharan, 2009).

- *Festival tourism*

  The State of Kerala is celebrating the cornucopia of festivals where the deity comes to life with vibrant emanations, effulgent displays, gracious offerings,

exuberant pyrotechnics and cultural programmes together makes a virtual carnival. Jose et al. (2017) assessed the prospects festival tourism in Kerala for the sustained economic growth.

Tourism is an important industry which is the major power behind the growth of service sector in Kerala. Therefore, the Government of Kerala, in its budget allocation, also prioritize tourism. It is one of the largest foreign exchange sources of Kerala economy. In 2019, the sector contributed Rs. 35,056.68 crores to the state exchequer while it was Rs. 14,353.96 in 2011. The following table and figure illustrates the earnings from foreign as well as domestic tourist arrival in Kerala.

Table 3: Earnings from Tourism in Kerala (2009-19)

Year	Foreign Exchange Earning in Crore	Earnings From domestic Tourists in Crore
2009	2853.16	7122.18
2010	3797.37	9282.68
2011	4221.99	10131.97
2012	4571.69	10883.00
2013	5560.77	11726.44
2014	6398.93	12981.91
2015	6949.88	13836.78
2016	7749.51	15348.64
2017	8392.11	17608.22
2018	8764.46	19474.62
2019	10271.06	24785.62

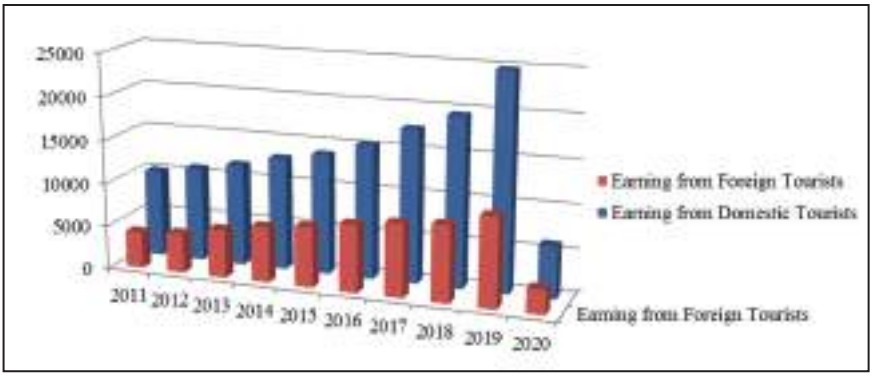
Source: *Economic Review, Government of Kerala*

Table 3 represents the earnings from tourism in Kerala, India, for the years 2009 to 2019, as per the data available until 2021. The earnings are categorised into two parts: foreign exchange earnings and earnings from domestic tourists, both of which are measured in Indian rupees (in crores.). Foreign exchange earnings refer to the revenue generated from international tourists who visit Kerala. Earnings from domestic tourists refer to the revenue generated from domestic tourists who travel within India and visit Kerala. Table 3 depicts that the earnings from both categories have been increasing over the years, indicating a growing tourism industry in

Kerala. In 2009, the earnings from foreign exchange were 2853.16 crores and the earnings from domestic tourists were 7122.18 crores, which increased to 10773.52 crores and 25364.24 crores, respectively, in 2019.

The earnings from foreign exchange increased at a higher rate than the earnings from domestic tourists, from 2853.16 crores in 2009 to 10773.52 crores in 2019, indicating an increase in foreign tourist arrivals to Kerala. In 2019, the foreign exchange earnings were higher than the earnings from domestic tourists, which can be attributed to the rise in the number of foreign tourists visiting Kerala. On the other hand, the earnings from domestic tourists also increased steadily, from 7122.18 crores in 2009 to 25364.24 crores in 2019. This indicates a growing domestic tourism industry in Kerala as well. The increase in domestic tourist earnings could be due to factors such as the rise in disposable income of the Indian middle class, better connectivity and infrastructure, and increased marketing efforts by the Kerala tourism industry. Tourism is significant to Kerala's economy because it creates employment opportunities and generates revenue. In addition, tourism in Kerala is renowned for its commitment to sustainable and responsible practises, which are also beneficial to the ecosystem and local communities. Kerala's tourism industry has been consistently expanding, with both international and domestic tourists contributing to the state's economy. The increase in earnings from tourism could be attributed to a number of factors, including increased marketing efforts, infrastructure enhancements and an overall expansion of the Indian economy.

Fig 3: Revenue from foreign and domestic tourists in Kerala



Source: *Department of Tourism, Government of Kerala*

The largest number of tourist arrival in the state was in 2019 and the highest income from tourism was in the same year. The domestic tourist's contribution is higher in terms of income and tourist visits. The domestic tourist earnings increased from 12981.91 crore in 2014 to 13836.78 crore by 2015 (GoK, 2016). The compound

annual growth rate (CAGR) of domestic tourist earnings over the last ten years was 11.25 percent. The domestic earnings from tourism during the year 2005 was 4281.42 crores which rose to 13836.78 crores by 2015.The global pandemic has hit the sector badly and there occurred a sharp decline in the revenue from the sector in 2020. By recognizing the sector's potential to contribute to the economy, the government of Kerala in connection with the Department of Tourism of Kerala, implements projects for the growth of the industry. The tourism industry has achieved its place in different five year plans adopted by the government. During the first five year plan, the sector has endowed with 3003 lakh rupees as its plan outlay. It increased to 56896 lakh rupees in the fifth five year plan and in the twelfth plan it was 10200000 lakh rupees showing an importance given to the sector in the plan allocations. The 13th Plan will try a new tourist growth strategy for the state. The main goal is to double foreign tourist arrivals, boost domestic visitor numbers by 50% and generate 400,000 employments in the tourism industry (State Planning Board, 2018). A total of 109410.00 lakh was allocated expenditure for executing different tourism projects during the first three years of the 13th Five Year Plan. The Annual Plan 2020-21 proposed a budget of 32014.00 lakh for the implementation of 22 schemes in the Sector (GoK, 2021). Joseph (2020) has well recorded the economic impact of tourism in Kerala, India.

An important factor in Kerala's economic development has been tourism. In addition to making a substantial contribution to the state's GDP, the tourist sector has promoted socioeconomic growth and produced job opportunities (Jose and Jegadeeshwaran, 2023). A sizable section of the populace has found direct and indirect work in the tourism industry, including possibilities for women and underrepresented groups. Traditional crafts and local guide services, as well as jobs in hotels, restaurants, travel agencies and tour companies, have given thousands of families a source of income. Additionally, this income diversification has helped to reduce poverty, especially in rural areas where there may be fewer options for employment. Apart from the generation of jobs, tourism has also contributed to the development of infrastructure. According to Kavya Lekshmi and Mallick (2020) tourism has a significant potential of unleashing the economic growth of Kerala and this is found to be robust with the use of alternative econometric estimation methods. In addition, improvements to transportation systems, including highways, airports and railroads as well as the construction of new lodging and recreational spaces, have been made necessary by the surge of tourists. Thus, the local economy has benefited greatly from this infrastructural development, which has improved accessibility and connectivity for both inhabitants and visitors and sparked growth in other industries including trade and agriculture. Kerala's approach to tourism development has also been distinguished by its emphasis on sustainable tourism. Initiatives like responsible tourism, which promote ecological

preservation and community involvement, have aided in striking a balance between environmental sustainability and economic growth in Kerala. In another study, Joseph (2020) evaluated the economic impact of tourism in Kerala with commendable economic outcomes. As per observations of Pushpalatha (2020), Kerala tourism offers a plethora of economic benefits like creation of job opportunities, generation of foreign exchange, balanced regional development, improvement of per capita income and standard of living, development of basic infrastructure, promotion of universal brotherhood, preservation of vanishing arts, promotion of pilgrimages to holy places, revival of local architectural traditions, regional peculiarities, preservation of ancient monuments and historical sites and protection of wildlife tourism.

Conclusion

The State of Kerala is a treasure trove of colorful festivals, delightful cuisine, beautiful beaches, backwaters and enchanting folk and classical art forms. Tourism is one of the promising sectors and it contributes a significant amount to the state's foreign exchequer. Due to its potential in generating income and employment, the Government has initiated and implementing several projects and proposals for the development and strengthening of the sector. Kerala, being one of the top tourist destinations in India, the sector will attract more tourists in the future and the development of the sector will engender unimaginable economic benefits. To sum up, tourism in Kerala provides a wide spectrum of economic and natural benefits such as employment generation, foreign exchange without exporting anything tangible, balanced regional development, improve per capita income and standard of living, infrastructure development even in rural areas, promote universal brotherhood, cultural conservation, pilgrimage tourism and international brotherhood, revival of local traditions, preservation of ancient monuments and historical sites and wildlife tourism. Thus community-based participatory tourism proposals will improve the economic and social well-being of not only local population but also propels the state economy too.

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Policy of Neutrality: A Geo-Economic and Political dynamics of Post Covid India

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The term geopolitics had its own wider swathe in the thesaurus of every external politics and it became a significant part of Indian foreign policy immediately after liberation of colonial India. Farsighted Nehru long before grasped the geopolitical significance of India for both Asia and Europe, thus taking advantage of India's topographical location Nehru tried to pursue several economic, socio- political and business relations with both the Asian and European nations in order to initiate an unblended image of India in front of the world. Thus, owing to that vision of his own, Nehru overemphasizing joined British Common Wealth on 1947 and took necessary actions to organize 'Asian relation conference' on the similar year. These particular ventures of Nehru not only gave India a head strong identity but made India an eminent actor of world politics. But India's foreign policy has experienced a considerable shift in last decade, particularly from the onset of India's opening up in wake of neo- liberal reforms since 1991. This made India to realize the importance of South Asia for enhancement of India's globalization. In this regard Rao's government (http://eparlib.nic.in/bitstream: Retrieved on 20th March 2022)[1] uttered that; 'Geopolitically India is curial for western alliance's but for India, South Asia is both strategically and geopolitically far more significant, so it's the need of the hour for global player India to handle South Asia with enough delegacy'.

Thus India since its economic liberation manifested conspicuous success in handing South Asia nations despite of China's continues disruption. And by the end of 20th century India launched several regional programs like 'Gujral Doctrine'[2] for the intensification of economy, culture and education cooperation of India with rest of the South Asian nations, which made South Asian, much more developed and strategically prime for the world. In this regard Harsh Pant (Pant 2021: pg.xviii-xix)[3] stated that; "New Delhi's growing capabilities and an inspirational foreign policy outlook have ensured that as we enter the third decade of the 21st century, South Asia is being viewed today as the pivotal theatre of the wider Indro- Pacific, where the key fault line of this phase of global politics will be played out".

Therefore, this image building process of India which got initiated by holding the hands of Nehru doubtlessly brought enormous success for India in the sector of foreign trade and investment, but simultaneously India's accelerating image and structural dominance in South Asia invited resentment and antagonism from other nations of South Asia. Moreover, Chinese entity in the realm of South Asian politics added fuel on the anti- India sentiment of South Asian nation due to the pessimistic propaganda of China against India's big brother policy[4]. But stepping of Modi as a state leader in 2014 changed the scenario. His newly launched programs like 'Act East Policy'[5] and 'Neighborhood First Policy'[6] gave a boost on the fragile image of India within South Asian nations. Modi's government also initiated several projects like 'Transformation by Transportation' to enhance regional trade and development within nations of SAARC and ASEAN to end up the decade long geopolitical tension of India with her immediate neighbors. Thus, in this regard Raja Mohan (Mohan 2015: pg.64-65)[7] pronounced that; "Modi has begun to take the initiative to end the prolonged political neglect of the neighbors and has demonstrated the ability to connect to the governments and people of the region. At the SAARC summit in Kathmandu, and in his bilateral visits to Nepal, Bhutan and Sri Lanka, Modi has signaled the willingness to take unilateral step to promote regional integration and work with sub regional cooperation where possible".

But unfortunately the year 2020 changed the whole geopolitical dynamics of South Asian nations towards India. The emergence of the deadly virus 'Covid 19' not only brought demographical wane but concomitantly it also knocked down India's economic growth. Moreover, a handful of unanticipated incidents crop up which generated enormous strain within the geopolitics of India with her neighboring nations. Among those three are most significant one;

i) Return of the Islamic fundamentalist in the throne of Afghanistan in 2021, which gave Pakistan adequate amount of potential and ascendancy to counter India.

ii) Invade of Russia on Ukraine on May 2022 and its raising antagonism with NATO is creating serious crisis for India both in economic and diplomatic sector.

iii) Post Covid economic crisis within major nations of South Asia is affecting India's regional economy and development.

Thus, these following un-happing events of world politics caused an acute geopolitical and geo-economical dilemma for India. Hence the rudimentary objective of this particular research article is to analyze that how India will going to handle the post covid changing geopolitics and geo economic crisis of South Asia in the upcoming hours? And secondly what are the necessary remedial steps India

will endeavor to regain its position in South Asian under the tremendous impede created by the major power of post covid era (China) and its associate Pakistan?

Therefore to seek answer of these following quarries we went through several parliamentary reports based on 'geopolitics of India after Covid 19'; and reviewed several scholarly articles of (Menon 2021: pg. 338-339)[8] and (Pant 2021: pg. xix-xx)[9] on 'post covid politics of India', and there we found that every documentations conveyed the series of hindrances India is facing due to this drastic changes in the world's political and economic order, but none have tried to give any proper clarification on the remedial which will help India to combat. Thus, the research outcome of this particular article is to follow up those remedial which will help India to regenerate her power and position within the political arena of South Asia and to stabilize the geo economic turbulence of India.

South Asia and changing geopolitics of India in post Covid epoch:

Since its genesis as an independent nation, India handled South Asia with ample delicacy as it viaducts the Indian Ocean to the Pacific in the east and the Mediterranean in the West. Thus it's colossal strategically crucially bound India to change her geopolitical plane of actions towards South Asia with the changing world order over decades. Since Nehru's era India is trying to establish her hold on South Asia for national security and welfare and non- alignment stood to be the fruit of such strategy of Nehru. Nehru through his diplomatic and strategic plan of action termed 'non alignment' tried to unify South Asia under the umbrella of India's leadership. In addition with the passage of changing world politics the center of gravity of foreign affairs got transferred from Europe to South Asia and Asia Pacific due to its water source and trade routes. Thus this growing concentration of the big powers towards South Asia compelled India to continue a friendly cooperation with her neighboring nations with gaining momentum. Thus, to peruse her alleged motives India launched certain list of schemes like SARTFP[10], SARSO [11]and SAU[12]. And this growing continuity of India's geopolitical relations with South Asia made India a crucial player of global politics.

Hence India's worthiness in world affair since the beginning of 21st century justifies and legitimizes her all time geopolitical strategies and diplomatic plan of actions towards her immediate surrounding neighbors. But the demolition of Berlin wall and dissolution of Soviet Union in early 90s caused integrated the global market. Thus, ingress of globalization and destruction of socialist regime gave China the opportunity of transition from agrarian economic nation towards a largest manufacturing nation. And this age renowned incident made China an Asian super power of 21st century. Accordingly, this particular transition of China gave India a major challenge towards the continuity of her geopolitical strategies

within South Asia. Moreover, China's determination of becoming Asian giant made dragon to defame peacock within South Asia, by paying the card of Mongolian politics. In addition, China always tried to keep India under a security dilemma by resuming broader disputes through the assistance of Pakistan. But India's stupendous strategic re- adjustment capacity and excellent diplomatic skills never gave China's vicious initiatives enough space. Alternatively India's growing strategic partnership and trade relations with US and Russia allow her to counter China rather than accepting his atrocious moves. In this regard Harsh (Pant 2021: pg. xx-xxi)[13] pronounced that; "The single most important geopolitical development of the last few months has been India standing up to China post the Galwan valley incident of June 2020 and making it clear to Beijing and to the world that it is possible to successfully resist Chinese aggression".

