

Why Israel Matters to India (And Modi) (IR ,GS paper 2 ,Political Science ,Gateway House)

When Narendra Modi makes a trip to Israel sometime [later](#) this year, he will be the first Indian Prime Minister to visit, formalising a relationship often conducted behind closed doors, clandestine meetings and secret agreements.

The announcement is already generating heat, with some [criticising](#) it, others urging caution—with one commentator [suggesting](#) a counter-balancing visit to Israeli arch-enemy Iran—and some seeing it as an inevitable [corollary](#) to the convergence of the ideologies of Hindutva and [Likud](#), a political movement (rooted in the free market and Jewish culture) that coalesced into a political party.

While India recognised Israel on September 17, 1950—a year after it voted against United Nations' membership for the Jewish state—full diplomatic ties were [established](#) only in 1992, the reticence flowing from India's traditional backing for the Palestinian cause.

Since then, in the public eye, relationships have been defined by defence deals and the 38,000 mostly young Israelis who [visit](#) India each year to de-stress after their compulsory [two-three years](#) of military service. The traffic isn't all one-way though, more than 40,000 Indians [visited](#) Israel in 2013, the largest number of tourists from an Asian country.

Business and technological ties are also growing, and India and Israel recently [agreed](#) to set up a \$40 million India-Israel cooperation fund to promote joint scientific and technological collaborations.

Here are five things that define the India-Israel relationship today:

1. Defence. There is no getting away from the defence relationship. Israel is India's fifth-largest source of arms, with imports worth \$0.21 billion in 2013-14 and [\\$10 billion](#) (Rs 59,670 crore) over the past decade.

Source: [Lok Sabha](#); Figures in US \$ billion.

The earliest signs of collaboration came during the 1962 Sino-Indian war, when Israel gave India military aid. Israel also aided India

during the two wars with Pakistan in 1965 and 1971, according to this [article](#) in the *Stanford Journal of International Relations*.

India reciprocated during the Six-Day War in 1967 by providing Israel with spare parts for Mystere and Ouragan aircraft, as well as AX-13 tanks, the Stanford report said.

The highlight of the partnership was Israel's [supply](#) of artillery shells during the Kargil war, when India faced a shortage.

In the late 1990s, a crucial [defence deal](#) was the Indian purchase of Barak 1, an air-defence missile, bought specifically for its capability to intercept US-made Harpoon missiles deployed by Pakistan.

India's imports of unarmed vehicles (UAVs) have almost all been from Israel. Of 176 UAVs purchased from Israel, 108 are Searcher UAVs and 68 are Heron UAVs, as [IndiaSpend](#) has [reported](#).

Israel has also [pledged](#) support to the 'Make in India' mission in the defence sector.

Other major deals include the jointly-[developed](#) Barak 8 anti-ship-missile missile, which the Indian Navy will be testing soon, and the SPYDER missile system, which the Indian Air Force is [procuring](#) to counter aerial threats at low altitude. India and Israel also closely [cooperate](#) on anti-terror activities and have [signed](#) agreements, among other matters, on homeland and public security and protection of classified materials and information.

2. Diplomacy. Several ministerial and high-level official visits to Israel precede Modi's forthcoming tour. These [include](#) visits by L.K Advani, former Home Minister, in 2000 and Home Minister Rajnath Singh in November 2014.

Both countries have signed several bilateral agreements since 1992, which include cooperation in agriculture, research and development, economy and industry and security.

3. Agriculture. This has been an important facet in the Indo-Israel relationship. India has benefited from Israel's expertise in the sector, evident from the number of bilateral agreements signed between the two nations.

While Indian agriculture is largely dependent on rain and an erratic monsoon, Israel, a [global leader](#) in drip irrigation, has pioneered desert agriculture with sparse supplies of water.

India has [benefited](#) from Israeli technologies in horticulture mechanisation, protected cultivation, orchard and canopy management, nursery management, micro-irrigation and post-harvest management, particularly in Haryana and Maharashtra.

An Indo-Israel agriculture action plan [unfolded](#) between 2008 and 2010, extended until 2015, providing "centres of excellence" in eight states, to showcase the latest technologies to grow fruits, vegetables and flowers.

Nearly ten India-Israel centres of excellence for cooperation in agriculture have been set-up so far, of the 30 **expected** by 2015.

