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Need to revive Iran-India energy ties

With the recent report¹ of two American companies – Chevron and ExxonMobil – dropping out of the race for the long-struggling TAPI gas pipeline project, on the grounds that Ashkabad had refused to give them equity stakes in the fields supplying the gas in exchange for funds for constructing the pipeline, has put the project in further doubt. Even though two other firms – France's Total and Malaysia's Petronas – have offered to step in without demanding any stakes in Turkmenistan's gas fields, at best, the project will be delayed for several months.

Interestingly, an earlier report had also said that Pakistan was now mulling over an alternative proposal whereby it would buy liquefied gas (LNG) from Iran, in lieu of natural gas through the suffering IPI pipeline project. Although Iran has been aspiring to build a liquefaction facility since the 1970s, it has not been successful and has had to cancel or delay LNG projects because of the US-EU sanctions regime that has made it impossible to obtain financing and to acquire the requisite technology for the same. As a result, Iran is now looking at the possibility of exporting natural gas to Oman, which has two liquefaction facilities, from where the Iranian gas could be converted to LNG and then exported to Pakistan. The report said that Pakistani officials were planning to hold negotiations with Iranian counterparts at an upcoming meeting.

The fact that Oman and Iran have reportedly finalised a “heads of agreement” whereby Iran will export 20 million cubic meters per day (mcmd) of gas to Oman through a pipeline over 25 years from 2015, does make the Pakistani proposal viable. Significantly, at the time the agreement was being negotiated a year ago, Oman had stated that approximately 50 per cent of the gas could be allotted for export to other markets including Japan, South Korea and India.

Of all the proposals that have been making the rounds over the last few decades, the latter appears to be the most feasible as it would resolve India's security concerns associated with the IPI and TAPI projects, and would avoid the unstable and insecure route transiting Afghanistan and Pakistan. However, the success of the under-sea pipeline from Oman would be contingent upon a pipeline between Iran and Oman being constructed. Although an Iran-Oman gas agreement has been doing the rounds since 2007 and a MoU was signed in 2013, as of now, only a “heads of agreement” has been signed between these countries, which is essentially a checklist of issues that the parties have decided must be resolved. Nonetheless, the fact that Oman has taken this preliminary step is significant given the pressure that it has been subjected to by the US to purchase gas from other suppliers, like Qatar.

In fact, several countries and companies, including European ones, are eagerly waiting for

signs that the sanctions imposed on Iran will be lifted so that they can access not only the country's vast energy resources, but also enter its lucrative market. In particular, European companies, which had exited from Iran four years ago, when the sanctions were tightened, are at the forefront leaving their American counterparts behind. Many are already holding exploratory talks with Iran. Within weeks of the Joint Plan of Action (JPA) being announced in November 2013, Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh met with the chief executives of some European oil companies. With the US and EU imposing sanctions on Russia for its Ukraine operation, although as of now these do not include the energy sector, concerns are increasing that Russia may retaliate by cutting off supplies to Europe, lending weight to Europe's search for a non-Russian supply alternative. Although the JPA set a July 20, 2014 deadline for a final settlement on Iran's nuclear programme, the deadline was pushed to November 24, 2014. While the negotiations are inching along with both sides taking hard positions, Tehran seems optimistic that by November a decision to lift the sanctions will be taken.²

If indeed Iran and the Western countries do come to an understanding or even possibly an agreement on the former's nuclear programme resulting in the sanctions being lifted, it will lead to a rush for a share of the lucrative Iranian energy pie similar to Myanmar's opening up last year. India cannot afford to be left behind.

India earned Tehran's wrath when it voted against Iran in the IAEA in 2005 and although it continued to buy Iranian crude despite the sanctions, it reduced its off-take drastically, relegating Iran to seventh position as an oil import source, down from second position. Moreover, India has all but opted out of the IPI gas project – although officially it remains on the table – and has instead showed more enthusiasm for the rival TAPI project.