But the post covid world order brought a quantum jump within the geopolitics of not only India but the entire global. The United Kingdom and its alliance got totally distracted and devastated due to the demographical and economical fall caused as an effect of pandemic, whereas Beijing keeping all suffering aside concentrated itself on supplying PPT kit, medicine, covid test kits etc. to the entire world which accorded China mammoth wealth, and assisted China to rehabilitate its post covid devastated economy. Additionally China's recent achievement in technological and nuclear sector; i.e. launch of five satellites into orbit on rocket that got lifted from the mid of 'East China Sea' and launch of Chinese aircraft carrier 'Fujian'[14] testifies Chinese power and ability which can turn the multi-polar world towards uni-polarity at any moment.

Secondly, Russian invasion on Ukraine and its growing antagonism with NATO signifies the outbreak of the Cold War II where U.S.A on the hand will going to counter Benijing- Moscow block, under such state of affairs India's plane of diplomatic action and geopolitical game need to be enough strategic.

Thus Modi's government as a remedial of overcoming this critical situation chooses two basic principles of Nehru's foreign policy; firstly is the policy of neutrality and second is the policy of peaceful coexistence. Both these mentioned policies proactively saved India to overcome external turbulence created as an effect of Cold War, but in long run both these policies failed to restrain Chinese aggression on India. Moreover, non-alignment invited antipathy of USA towards India which prevented Washington to provide any external and bilateral assistance to New Delhi until 9/11. In this regard (Pant 2008: pg 21)[15] stated that; "The event of September 11, 2001, and the subsequent dramatic changes in U.S foreign policy prevented the Brush administration from following through with its new approach towards India through gradual changes in U.S hostile attitude towards India continues apace".

Now the basic research query is that whether the history of abortiveness will repeat itself or Modi's 'Atmanirbhar Bharat', which represents 'a policy of neutrality'

and 'self-reliance' will assist India to regain its position within the geopolitics of South Asia? Thus to seek answer of the above inquest we have reviewed several speeches of Modi [16] (https://indianexpress.com/article: Retrieved on 23rd December 2021) and Dr. S. Jaishankar (minister of external affair)[17] (http://m.economictimes.com/news/politicsandnation: Retrieved on 20th December 2020) and several scholarly article of Abhijit Banerjee (2020)[18] (https://m.economictimes.com/news/economy/policy/india-should-focus-on-domestic-economy: Retrived on 12th June 2022) and Shashi Tharoor (2020)[19] (https://timesofindia.com/india/selfrelient: Retrieved on 2nd June 2021) and there we found that, though 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' and ' Non Alignment' sounds similar because both of these policies states that; "Self-reliant does not mean cutting off from rest of the world nether it advocates a self-centered protectionist system rather it ensures that India can emerge as global nerve center with multiple tries but by keeping a safe distance from any power game".[20] [WWW.hindustantimes.com: retrieved on December 22nd 2020: 10AM to 11.30 AM]

But differences lies in their constitution which are just reverse of each other. For instance, Nehru tried to peruse both the objectives that are 'national interest' and' international peace and welfare' through a single plane of action (I.e. Non Alignment) which is never possible because theoretically 'internationalism' does not sit comfortably with 'national self-determination' as by nature they contradict each other. Thus whenever Nehru tried to peruse both this goals through a single policy it failed to bring success, whereas, Modi's 'Atmanirbhar Bharat', followed only a single objective that is, 'national interest' of India. While declaring ' Atmanirbhar Bharat Scheme' in the digital platform on 12th May 2020, Modi clearly defined that, this policy of self-reliant India will develop the capacity for sovereign strategic action which will only focus on the nation interest of India not the interest of mighty nations which depends or collaborates with India. India will remain fully self-contained.

Thus the hypothetical analysis of this section testifies that 'policy of neutrality' consequently proved to be an everlasting policy which is successfully prevailing still date, but in a varying embodiment it is 'Atmanirbhar Bharat;' whose objective only focuses towards national self-determination and rejects overemphasis towards international welfare. And this changing nature of the 'policy of neutrality' is effectively handling every economic, geopolitical and security issues of post covid India.

Post- covid geo- economic strategies of India towards South Asia and Eurasia

Geo- Economics as a term is customarily used as a delineating gadget of geopolitics in international affairs. But in practicality geo-economics is the base of every external affair and not a mere component of geopolitics. The particular term

'geo- economics' was fabricated by (Robert Backwill 2016: pg. 19-20) and (Jennifer Harris 2016: pg.19-20)[21], according to them; "geo-economics mean the use of economic instrument to promote and defend national interest, and to produce beneficial geopolitical results". Thus we can validate that geo- economics and geopolitical harmonizes each other, so changes in the former will necessitate the changes within the latter term. For instance, epoch of post-cold war have attested a changing global economic order with the demolition of Berlin wall and inundating of globalization which engendered geopolitics of uni polarity.

Similarly, the persistence of Covid virus for two years changed the whole pre-existing geo economic and political order of the world due to the huge economic devastations cause as effects of lockdown. Thus, imposition of residential isolation as a life restorative measure generated fall off in per capita income. Accordingly, in other version we can elucidate that a total global economic meltdown got materialized in these two years. According to (Minhaz Merchant 2022)[22]; 'world largest economy U.S is witnessing double threat in the current fiscal year due to high inflation and low growth in world market which can result into economic recession in U.S.A as it happened in 2008'. But on the other hand according to Economic Time report[23] (http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/topic/china-gdp-growth: Retrieved on 20th June 2023) though China like other nations have received a huge economic set back in the last two years due to the effects of 'Zero Covid policy', but in this current fiscal years China is witnessing a total 8 percent growth in its G.D.P. This testifies that the current economic status quo of the world is changing. Moreover, continuity of Russian aggression on Ukraine have not only triggered turmoil in the global financial market but for India it had invited much more awfulness in the economic sector, as high crude oil price has muted the growing economy of India and have casted a shadow over the post covid economy of India. According to the World Back report of 2022, not only India but the entire SAARC nations are grappling with the rising community price, supply logjam, and vulnerability in financial sector. In this regard (Hartwig Schafer 2022: pg. 8-9), [24]the Work Bank vice president for South Asian region stated that; "South Asia has faced multiple shocks in the past two years, including the scarring effects of the Covid 19 pandemic. High oil and food prices caused by the war of Ukrain- Russia will have a strong negative impact on people's real income".

Under such scenario India's economic benefit through regional cooperation is nearly a utopia, so government of India need strategic partnership with both major nations of the world, i.e. China and U.S.A to make herself out of such economic inflation. But the growing power equation between nations of Quad[25] and CRFA[26] in the Indro- Pacific demesne is gradually making India to frown its eyebrows. Additionally, according to White House official reports[27] (http://WWW.

whithouse.gov: Retrieved on 15th June 2022) Putin have decided on the embargo of Russian oil, liquefied natural gas and coal in U.S.A and its alliance nations, where as China according to 'Indian Times Report'[28] (http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/energy/oil-gas: Retrieved on 20th June 2022) is assisting Russia by replenishing its petroleum reserves by the cheap crude oil of Russia. Thus, according to (Dr. V. A Anand 2022 pg. 62)[29] "Besides supply of crude oil- Russia's extensive natural resources and established heavy industry dove-trailed with China high recourse demand, large market size and massive export capacity for finish goods. With these measures their relations with the west kept deteriorating. But Putin and Xi is successfully continuing their no limits partnership".

Thusly, these above political ties have an immense strategic relevance for India's geopolitical and geo economic moves. It is because to overcome the post covid credit crunch condition India need trade and financial ties with all these super powers of 2022; dysfunctional relation with either of these powers can cost high for India's security and trade. Thus the basic research quarry of this particular section is how India will going to tactically handle this post covid balance of power? And what is the pertinent remedial for India to overcome this high economic inflation under this Cold War II era of 21st century?

Though India and its immediate neighbors perceives themselves as semi peripheral nations aspiring to became a core nation, but in originality major SAARC nations are poor and middle power nations who failed to comprehend the economic ravaged caused by covid 19. And above that Russia- Ukraine war fuelled inflammation at its extent which made the major SAARC nation to witness their following GDP. According to the World Bank report[30]; (http://databank.worldbank.org/data: Retrieved on 2nd June 2022) 'South Asia emerges from the glooms of Covid 19, but the recovery has been highly uneven. The war in Ukraine threatens to exacerbate the challenges of commodity price and lingering supply constraints. Thus, to combat with these headwinds India need well planned financial policies'. Approximately we can apprehend that this time mere regional cooperation is not the solution rather India needs bilateral trade and investment relations with major powers of the nation to make out herself from this economic inflation.

Hence, Modi government plump for the policy of 'self-reliance and self-dependence' as the remedial to combat with the falling GDP and also as an instrument to tactically handle this post covid balance of power. But beforehand we have be familiar with the term 'self-reliant and self-dependent India'; thus according to scholars like Shashi Tharoor[31] (http//:timesofindia.indiatimes.com. Retrieved on 23rd July 2020: 8.00AM to 10.00AM) it is nothing but self-reliance India mission where India will try to come out of this disastrous condition by

laying emphasis on domestic products and agriculture without depending upon foreign investors it is because major foreign investment comes from countries like U.S.A, Germany, Japan, France ect, but this following recommended nations itself are facing a tremendous cut off in there GDP, so under such situation anticipating foreign invested sound a little bit visionary, so economic self-dependence is only the way out. Whereas, according to the IT minister Ravi Sankar Prasad[32] (http://www.thehindu.com : Retrieved on 13th August 2020) under this covid situation over dependence on any super power nation will not only misdirect our economic growth but will also invite security threat for herself under this Cold war 2 era. But at the same time he also clarified that self-reliance does not mean isolation or away from the entire global world rather India will heartily welcome foreign direct investment and technological cooperation if any country is interest under such ravaging condition.

According to the prime minister of India this self-reliant India means self-dependency upon the entire sector of production, such as organic farming, domestic industries, textiles, chemical and electronic industries etc. According to (Patel & Vala[33] 2021: pg. 1-2), Modi put emphasis on two basic sectors as these two sectors among the others. It is because according to him these two particular sectors carry maximum potential to achieve self-reliance and possess the ability bring economic benefit through this process of self-dependence. Therefore, those two sectors maintained feasible sectors are organic farming and textile industry.

Accordingly, while explaining the fact that how these two sectors can bring economic development through the process of self-reliance Modi uttered that in terms of economic benefaction textile industry of India is the second largest one and the first largest is China, but due to prediction of an involvement of China with Covid 19 made the global supplier to look for an alternative, for textile investment, under such situation India can easily hold the market. And secondly, for raw materials of textile industries India rarely need foreign capital and funding because India's textile industries can easily satisfy its own requirements by taking the assistance of cottage and village based industries. Thus, India can bring a change its falling GDP[34] and economic growth in its own worth without any depending on foreign nations.

Similarly, according to (Dubey[35] 2020: pg- 27-28) in the sector of organic farming India holds a position of third organic food productor in the world. And for organic production India need zero foreign investment as she is enough capable to give abetment of those materials which are needed for organic farming. Thus under this captious situation created by Covid 19 India can hold the major world market of organic farming products through the assistance of north east states of India which are known to be the hubs of organic farming. Thus, we can apprehend

from the so far discussion that 'self-dependent' or 'self-reliant' India is the best geo economic status quo to overcoming the economic inflation by handing the balance of power of 21st century.

Conclusion

'Policy of Neutrality' and 'Policy of Self-reliance' none of conjugate policies is unheard in the arena of the foreign policy of India; the genesis of these policies can be traced back since 1950. And whenever any kind of paucity occurred in economic and external policy of India, attempt to resurrect of the policy of neutrality was made by the scholars even in covid era also. But as a viable principle of India's external policy it failed to exhibit it's excellent heretofore due to the refuting nature of the deeply rooted objectives of these policies. Thus the basic finding of this article is to focus on the' Policy of neutrality' and 'self- reliance' rather than mere declaring it as irrelevant and secondly, beside re- launching it in new packages we should handle it by removing its basic theoretical defaults that is implanted in its objectives.

Notes

1. "India's Geopolitics with South Asia" athttp://eparlib.nic.in/bitstream: Retrieved on 20th March 2022: 8.AM to 9 AM)
2. While being the minister of external affair, I.K Gujral, introduced five set of policies to enhance the relation of India with South Asia. Where India tried to reflect its benevolence towards the nations of SAARC. For further study refer , Gujral, I.K (2011). Matter of Discretion: An Autobiography. New Delhi. Hay House Publication India PVT.
3. Pant. V.Harsh (2021): 'Politics and Geopolitics: Decoding India's Neighborhood Challenges'. New Delhi. Rupa Publication.
4. India is the largest nation of South Asia with a bucket of economic and bilateral engagements with greater nations of the world, which made India a leader of South Asia and her decision, are regarded as big brother policy towards South Asia. For further details follow, Rajat, Amit (2019).' India in South Asia: Challenges and Management'. Singapore. Springer.
5. 'Act East Policy' of India was launched by Modhi government on 2014, it is just an up gradation of Manmohan's ' Look East Policy', it was launched by present central government to promote economic cooperation, cultural ties and development of strategic relation with nation of South East Asia to end China hegemony over this land. For further study refer, Muni, S.D & Mishra, Rahul (2019). India's East Ward Engagement: from antiquity to Act East Policy. New Delhi Sage Publication.
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7. Mohan. C. Raja (2015): 'Modi's World: Expanding India's sphere of Influence'. New Delhi. Harper Collins Publication.
8. Menon. Shivshankar (2021): 'India and Asian Geopolitics: The Past, Present'. New Delhi. Penguin Random House.

9. Pant. V.Harsh (2021): 'Politics and Geopolitics: Decoding India's Neighborhood Challenges'. New Delhi. Rupa Publication.
10. South Asia Regional Trade Facilitation Program support local enterprises of South Asia and this program is administrated by WB it is a regional program to enhance women's participation in trade.
11. South Asia Regional Standards Organization was got established in 2011 but commenced into operation from 2014. It was established to achieve and enhance intra regional trade within SAARC nation and to increase its access in global market also.
12. South Asian University is an international university established in New Delhi, whose aim is to actively enhancing the education of the South Asian nation.
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14. Fujin is the biggest aircraft carrier launched by China to extend its navel range in Indro Pacific region. It was launch to challenge U.S.A.
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24. Schafer. Hartwig (2022). 'South Asia to see slow growth as war in Ukrain impedes recovery': World Bank'. Down to Earth. Vol 34. 15th April 2022.
25. Quadrilateral Security Dialogue is an informal strategic forum whose membering nations are Japan, India, U.S.A and Australia, the main aim of this forum is to restrain China's influence in Indro- Pacific region and on South China Sea.
26. CRFA is a nonprofit mass organization whose basic aim is to enhance friendly cooperation between China and Russia. It also looks after the cultural, economic and political programs going on between these two partners.
27. United States Bans Imports of Russian Oil...' at http://WWW.whithouse.gov: Retrieved on 15th June 2022: 5PM to 7.30PM.
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29. V. Anand (2022). 'Decoding China's Stance'. Frontline. Vol-39, No-13. 1st July 2022.