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis recently **visited** Israel, seeking agro-technology to address the farming crisis in the Vidarbha and Marathwada regions.

4. Water Management. Technologically adept Israel has developed water-management technologies, **located** as it is in a semi-arid region with limited sources of fresh drinking water.

Israel's expertise **includes** recycling waste water and desalination. Indian companies and official delegations regularly visit the biannual Water Technology & Environment Control Exhibition & Conference, which showcases Israel's water and energy technologies.

IDE, an Israeli company, has built several desalination plants in India, including a 100-million-litre per day **desalination** plant at Nemelli in Tamil Nadu, commissioned in 2013, the second such plant in Chennai.

5. Trade. India's total trade with Israel is \$6.06 billion (Rs 36,160 crore) in 2013-14, up 57% over 2009-10. The trade balance stood in India's favour at \$ 1.44 billion (Rs 8,592 crore) in 2013-14.

Source: [Ministry of Commerce](#); Figures in \$ billion; NA-Not Available

Mineral fuels and oils are India's leading export to Israel worth \$1.45 billion in 2013-14.

India's major imports from Israel in 2013-14 included natural or cultured pearls and precious stones, worth \$1.20 billion. Stones and pearls are the second-largest commodity, in terms of value, exported to Israel from India after mineral fuels.

Indo-Israel trade in diamonds increased 98% from \$1.25 billion in 2009 to \$2.48 billion in 2013.

Source: [Embassy of India in Israel](#); Figures in \$ billion

Nearly 40 diamond dealers from India have opened offices at the Israeli diamond exchange in Ramat-Gan. Some of these dealers have been active in Israel for nearly 30-40 years.

Since 2010, the two countries have been negotiating a free-trade agreement for goods and services, which should boost investments and trade ties.

Israel ranks 44th in terms of foreign direct investment in India, **investing** \$82 million between April 2000 and February 2015.

India's Stakes and Dilemma in SCO (Important regional organisations, GS paper 2, IDSA)

India hopes to become a member the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) at its Ufa Summit on 9-10 July 2015. A formal application was put in last year when all legal hurdles were removed – short of ratifying a lengthy 28 draft documents of the grouping.

A recent statement coming from Moscow suggests, however, that the accession of India and Pakistan to the SCO is still being examined. Is there a new hitch?

Until now, the delay was caused by the lack of criteria, procedures and timeline. Only Mongolia was welcomed but it hesitated to join the outfit. In 2010, UN sanctions obstructed Iran's entry.

Despite Russia pushing India's case and China for Pakistani entry, the SCO remained reticent that fearing it would get mired into the South Asian conflict. Some cited SAARC's failure as an alibi. Others saw India's proclivity as being towards the West and East rather than Eurasia.

New Imperatives

In spite of its high visibility, the SCO has found real progress elusive. In fact, only Chinese funding has kept it alive, with Beijing actively using the forum for enlarging its own footprints in Central Asia.

The tricky aspects of 'regime security' have also impeded the SCO's growth. In fact, the frequently held anti-terror drills under SCO auspices were tied to curbing potential domestic upsurge as much as to guarding against external threats.

But fresh imperatives have hit Central Asian states lately. Importantly, their key mentor, Russia, is in deep crisis. Sanctions apart, the whopping fall in oil prices and the value of the rouble are having ripple effects on Central Asian states as well. At the same time, they also fear Russia's renewed nationalistic and economic assertion. Then there is the impact of growing Sino-Russian proximity, which is compelling Kazakhstan and even Uzbekistan to seek diversification beyond the immediate region. Security challenges also loom large. The Afghan fallout apart, the ISIS is heavily recruiting in Central Asia – an additional cause of concern.

In the light of all this, bringing India, Iran and others into the SCO would mean gaining greater voice and cachet for the SCO. Some also fear that not doing so would make Iran and India slip out and join the US regional game.

New Strategic Axis

Nevertheless, the coming prospects at SCO are unlikely to be delinked from the current rebalancing games that are underway in the global arena.