None of this could have gone down well with Tehran and may reflect on energy ties once Iran returns to the international community's fold. No doubt, India can, and has been finding alternative sources for its oil imports, both in West Asia and other regions. However, with the potential growth in its demand for gas seen to increase over the next few years, Iran is an ideal source. Not only does it have huge natural gas reserves, which have remained unexploited, unlike its rivals in the region such as Qatar and Oman, its geographical location is well suited for exporting gas to India, either through pipeline or as LNG – as and when Iran gains access to the technology.

On the other hand, Iran has recently put its Farzad-B gas block on its auction list, citing delays in development by the Indian firm. The block, which holds an estimated 21.68 tcf of in place reserves, of which 12.8 trillion cubic feet (tcf) can be recovered, was acquired by OVL in 2008, but left undeveloped due to fear of sanctions. Earlier too, in February 2012, Tehran issued an ultimatum to OVL, but had not carried out the threat of cancelling the allocation. The general belief is that the recent auction notice is to put pressure on India to develop the field. With reports of India negotiating with other gas producers, including the US and Russia for LNG as well as pipeline, Iran too is keen to tie up sensing the potentially huge Indian market. However, if OVL continues to show tardiness, it may lose the block, given that several suitors are waiting in the wings to enter Iran's energy sector. Moreover, once the sanctions are lifted, Iran may prefer to send its gas to the more lucrative European market.

India has recently been trying to revive its energy links with Iran and has even increased its oil imports. It has also recently agreed in principle to pledge \$100 million for upgrading Iran's Chabahar port, and is believed to have revived interest in piping gas from Iran, although not necessarily through the IPI project. Whatever the outcome of the nuclear negotiations between Iran and the western interlocutors, India needs to keep its long-term energy security interests in mind and engage with Iran before it becomes too late.

Regional Parties in the 16th Lok Sabha Elections Who Survived and Why? (epw)

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This paper attempts to explain why some regional parties flourished and others fizzled out in the 16th general elections to the Lok Sabha. To explain this variation, it makes a distinction between regionally-located parties and regionalist parties. While both are regional parties in the sense that they have territorially limited arenas of operation they are different in terms of their programme and agenda. In the 2014 elections, the regionally-located parties fared relatively poorly compared to regionalist parties. This paper argues that success and failure often depend on the efforts, strategies and tactics of competitors. It concludes that the strategy of the Bharatiya Janata Party was favourable to the electoral fortunes of regionalist parties and disadvantageous to the regionally-located parties.

Does Media Exposure Affect Voting Behaviour and Political Preferences in India?

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Analysing the National Election Study data from 1996 to 2014, this paper examines the effect of media exposure on Indian elections to reach four main conclusions. First, in the last two decades, Indian electorates have been more exposed to the media than ever before. Second, in the 2014 elections, electorates with higher media exposure were more likely to vote for the Bharatiya Janata Party. Third, voters with higher media exposure were more likely to vote for the BJP in previous Lok Sabha elections as well, and, in that sense, the 2014 elections were no different. Fourth, media exposure influenced the political preferences of people. It also finds that electorates with higher media exposure were more likely to support economic liberalisation, but that it made no difference on social conservatism.

India-U.S. Partnership: \$1 Trillion by 2030

The United States and India must strive to create a \$1 trillion economic relationship by 2030 not because it is easy, but because it is hard—to paraphrase that great American President and friend of India, John F. Kennedy.

An ambitious bilateral agenda will help both countries: it will put in place thinking, planning, innovation and execution by the private sector and entrepreneurs of both nations for mutual benefit and beyond. It will lay out a plan for the Indian economy to achieve its potential and for the U.S. to serve the needs of workers at home and consumers in the emerging markets of the world.

A joint agenda will necessitate intense collaboration by American and Indian companies across sectors as varied as technology and agriculture. And it will require governments and non-profits to move dramatically out of their comfort zones and welcome ideas, skills and execution from new sources.