30. 'Global Growth to Slow through 2023, Adding to risk of ' Hard landing' in developing economies. At http://databank.worldbank.org/data: Retrieved on 2nd June 2022: 8PM to 9PM

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32. Biswas, Debolina. ' Aatmanirbhar Bharat is resergent India'. At http://www.thehindu.com : Retrieved on 13th August 2020: 6.00PM to 8.30PM

33. Vala. Y.B and Patel.K (2021). 'Low Cost Natural Farming: A Step towards Atmanirbhar Bharat'. Just Agriculture. Vol-1, Issue-9. May 2021.

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India in Africa: An Analysis of South-South Cooperation in Trade and Investment

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Abstract

South-South Cooperation was emphasized by the UN General Assembly in 2015 as a crucial development strategy. It refers to collaboration among countries of the South in the political, economic, social, cultural, environmental and technical domains. Africa as a whole is expected to have roughly a quarter of the global labour and consumer market by 2030, despite political, economic and security concerns in some countries, making the continent an appealing partner for governments and corporations throughout the world. As the power dynamics are shifting in the global scenario, major developing nations are re-imagining traditional frameworks of engagement and providing alternatives. In this context, India is uniquely placed to play a critical role by creating development partnerships with African nations. However, even after 73 years of interaction with the African continent, the Indian government has long faced criticism for lacking a distinct vision for the continent. The Kampala Guiding Principles announced in 2018 have been an attempt by the Indian government to bridge this gap. The paper tries to examine the trade and investment patterns of India with the African region from 2008 to 2022. By analysing the changes in the trade and investment patterns, this paper attempts to assess the progress attained by India in her attempt to become Africa's biggest partner. Trade and investments flows between India and the African continent are prominently in the sectors of energy, gold and pharmaceuticals amongst an array of other economic interactions.

Introduction

The idea of South-South Cooperation (SSC) is originated from the Bandung Conference, which promoted state led emancipatory development with the Global South working in solidarity against the Global North (Engel 2019: 219). A comprehensive framework of cooperation in the political, economic, social, cultural, environmental, and technological sectors is used to facilitate South-South interaction. It can take place on a bilateral, regional, intra-regional, or inter regional basis and include two or more developing nations. Through South-

South Cooperation, developing nations exchange knowledge, abilities, knowhow and resources in order to jointly work towards their development objectives (UN, 2022).

In the larger framework of multilateralism, South-South Cooperation is an on-going process that is essential to addressing the difficulties the South faces. It makes a significant contribution to development, and as such, has to be enhanced, especially by stern gathering the institutions and arrangements capacity to support such collaboration. South-South cooperation is crucial as a tactic to support poor nation's efforts at development and as a way to increase their involvement in the newly emerging global economy (South Centre, 2009).

India, one of the most prominent emerging economies that has drawn attention from the international world, has established itself as leader in South-South Cooperation, much as it did when it was a major role in the Non-Alignment movement. India's foreign policy and diplomacy has always placed a strong emphasis on South-South Cooperation. In fact, since the independence from Britain in 1947, India has cooperated with other developing nations on a bilateral, regional and global level to share its knowledge and development experience (OECD, 2019). The asymmetry between states is reflected even in the global institutional governance. It is for this reason India seeks to create a new multilateralism such as IBSA or BRIC Seven if it's restricted to global south. India seeks a South-South alliance on development issue because there is a North-South divide on trade and economic development agenda (Kanth and Kumari, 2016:15).

Indian Prime minister, Narendra Modi presented a vision for collaboration at the global level in addition to a bilateral connection with Africa in an address to the Ugandan parliament in 2018 through 10 guiding principles for India and Africa. India asserted its position in global platform by stating that India's quest for reforms in the global institution is incomplete without an equal place for Africa. That will be a key purpose of India's foreign policy (MEA, 2018: 20). South-South Cooperation may be greatly boosted by a resurgent Africa and a developing India, particularly when it comes to tackling issues such as clean technology and climate resilience and other areas such as health, education, digital literacy, financial inclusion etc. India External Affairs Minster remarked 'India is a trusted partner in the journey of African Socio-economic development and Africa plays a particularly important role in India's foreign policy outlook. That is reflected in our expanding diplomatic footprint that d covers 43 Asian countries' (All India Radio, 2022). India also enhances south-south cooperation through number of organisations such as BRICS and IBSA. For Brazil being in BRICS is connected to its interest for increasing South-South trade especially with developing economies like and South Africa. For South Africa, BRICS is the continuation of the historic Bandung conference. In this sense it represents the South- South cooperation against the domination of the West (Sahu, 2016: 62-63).

India has discreetly increased its role as a major donor of development aid to other underdeveloped nations during the last decade. India's sense of itself as an emerging power, its run for political influence and energy resources in developing nations, and the swift expansion of its domestic non-profit and private-consultancy sectors are the driving forces behind change. The overarching goal of India's development aid programmes is to strengthen the nation's geopolitical power and create a strong "pro-India" constituency among influential decision-makers in recipient nations.

During the course of its seventeen conclaves, the CII-EXIM Bank Conclave on India-Africa Project Partnership, which was started with the support of the Ministry of External Affairs and of Commerce and Industry, Government of India, has been crucial in encouraging Indian companies to start and expand their footprints. This conference has evolved into a venue for enhancing India and Africa's relationship on numerous levels. To reflect these evolving contours of this dynamic relationship, the conclave was renamed to CII EXIM Bank Conclave on India Africa Growth Partnership expanding the previous emphasis on Project Partnership. This conclave is aimed to concentrate on trade and disinvestments, knowledge sharing, and expertise exchange between India and rest of industry to create shared value (CII and Exim Africa).

India' Trade and Investment Presence in Africa

After a long period of stagnation, trade between India and Africa grew rapidly from the mid-2000s onwards. The three Indo-African Forum Summits (IAFS) held in 2008, 2011 and 2015 strengthened the trade, economic cooperation and investment linkages. The first summit set a stage for collaboration for increase in trade , India sanctioned US$ 5.4 billion in new credit line and provided African Least Developed Countries (LDCs) with tariff reductions (Wagener 2019: 17). The second summit deliberated on deeper economic engagement with 'Duty Free Tariff Preference Scheme' by India focusing on trade enhancement. A key shift witnessed in third Indo-African Forum Summit in 2015, India capitalized on its policy of 'Arc of Prosperity' through a 'Business Alchemy' between itself and Africa. This summit also agreed to cooperate in the areas of trade and industry through Small and Medium Enterprises and Medium and Small Industries; promotion of public and private partnerships etc. (Sarkar and Panda, 2021:42-43).

Indian exports to Africa grew from US$ 14191.78 million in 2007-2008 to US $ 32841.93 million in 2014-2015. However, India's imports grew even faster from US$ 20470.91 million in 2007-2008 to US$ 38634.87 million in 2014-2015. But during the 2022–2023 fiscal years, exports increased from US$ 40,218.18 million to US$ 51,199.27 million, improving their position relative to imports.

While India's imports stood at US$ 46,650.41 million (Export Import Data Bank, Government of India). The increase in India's energy imports had a major role in the expansion of trade between India and Africa. From US$ 194.7 million in 2005 to US$ 18,675.2 million in 2015, the imports of mineral fuels and lubricants from Africa grew at compound annual growth rate of 58 percent. During 2022-23, export of energy increased from 8667.76 million to US$ 19284 million (Table 1.2). In 2022-2023 balances of trade become favourable to India due to sharp increase in exports (Table 1.1).

Table 1.1: India's Trade with Africa

	Export	Import	Balance of Trade
2007-2008	14,191.78	20,470.91	-6,279.13
2008-2009	14,813.42	24,728.31	-9,914.89
2009-2010	13,432.92	25,614.76	-12,181.84
2010-2011	19,713.47	31,956.42	-12,242.95
2011-2012	24,674.08	43,865.61	-19,191.53
2012-2013	29,142.50	41,110.68	-11,968.18
2013-2014	31,226.19	36,626.93	-5,400.74
2014-2015	32,841.93	38,634.87	-5,792.94
2015-2016	25,039.00	31,667.23	-6,628.23
2016-2017	23,129.37	28,844.72	-5,715.35
2017-2018	24,903.95	37,789.21	-12,885.26
2018-2019	28,540.88	41,114.74	-12,573.86
2019-2020	28,990.90	37,692.95	-8,702.05
2020-2021	27,733.34	28,179.15	-445.81
2021-2022	40,218.18	49,319.78	-9,101.60
2022-2023	51,199.27	46,650.41	4,548.86

Source: *Export-Import data Bank; Ministry of Commerce, author's calculation*
Note: *Values in US$ million*

India's involvement in African Hydrocarbon sector might be viewed as a part of diversification policy. India's growing need for energy has become a compulsion for government to look for other alternatives. In addition, African oil, particularly that from Gulf Guinea is of high quality, due to its low sulphur content and most of the new discoveries are away from conflicting areas. Moreover, Africa's market is open to all and Nigeria is the only African nations to be a member of Organization

of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) which set limit on output level (Desai, 2009: 424).

Table 1.2: Indian Energy Trade with Africa

Year	Energy Export	India's Total Export to Africa	Percentage share (Export)	Energy Import	India's total import to Africa	Percentage share (Import)
2008-2009	3369.97	14813.42	23	15541.12	24728.31	63
2009-2010	2822.15	13432.92	21	17603.27	25614.76	69
2010-2011	4909.3	19713.47	25	22410.4	31956.42	70
2011-2012	5521.57	24674.08	22	29281.94	43865.61	67
2012-2013	7742.94	29142.5	27	28724.39	41110.68	70
2013-2014	8796.96	31226.19	28	27051.26	36626.93	74
2014-2015	10117.7	32841.93	31	25924.36	38634.87	67
2015-2016	4962.35	25039	20	17839.02	31667.23	56
2016-2017	4280	23129.37	19	15027.43	28844.72	52
2017-2018	4091.23	24903.95	16	20759.07	37789.21	55
2018-2019	5103.14	28540.88	18	24186.09	41114.74	59
2019-2020	6090.89	28990.9	21	23632.04	37692.95	63
2020-2021	3500.72	27733.34	13	12894.66	28178.15	46
2021-2022	8667.76	40218.18	22	24271.79	49319.78	49
2022-2023	19284	51199.27	38	21633.4	46650.41	46

Source: *Export Import Data Bank, Ministry of Commerce, author's calculation*
Note: *values in US$ Million*

India's exports of refined petroleum goods to Africa rose at the same time. Due to Africa's relatively poor refining capacity and India's surplus refining capacity, shipments of refined petroleum products now make up around 10 percent of India's export to Africa. Africa is a significant supply of coal, natural gas and uranium in addition to oil. India's primary coal suppliers are Mozambique and South Africa. Niger, Malawi, South Africa and Namibia are significant suppliers of Uranium for India, whereas Algeria, Nigeria and Egypt are significant supplies of natural gas (Chakrabarthy, 2016: 269). India's collaboration with African nations has a modest amount of success. India has occasionally fallen short in the competition to acquire equity oil assets to Oil Corporations from China and other nations. However India

continues to increase its purchase of oil from Africa especially from Nigeria and Angola. Other nations such as Chad, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon also joined with India's oil policy. The challenges of difficult political terrain of African nations and stiff competition from global oil players have not been an easy task for India (Gujar, 2018: 212).

International Solar Alliance (ISA) is also working along with the African Development Bank for supporting technical assistance and knowledge transfer for solar development and deployment in sun-shine rich African countries. This also aims at developing 10,000 MW of solar power systems to provide electricity to 250 million people with 90 million of these being on off-grid systems (African Development Bank, 2018). ISA in collaboration with Grid Controller of India Ltd (Grid-India) and West African Power Pool (WAPP) hosted delegates from the West African Region at New Delhi in 2023. This was a platform for knowledge sharing highlighting aspects of solar energy implementation (International Solar Alliance Secretariat, Haryana).

The proportion of gold, the second-largest import from Africa is still significant. In 2001, South Africa was the only source of India's gold imports by 2017, South Africa's share had dropped to 22.8 percent and new significant gold exporters to India included Ghana (48.4 percent) and Tanzania (12.3 percent). Despite the fact that their combined market share has remained high since. India's top imports from Eastern Africa include coal, coke and briquettes, mainly from Mozambique; gold, mainly from Tanzania; non ferrous metals, mainly from Zambia and Madagascar (Afrexim Bank and EXIM Bank, 2018: 25–29). In 2021, India imported $251M in Gold, making it the 78th largest exporter of Gold in world. At the same time, Gold was the 237th most exported product in India. The main destinations of Gold exports from India are UAE, Qatar, Hong kong, Singapore and Jordan. India imported $58.4 Billion in Gold, becoming the 2nd largest importer of Gold in the world. India imports Gold primarily from Switzerland, United Arab Emirates, South Africa, Guinea and Peru (Observatory of Economic Cooperation, (OEC) 2021).

As far as agriculture trade is concerned, the US, the UAE, Indonesia, Nepal, the UK, Vietnam and China are India's top export destinations for processed agriculture products. However, it appears that India is also boosting its exports to the smaller markets. The main objective of India's agricultural export policy appears to have been accomplished through improved value-added product penetration in previously penetrated or underpenetrated African markets. Additionally, India's exports of processed foods to a number of previously untapped markets rose significantly in 2020-2021, especially to African nations such as Djibouti, Rwanda, Central African Republic, Sierra Leone, Cameroon and Mali among others, where exports more than doubled (Pal and Mukherjee, 2022: 75-76).

Over the past two decades, Indian investments in Africa have dramatically expanded. This expansion can be attributed to a variety of changes on both sides. India was extremely constrained in releasing the amount required for Indian enterprises to make international investments due to its lack of capital and restricted foreign exchange. After 1990s, the policies and processes for foreign investments were gradually liberalised with the economic reforms. By 2003, the overall investment cap on outbound investments by Indian firms had been eliminated and they were essentially free to make investments abroad. Along with that, India's growth rate climbed, so did its energy needs, which thrust the issue if energy security at the forefront of India's foreign policy (Chakrabarthy, 2018).

The most favoured destination for Indian investment is Mauritius. The favourable taxation laws of Mauritius on investment flows however are a mechanism for investors in other countries to transfer money to other African Nations. For instance, India receives a sizable portion of FDI from Mauritius that comes from multinational companies based in UK, the EU or the US. For the same reason, Indian and other international businesses are permitted to invest in Africa through Mauritius. India overseas investments in Africa had been showing an increasing trend from 0.8 billion USD in 2004-08 to 12.6 billion USD in 2009-13. The figure increased further to 34.8 billion USD in the period 2014-18. However, the following period of 2019-23 showed a fall in the overseas investments to 10.7 billion USD(Morgan *et al.,* 2022: 11). This could be the combined influence of COVID related worldwide economic slowdown.

India and Mauritius signed the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and Partnership Agreement (CECPA) on 22nd February 2021. This is the first trade agreement signed by ndia with a country in Africa which will cover Trade in Goods Both sides have completed their internal legal procedures and the India-Mauritius CECPA will enter into force on Thursday, 01 April 2021. Trade in Goods, Rules of Origin, Trade in Services, Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT), Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) measures, Dispute Settlement, Movement of Natural Persons, Telecom, Financial services, Customs Procedures and Cooperation in other Areas. The India-Mauritius CECPA provides for an institutional mechanism to encourage and improve trade between the two countries. The CECPA between India and Mauritius covers310 export items for India, including food stuff and beverages (80 lines), agricultural products (25 lines), textile and textile articles (27 lines), base metals and articles thereof (32lines), electrical and electronic item (13 lines), plastics and chemicals (20 lines), wood and articles thereof (15 lines), and others. Mauritius will benefit from preferential market access into India for its 615 products, including frozen fish, specialty sugar, biscuits, fresh fruits, juices, mineral water, beer, alcoholic drinks, soaps, bags, medical and surgical equipment, and apparel (PIB 2021).