Clearly, the Sino-Russian strategic propinquity in Eurasia and elsewhere has now become explicit. There is little scope for altering that equation for now. Despite talk about the undercurrents of Sino-Russian competition in Eurasia, Putin has recently made it clear that the SCO will operate "actively on convergence between two big projects" – the China-led Belt and Road, and the Moscow-led Eurasian Economic Union (EEU). This reflects strategic clarity and the two projects may become the main driving force for Euro-Asian connectivity and integration; a top strategic priority for dealing with regional security threats. At the Ufa

Summit, this could become a key to “SCO Development Strategy Towards 2015”.

From India’s perspective, such a vision for Eurasia is likely to be at odds with Modi’s foreign policy texture, especially his shared vision with Obama for the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean Region that are ostensibly meant to contain China. While India has expressed its desire to cooperate with the Moscow-led EEU, it hasn’t quite approved Beijing’s Belt and Road idea. Instead, it has expressed its resentment towards China’s plans for the USD 46 billion economic corridor through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. Here lies a potential problem. Beijing has already turned down India’s objection in this regard, saying it is a “livelihood project”. The differences it seems will only enlarge and for India navigating the evolving contradictions in SCO may remain less than a smooth one.

India’s Stakes

Sceptics at home oppose India joining a Chinese-led body as a junior member. But for India, SCO is about increasing its stakes in Central Asia – the next emerging Muslim region with close proximity to Afghanistan. Clearly, India’s concerns seem essentially security driven, fearing that SCO could possibly be used as a smokescreen by inimical forces including Pakistan to drum up support for anti-India activities. Thus, staying outside cannot be to India’s advantage.

Security concerns also drive Russian and Chinese actions in Eurasia but the approaches they follow are economic in orientation. Clearly, joining SCO could help India get out of the current tight geopolitical spot – wedged between a wall of Pakistani hostility and fear of cooperating with China.

Stakes are also high for securing energy and connectivity interests – to invest in oilfields also with an eye to get its way on the pipeline route. SCO could change the way for energy projects, including the TAPI which may finally see the light of day.

India could benefit from SCO’s Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (*RATS*) and also learn from its counter-terror exercises. India could also gain from cooperating in soft-political areas of the region that it knows little about.

Conversely, India could bring to the SCO table its techno-economic expertise, markets and financial commitment. India’s experience in dealing with multi-cultural settings is an attraction among many sections in Central Asia.

Ironically, Pakistan has quite successfully inserted itself into this new alignment. Even Russia’s confidence in Pakistan seems to have increased though it may have an opportunistic aspect. Clearly, the acceptance of Pakistan in Eurasia would grow henceforth. Pakistan has its geographical advantage unless Afghanistan continues to remain a thorn.

Option for India

For India the issue is quite clearly about its strategic ambivalence and lack of clarity. The SCO is more often than not used as a counterweight against the West. For Modi to play an ancillary role of offsetting the US is tricky.

Earlier Pakistan used to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds for the US. It seems this role is being passed on to India now.

For Prime Minister Modi, it would be prudent not only to display pragmatism but also clarity. Surely, any attempt at matching the Russian or Chinese leverages in Eurasia would be unrealistic. He should instead use the SCO for building greater convergences with China and Russia.

For sure, Moscow and Beijing and even Astana possibly relish the idea of using the SCO forum to beget a serious India-Pakistan thaw. But creative diplomacy by Modi could minimize the impact of the China-Pakistan alignment, which has tended to undercut India’s direct access to Central Asia.

Modi should also know the fragile nature of the SCO. Central Asians especially carry varied expectations; they remain sensitive to ties with Russia and China, but their positions fluctuate regularly in line with their interests, even opting for bilateralism with the US. They ably play the suitors off one against the other to extract economic benefits and reinforce political control at home.

Clarity is also necessary to avoid the risk of India becoming a focal point of criticism by Central Asia States, like the way it happens in SAARC, of course for different reasons. So long as India was not a full member, expectations from it were less. But once India is in, the regional countries are going to compare India with China.

Brick and mortar of foreign policy (Institutions of Foreign Policy , Political Science , The Hindu , GS paper 2)

Narendra Modi has shown that he has no hesitation in articulating India's role on the world stage. But for this, he must start overhauling the foreign policy apparatus.