How can this be achieved? Countless papers and books have been written about the enigma of India-U.S. relations, about its opportunities, challenges and unrealised potential. Indians and Americans have spoken at conferences and in the media about the reasons why two countries—both managing diversity at a level that few other nations understand, yet committed to democracy and capitalism—cannot come together more often on the great issues of the day.

But the reality, as most experts understand, is that the short-term objectives of each nation have never been aligned. And until the information technology revolution in India began in the 1990s, there was little deep and sustained interaction between the people of the U.S. and India.

Today, the U.S. is the world's largest economy and India is the world's third largest by purchasing power parity. In 2030, the U.S. will, most likely, be the world's second largest economy, after China, and India will remain in third place. Bilateral trade worth \$1 trillion between India and the U.S. may not alter the rankings, but it will dramatically boost the size of both economies.

However, the current trade between the two nations, which is about \$120 billion, will not necessarily indicate the pathway to this eventual \$1 trillion relationship. Most CEOs and analysts have so far only predicted slow and steady growth that can gradually lead to \$500 billion in bilateral trade and investment, as U.S. Vice President Joe Biden has suggested.

That will not help India to transform its economy or America to be better prepared for global competition. Instead, the India-U.S. relationship has to look like the relationship the U.S. has with countries such as Mexico, South Korea and Israel. These countries are not part of the G7 but have deep-seated economic ties with the U.S, and a consistency in policy and collaboration that the U.S. and India must strive for.

A goal of \$1 trillion can accelerate an economic growth curve that rivals the “hockey stick” growth curve promised by startups everywhere. For precedent, we can look to the impact of economic liberalisation and the IT revolution. From 1991-1992, when India embarked on economic reforms, to 1996, when outsourcing contracts began to accelerate, foreign direct investment in India increased 40 fold—from \$132 million to \$5.3 billion.

This, then, is the lodestar for the bilateral’s future. India and the U.S. must look for the correct combination of disruptive innovation, business model transformation, and robust policy reform that can lead to a similar economic acceleration and possibly a \$1 trillion partnership.

Disaster Risk Management

Most countries have demonstrated some success in responding to disasters. Does it imply that as a species we have learnt how to handle disasters, and that disaster risk management has finally come of age? As discussions on the formulation of the successor to the Hyogo Framework for Action (2005-15) gather momentum, it is time to take a look at the conceptual underpinnings of disaster risk management.

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The effective handling of Cyclone Phailin in 2013 earned India worldwide praise for its disaster risk management efforts. Particularly remarkable was the success in ensuring minimal loss of human lives as compared to a cyclone of similar strength – Cyclone 05B – in the same region in 1999 (Harriman 2013). Fortunately, this is not a singular instance. Around the world, most nations have demonstrated more or less similar success in responding to disasters. Does it imply that we have learnt how to handle disasters, and that disaster risk management has finally come of age?

Disasters: Historical Trends

A look at the available empirical evidence, however, reveals a different picture. An analysis of the Emergency Events Database (EM-DAT) maintained by the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED) (EM-DAT 2014) unambiguously points to three striking trends.

First of all, the mortality associated with hydrological hazards (for example, floods), meteorological hazards (for example, storms) and climatological hazards (for example, droughts) has declined significantly over the past five decades. This comforting trend is in line with the effective handling of Cyclone Phailin and other storms, floods and droughts in recent years.

This can be explained in terms of advances in science and technology – for example, early warning systems and emergency response operations – that have resulted in improved disaster response. At the same time, however, the mortality associated with geophysical hazards (for example, earthquakes) has witnessed a rising trend. Quite intriguingly, all-round technological progress has not been able to arrest this alarming uptrend. Abject failure on

this count continues to be the most disturbing area of concern for disaster risk management.

Second, the economic and livelihood losses have shown a steeply increasing trend. To some extent, these trends can be attributed to a growth in population and increase in the value of assets exposed to various hazards. But this cannot be used as a justification for the failure to reduce economic losses.