Financing Mechanism between India and Africa

The financing mechanism developed by India is more commercial in nature as interest rates are higher and grant is smaller than the Lines of Credit. Indian exporters are encouraged to seek new markets by the Buyers Credit facility provided by the Export-Import Bank of India (EXIM). While the exporter benefits from lower processing costs and the complexity of international trade processes, the Indian exporters also get to participate in the global market and may continue to effectively use his working capital to expand operation (Inspiration to Expand Possibilities EXIM Bank). Additionally, EXIM offers Lines of Credit (LoC) so that Indian exporters can grow their businesses in existing export markets or enter new markets without worrying about the payment obligations of foreign importers (Entering and Conquering new Vistas EXIM Bank).

Up to 2020, there are over 300 LoCs in use across 64 nations. Various countries have received offers totalling $30.62 billion, of which around one-third have been authorized for contracts. The EXIM Bank's ability to fulfill these commitments is constrained by the borrowing ceiling, which is capped at 10 times the Bank's net owned funds, necessitating a capital injection from the government. The capacity of a partner nation to accept the line of credit is also impacted by IMF conditions. LoC is a demand-driven procedure with two requirements: at least 75% of the products and services must be exported from India, and the firm carrying out the project must be an Indian company. LoCs give Indian businesses simple, risk-free market access through both buyer and seller financing. Moreover, the government has committed an increasing number of LoCs to African nations throughout the years, and the continent of Africa has continued to be a top destination for these LoCs (Kurian, 2020).

As per MEA reports Government of India supported LOC routed through EXIM bank since 2010 to 2019 worth of 8630.22 USD Million (MEA 2019). During 2022, India offered a LoC of USD 190 million for Metro express and other infrastructure projects in Mauritius. India also supported Zambia with a LoC of USD68 million for the construction of 650 prefabricated Rural Health Posts (MEA Annual Report, 2022: 130).

India-Africa Cooperation in Education Sector

India's under its ITEC project, India began to fund development initiatives in foreign nations as early as 1964. ITEC has emerged as one of the most crucial tools in foreign policy for fostering South-South Cooperation, particularly with Africa (Wagner 2019: 17). The statement made by the Indian Prime Minister at Ugandan Parliament in 2018 clearly demarcates the commitment of improving India- Africa

through India's experience with digital revolution to support Africa's development, improving the delivery of public services, extending education and health, expanding financial inclusion and helping the marginalized section of society to find a place in the mainstream (PIB 2018). During 2022-23, India continued to provide Bissau-Guinean authorities several scholarships to attend different courses in India under ITEC programme. Cote d'Ivoire has continued to receive from India 100 ITEC training slots and 8 ICCR scholarships, both of which have been successfully utilized (Annual Report MEA,2022: 114-117).

Sudan, Nigeria and Tanzania are the most important source nations for international students in India, respectively, according to the AISHE. (Teri 2023 and AISHE 2020-21). The strongly rooted racism in the local population is a considerable obstacle for the study in India programme between India and Africa. The traits of racism is accompanied with mob attacks, assaults, public stripping, molestation and rape or financially exploitative such as extended fees, commissions, higher rent deposits and increased fares etc. (Mohaptra, 2019).

Right after five years of Former President APJ Abdul Kalam's visit to South Africa in September 2004, the PAN-African e-Network was launched. It's a transnational network, composed of a fibre-optic section and undersea cables and satellite technology connecting India and Africa. The PAN delivered two forms of medical services: teleconsultations and continuing medical education. The vision that President Kalam had of the PAN-African e-Network, in 2004, been not only to connect India and Africa: it was also to model such a connection according to a specific technological form (Duclos, 2021:128). A report on PAN network of African Union considers it as a state of art, open and scalable and it has evolved as a Closed User Group (CUG) which primarily delivered services from Indian institutions to the member states (African Union, 2018). Through programmes such as e-Vidyabharathi and e-Arogya Bharati (e-VBAB), 22,000 African students received degree from India through PAeNP by March 2017 (Mittal, 2020).

India-Africa Cooperation in Healthcare Sector

Infrastructure and resources for healthcare are now in low supply in Africa. As per the reports of the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development, the majority of African nation as have hospital beds per 100 people that are much lower than the global average. The number of public treatment facilities in the region has remained mostly stable over the past ten years, despite the fact that the burden of non-communicable diseases in West Africa is increasing. Very few percent of people are administered for specialized therapies in Oncology and cardiology and 23 percent of the necessary treatments are administered in haematology. This has created a significant gap and opened up the market for new business to solve the deficit load.

It provides new opportunity for new players to address the deficit burden. Private business owners and investors have created technical partnerships and collaborations to fill the supply gap in the market. Frequently, these partnerships enlist skilled medical experts from North America, Europe or India to give the expertise to operate regional hospitals. Afrexim bank argues that these programmes are expensive and do nothing to meet the enormous need for expert medical care in the area, much like health care provided abroad (Afreximbank, 2021).

As of March 31, 2021, the Indian Exim Bank had provided many African countries with loan lines totalling $1.6 billion for health projects. India also announced$10 million commitment to the Indian-Africa Health Fund. India, after the United Kingdom and the United States, was third largest investor in Africa's health sector providers from India; Pharmaceutical manufacturing companies in India effectively serve the African market. Indian hospital groups such as Apollo, Fortis and others who have established the necessary skills, knowledge, systems and vision. India's Covid diplomacy during the Covid-Pandemic, India's humanitarian policy towards Africa won great appreciation. Between January and March 2021, African countries received 24.4 million made in India Covid-19 vaccines. Nearly 8.4 million vaccines shipped to Mauritius, Morocco, Egypt, Algeria and South Africa (Bhattahcarya, 2023).

There is a significant reliance on pharmaceutical items is nearly 15 times that of its exports, accounting 3 percent of Africa's overall imports in 2019. The continent's worldwide pharmaceutical exports amounted at US$ 1.1 Billion in 2019, accounting for 0.2 percent of its global exports. In 2019, 19.1 percent of all pharmaceutical imports into Africa came from India, the continents top provider of pharmaceutical items worth US$ 3.2 billion. Vaccines for human use, medication containing antibiotics and medicines containing penicillin are just a few of the pharmaceutical products that India supplies to Africa in large quantities (Exim Bank, 2021: 5). As Africa has been fighting against HIV, Malaria and TB for a long time, the requirement of medicines related to these diseases have been creating a market for Indian pharmaceuticals. The visit of Indian Prime Minister to Nations such as Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania and Kenya in 2016 boosted relationship stronger and it forged shared economic interests and developmental objectives that were compatible with India's plans to export pharmaceuticals to Africa and establish manufacturing facilities. As a result India became the source of 80 percent of the medications consumed in Africa. Additionally, Antiretroviral (ARV) has helped to lower the incidence of HIV/AIDS in the area. For instance, in 2017, 60 percent of HIV/AIDS patients in the African region were receiving ARV therapy which was a result of India's collaboration with the area in the healthcare industry (Priya, 2021 and Duclos, 2014). India always supported Africa through

multilateral institutions and mechanisms. The India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) fund, for example, has helped to strengthen Burundi's infrastructural capacity to tackle HIV/AIDS. Under the Asia-Africa Corridor (AAGC) framework, India plans to partner with Japan to undertake various developmental initiatives in Africa (Roychoudhary and Mawdsley, 2021: 138). As there was no implementation plan and concrete division of roles among the players, AAGC remained to be a vision plan of connecting Asia and developing Africa's capabilities in development and cooperation projects; people to people partnership; enhancing capacities and skill and quality infrastructure (Taniguchi, 2020)

Conclusion

The World Investment Report 2022 by UNCTAD states that in 2021, investment into Africa hit a new high of US$ 83 Billion. The research emphasis a diversification of investment sectors in Africa outside of the conventional industries; the most notable are investments in renewable energy, data centers and the development of power plants and industrial complexes (UNCTAD, 2022). It is clear that India and Africa have a intense relationship and both countries aspire to create new forms of economic cooperation across different sectors of economy. The lack of funding to fulfill objectives is one of the main constraints. The corporate sectors on both sides may become active players and collaborations in efforts to strengthen bilateral relations in trade and investment should be enhanced. An industry-government joint effort is need to pique interest in Africa and pro-active policies and its timely implementation is necessary to keep the momentum high. The fact that India and African nations do not have equal negotiating power in their different commercial partnerships is also problematic. Indo-African nations should work together to overcome their shared obstacles and build on their shared success as co-porgressors. If India helps African nations overcome their formidable obstacles, the partnership will be more fruitful and meaningful.

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Sustainable Livelihood and Energy Co-operation: A Case Study of India and Bhutan Relations

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Abstract

International relation and its affairs during the Cold War was in the beginning phase of reconsideration of power and capacity of states which influenced the world politics and economy. For instance, competition between US and Soviet Union had proved this through all political means till there was disintegration of Soviet Union happened and ended the Cold War. Similarly, on the other many countries follow up two principles in order to survive in competitive environment. If one group followed the principle of alignment to protect themselves then on the other hand, other groups followed principle of Non-Alignment Movement (NAM). However, NAM did not mean for complete isolation from worldly affairs and connection with other nation rather it was meant by supports of one nation to another friendly nation for democratic structure and their development through economy and ensure their security against threats approaching from other big powers.

In the case of South Asia, it seems to be very differently when importantly, there was presence of two big giant states India and China, and other small states as well their unique pattern of relations. Therefore, action of two giants India and China directly and indirectly influence the decision making of small nation in the region. However, small like Bhutan, Nepal and Maldives are strategically taking the decision to maintain balance and to achieve the national goal in the competitive situation in the region.

In the sphere of protecting devices, farsighted and very diplomatic leader then the Jawaharlal Nehru Prime Minister of India followed a strong foreign policy against policy of authoritarian and dictator states as well as maintained good governance, balance and cordial relations with nations which were aspirants of democracy.

In fact, India became inspiration for nation who fighting for their independence and development. In this context, it was noticed that India signed its first treaty for friendship for peace and tranquillity with Bhutan in 1949. India and Bhutan's cordial relation began with 1949 treaty of "Peace and Friendship". Besides, Bhutan and India's energy co-operation for sustainable growth and economic development would be one of the foundation pillars of their relations. India wants Bhutan always be under its influence of power in the region vis -a vis China. On the other hand, Bhutan's principle of Gross National Happiness (GNH) promotes ecological friendly

movement for all round development and balance foreign policy towards India and Bhutan. However, the latest happening related to border tension between India and China, and China and Bhutan in Donglang region (Dokhlam) has given the picture of strategic step of India in order to push back the Chinese army outside the region. Importantly, signing number of hydro-power projects with Bhutan also became India's part of diplomatic relations in international political system.

Keywords: Foreign Policy, Globalization, Human Security, Renewable Energy-Security, Sustainable Development and Hydro-Power Projects.

Introduction

States are playing an important role as actors in international system, although there are different national interest and different conditions. It obvious that in any situation of international relations, states pursue different approach to attain their national interests lonely as well as collectively and these activities are determined by foreign policy. In fact, foreign policy refers as a mean to all the activities that countries pursue outside their boundaries for aiming at particular interest. States cooperate with other states bilaterally or multilaterally for mutual interests because no single state can survive in complete isolation. Foreign policy and diplomacy have been described as steering wheel with the process of international relations is driven by state. In a co-operative situation there are affairs ranging from trade relations, cultural relations, security and political relations. Whether it is a matter of small or big, every state seeks to promote its own national interests. However, this national interest is also based on geography, history, traditions, culture, economic development, military capacity and international environment. Importantly, foreign policy is formulated by state is to serve its national interests when the government of state decide on a certain course of action or refrain from others interest.

Accordingly, state behaves in a particular manner in relation with other states in way their action become a factor behind changing policy of other states. In fact, an action of state can influence the decision making of other states directly or concomitantly. Hence, in order to understand the India and Bhutan relation through energy cooperation then it becomes an imperative to understand geo-politics of the region with Chinese presence and non-conventional approach which is being followed by India and Bhutan to have sustainable development internally and minimise Chinese threats externally.

Hydro-power, also called hydro-energy electric power is the technique of producing the power of water to create electricity. It is the world's leading source of renewable energy. It is renewable because during producing the power the turbines

is not lost in the process. Hence, it can be reused and over again to produce electricity. Also, water on the earth is continuously replenish by the rain and snow. Therefore, there is no dearth of water on earth.

The energy co-operation between India and Bhutan is most important component of and backbone of their relationship. Indeed, out of other energy sources, hydro- electricity dominates almost the entire relations of two countries. There are other energy sources such as wind and mineral resources in Bhutan and India, however, the natural renewable resources create an utmost mechanism to ensure adequate and sustainable economic growth of India and Bhutan (Dhakal 1990). Hence, India and Bhutan's energy relation (Hydro-power) has envisaged sustainable development by provinding a new life to their citzens for better future including crucial cultural and political relations.

Importantly, the social-political relations of two states traces back to history even before India got independence. However, foundation of socio-economic and political relation came with India's first treaty for friendship for peace and tranquillity with Bhutan exist in 1949. India and Bhutan's cordial relation began with 1949 treaty of "Peace and Friendship". The study also discusses a list of sections of the treaty in the first and second chapter. It was considered that Bhutan and India's relation stands with this treaty and so as it became the very foundation for prosperity, peace and security of both countries.

However, it is correct to say the first energy cooperation came with installation of electricity generated by diesel in certainly some major town in 1960s in Bhutan. Significantly, Bhutan initially relied on India for electricity because it was not in position to generate Hydro-Power.[1] It was the need of the hour for Bhutan to plan for power or electricity generating in its own country. Therefore, in the first Five Year Plan of development totally focused on project for generating electricity. India became only financial source for Bhutan's electricity till it would be ready to set up own mechanism. For the first time, Bhutan and India signed an agreement to harness the *Jaldhaka River on 13 September 1961* for the generation of hydroelectric power. The project was completed in 1966. The mutual cooperation however, took a concrete shape with the commissioned of many other following projects later including Chhukha Hydro Project in 1988.[2] According to huge resources of natural capacity, Bhutan could also become the source energy market for other partners in south Asia.

In fact, it could link energy cooperation with other states from out -side and inside the region like Bangladesh and Myanmar and India could become key player to facilitate Bhutan to access its land and support Bhutan by financially and technologically (Lama 2012).

If we see the domestic benefits of Bhutan through Hydro-power project then we find the Government of Bhutan operates its part of power to strengthen some of the industries such as fruit preservation, timber, and other industries. In addition, the hydroelectric projects would create job opportunities during the construction period and after too.

Earlier, the Indian state West Bengal became power source till 1988 when both India and Bhutan had had a normal relation. India-Bhutan power cooperation gave a new space of relations which was noticed when the Commission of the 336 MW Chukha Hydel- project set up in 1989 with the initiation of Chukha Agreement of 1974.