The consensus among those evaluating Prime Minister Narendra Modi's performance at the end of his first year in office is that while the jury is still out on domestic issues, the Bharatiya Janata Party-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government's performance on the foreign policy front has been praiseworthy. While some of it may be true, it is important to note that foreign policy outcomes are merely the tip of the iceberg when compared to the entirety of a country's foreign policy architecture. In that sense, Mr. Modi has so far not sought to improve the competence and capacity of the country's foreign policy establishment. Therefore, let's move beyond the euphoria surrounding his "spectacular" foreign policy performance to examine the deep-seated inadequacies in India's foreign policy architecture.



Organisational inadequacies

The principal drawback of the foreign policy establishment is that it is miserably understaffed. While New Delhi does have some first-rate diplomats, what we really need are not a few overworked senior officials but more, well-trained personnel. On account of financial constraints, bureaucratic inertia and inter-ministerial disagreements, all we have are around 900-odd Indian Foreign Service (IFS) officers to operationalise India's ambitious foreign policy initiatives.

Even as the volume and nature of India's foreign policy workload is steadily increasing and transforming, especially under the new regime, the recruitment of

IFS officers has increased only by 3-4 per year despite recommendations to increase the intake. Though the aim is to have around 1,200 officers by 2018, even that will prove inadequate. The fact is that IFS officers are generalists by training, and are routinely transferred around the world to man varied diplomatic and foreign policy assignments. This means that key elements of today's international relations such as trade diplomacy and climate policy, among others, will be neglected, even as they are the centrepiece of Mr. Modi's international engagement.

Intellectual weaknesses

Diplomacy today is much more than mere courtesies, photo-opportunities and protocols: it is primarily about pursuing one's national interests in a globalised and highly networked world that is far more complex than before. New-age diplomacy then needs a lot more intellectual agility, in-depth knowledge of specialised issues, and an ability to innovate like never before. Therefore, India's antediluvian diplomatic and foreign policy architectures should be subjected to radical reform if New Delhi is to make its presence felt in the fast-changing contemporary international system.

For one, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) is hardly receptive to intellectual inputs from anyone other than its own overworked bureaucrats who are almost always caught up in the day-to-day running of the ministry. On issues ranging from trade to climate change to science and technology, all of which are central to contemporary diplomacy, there exists a great deal of intellectual expertise in non-state institutions such as private sector think tanks, public and private universities and the media. But bureaucratic self-importance and the absence of conducive institutional mechanisms have prevented the proper utilisation of such valuable expertise. Indeed, while foreign ministries across the world are exploring innovative means to draw upon outside expertise, the tendency in India is to build barricades against such expertise from trickling into South Block. When the government does engage the strategic/academic community to carry out research for it, "supporting findings" are generally preferred.

K. Subrahmanyam, one of India's finest strategic thinkers, had this to say about the interaction between the bureaucracy as well as politicians and the civilian policy community: "Our politicians and bureaucrats entertain the illusion that they know more about overall Indian foreign and security policies than the think-tank people and academics in India. Most of our leaders listened to the advice of Western strategists, but would not even engage in serious discussions with Indian thinkers on the subject."

To make things worse, IFS officers also avoid being posted to other ministries such as commerce or finance and vice versa. Currently, no more than one or two IFS officers are posted in other Union Ministries. This means that various Union Ministers with interests in India's foreign policy decisions, including the MEA, continue to remain in their cozy enclaves, resulting in suboptimal foreign policy formulation.

Ideational shortcomings

The Indian foreign policy establishment also suffers from an acute inability to ideate outside the box. Much of the intellectual energy is spent on routine management of the ministry where adhocism, outdated precedents and pragmatism

are the guiding principles. Moreover, our foreign policy establishment, by design, tends to be reactive in nature, rather than proactive or creative.

Such adhocism is a direct result of deep-rooted structural and ideational biases against long-term planning and grand strategic thinking. Successive Union governments have steered clear of articulating a coherent road map for the country's foreign policy and strategic engagements, of identifying medium- and long-term goals, the challenges to be faced while pursuing them, or the ways to get there. The MEA's Policy Planning Division hardly engages in any serious planning, nor is it mandated or empowered to do so.

White papers or official documents are rarely issued on key foreign policy challenges nor are independent panels of experts tasked to work on them. And when an independent panel is appointed – a rare occurrence – the recommendations of its members are neatly archived, often classified under the Official Secrets Act, and never referred to. Senior bureaucrats hardly ever refer to research findings churned out by research organisations and think tanks. Given this absence of a competent policy-planning structure within the MEA, policies are often made on the basis of intuition and common sense. Non-official literature dealing with long-term strategic planning is often dismissed as “academic”, meaning, useless.