Finally, the number of disasters occurring due to hydrological and meteorological hazards has shown an explosive growth, shooting up nearly five times in the past 40 years. Also, the decadal growth in the total number of disasters continues to be dreadfully high (Guha-Sapir et al 2012).

Combining these trends together, it becomes abundantly clear that barring partial success in reducing the mortality rate associated with some hazards, the current state of disaster risk management is far from satisfactory. In fact, the trends indicate that the situation is likely to deteriorate further at an increasing pace. This puts a question mark on the effectiveness of the massive disaster reduction efforts undertaken around the world so far. The issue assumes critical significance for developing countries because a lack of adaptive capacities forces them to face a disproportionately higher share of adverse consequences of disasters (Julca 2012). Moreover, the loss of economic and social capital sets back the process of development by several years, resulting in reversals on the poverty front.

This grim reality should throw us out of any sense of complacency that may have set in because of partial success in reducing the mortality rate, and compel us to re-examine the theoretical underpinnings of disaster risk management.

Hyogo Framework for Action

The current thinking on disaster risk management is largely reflected in the “Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) 2005-15 – Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters” (UNISDR 2005), which is a non-binding policy framework endorsed by 168 nations at the Second UN World Conference on Disaster Reduction held in Kobe (Japan) in 2005. The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) has been monitoring the progress made by each nation in the implementation of HFA. The current HFA will come to an end in 2015 and the post-2015 framework will be finalised at the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, scheduled to be held in Sendai (Japan) in March 2015 (UNISDR 2012). In the run-up to this major event, disaster risk and development specialists are questioning the fundamental premises of disaster risk and the current HFA.

In the first place, it must be emphasised that the HFA marked a significant progress in disaster risk management as it was based on a paradigm shift in the way societies handle disasters: from an emergency response to a more proactive approach aimed at the reduction of disaster risk. It seeks to guide nations in their efforts at the management of disaster risk by setting three strategic goals¹ and five priorities for action,² which are monitored against a set of 22 core indicators.³ The expected outcome HFA strives to achieve is “the substantial reduction of disaster losses in lives, and in the social, economic and environmental assets of communities and countries” (UNISDR 2005), which highlights the disaster risk reduction paradigm embodied in the HFA.

Increasing progress in its implementation has been reported by nations in their self-assessment reports. HFA implementation has strengthened disaster preparedness for effective response, and considerable progress has been made in ensuring that disaster risk reduction becomes a national and local priority, backed by strong institutional arrangements. What comes as a puzzle is that increasing implementation of HFA has failed to arrest the disturbing trends outlined above.

In view of this cardinal contradiction, it has been argued that a mere continuation of the current paradigm in the post-2015 period will only amount to repeating the same mistakes all

over again. Ongoing discussions on the formulation of the successor to HFA present an ideal opportunity for a critical evaluation of the current paradigm for disaster risk management. This is particularly significant because the other two closely interrelated instruments – climate change adaptation and sustainable development agenda – are also under discussion. This coincidence offers a rare opportunity to develop a coherent post-2015 paradigm that can harmonise policies and actions across the three instruments.

Deficiencies of the Paradigm

The fundamental problem with the current HFA is that it treats disasters as exogenous shocks which need to be reduced in order to protect the development processes. This is the essence of the disaster risk reduction paradigm underlying the current HFA. It is simple and intuitively appealing. Unfortunately, it is also the root cause of a series of vexing problems that become intractable in the current framework.

To begin with, it makes the existing paradigm fundamentally flawed even in theory, assuming away all practical problems of implementation. Development processes have their own risk-return trade-offs, which lead to a generation and accumulation of risk along with development gains. Treating disaster risk as exogenous to the development framework ignores the inherent risk-return trade-off, and leads logically to the unsustainable outcome in which development gains get privatised while disaster losses are socialised. This is a self-defeating mechanism because it is designed to protect the very economic processes that are contributing to the generation and accumulation of risk.