This Chukha Hydel Project became a significant ways and foundation for the pace for future co-operation. With the intent of Chukha Hydel-power project Bhutan realised the potential of Hydro-Power projects as a means to earn more revenue sources and grow up its sustainable GDP in economy. As we studied the first major energy connection between India and Bhutan with 336 MW Chukkha Dam in South Bhutan, commissioned in 1986-88 with 1974 Agreement where India entirely funded, it was also noticed Hydro-Power is the foundation of Bhutan's long-term prosperity.

Hydro- Power is the backbone of the Bhutanese economy and that of the major foundation of friendly relations between India and Bhutan. Moreover, the Himalayan kingdom having principle of GNH (Gross National Happiness) to protect environment also very much sensitive about nature God and Goddess. Therefore, vital decision by the Bhutanese Government to use its river as resources for production of electricity changed the political and economic scenario for Bhutan along with living condition of its citizens was welcomed by India. Later, Bhutan and India's relation was also based on Bhutan's energy or power which was being consumed by India to control its huge power deficit (Tshering & Tamang, 2004).

After 1990s there were many Hydro-Power Projects have been commissioned in Bhutan and India became a sole investor of that projects. Importantly, energy through Hydro-power became a major commodity enabling India to have special relationship with Bhutan because it contributed to speedy progress of revenue for GDP and development of Bhutan's economy. The latest figure of national budget of Bhutan shows that more than 75 percent of electricity produced in Bhutan is exported to India and account for more 40 percent of national Budget revenue. If it continuously follows the same trend in the future then the Hydro-power sector will grow 50 percent of GDP and 75 percent of Bhutanese Budget revenue by 2020 (Mitra and Jeong 2017, 382-383).

India- Bhutan Cooperation in terms of energy sector was a highly beneficial cooperation sign of international affairs of both countries. It enabled both India

and Bhutan to access energy power to increase its surplus for future production and control the energy deficient. Economically, Bhutan benefits in revenue earnings from 85% export of surplus power and 15% domestic supply to fuel the engine of domestic growth.[1] Therefore, it was completely mutually beneficial and environmentally sustainable based energy security of both countries that have become the foundation of relations today and in the foreseeable future too.

Political and Security Cooperation

It was noticed post- 1962 War China and India were struggling for power (politics) according to provided military and economic strength respectively. It was also a challenge for small states in the region to coupe up with power politics of India and China. By looking at ambition of both big powers of region, Bhutan wanted to follow neutral position and balanced the political competition of India and China by maintaining equal- distance and equal- connectivity. On the one Bhutan confirmed friendly and cooperative relations with PRC on its north then, maintained close socio-economic and cultural relations with India on its Southern part. Bhutan's bilateral relationship with both India and China was also Bhutan's interest to resolve its border disputes, enhance country's economic condition (GDP), and to create its own image in the world by following its independent policy. For this reason, Bhutan's bilateral relationship with India seems complex sometimes.

After 1998 became a vital year to maintaining status quo in the disputed area and also agreed to prohibit the use of force and to use only peaceful means for negotiations (Beena, 2019:61). The "Donglang" region which is also known as the Dokhlam region is another area of dispute between China and Bhutan.

China had been offering a package deal with Bhutan since the 1990s by making bigger territorial concessions to Bhutan in return for the smaller portion of Doklam area. But Bhutan had been declining the offer repeatedly because Doklam region has had contained the sensitive security area for India and Bhutan. On 18 June, 2017 as a part of Operation Juniper about 270 armed Indian troops with two bulldozers crossed the Sikkim border in *Doklam* to stop the Chinese troops from intruding and constructing the road. Hence, China and Bhutan's border issues as well as disputes have become always a factor behind India and Bhutan's further relations.

Significance of the Study

The study of India and Bhutan's relations is significant as it is one of the most affable relations India has had since independence. Equally beneficial economic

inter-linkages between India and Bhutan have been an important element of bilateral relationship in the past.

The proposed research will study the force of globalization brought new kinds of economic interdependence. As a result, the nature of India-Bhutan relationship has also transformed from dependency to interdependency. The priority for economic development, energy security, market and investment has changed the contour of India-Bhutan relationship in political, cultural and educational spheres.

Moreover, in the area of security, the growing clout of China in South Asia and the so called 'String of Pearl' theory urged the need for a deeper relationship between India with Bhutan. The problem of insurgency in India's Northeast and Bhutan's strategic location necessitated a more diversified relationship between the two countries in terms of peace and security. Thus, the study of India-Bhutan relationship that evolved since 1961 mainly after having hydro-power connectivity is very significant to our understanding of the changing needs of the current national interest especially, politics, economic, cultural, education and strategic interests.

Methods

The proposed research will draw insights from system theory and neo-liberal theory of international relation to understand and analyse the broad contours of India-Bhutan energy (hydro-power) relations. Neo-liberal institutionalist undertakes that states are key actors and rational actor always seeking to maximize their interests in all areas. In this competitive environment, state seeks to maximize absolute gains through cooperation. Rationality of states consider the value of co-operative environment.

The propose research would look into how interrelationship leads to mutually advantageous for both sustainable livelihood and security of the state. Importantly, the study shows an action of China as impacts factor on foreign policy of India and Bhutan within the gambit of international political system.

In order to reach the proposed hypotheses, it would also adopt inductive and deductive methods. Primary sources such as interviews, schedule and official documents will be used vastly in this research work. For this purpose, the proposed research would draw data from various governmental ministries and agencies of Bhutan and India gazettes, reports of the project and agreement signed by India and Bhutan and other publications issued time to time. Apart from this, available secondary source materials like books, periodicals, journals, newspapers, internet sources will also form a part of the secondary sources.

Notes

1. Jaldhaka Agreement Act of 1961.
2. It is a joint venture between India and Bhutan located in Chhukha Dzongkhag. In fact, this was the first biggest investment project that Bhutan had ever seen.
3. This was proved by the fact that, India Foreign Secretary in his report presented state that, "The cost per unit of electricity of these (Bhutan's Hydel Plants) is roughly half the cost of similar hydel plants in India. So, it is very cheap electricity. 95 per cent of the outcome of these plants comes to India. We are the ones who use that power. Actually, for us, it is environment friendly because if you see, for instance, the number of people displaced, in the case of Tala, it is just 14. That is all, and we have got 1020 MW. The entire production comes to us. So, actually we would like very much to enter into similar arrangements with Nepal, but it has not been possible so far." (Standing committee on external Affairs (2006-2007), Demand for Grant (2007-2008), 15 Reports, Lok Sabha Secretariat, New Delhi, April, 2007/Vaisakha, 1929 (Saka). Presented to Lok Sabha on 26 April, 2007, Laid in Rajya Sabha on 26 April, 2007. pp. 22-25.

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Crossing the Euro-American Rubicon in International Studies: Acknowledgement of Kautilya's contribution to the Realism

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Abstract:

Empirically, the evolution of international studies is traced to the Western World, dominated by European and American scholars, particularly in the post-Westphalian world order, which offers minimal recognition to non-Western scholars. The genesis of all the major schools of thought in International Studies were found in Euro-American texts. Idealism, liberalism, realism, Feminism, constructivism, and many others originate from the same intellectual avenue. With the advent of globalisation, the rise of the non-Western economic powers and the structural transformation in the international system, a gradual shift is observed in the narrative surrounding the origins of the significant school of thoughts with the terminology of non-Western theories of international relations. Moreover, the assertive nature of scholars of the non-Western world has also contributed positively in this shift. However, Western scholars' positive, receptive, and conducive environments have been instrumental in promoting and recognising non-Western scholarship. In this regard, the scholarship of Kautilya (also known as Chanakya or Vishnu Gupt) and his ancient text, the Arthashashtra, has been recognised as significant texts in shaping the principles of the realist school of thought. Thus, the paper attempts to explore the recognition of non-Western scholarship in international studies with particular reference to Kautilya in the realist world view.

Keywords: Realism, Kautilya, Arthashastra, International Studies

Introduction

Empirically, the evolution of International Studies as a discipline has largely been perceived through a Euro-Americo-centric lens, emerging in the "post-Westphalia" world order—often critically dismissed as a "West failure system." (Strange, 1999) Within this framework, various forms of interactions among nation-states unfolded. The pursuit of power, war, peace, resource control, territorial ambitions, and ideological propagation has remained central to the agendas of

sovereign actors engaged in global affairs. Notably, the "anarchical international system," (Waltz, 1979) the Hobbesian notion of "war of all against all," (Hobbes, 1951) Kautilya's *Matsya Nyaya*-law of the fish (Rangarajan, 1992), and the so-called "civilising mission" (Hirono, 2008)) are often cited as underlying causes of militarisation and arms accumulation by states seeking to ensure their survival and security in the absence of a central authority that might guarantee sovereignty—the intrinsic and non-negotiable value of the state, described as the "march of God on Earth." (Shlomo, 1972) Consequently, strategies such as alliance-building, balance of power, collective defence mechanisms, the procurement of weapons of mass destruction, and the strategic deployment of intelligence networks have become key instruments to secure a state's standing in the international system.

Overall, the influence of international organisations, universal principles, and normative ideals is frequently overshadowed by the imperatives of achieving specific political ends. Material interests have come to define power maximisation, often marginalising the ethical and moral considerations behind state actions—an approach described as "amoral realism." Academic discourse continues to be anchored in Western philosophical paradigms, often overlooking or marginalising the rich intellectual traditions rooted in indigenous thought systems. This oversight, whether deliberate or incidental, has led to the exclusion of substantial contributions from non-Western traditions—particularly those of Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

Nonetheless, the growing presence of scholars from these regions has increasingly challenged this imbalance. The spread of globalisation, the emergence of powerful non-Western economies, and systemic changes in international relations have contributed to this shift. There is now a noticeable reorientation in the historiography of major theoretical frameworks, marked by the rise of non-Western theories of international relations. Importantly, scholars from these regions have made meaningful contributions, while Western academia's openness and supportive attitudes have also played a key role in advancing and acknowledging such perspectives.

Within this context, the contributions of Kautilya (also known as Chanakya or Vishnugupta) and his seminal work *Arthashastra* have gained recognition for their foundational role in shaping realist thought. This paper focuses on the inclusion of non-Western perspectives in international studies, particularly examining Kautilya's relevance within realist interpretations. The study is organised into three parts: the first outlines the core tenets of Kautilya's realist philosophy; the second examine the reflection of Kautilya's thoughts on realists writing and the final section concludes by arguing that Kautilya's influence remains underappreciated both within India—due to internalised stigma—and outside, due to the dominance of Euro-Americo intellectual narratives.

Kautilya's Arthasastra: A Bedrock Formulations of Realpolitik

In short, commonly known as Chanakya and occasionally referred to as Vishnugupta, Kautilya served as advisor—and later Prime Minister—to Chandragupta Maurya, the founder of the Mauryan Empire. He is widely regarded as the architect behind the rise of one of ancient India's most formidable dynasties. His magnum opus, *Arthashastra*, composed around 321 BCE, is considered as a seminal work on governance, warfare, administration, and diplomacy. It provided a blueprint for maximising state capacity, maintaining national defence, and creating a welfare-oriented administration. Essentially, the text served as a comprehensive guide for rulership, aiming to enhance the kingdom's prosperity, authority, and stability.

The classic text of Kautilya, *Arthashastra* denotes the study of *Artha*, or material prosperity. Scholars have labelled this monumental work with terminologies such as 'The Science of Political Economy, 'Treatise on Polity', 'The Science of Polity', and 'The Science of Material Gain' (Boesche , 2002 & 2003; Kosambi, 1964; Rangarajan, 1992; Chande, 2004 and Singh, 1993). It has been posited that *Arthasashtra* shaped India's economic philosophy for almost 2,000 years (Tisdell, 2006) until the publication of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nation*. Moreover, *Arthasashtra's* powerful strategies to manage interstate affairs have profound implications for international relations. This treatise has been illustrated as the 'political realism' because it taught about handling the practical situation in a world full of imperfect human beings and tells what must be done rather than preaching about what should be done. Adam Watson acknowledged the *Arthasastra* as a "major theoretical analysis of international relations, an integral part of the problems of statecraft, a fusion unparallel in any extant literature" (Watson, 1992). Interestingly, Arabs knew it as a bible on "Administration of War" (Venkataraman, 2011). Similarly, Muthiah Alagappa believes that contemporary international politics in South Asia is not very different from that articulated in the *Arthashastra* (Alagappa , 1998 and Mishra, 2020).

Additionally, the classical treatise *Arthashastra*, often characterised as an "encyclopaedic work" (Zimmer, 1973; Modelski, 1964 and Kangle, 1972) is considered as one of the primary texts on statecraft (Kumar, 2024a). Significantly, Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, describes *Arthashastra* as the "science of polity" (Nehru, 1946) in his famous book *Discovery of India (Ibid)*, acknowledging Kautilya's insightful thoughts and the strategic insights that led to the establishment of one of the greatest empires of ancient India, the Mauryan Empire (Kangle, 1965). It is argued that "Kautiliya's *Arthaśāstra* is indispensable for understanding India's strategic orientation in a multipolar world system" (Liebig, 2014). Sarkar in his work in 1919 described Kautilya as a Political Realist. The textual

tradition of *Arthashastra* enforce the condition of 'law of fish'-*Matsya Nyaya* (Sarkar, 1919). Shamasastry states that "Kautilya is renowned, not only as a king-maker, but also for being the greatest Indian exponent of the art of Government, the duties of kings, ministers, and officials, and the methods of diplomacy" (Shamasastry, 1956). Kautilya, as quoted, says, "The science of politics is not in the name of the people, but in the name of the power of the state" (Kautilya, 1992).

With above descriptions, the study focuses on the significant pragmatic ideas of Kautilya namely, on State Power (*Saptanga*), External Relations (*Sadguna*), Methods to Conquer the world (convert *Vijigisu* into *Chakravartin*), and the *Raj Mandala* theory that centres on the theoretical foundation of international diplomacy. Pragmatically, the *Arthaśāstra* synthesises military, diplomatic, legal, governance or economic strategies into a coherent grand strategy aligning with the principle of raison d'état (Bozeman, 1982). The concept of grand strategy is homologous to Kautilya's synoptic idea of statecraft in which *Rajamandala* (concentric, geopolitical conception of the inter-state realm) (Bozeman, 1960)*, Saptanga* the seven organs*,* theory of power (Kajarikamal, 2023) and *Sadgunya,* the six principles of foreign policy (Mark, 1919) *(*theories covers the basic principles of state, governance, economy, law, foreign policy/diplomacy, military affairs and intelligence deliberated comprehensively (Liebig and Mishra, 2021). The ultimate objective of statecraft is to transform *Vijigishu* (Mitra and Michael, 2017) into the *Chakravartin* (ruler of the world, "world", meaning Indian subcontinent). The *Chakravartin* symbolises the hegemonic state (Mearsheimer, 2014) in the post-Westphalian State system.

The *Saptanga, "*the seven constituent elements of the state", represents the seven organs: i) *Swami,* the King; ii) *Amatya,* Council of ministers; (iii) *Janapada,* Countryside; (iv) *Durga,* Fort; (v) *Kosha,* Treasury; (vi) *Danda,* Army; and (vii) *Mitra,* Ally. Pragmatically, these seven constituent elements determined the state's capabilities, the power which is led by the prudence of the political ruler, *Swami,* the King that works for *Artha,* the material well-being, the foundation of spiritual fulfilment, *Dharma* and sensual pleasures, *Kama*.