There is inadequate and inconsistent focus on major policy initiatives. The focus between two prime ministerial visits or crises, is on the mundane. Clearly, major initiatives cannot be undertaken in a sustained manner with a handful of officials distracted by routine matters, and with the political bosses showing neither the aptitude nor the appetite for it. The political leadership under Mr. Modi may make grand foreign policy declarations and promises, but the chances of such declarations translating into outcomes are few, given the establishment's short attention span.

Walking the talk

Unlike his predecessors, Mr. Modi has demonstrated no hesitation in articulating that under his watch, India will play a major role on the world stage. If he is serious about his ambitious plans to be a part of the emergent Asian century, he needs to start by overhauling the country's foreign policy apparatus. If not, his foreign policy agenda is likely to collapse under its own weight.

First, the MEA's institutional capacity must be improved by radically altering recruitment patterns and philosophy. The intake of IFS recruits per year should be at least doubled, and the government should consider a separate examination to recruit officers with an aptitude for foreign affairs. Many such proposals in the past were shot down by other bureaucracies, namely, the Indian Administrative Service. Hence, the government should not let the MEA or other self-seeking bureaucracy to decide on how to expand the Foreign Service establishment; this ought to be a political decision. Moreover, there should be a policy decision to absorb outside expertise through lateral entry or deputation.

In its fourth report, the parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs (2014-2015) made some thoughtful recommendations: “The Ministry must engage with the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) and impress upon them about the urgency of providing more staff, including through recruitment from other cadres

and the academic and private sector, as per the specialized needs of the Ministry. Recruitment on contract basis from individuals with academic or private sector experience that is directly relevant to urgent needs should be permitted." One hopes that the government takes the Standing Committee recommendations seriously.

Second, the NDA government should issue a doctrine that reflects the country's grand strategic objectives. There has to be more clarity on what India wants as a country which, when enshrined in a well-conceptualised official document, will generate a sense of purpose and cohesion in the country's foreign policy. Modesty and opaqueness are no virtues in contemporary international relations. The MEA's Policy Planning Division should be empowered and encouraged to draw upon wide-ranging outside expertise to help frame and articulate long-term foreign and strategic policies.

Third, there has to be more inter-ministerial coordination in policy-making. Deputations between the MEA and other key ministries should be mandatory. The government must consider the Commerce Ministry's proposal to create a separate cadre of commercial counsellors in key Indian missions.

If Mr. Modi does not want the future chroniclers of India's foreign policy to conclude that his foreign policy initiatives, considered to be path-breaking, were nothing but "more of the same with a lot more noise", he needs to rescue the architecture from its current disrepair and undertake fundamental reforms to give it the institutional and intellectual wherewithal it so badly needs.

The battle for Delhi (Polity, Hindu Editorial)

After months of sparring by means of official notifications, rounds of litigation, and orders of transfer and dismissal of various officers, the seemingly endless battle for the control of Delhi between the Aam Aadmi Party and the BJP-led Central government has taken an ugly turn with the extraordinary arrest of Jitender Singh Tomar. The Delhi Law Minister, who allegedly holds two fake educational degrees, resigned hours after a court sent him to police custody. It must be said that the AAP has handled the issue of Mr. Tomar's qualifications with a complete lack of political nous. This has been the subject matter of a case in the Delhi High Court after the issue came up in February, and the party could have either asked the Minister to step down till he was cleared of the charges, or simply made his degree diplomas public on its website. It might be said that the AAP deserves sympathy in its ongoing face-off with a Goliath of a Centre, but lapses such as these are but another reminder that it could no longer really claim to be a party with a difference. The Delhi Police have gone strictly [by the letter of the law](#) in ordering the arrest. However, the manner in which they have gone about the process has left no one in

doubt that it has essentially been a show of strength against a political party that is determined to put an end to corruption. To arrest Mr. Tomar the Delhi Police sent a posse of 40 officers, and then deployed heavy security around the police station where he was being held. The police worked late into the night to file a first information report, got it signed by Lieutenant Governor Najeeb Jung around midnight, and then appeared at Mr. Tomar's residence around 6 a.m. to make the arrest. The sudden drive and determination to arrest on the basis of charges of forgery a person who is hardly likely to go absconding, made it seem politically motivated.