This fundamental flaw can readily explain why increasing implementation of HFA has been particularly unsuccessful in halting or reversing the accumulation of risk. To illustrate, consider the development processes involving groundwater extraction, landfill, or building a dam in a seismically active zone, all of which are known to have an impact on the possibility and severity of earthquakes. The gains of these development activities will be cornered by the beneficiaries (privatisation of development gains), but if an earthquake occurs, the disaster losses will be borne by all (socialisation of disaster losses). Koyna dam (associated with the 1967 Koyna earthquake) and Tehri dam (associated with the 1991 Uttarkashi earthquake) are classic examples of reservoir-induced seismicity.

In addition to that, considering disaster risk reduction as a separate goal imposes a conceptual framework wherein disaster risk is separated from normal economic activities. Although the current HFA talks of a holistic approach, its basic premises, in reality, directly lead to compartmentalisation. As a result, very little progress has been achieved in the integration of disaster risk management with climate change adaptation and sustainable development goals, despite repeated declarations calling for an integrated approach.

Moreover, disaster risk reduction regarded as a separate, autonomous sector fails to become a part of the main concerns of the government, thereby leading to a lack of political and economic commitment. Hence, disasters hit headlines once in a while, but disaster risk management never becomes a mainstream political issue.

Finally, viewing disasters as exogenous shocks reinforces the popular belief that disasters are “acts of God” (Basher 2008), and the resulting fatalism relieves authorities from all considerations of accountability and responsibility. Needless to say, it serves as an in-built incentive for authorities to support this paradigm.

Proposed Paradigm Shift

To a large extent, these problems explain why the progress towards the implementation of the current HFA has not led to the desired outcome. This has prompted many experts (Lavell and Maskrey 2013) to suggest another paradigm shift: from disaster risk reduction to making disaster risk endogenous to development. This is one fundamental change that can effectively tackle the problems listed above. Under this paradigm, disasters are not viewed as exogenous

shocks to the development process, but as manifestations of development problems that have not been resolved.

Hence, disaster risk reduction becomes an integral part of all development processes and is no longer treated as a separate goal. Instead of shielding development processes from external shocks, disaster risk management aims at transforming development processes to incorporate risks and strengthen resilience. In other words, the focus shifts from risk reduction (corrective risk management) to avoiding risk construction and accumulation (anticipatory or prospective risk management).

Given the conventional wisdom of treating disasters as acts of god, the idea of disasters as unresolved development problems may appear to be counterintuitive, if not radical. Even though the idea has been around for several decades now, not much progress in its implementation has been observed. Still, a couple of cases where successful disaster risk management efforts were built around this idea may be mentioned here.

The case of the Lower Lempa River Valley, El Salvadore (Lavell 2004) during the previous decade is noteworthy because it illustrates successful implementation of a disaster risk management intervention built around the central premise that reduction of disaster risk can only be achieved through a reduction of "everyday risk", that is, the risks associated with regular development problems like poverty, inequality, poor infrastructure, etc. To tackle the risk of floods and droughts, the intervention comprised a portfolio of development projects along with disaster risk projects. Its success is particularly notable because several earlier interventions had been unsuccessful. Similarly, the close connection between everyday risk (development problems) and disaster risk has been demonstrated in the case of Bolivian Chaco (Reyes and Lavell 2012) and other studies (UNISDR 2009).

To be fair to the current HFA, we must emphasise that it also creates a space for prospective risk management. In fact, HFA Priority 4 seeks to address underlying risk drivers; however, very little progress in its implementation has been reported (UNISDR 2013a). And this is along expected lines because the fundamentally flawed mechanism created by regarding disaster risk as exogenous to development fails to make risk creators accountable to risk bearers. The resulting socialisation of disaster losses ensures that very little actual progress is made in pre-empting the construction and accumulation of risk. In contrast, the new paradigm takes care of the problem of separation of development gains and disaster losses by directly addressing the risk-return trade-offs associated with development processes that lead to the generation and accumulation of risk.