Four critical insights can be drawn from the components and their order. First, the unique blend of material factors (economic and military strength) and non-material elements (political effectiveness of leadership, loyalty and efficiency of ministers, productivity of citizens, and morale of the armed forces) offers a nuanced measure of state's capability and will. Second, placing *Swami* (ruler) and *Amatya* (council of ministers) at the apex, Kautilya emphasises the importance of political leadership and high-level decision-making, with *Mantrashakti* (the power of counsel) surpassing both *Prabhavshakti* (the power of treasury and army) and *Utsahshakti* (the power of courage).

Third, the inclusion of *Mitra* (external ally) is particularly important, as its position in the hierarchy suggests that while external assistance can be valuable, internal balancing among the six elements should be prioritised when desired outcomes are not achieved. Fourth, a cascading effect exists- among the state factors. The *Amatya*, who perform the tasks in the *Janapada*, are chosen by the supreme *Swami* on the top. The accomplishment of projects results in material prosperity, boosting the state's political legitimacy, defensiveness, and treasury. It strengthens the army's deterrence capabilities and keeps it well-trained, increasing the state's negotiating leverage in interstate relations.

The *Sadgunyas* (six principles of foreign policy) include policies of accommodation or peace pact (*samdhi*), war (*Vigraha*), seeking shelter (*samshraya*) and dual policy (*dvaidhibhava*) guide the state's interactions with external actors. Generally, prescribed *Samdhi* for the weaker; hostility (*vigraha*) and marching or preparation (*yana*) for the stronger; and neutrality (*asana*) for equals. The categorisation of allies and adversaries emanating from geographical, material, dispositional and situational considerations sharpen strategic assessments and make policy measures effective. Additionally, the *Upaya* (*Saam, Daam, Bheda, and Danda*) cluster pivots on the four methods of politics: conciliation, gift-giving, devide, and use of force. Further, it provides a toolbox of options to be used singularly, alternatingly, or in combination with other methods, allowing rulers to manoeuvre through shifting political landscapes.

Significantly, *Kautilya's* work remains a great source of guidance to political scientists and strategists, resonating its relevance in international politics. Undoubtedly, it is argued that internal balancing, alliances, and asymmetric approaches are as old as statecraft. They are not inventions of modern strategic thought from Europe but date back to the era of Kautilya's *Arthashastra* and Vishnu Sharma's *Panchatantra (*Mohan, 2012). Moreover, to do better in diplomacy requires introspection and a deeper understanding of Kautilya and the relevance of his realism to our time (Fabian, 2012). Kautilya's theory of *Raj Mandala* holds enduring importance for contemporary foreign affairs.

The Raj Mandala: A Model of Diplomacy

The *Mandala* concept involves circles of friends and foes, with the King and his Kingdom as the central point. Fundamentally, Kautilya's realpolitik encourages disruption of symmetrical power relations. He believed that the ruler must always seek to tip the balance of power in his favour (Chandrasekaran, 2006). Kautilya, the *realist,* understood the relationship between power and maximising wealth. He sought to provide how the balance of power would shift in favour of "the-king-who-wants-to-conquer," named as the "*Vijigishu*". This policy is significantly linked

to the nature of its ties with its neighbours (Bhattacharya, 2024). He, therefore, argued for an energetic and dynamic foreign policy and states that "the welfare of a state depends on an active foreign policy" (Liebig, 2013).

Kautilya envisioned his state surrounded by concentric circles, hence the term "Mandala". It embraces twelve kings in the vicinity. For each concentric circle, he designed policy blueprints for action: 1) *Immediate Neighbors Should be Suspect at All Times*: neighbouring states were to be potential enemies, even if friendly relations prevailed in the immediate time (Alochonaa, 2014).

2) *Maintain Neighbours of Immediate Neighbours as Allies*: The state that borders the neighbour on the other side of the *Vijigishu's* kingdom should be courted and viewed as a potential ally, mainly if the *Vijigishu's* immediate neighbouring state is more assertive or equally strong (Chandrasekaran , 2006).

According to Kautilya, the *mandala* concept is "separating the king by one intervening territory, the felly and those immediately proximate the spokes. The leader should stretch himself out as the hub in the circle of constituents. For the enemy between the two, the leader and ally, becomes easy to exterminate or harass, even if strong" (Kautilya, 1992). Further, if he had created a strong ally on the other side of the "enemy's" kingdom, Rangarajan mentioned Kautilya's view: "The enemy, however strong he may be, becomes vulnerable to harassment and destruction when he is squeezed between the conqueror and his allies" (Kautilya, 1992). Although Bismarck did not exactly operate with the *Mandala* concept in mind, one can see that he strived to develop alliances and ties to enhance his strength and expand the power of German-Prussia.

Kautilya's *Raj Mandala* theory reinforces core realist framework for understanding alliances and hostility. It proposes that neighbouring states are naturally inclined toward hostility, whereas those further removed may align as collaborators. This strategic foresight in Kautilya's theory enlightens us about its enduring relevance to modern geopolitics. It anticipates later geopolitical theories, such as Mackinder's Heartland theory, by recognising the strategic significance of geographical proximity in determining alliances and rivalries (Mackinder, 1904). The *Mandala* theory reflects regional geopolitics, such as India's strategic alliances in South Asia and China's Belt and Road Initiative (Kumar, 2024).

Kautilya's approach is intensely pragmatic, emphasising the importance of realpolitik over moral or ethical considerations. For instance, the *Sadguna*, or six-fold policy, advises rulers to pursue peace, war, neutrality, or alliances based on practical benefits rather than ideological commitments. It aligns with Machiavelli's advice in *The Prince* that rulers should prioritise the state's interest over personal virtue, a hallmark of classical realism. Critics may argue that this undermines ethical

governance, but Kautilya's approach emphasises the harsh realities of maintaining sovereignty. The practicality of the *Arthashastra* can be seen in contemporary strategies like balance-of-power politics and strategic alliances, where ethical considerations often take a backseat to national interests.

Kautilya and the Realism: A Deep-rooted Resonance

Scholarly, Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, an ancient manual on governance, diplomacy, and administration, has long served as a foundational text in political thought. Though less prominent in the Western canon of International Relations (IR), a growing number of scholars acknowledges its sophistication and relevance. Its themes—strategic calculation, power maximisation, and pragmatic diplomacy—align closely with modern realist traditions. Theoretically, Hans Morgenthau's classical realism asserts that politics is governed by objective laws rooted in human nature, with power as its chief concern of state behaviour (Morgenthau, 1948). Morgenthau's claim that political actions cannot be judged by universal moral standards but by their alignment with national interest is a compelling connection with Kautilya's advice that the ruler's first and foremost duty is to make sure of the prosperity and safety of the state, even if it means setting aside the ethical norms.

In *Politics among Nations*, Morgenthau mentioned power as the central component of international relations, viewing states as primarily seeking to maximise "national interest and security". This position aligns with Kautilya's view in the *Arthashastra*, where the power search is essential for the state's survival. In the view of Boesche, Kautilya was a realist because "Kautilya's political thought, however, leaves no room for privacy and individual rights because Kautilya advocates a spy state, a system of surveillance, each watching each, that history has probably only found in the twentieth-century totalitarian states of the Soviet Union and China" (Boesche, 2002). For Kautilya, the ruler's foremost aim is to secure and expand power to ensure the state's stability and advancement. This notion aligns with Hans Morgenthau's assertion that politics is governed by objective laws rooted in human nature, notably the pursuit of power. Kautilya's assertion that "a king should always strive to augment his power and safeguard it" echoes this foundational principle (Morgenthau, 1961).

Kautilya's *Mandala Theory* which delineates alliances and adversaries based on spatial logic, finds contemporary parallels in Kenneth Waltz's structural realism, which views international relations as an anarchic system where states act to maximise their security through balancing strategies (Waltz, 1979). Additionally, Kautilya's pragmatic yet flexible ethical approach seems more realistic. For instance, he says rulers must employ deceit, diplomacy, or war depending on the situation, stressing that the state's

staying alive is more important than the people's ethics. The state centrism remains core on the Kautilya's philosophy as Waltz states that "the first and foremost duty of state is to maintain position in international system" (Ibid).

Moreover, Scholars such as Joseph Grieco have expanded on this by emphasising "relative gains," where states prioritise their advantage over rivals rather than absolute benefits (Grieco, 1988). Kautilya's advisories on forging alliances to counter immediate threats demonstrate this principle. His focus on pragmatism in diplomacy, allying with weaker states to counterbalance stronger adversaries, provides a foundational model for realist thinking in international relations. John Mearsheimer's theory of offensive realism argues that states inherently strive for power and dominance to ensure survival in an anarchic system (Mearsheimer, 2014). The *Arthashastra* recommends pre-emptive strategies—ranging from military offensives to psychological operations. Kautilya suggests inciting internal unrest in enemy territories to erode their capability, a strategy mirrored in Mearsheimer's emphasis on using power to shape the strategic environment to one's advantage. These parallels demonstrate the deep-seated connection between ancient Indian thought and contemporary realist doctrines.

The role of intelligence and espionage, as highlighted in the *Arthashastra*, finds its modern counterpart in Stephen Walt's emphasis on "threat perception" and "strategic foresight" in international politics (Walt, 1987). Kautilya underscores the use of spies for acquiring vital information and influencing decision-making within rival domains. This reliance on surveillance and foresight over idealism exemplifies pragmatic realism. In modern diplomacy, this aligns with contemporary reliance on actionable intelligence, reaffirming Kautilya's enduring relevance. Arguably, integrating Kautilya's strategies into modern discourse enhances the practical applicability of realism and provides deeper insights into contemporary geopolitical issues. Today's resurgence of great-power rivalries in a multipolar world reaffirms this realist inclination toward consolidation of authority.

Moreover, Kautilya beliefs that economic strength underpins political and military power predate but aligns with Waltz's structural realism, which views economic capability as foundational to state behavior. This interplay between ancient and modern thought reinforces the lasting applicability of Kautilyan ideas. More than a historical artifact, the *Arthashastra* serves as a foundational contribution to realist thought. While Western scholars like Morgenthau, Waltz, and Mearsheimer refined realism in their contexts, their core principles often mirror Kautilya's insights centuries earlier. The theories of *Saptanga*, *Sadguna*, conquest strategies, and *Raj Mandala* collectively form a comprehensive guide to governance and diplomacy. Though rooted in a monarchical framework, their strategic acumen provides valuable insights for today's geopolitics.

Through its study of power, diplomacy, and the complexities of governance and statecraft, the *Arthashastra* epitomises the outlook of realpolitik. It accepts the inevitability of war and places the onus on a ruler's sagacity in securing command and stability (Shahi, 2019). The *Arthashastra* demonstrates a realpolitik understanding that accepts the reality of conflict and the necessity of the ruler's mastery of wisdom to sustain power and order and expand the state's border. For example, Kautilya recommends that a ruler be flexible and ready to use ethical and unethical identities to realise political ends, which is close to Machiavellian theory (Shamasastry, 1956). In fact, the *Arthashastra* provides a systematic framework for rulers, advising them to prioritise national interest over personal morality (Kautilya, 1992*)*.

This approach parallels Niccolò Machiavelli's *The Prince*, where Machiavelli advocates for the ruler's pragmatic use of power to maintain order (Machiavelli, 1992). Scholars like Roger Boesche have acknowledged Kautilya as "the first great political realist," emphasising the text's relevance to modern political theory (Boesche, 2003). Kautilya and Machiavelli both argue for a utilitarian approach to governance, where the ruler's actions are dictated by necessity rather than morality. While Machiavelli's emphasis on fear as a political tool aligns with Kautilya's notion of *danda* (coercion), the latter integrates moral dimensions like *dharma* to ensure long-term stability. Scholars like P. Olivelle argue that Kautilya's realism is more nuanced, balancing ethical considerations with pragmatic governance (Olivelle, 2013).

Furthermore, the *Arthashastra* emphasis on intelligence and espionage as a governance tool underscores the realpolitik character of its recommendations (Shahi, 2019). Empirically, grasping how Kautilyan truths apply to today's political dilemmas is critical for politicians making sense of a multipolar world rife with competition and diplomatic choreography. Further, Zimmer described *Arthashastra* as "timeless laws of politics, economy, diplomacy, and war" (Zimmer, 1973). According to Boesche, "Kautilya offers a work of genius in matters of foreign policy and warfare, including key principles of international relations from a realist perspective and a discussion of when an army must use cruel violence and when it is more advantageous to be humane" (Boesche, 2002).

Kautilya advocacy for using intelligence gathering, strategic trickery, and pre-emptive attacks to mitigate potential dangers aligns with Thomas Hobbes' concept of the *Leviathan*, where a formidable sovereign is necessary to avert chaos. Furthermore, Kautilya's emphasis on internal security and external protection resonates with Hobbes' argument for a robust state to guarantee safety and order (Hobbes, 2006). Similarly, for John Mearsheimer, "the powerful states will always dominate weaker ones, regardless of ethical considerations" (Mearsheimer, 2014), a

view that resonates with Kautilya's assertion that "the king shall lose no opportunity for acquiring power" (Kautilya, 1992). It parallels the concept of the self-interested state, which is pivotal in both Kautilya's thought and modern realism.

While its ethical implications warrant scrutiny, the *Arthashastra's* emphasis on pragmatism and strategic foresight continues to influence modern political thought and practice. Boesche discusses *Arthashastra's* application in contemporary geopolitics and identifies parallels between Kautilya's ideas and those of Machiavelli and Hobbes (Boesche, 2002). Sharma examines the relevance of Kautilya's strategic principles for modern diplomacy, addressing issues such as economic competition, coalition politics, and strategic partnerships (Sharma, 2009). It prefigures modern balance-of-power dynamics, as discussed by realists like Henry Kissinger in *Diplomacy* (Kissinger, 1994).

Moreover, Kautilya's work demonstrates the strategic interplay between moral flexibility and strategic calculation in pursuing national interests. As Robert Gilpin states, "Nations do not choose between good and evil; they choose between competing interests" (Gilpin, 1986). Kautilya famously notes, "There is some wisdom in the pragmatism of the statesman, who acts as per the realities of power and opportunity" (Kautilya, 1992). This perspective highlights the necessity of moral ambivalence in politics and reinforces the idea that ethical considerations are subordinate to the imperatives of power and security.

However, Kautilya's framework draws criticism when applied to the intricacies of modern diplomacy. Though it highlights the strategic value of manipulation and calculated deceit, such tactics may foster a worldview that erodes mutual trust. As Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye highlighted in their writing on complex interdependence, the contemporary global landscape requires collaboration and mutual benefit rather than mere self-interest (Keohane & Nye, 1977). Thus, while Kautilya's contributions are invaluable in articulating the foundations of realpolitik, they often fall short when addressing the intricate interdependencies that characterise today's international relations (Jindal, 2019).

Further, critics argue that the *Arthashastra's* focus on power and pragmatism can lead to unethical governance, where the ends justify the means. However, Kautilya also emphasises the welfare of the people (*Yogakshema*) as the goal of statecraft, suggesting a nuanced balance between pragmatism and ethical responsibility (Sen, 2005). According to Mehta, it may persist in contemporary realism, where states grapple with balancing ethical diplomacy and strategic imperatives (Mehta, 1997).

The global rise of India as an economic, military, and geopolitical power has sparked scholarly discussions about how Indian thinkers have approached realpolitik in a distinctly non-Western context. Scholars such as Mitra and Liebig

argue that the *Arthashāstra* offers profound insights into India's grand strategy, particularly in navigating relations with other great powers, managing regional conflicts, and asserting its interests in a competitive world order. Kautilya's strategic teachings on alliances, diplomacy, and warfare remain highly relevant for Indian foreign policy today. India seeks to balance relations with powers like the United States, China, and Russia (Mitra & Liebig, 2016).