The governmental tussle over Delhi has meanwhile reached its zenith, and one battleground is the State's Anti-Corruption Branch. The Lt. Governor recently created a senior post in the ACB so that he could post an officer of his choice who, incidentally, was conducting the investigations when a farmer committed suicide at the venue of an AAP rally. The AAP cried foul and ordered him sent back. That order was cancelled by the Lt. Governor. In retaliation, the AAP transferred out the official who had appointed him. All of this points to just another bizarre turn to a bizarre situation where the two governments just seem to be itching for a fight. The people of Delhi, interminably caught in the crossfire, may be the only real losers.

Keywords: Aam Aadmi Party, BJP, Delhi Law Minister, Jitender Singh Tomar, Delhi politics

Time for new environmentalism (Down to Earth ,Environmental movements ,new social movemnet ,polity)

This piece has been excerpted from Down To Earth Editor Sunita Narain's article in State of India's Environment 2015—A Down To Earth Annual. For the complete article, please [click here](#).

India's environmental movement is at a crossroads. On one hand, there is a greater acceptance of our concerns, but on the other there is growing resistance against required action and, more importantly, every indicator shows that things on the ground are getting worse.

Our rivers are more polluted; much more garbage is piling up in our cities; air is increasingly getting toxic; and hazardous waste is dumped, and not managed.

Worse, people who should have been at the frontline of protection are turning against the environment. They see it as a constraint to their local development and even as they may protest against the pollution of neighbourhood mines or factories, they have no reason to believe that their livelihood from natural resources is secured. They are caught between the mining companies and the foresters. Either way, they lose.

So, I believe, it is time we took stock of developments and future directions. In the past four decades—the beginnings of India's environmental movement can be traced to the early 1970s, when the country saw its first environmental movement (Chipko), the launch of Project Tiger and enactment of the water pollution law—much has changed. And yet, not changed.

The worst indictment is that over 700 million people in India still use dirty, polluting biomass for cooking food and that an equal number defecate in the open. They do not have access to the basics—clean water, hygienic toilets that do not end up polluting rivers and groundwater, and energy for lighting or cooking. Clearly, somewhere we are going wrong, very wrong.

We must also realise that even as the problems have grown, the institutions for their oversight and management have shrunk. Many actions have been taken but, equally, many more actions that have been taken have come to naught. Most importantly, while the environmental constituency has grown—many more people are interested in environmental issues—principles of environmentalism have got lost. In this way, the underlying politics has been neutered.

It is important we point to the fundamental weaknesses and contradictions. It is only then that we can deliberate on the directions for future growth of the environmental movement. In my view there are distinct trends that need elaboration.

One, we have lost the development agenda in environmental management. Instead of working to regenerate the natural capital for inclusive growth, we have increasingly framed action as “development versus environment”.

As a result, even though environmental imperative is now better understood, the constituency which is asking for protection has changed or will change. The management of natural resources—swinging between extraction and conservation—is leaving out millions who live on the resources. These people cannot afford either degradation of the resources or pure conservation. They need to utilise the natural resource for their livelihood and economic growth. In this way, the environmental movement is in danger of making enemies of the very people whose interest it is working to protect.

The debate on environmental issues is increasingly polarised and seen as obstructionist. In this way, the positive agenda gets negated and lost.

Environmental struggles are increasingly about not-in-my-backyard (NIMBY). This is understandable as people are the best protectors of the environment and are saying that pollution must not happen in their backyard. But the problem in a highly iniquitous country is that this can simply mean that we do not want

something in our backyard, but it can move to some place where the less powerful live.

But we must realise that even as middle-class environmentalism will grow, which is important, it will not be enough to bring improvement or change. The reason is that solutions for environmental management require inclusive growth. Otherwise, at best, we will have more “gated” and “green” colonies, but not green neighbourhoods, rivers, cities or country.

It is important also then to look for solutions, not just pose problems that do not go away. But this search for technologies and approaches to environmental management will have to recognise the need to do things differently so that sustainable growth is affordable to all. It also recognises that new age institutional strengthening is vital—we cannot improve performance without investment in boots on the ground.