Seen in this light, the controversy surrounding Sardar Sarovar Dam can be interpreted as an attempt by the protesters to make risk creators accountable to risk bearers, precisely in line with the proposed paradigm. The protracted controversy also demonstrates the intractability of the problem of socialisation of disaster losses, especially when we consider investments not only by public bodies, but also by innumerable agents in the private sector.

Furthermore, the problem of compartmentalisation gets automatically eliminated because the new paradigm is based on the integration of disaster risk management with the process of development. Hence, disaster risk management and climate change adaptation can be systematically integrated into the development framework. To varying degrees, this has been attempted by various countries. For example, Mozambique's intervention (2001-07) for managing the adverse consequences of floods included a poverty reduction programme (Murray et al 2012).

Also, by making disaster risk endogenous to the development framework, disasters come to occupy the mainstream agenda of governments. This is conducive to creating an environment which provides strong incentives for strengthening political and economic commitment to disaster risk management. Moreover, as disasters are no longer seen as acts of god, it becomes logically acceptable to create mechanisms for fixing accountability and responsibility.

At least in theory, the proposed paradigm shift appears to come up with neat solutions to the

intractable problems of the current HFA. But moving from a framework of extreme exogenous shocks to a framework that focuses on managing risks in development processes poses formidable theoretical and practical challenges. Risk-return trade-offs are typically difficult to interpret and implement. Moreover, the threat of loss in the distant future is often not enough in comparison to the short-term gains that can accrue from not investing in disaster risk management (Bender 2011).

Consider, for example, the case of the 2005 flooding of Mumbai, which shows that the drivers of flood risk (in fact, a complex portfolio of interrelated risks, including risk of landslides, risks associated with reclaimed land, risk of outbreak of infectious diseases, risk of disruption of networks of critical infrastructure, etc) are located in a web of socio-economic factors like poverty, slum settlements, infrastructure, and the ecosystem. No wonder that multi-hazard risk plans for coastal megacities prove to be difficult to formulate and implement (Murray et al 2012).

Combination of Approaches

The challenges of implementation of the new paradigm are further complicated by the existence of powerful incentives for politicians and administrators to maintain the status quo. After all, striving hard to ensure that nothing happens (which is the expected scenario under the new paradigm) is certainly less appealing than putting up heroic efforts to save lives and contain destruction in the aftermath of a disaster (which is the reality under the existing paradigm).

The proposed paradigm shift, however, does not imply that the compensatory approach followed so far can be abandoned immediately. Shift in paradigm is a gradual process and not an abrupt one-off event. It is expected to be a gradual shift in focus from short-term reduction of risk to long-term avoidance of risk construction. We cannot simply abandon the risk reduction paradigm because the existing levels of risk are already too high to be tackled within a reasonable period of time through the alternative paradigm. As the stakes involved are enormous – not just economic costs, human lives are at stake too – the only sensible solution would be a coexistence of the two paradigms. Fortunately, it is possible to achieve that by complementing the existing compensatory approach with the one that focuses on prospective risk management.

Now, that sounds paradoxical. But a closer look reveals that employing both the paradigms simultaneously is not logically inconsistent. This holds true because the existing disaster risk reduction paradigm focuses on the short-term consequences, whereas the proposed paradigm is essentially a long-term approach. Hence, it is entirely possible to create a structure based on the new paradigm and complement it with the efforts under the existing paradigm wherever immediate consequences need to be tackled. The existing approach, therefore, can coexist with the new approach as its subservient short-term instrument. Given the enormity of the challenge posed by disaster risk, this combination of approaches is probably our best bet for the successor to the current HFA.

Questioning the Idea of

Disaster

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Does popular understanding of disaster lead the idea of disaster management prevention and mitigation in the field? How does it differ in cases of flash and recurrent disaster? Is there any need to change either plan or strategy to mitigate the condition of those people who face recurrent disaster in their lives?