A key theme is the constructive impact of cross-cultural engagement in international relations theory. The study suggests that incorporating Kautilya's perspectives enhances and deepens our grasp of global political dynamics. Such dialogue revitalises realism and encourages scholars and policymakers to consider a broader range of strategies for conflict resolution and diplomacy (Huntington, 1996). Kautilya's *Arthashastra* transcends its historical origins, standing as a seminal text that continues to illuminate the contours of contemporary realist thought. While thinkers like Morgenthau, Waltz, and Mearsheimer have shaped realism within Western paradigms, many of their core ideas find striking resonance in Kautilya's ancient insights. The *Arthashastra's* inferential legacy serves as a bridge between Eastern and Western traditions, affirming the timeless relevance of Kautilya's vision in understanding power dynamics, strategic governance, and the complexities of international affair.

Conclusion

Kautilya's *Arthashastra* is not only a cornerstone of ancient Indian political thought but also a critical and objective text for universally understanding the basic foundations of realism. Its insights into power dynamics and statecraft influence modern governance and diplomacy in interstate and international relationships. The *Arthashastra* offers a rich comparative analysis with contemporary theories of realism, asserting the importance of the state's power, the state's self-interest, and pragmatic strategies in political affairs. The *Arthashastra* is an essential observation of the nature of governance and international relations, reflecting a timeless understanding of human behaviour and state interaction. Kautilya's insights align significantly with the contemporary realist framework. Nevertheless, one may argue that Kautilya's influence remains underappreciated both within India—due to internalised stigma of often being identified as conservatives/right wing—and outside, due to the dominance of Euro-Americo intellectual narratives.

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Unveiling Vulnerabilities: Gender Dimensions in Natural Disasters

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Abstract

Individuals from diverse age groups and socioeconomic backgrounds possess unique vulnerabilities that influence their responses to disasters and their capacity to bounce back. Women and girls are especially vulnerable to environmental disasters due to sociocultural reasons.Because they handle unpaid tasks like supplying food, water, and care for households, women and girls are disproportionately burdened during most disasters. Women are particularly vulnerable to a variety of risks when it comes to agricultural employment . However, women are also given the chance to be change agents by the same destructive forces that bring about catastrophes. In the aftermath of a disaster, for instance, programmes that acknowledge and address women's needs and include them as equal partners in the rebuilding process might help combat long-standing biases against them.Effective disaster risk management heavily depends on gender, which is described as the socially created roles, attitudes, and qualities associated with a person's assigned sex at birth. Building resilient communities and countries requires an understanding of the gender dimensions and implications of natural disasters and climate change.

This paper anlyses the vulnerabilities that women experience in the context of natural disasters and this further explores the necessity of gender mainstreaming in diasaster mangemnt.

Key words: gender, vulnerability, disaster, resilience,rehabilitation, disaster risk reduction.

Diverse factors, including social, economic, ethnic, cultural, and physiological elements, affect how women, men, girls, and boys respond to disasters and how involved they are in disaster management operations. Women frequently experience marginalisation in the creation of policies and decision-making processes, despite their important roles as first respondents and contributors to catastrophe risk reduction and recovery. Those who are displaced and in need of aid are primarily women, and children are disproportionately impacted by crisis situations. As

hazards associated with climate change increase, it is imperative to understand the relationship between gender and disasters. Sadly, national governments and international organisations routinely ignore the leadership contributions that women provide to their communities.

Women must be included at all stages of disaster and climate risk management because they are essential to a society's ability to bounce back. They are invaluable in understanding the needs of the community and are essential to relief and rehabilitation efforts. Holding executive roles in non-governmental organisations also enables women to participate in official disaster relief procedures. Biological disparities and, more importantly, social position and uneven power relations are the reasons behind women's vulnerability to natural catastrophes and the impacts of climate change. The need to redress these disparities is highlighted by higher rates of catastrophe mortality among women, especially in countries where women's rights are restricted. The inclusion of women in disaster and climate risk management is vital, as they play a critical role in a society's capacity to recover. . In addition to being crucial to relief and rehabilitation operations, they are helping to comprehend the needs of the community. Women who have executive positions in non-governmental groups can also engage in formal disaster relief protocols. Women are particularly vulnerable to natural disasters and the effects of climate change due to biological differences. Higher rates of disaster mortality among women, particularly in nations where women's rights are curtailed, emphasise the need to address these discrepancies.

Planning for disaster and climate risk management requires a holistic strategy that includes age- and gender-based methods to address capacities and vulnerabilities. The necessity for gender-inclusive measures in disaster preparedness, response, and recovery activities is highlighted by the challenges and advancements at the national, local, and international levels.

According to vulnerability theory (Blaikei et al., 1994; Hewitt, 1997), people's susceptibility to hazards is influenced by social structures that involve gender, race, and class disparities. According to Blaikei et al. (1994), disasters are thought to be the product of intricate social, political, and economic dynamics that expose some populations to dangerous situations. According to Blaikei et al. (2004) and Fordham (1998), vulnerability is characterised by traits that affect a person's or a group's ability to foresee, deal with, resist, and recover from the effects of natural hazards. In order to identify vulnerable groups, categories including age, class, ethnicity, gender, and disability are employed, noting that different vulnerabilities are influenced by different socio-cultural settings and types of hazards.

Women from lower socio-economic origins, for example, are frequently seen to be particularly vulnerable. According to vulnerability theorists, disasters

happen when vulnerable people are exposed to risks, and human agency plays a significant role in determining how catastrophes turn out (Cannon, 1994). Vulnerability is seen as a dynamic phenomena that is susceptible to change throughout time within a gendered framework. In order to address vulnerability, measures to counteract societal factors that influence vulnerable groups' sensitivity to risks and harm must be identified. Vulnerability highlights two crucial aspects in the context of gender studies and disasters: the gendered character of catastrophes themselves and the gendered experiences of individuals during such occurrences. Within a gender framework, a modern viewpoint stresses the methodical acknowledgment of various identities. The fundamental factor that determines needs, hazards, or vulnerabilities before, during, and after a humanitarian crisis or disaster is gender. According to Enarson et al. (2007), a gender perspective sees catastrophes as a "intersecting dimension of human life," understanding that the idea of disaster changes over time to include lived experiences and a continual spectrum of social processes. Intersectionality offers a sophisticated framework for study, collaboration, and conversation starters across different sectors engaged in disaster preparation, response, and assessment.However, because the categories of a gender-based social science theory of catastrophes can become burdened by their internal structures, there are difficulties in putting them into practice.

For example, the concept of health, which was formerly limited to clinical settings, is changing. It is moving into a more expansive social setting where people are resisting the idea of health being just one distinct, quantifiable aspect of who they are. As health and catastrophe intersectionality are linked, the importance of interconnection in health is highlighted. This viewpoint highlights the necessity of approaching health from a gender perspective and acknowledges the reasons for it.

Women are oppressed because of prevailing patriarchal ideals, according to feminist philosophy. This ideology takes many forms, including as aggression, economic domination, and social structures. Its foundation is the unequal power relations between men and women. According to Gramsci (as cited in Connell, 2005), hegemony emphasises the male supremacy and female subordination in the intellectual creation of gender. Gender inequality is reinforced by patriarchal hegemony, which goes beyond violence and includes institutional structures such as the state, media, religion, schools, and homes (Jayawardena & de Alwis, 1996).Beginning with Mary Wollstonecraft, liberal feminism promotes gender equality in terms of equal possibilities for men and women, regardless of biological distinctions. This strategy, criticised for concentrating solely on the legal dimensions of patriarchy, aims to enact legislative changes for equality in the political, economic, and social domains.Marxist feminism places the blame for gender-based discrimination on the capitalist class structure and private property. To completely

destroy patriarchy, radical feminism need a revolution in consciousness. It is not as applicable in understanding women's vulnerabilities, even though it offers insightful information.Marxist, radical, and third-world feminisms are combined with parts of socialist feminism to examine the relationship between capitalism and patriarchy.

It challenges the idea that economic oppression is secondary by highlighting the connections between different systems of dominance.Postcolonial and Third World feminisms emerged in response to criticisms of feminism as Western-centric, highlighting the range of experiences faced by women around the world. These viewpoints challenge Western conceptions of indigenous women and stress the significance of taking economical, cultural, and ideological factors into account while attempting to comprehend women's reality (Mohanty, 1988). These theoretical frameworks offer prisms through which gender dynamics and vulnerabilities can be viewed, supporting an all-encompassing strategy for disaster and climate risk management.

Global Disaster Reduction Strategies for Women

Gender equality and women's empowerment are actively promoted by numerous national, regional, and international policy frameworks in the context of disaster risk reduction.Gender equality and women's empowerment are essential preconditions for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), according to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. All people, regardless of gender, should be able to equally enjoy their rights and opportunities while sharing responsibilities in the society that these 17 goals and 169 targets seek to establish. In order to eradicate prejudice and empower women in all fields, Goal 5 primarily addresses gender equality and women's empowerment.

International agreements about climate change have changed over time to recognize the critical connection between women's empowerment, gender equality, and successful climate action. International collaboration was established in 1992 with the launch of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The importance of women's empowerment and gender equality in the battle against climate change is acknowledged clearly in the 2015 Paris Agreement. The international community has placed more emphasis on the connections between climate change, disaster risk reduction (DRR), and sustainable development as climate-related disasters worsen. Women's contributions to climate change adaptation and mitigation were further cemented at COP26 in 2021, when further action on climate change was advocated for in order to benefit women locally, nationally, and globally.Understanding disaster risk, bolstering governance,

investing in reduction for resilience, and improving preparedness are given top priority in the 'Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030,' which was adopted in 2015. In order to reduce and mitigate the risk of disaster, this framework highlights the vital roles that women, young people, people with disabilities, and enterprises may play. Women must be empowered to prepare for and recover from disasters, including finding alternative sources of income after the event, through gender-sensitive policies and capacity-building initiatives.

Other significant global advancements concerning gender and disaster risk reduction are listed chronologically below. These include resolutions passed at the 56th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in 2012, particularly the one on "Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Natural Disasters." "Achieving gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls in climate change, environment, and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes" was the theme of the 66th CSW meeting, which was held in March 2022.

Furthermore, the framework of gender-inclusive disaster risk reduction and climate change policies is further strengthened by a number of international instruments, including the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development 2015, the Agenda for Humanity of the World Humanitarian Summit 2016, the New Urban Agenda of Habitat III 2016, and the General Recommendation No. 37 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 2018. These agreements urge comprehensive and cooperative efforts for sustainable development by acknowledging the interwoven concerns of disaster risk reduction, climate change, and gender. All tiers of governance must implement disaster risk management (DRM) with a rights-based approach to gender. Although a number of UN agencies and international organisations have made an attempt to incorporate gender considerations into their policies, national initiatives have fallen short, especially when it comes to Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) programmes. Gender was only included in a small number of countries' HFA plans, and little progress has been made. Even with guidelines such as UNISDR's "Making Disaster Risk Reduction Gender-Sensitive," a lot of country policies prioritise catastrophe response over management.

There are few outliers, such as India, where rules and guidelines for disaster management acknowledge the contribution of women in both preparation and reaction. Gender equality in post-disaster activities is also emphasised in Japan's Basic Guidelines for Reconstruction. CEPREDENAC in Central America is notable on a regional scale for its Disaster Risk Reduction strategy collaboration with grassroots women's organisations. But there are still gaps, as the UNDP has pointed out with regard to the island communities in the Caribbean and Pacific.Even while

women actively participate in DRM at the grassroots level, their contributions are frequently overlooked. Regional women's civil society organisations feel left out of national disaster planning and risk reduction initiatives. Although there is a gap between the work that women do and their inclusion in legislation and decision-making processes, they are actively involved in DRM efforts worldwide. Mauritania's first female mayor is one example of a woman spearheading DRM initiatives at the local level; she took part in the "Making Cities Resilient Campaign." But as Mauritania (2013) noted, the lack of women's organisations on national DRR platforms is indicative of a larger pattern.Although women are crucial to DRM, it can be difficult to incorporate their contributions into the decision-making process. Following a disaster, women's activities as professional service providers, community volunteers, and sources of solidarity typically result in increased domestic workloads for them. Initiatives such as the work of Mahila Milan in Cuttack, India, show how women's participation in risk assessment and urban planning may be beneficial.

In addition to include women in the development process, disaster and climate risk management policies and programmes must also guarantee that women are well informed about them. A Huairou Commission poll revealed a divide that highlights the need for improved awareness and communication.In summary, despite women's active participation in DRM, it is still difficult for them to be effectively integrated into decision-making processes. Closing this disparity is critical to creating more resilient communities and attaining gender parity in the management of climate and disaster risks.

A Gender Analysis of the Impact of Disasters: Tsunamis in Japan and India

When earthquakes and a tsunami slammed the Tohoku region on March 11, 2011, Japan was left in the grips of a catastrophic situation. The calamity was most severe in this area, which is primarily rural and has deeply ingrained traditional gender roles. As of January 11, 2012, the East Japan Disaster had claimed 15,844 lives, with 3,450 people remaining unaccounted for. Remarkably, 54% of the deaths in the hardest-hit regions were women.Survivors took refuge in evacuation centres set up in public buildings such as schools after the incident.

The sheer scope of the tragedy made it difficult for the government, businesses, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to supply the necessary resources. It took more than nine months to close all 2,417 evacuation centres, which housed a total of 468,653 individuals. It became clear how differently men and women operated the government's evacuation centres during the first response.The Fukushima coastal region was also impacted by the earthquakes and tsunami, which resulted in damage to the nuclear power plants and prompted evacuations

because of radioactive fallout. More evacuations from nearby neighbourhoods outside the approved zone were prompted by concerns about potential health effects. The problem of nuclear radiation increased stress levels and increased the impacted population's anxieties.

Despite having experienced major earthquakes in the previous 20 years, including the 2004 Niigata Chuetsu earthquake and the 1995 Hanshin/Awaji earthquake, gender was not taken into account when disaster preparation and response were carried out in Japan. Similar gender-related concerns emerged in the wake of the East Japan Disaster, despite certain government reforms and advocacy from women's rights groups. This was due to a failure to fully reflect the lessons learned from previous disasters.Japan's national gender equality and disaster prevention plans demonstrate the great progress the country has made in bringing a gender viewpoint into disaster planning. This paper presents a critical analysis of gender and catastrophe policies and practices in Japan, emphasising both achievements and shortcomings.

National Plans and Gender Inclusion: Gender issues have been incorporated into disaster planning since the establishment of the Basic Plan for Disaster Prevention (2005) and the Third Basic Plan for Gender Equality (2010). Notably, the disaster prevention strategy has recently undergone changes that show a dedication to meeting the unique requirements of women. Examples of these changes include the provision of facilities for changing clothes and feeding infants and the encouragement of gender diversity in management teams at evacuation centres.

Although the Cabinet Office's Gender Equality Bureau has made excellent efforts, there are still issues at the local level. Insufficient power of the Gender Equality Bureau and poor coordination amongst government branches are blamed for the poor execution of central government policy instructions. Gender equality is notably underrepresented in local disaster prevention councils due to the devolution of authority to local governments, which further impedes the inclusion of gender issues in disaster prevention planning. During the crisis, female public servants, who were already under stress due to previous workforce reductions, had more difficulties. Their job was increased by traditional gender role assumptions, which required women to cook meals for evacuees in addition to their regular responsibilities. Women's centres were essential in meeting both practical and emotional needs, but budget cuts have forced them to close and provide fewer services, which is indicative of a general loss of interest in gender issues among the general public and authorities.