This demands a new way of environmentalism—one that can move beyond the problems of today and yesterday—to embrace ideas without dogma, but with idealism and purpose. But for this to happen, it is time we imbibed politics that will make this environmentalism happen.

Stateless and left out at sea (Rohingya crisis, IR, The HINDU ,GS paper 2)

The images of emaciated Rohingyas stranded mid-sea and reports of mass graves of trafficked people in Thailand and Malaysia, which have shocked the world, speak of a history of ethnicity-based marginalisation where certain groups are victims of systematic oppression

The images of thousands of emaciated migrants on boats sent back to sea by Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia, and reports of the discovery of the mass graves of trafficked people in Thailand and Malaysia have together done what human rights activists have been trying to achieve for decades. They have drawn international attention to the plight of thousands of Rohingya people who have been deemed stateless by the Myanmar

government for more than 40 years as well as the issue of human trafficking in South and Southeast Asia. It appears that the images have managed to shock the world but this is not a new phenomenon. Nor can it be resolved just by a one-time acceptance of the migrants into these or other countries. While recent reports suggest that Malaysia and Indonesia will no longer turn away migrants, these horrifying images speak of a history of ethnicity-based marginalisation that has turned certain ethnic groups into perpetual victims of systematic oppression.

Exit as escape

The Rohingya in Myanmar are perhaps the worst off among many minority groups that have been repressed by the military government of Myanmar as they were stripped of their citizenship and rendered stateless between 1974 and 1982. The government sees them as Bengali Muslims from Bangladesh who migrated there during the colonial period (and continue to do so) whereas the Rohingya see themselves as (Muslim) natives of Arakan (Rakhine), a state in Myanmar. In turn, Bengali Muslims in Bangladesh and India do not see the Rohingya as their kin in any respect, making the Rohingya the "safest" scapegoat. The Rohingya are thus deemed outsiders and continue to be persecuted and denied citizenship. In fact, the Rohingya are among the most persecuted minorities in the world according to the UNHCR.

Many had participated in Myanmar Opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi's pro-democracy movement as members of the National League for Democracy (NLD), the main Opposition party, only to realise that the NLD, like the junta, has no place for the Rohingya in its "democracy." There were and continue to be fringe armed groups mobilising to increase pressure on the government, but activists complain that there is no solidarity among the Rohingya let alone any consensus with regards to the future of the movement. Because many of the Rohingya are averse to armed struggle, they are unable to defend themselves when the military sweeps through their villages to clear the areas of "illegal immigrants." Fleeing becomes the only

option, no matter how dangerous that might be, the choice being between certain death and a small chance of survival. India and Bangladesh's silence shows that they are unlikely to intervene in any way in what they would identify as being Myanmar's internal affairs.

Plight of economic migrants

Economic migrants face a somewhat different reality. The logic of globalisation requires that labour be freely mobile across markets for efficiency reasons, at least theoretically. Yet, despite high economic integration, labour migration is often criminalised, creating an inherent contradiction between the incentives to migrate and immigration laws that limit migration. What this means is that there are profits to be made from migration that governments restrict artificially, which then incentivises "illegal migration." When the workers are desperate, unskilled, and willing to pawn off their lives' worth of assets to access job markets abroad, they become easy targets of extortion, exploitation and trafficking. As the many interviews of rescued migrants in the past weeks indicate, these migrants often have no idea that what they were doing was illegal; after all, many had paid huge sums of money for migration services – often by selling land/assets, taking on loans, or mortgaging future earnings.

A small example from Bangladesh provides a microcosm of the larger issues at hand. Since the 1990s, Bangladesh has been one of the two largest suppliers of labour to Malaysia, responsible for much of the construction work and infrastructure development there. Beginning 2012, however, a smaller number of Bangladeshis have been able to go to Malaysia through official channels because of "insufficient demand" despite a government-level agreement to send 14 lakh Bangladeshi workers to Malaysia. At a time when the government could not ensure regular labour export, traffickers, in the guise of middlemen and government agents, lured workers into treacherous waters.