Although Japan has made great attempts to include a gender perspective in disaster preparation, there are still difficulties, especially at the local level. In order

to provide a more inclusive and successful approach to gender-sensitive disaster planning and response, it is imperative that government branches strengthen their coordination, the Gender Equality Bureau be given greater authority, and the decrease of community-based organisations be addressed.After the incidents at the Fukushima nuclear power facilities, the evacuation from the area had a significant impact on a number of different population categories. Altogether 62,674 people had evacuated Fukushima for other prefectures as of February 23, 2012. A sizable portion of the evacuees were women who fled with their kids out of fear for the possible health repercussions of radiation. It's interesting to note that in several situations, husbands continued to work in Fukushima, which resulted in separations or divorces because of disagreements over the effects of radiation. (Tanaka, Y., Ishiwatari, M., & Nonoguchi, A)

About half of the households in Yamagata, the prefecture that took in the most evacuees, had single parents, according to a poll done there. Of these, about half were planning to stay in Yamagata for a year or longer. Pregnant women and children were reportedly entitled to expedited radiation screening and higher compensation amounts. Young women did, however, voice concerns about possible discrimination in marriage and the effects of radiation on reproductive health. Regrettably, there was a dearth of focused health or counselling programmes that addressed these issues.(Tanaka, Y., Ishiwatari, M., & Nonoguchi, A)

Women with impairments were not exempt from concerns. As a result of things like inadequate wheelchair access, psychological stress, and a lack of awareness of their needs, around half of the disabled people the Japan Disability Forum spoke with in Minami-Souma City were forced to return home from evacuation centres in less than three weeks. In the impacted area, women who were born abroad experienced particular difficulties. The categories were trainees, students, and foreigners married to Japanese males. There were many language obstacles, thus in response, organisations like the Multi Language Centre FACIL produced radio services and programmes in Tagalog, Chinese, Thai, Spanish, and Korean, among other languages. Employment also became an issue; nevertheless, with the help of training organised by the Japan Association for Refugees, several immigrant women were able to effectively shift into employment as care assistants.(Tanaka, Y., Ishiwatari, M., & Nonoguchi, A)

Positive results emerged throughout the post-disaster reconstruction phase, despite the difficulties. At the local and national levels, new networks and associations for women emerged, demonstrating the resiliency and unity of those impacted. Advocates for gender mainstreaming in the reconstruction process and catastrophe prevention in the future founded the 'Gender Equality and Catastrophe Reconstruction Network' and 'Rise Together: Women's Network for East Japan

Disaster'. These initiatives attempted to encourage inclusive recovery and cater to the unique needs of women.

In order to prevent favouring one location over another and forcing the same designs for disaster recovery housing on all the towns, the local administration, with limited resources in terms of staff, time, and money, often creates one standard plan, or onesize-fits-all blueprints. Tripartite cooperation between the local government, a committee that actively includes women, and outside experts, however, can result in inclusive and gender-responsive recovery processes that better meet the unique needs of the community and strengthen the social fabric, creating a more sustainable society.

Local women are good at fostering agreement because they pay close attention to people's individual needs, situation-specific interests, and values. Given that women in Kitakami had a history of cooperating to support the community's revolving fund and agricultural labour, using iv. women's power for neighbourhood consultation during the aftermath of the disaster further enhanced their active roles, empowering them to elevate the voices of people—especially women—and allow them to fully participate in decision-making processes, thereby fostering their own agency and leadership. They started a multifunctional women's centre and are actively involved in local product marketing and entrepreneurship.

The residents of Kitakami continued to talk until they came to a complete consensus despite the lengthy inclusive consultation procedure. Reconstruction housing is typically distributed by lottery by the local government, and individuals are dispersed haphazardly throughout the relocation housing, losing their original neighbours, relatives, and friends. This frequently results in a decline in health and mental well-being and may even be fatal. Everyone in Kitakami was glad and content since the question of who gets to live where was settled by consensus after much debate. For inclusive and long-lasting disaster recovery, local government's choice to assign planning and implementation responsibility to local communities—particularly women's groups—is essential.

When local government takes a proactive approach to gender and diversity, it creates an atmosphere that supports the agency and leadership of women and other marginalised groups. This is essential for bringing about social change and creating more equitable and long-lasting social structures.

Many natural calamities, such as the yearly monsoon floods, recurrent droughts, earthquakes, and cyclones, can strike India. Significant natural disasters have struck the nation, including the Bhopal gas tragedy (1984), the Latur earthquake (1993), the Orissa super-cyclone (1999), the Bhuj earthquake (2001) and the tsunami (2004). While each of these calamities has had a unique effect, they are all associated with overt gendered consequences.

Survivors of tsunami from the area list a number of reasons why women die at a higher rate than men. Many men were fishing at sea when the tsunami struck, and women were waiting close to the shorelines for the boats to return with the catch, which they would then gather, clean, and transport to the market to be sold. Women lost valuable time trying to gather their elderly and children before trying to run for their lives when the waves hit.

Women were beaten to death by powerful waves, and they lacked the strength to protect themselves by holding onto a child and a branch or other object. Despite the fact that women (particularly pregnant women) were disadvantaged by biological differences, sociocultural norms had a major role in determining a person's ability to live. Even if they may have learned to swim as youngsters, many of the women and girls who reside in coastal areas do not continue to practise it (Murthy, 2005). Women's long hair and the saree, which restrict movement quickly as the situation required, also turned into death traps for them due to the gendered dress and hair codes (NAWO 2006).

Many people also drowned as a result of this, or became entangled in the palm trees and prickly shrubs. Conversations with women in Sonan Kuppam, Cuddalore, disclosed that the waves might be so strong in certain places that they would even pull women's garments off. Due to an ingrained feeling of honour and shame, some people declined to step into the rescue boats while nude. Women declined the offer of men's shirts to cover their bodies, citing underlying issues of gender-based abuse and the ramifications for their post-survival, even though several women claimed that men had asked them to let go of their feelings of shame.

According to SWASTI (2007), a research conducted on the susceptibility of coastal populations to HIV/AIDS in areas impacted by the tsunami revealed that certain individuals who were saved by men were requested to perform sexual favours in exchange. In many instances, women complied with these requests out of a sense of duty. As a result of their efforts to save the sick, elderly, and children during the tsunami, many women perished. Reports state that the lifeless bodies of elderly people and young children were discovered mixed in with the bodies of numerous women (UNIFEM, 2005). When mothers witnessed their children being swept away by the fury of the waves, they sometimes gave themselves up to the seas.

These fatalities, as well as the deaths of their offspring, may have been caused by the prevalent connection of women with motherhood and the internalised values that place nearly all the burden of ensuring the survival of children on women. Although it has been noted that males who were in the deep sea were spared the violent waves of the tsunami that slammed onto the coast, field research shows that more women than men perished even in locations where both sexes were present. The much more vulnerable groups of widows and female heads of homes include

many of the women who have lived to this day. Due to unequal pay, a reduced social status, and restrictions on their mobility imposed by both their jobs as carers for their child and sociocultural conventions, they suffer poverty more severely than males who are similarly impacted (widowers). It is disproportionately difficult for women in all professions to develop their own coping mechanisms in order to provide for their families' requirements as a result of the vast number of men who are rendered idle by bad catches and lost workdays. Women with spouses incapacitated by the Tsunami have de facto taken on the role as de facto household supporters, according to conversations conducted with women in Keechankuppam, Nagapattinam.

Women who had previously worked as unpaid domestic helpers in fishing towns found it challenging to get used to carrying heavy loads, going great distances to sell fish, and dealing with discrimination based solely on their gender in marketplaces. (Chaman Pincha, 2008) The survey also revealed that widows and single women in households are denied their own identities, which is a significant finding. This resulted in the marginalisation of older men and women, widows without children, and single women, particularly when it came to the intrahousehold distribution of food relief and money for unforeseen bills. The situation appears to be the same in the districts of Kanyakumari, where help was facilitated by religious institutions, as well as in Nagapattinam and Cuddalore, where traditional panchayats are powerful. (Chaman Pincha, 2008)

Other members of the coastal sector were severely disadvantaged as a result of caste and occupation-based discrimination, socio-cultural marginalisation, and the policy makers' initial, virtually exclusive focus on the fishing community. Women who belonged to these communities, as well as Dalits and Irulas in general, borne a disproportionate share of this discrimination. They were not granted access to relief benefits until the government went on to grant these benefits to all impacted residents of the coastal districts. The Aravani population became invisible in the relief, rehabilitation, and reconstruction agenda due to pre-tsunami socio-cultural factors and policy-induced discrimination. There were no official records of the group's losses and deaths, or of the stress and neglect they suffered as a result. Their systematic exclusion from post-disaster planning exercises and the dominant gender discourse made them even more vulnerable.

Gender differences were discovered in Tamil Nadu following the tsunami in relation to mortality, availability of resources for rehabilitation and aid, living conditions in makeshift shelters, violence against women, and general health effects. Several socially built vulnerabilities account for the disproportionate effect experienced by women.In the worst-affected places, women perished at a higher rate than men, according to the tsunami's first effects. Social variables—specifically,

the gendered division of labor—contributed significantly, even if biological characteristics like muscle mass and running speed also play a part. While waiting at home for their fishing husbands, women suffered more because it was difficult for them to gather children and the elderly, they were not good swimmers, and wearing traditional clothing like saris made things worse.

Women have trouble obtaining aid supplies in the aftermath of the tsunami. Government regulations that limited assistance to the "head of household," usually a male, made women more vulnerable. Relief attempts failed to take into account the varied needs of women in various circumstances, and unmarried, widowed, and divorced women were frequently ignored.Gender disparities were also brought to light by the allocation of humanitarian resources, which included permanent housing and ex gratia cash. Women had difficulty getting loans, and their lack of financial decision-making authority resulted in unequal allocation of money within households. Women's long-term security and ownership were not taken into account in policies intended to reconstruct permanent homes.

Women's livelihood rehabilitation was mostly disregarded in favour of reestablishing productive assets controlled by men. The economic activities of women prior to the tsunami, like managing small companies, were disregarded. Gender perspectives were absent from rehabilitation programmes, and women encountered barriers in training programme attendance and obtaining logistical help for income-generating endeavours.Women were disproportionately affected by the unsanitary, unsafe, and inadequately lit conditions in the temporary shelters. The limited area resulted in problems with gender-based violence, and the general living circumstances disregarded the safety and cultural expectations of women.

The gendered effects of Indian disasters, especially the tsunami in Tamil Nadu, underscore the necessity of holistic and gender-aware approaches to disaster relief, preparation, and recovery. Ensuring that those who are most vulnerable—women in particular—receive sufficient support in the wake of catastrophes requires addressing socially constructed vulnerabilities and advocating equitable policies. Tamil Nadu was hit by the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami, which highlighted issues unique to certain genders. The increased death rate among women was caused by cultural taboos and poor swimming skills. A number of issues that women confront were brought to light by the aftermath, including widowhood, orphaned daughters, physical and sexual assaults, lack of legal support, insecurity in transitional shelters, growing family responsibilities, and an increase in domestic violence.

India has created laws and procedures, such as the Disaster Management Act of 2005, in reaction to these calamities. These include the establishment of organisations like the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and a focus on the involvement of women in disaster management. Poor women are

identified as a vulnerable group under the National Policy on Disaster Management, which also suggests that they join disaster response teams.International and national guidelines emphasise the significance of addressing women's special needs, empowering them, and developing gender-sensitive disaster programming. These days, gender, psychosocial support, and working with vulnerable groups are all covered in disaster management courses in India.There are plans to add more women to the NDRF, which represents a major step towards gender inclusivity in disaster response. Almost 100 women were recently inducted.India's emphasis on gender equality and the empowerment of women to accomplish sustainable development goals is in line with global ideas when it comes to disaster management. Given the particular difficulties that women encounter during emergencies, women's empowerment is viewed as essential to disaster response and recovery.

Conclusion

Long-term, sustainable outcomes require encouraging and rewarding women's significant engagement in disaster and climate risk reduction. Women should be actively involved in preventative, planning, decision-making, and implementation activities by governments and international humanitarian players. Encouraging women's civil society organisations to get involved is crucial to reversing the historical exclusion of women from decision-making.Women should be included in efforts beyond just inviting them to meetings; instead, systems should be put in place to guarantee their involvement is relevant and comfortable. It is essential to locate and assist active women's networks and associations in the neighbourhood. Understanding that involving women takes time, especially in the aftermath of a disaster, it is more likely to be successful to concentrate on longer-term projects related to risk reduction and recovery activities.

Organisations should adhere to established criteria, such as the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Operational criteria on the Protection of Persons in Situations of Natural Disasters, to guarantee a rights-based approach to disaster preparedness, response, and recovery. This covers safeguards for life, safety, bodily integrity, relationships with family, food, health, shelter, education, housing, land, property, means of subsistence, documentation, mobility, relationships with family, expression, opinion, and elections.Policies and practices related to disaster risk management (DRM) must take gender realities into consideration. By incorporating a gender-sensitive approach into every stage of DRM, policies and programmes are created that cater to the unique requirements of both men and women and utilise their priceless abilities.

Planning and policy making need the collection and maintenance of gender-disaggregated data. To achieve successful risk reduction, governments and

organisations involved in disaster and climate risk management should give priority to collecting data broken down by important characteristics such as age and sex. It is necessary to conduct more study on gender and climate and catastrophe risk management. More gender-based analysis is needed in risk reporting, assessments, and evaluations, even if there has been an increase in reporting on gender and natural disasters.This entails taking into account the unique capacities, vulnerabilities, and resources of women, men, kids, and other groups within communities.It is crucial to incorporate a gender-sensitive approach into important policies and programmes, including as those pertaining to the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA), development strategies, plans for managing climate risk, and initiatives to eradicate poverty. By taking an all-encompassing approach, threats to individuals, communities, and nations will be greatly reduced.

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IJPAIR: Aims and Scope

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If the name of the author or the date appear as part of the narrative, cite only missing information in parentheses. For example,

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Encyclopaedia Britannica (2007)

Specific Parts of a Source

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(Srinivasan, Grover & Bhardwaj 2005: 5183-88)

Journal Article: where the page numbering continues from issue to issue

Bajpai, Kanti (2005): "Where Are India and US Heading?," *Economic and Political Weekly*, XL(41), August 6: 3577-81.

Perkovich, George (2005): "Faulty Promises: The US-India Nuclear Deal," *Policy Outlook,* 34(4), September: 18-20.

Newspaper Article

Rappai, M.V. (1998): "China: a status quo nuclear power," *The Hindu,* 18 June.

Book

Jalan, Bimal (1991): *India's Economic Crisis,* New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Article or Chapter in an edited Volume/Book

Thomas, A. M. (2005): "India and Southeast Asia: The Look East Policy in Perspective," in Rajan Harshe and K.M. Seethi (eds.), *Engaging with the World: Critical Reflections on India's Foreign Policy,* New Delhi: Orient Longman.

Website:

"President Meets with Displaced Workers in Town Hall Meeting," at http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/12/print/20011204-17.html

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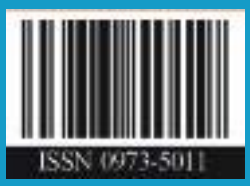
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