Paradoxically, the same desires for upward mobility are deemed entrepreneurial if the migrants are among the elite class and

know the laws well enough to never break them. Going back to the case of Bangladeshis in Malaysia, in the same period too, Bangladeshis formed the second largest group to apply for a residency programme called "Malaysia My Second Home", aimed at wealthy families in developing countries who would like to take advantage of state-sponsored facilities in Malaysia (unavailable in their own countries) and eventually invest there.

Thus, while there was no demand for Bangladeshi unskilled labour, wealthy Bangladeshis were welcome to go and live there. Perhaps, this highlights Malaysia's developmental path; Malaysia needed Bangladeshi (manual) workers when its primary investments were infrastructure-based. Now, as it tries to shift to a consumer-driven economy, it no longer requires unskilled labour as much as it requires a strong consumer base. At the same time, the many tales of workers finding jobs in Malaysia just as they land and rumours that Malaysian women like Bangladeshi men as husbands because they "look like Shah Rukh Khan" all keep the lure of going to Malaysia strong. While wealthy Bangladeshis found their way to their "second homes," the unskilled, poor migrants ended up stranded at sea, buried in unmarked mass-graves, or in detention centres across South and Southeast Asia.

Being Bengali Muslim

The circumstances under which the Rohingya and Bangladeshi migrants found themselves at sea are different, but the issues at hand are not only about escaping ethnic cleansing or economic depravation. In the last several decades, Bengali Muslims have become among the most persecuted in the region, easily targeted as being foreign by virtue of a shared ethno-religious identity with the majority of Bangladeshis. For its part, the Bangladeshi government has turned a blind eye to such acts for the sake of regional peace, stability and cooperation, made necessary by its weaker economic position. Perhaps, it is for the same reasons that the Bangladeshi government allows the 3,50,000 strong refugee population along the Myanmar-Bangladesh border without demanding resolution to

the over 40 year refugee crisis. Thus, not only are Bengali Muslims easily “othered”, but they also have no foreign patrons to come to their defence, despite cross-border ethnic ties.

The “Muslim factor” feeds into the calculation as well. The ‘global war on terror’ has effectively legitimised anti-Muslim sentiments and attacks across the world, even when links to the al-Qaeda are at best tenuous. For example, several UNHCR officials I spoke to in 2008 about resettlement of the Rohingya, had categorically said that their religion and “ties to terrorism” make them unlikely candidates for resettlement in the developed world; they saw resettlement in Bangladesh as the only durable solution to the Rohingya refugee crisis.

Anti-Muslim rhetoric

In India, the Hindu right traditionally used anti-Muslim sentiments as a rallying force, but in subversive ways. With global Islamophobia on the rise, anti-Muslim rhetoric has been normalised, it seems. Recently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that religious minority groups (Hindus) in Bangladesh and Pakistan would be given residency in India if they so desired. In conjunction with his speech during his election campaign in West Bengal and Assam in 2014 – on “illegal Bangladeshis” needing to pack up their bags or face consequences – this indicates that the Bharatiya Janata Party’s interest may lie in the consolidation of a supranational Hindu space; to which Hindus of the region belong, but even Indian Muslims may not. Historically, anti-Bengali Muslim sentiments in Assam had emphasised the Bengali part. Moving forward, would the Muslim factor become more dominant? What would be the fate of Muslim populations in enclaves that India received as part of the land-swap with Bangladesh?

Despite the various uncertainties, several things become clear: in spite of varied circumstances, the migrants at sea are predominantly Bengali Muslim (defined broadly), unwanted in their own homelands; Islamophobia has become a global force that has allowed countries like Myanmar (and the democratic

voices there) to disregard the lives of (Bengali) Muslims without fear of any repercussion; a climate of anti-Muslim sentiments in India, the de facto regional hegemon, has excused and normalised repression against Muslims in the entire region (including in Sri Lanka); Muslim-majority countries also prioritise state interests and will not necessarily come to the rescue of Muslim migrants on the basis of humanity or religiosity, as can be seen in the case of Indonesia and Malaysia; hope lies with the people – Indonesian fishermen were the first to rescue migrants defying government orders to turn away boats carrying migrants. It is among ordinary people that we can find humanity.

The Rohingyas: Security Implications for ASEAN and Beyond (Rohingya Crisis ,GS papaer 2 ,IDSA)

The Rohingya exodus has re-emerged as a point of concern for Southeast Asia since late April 2015. The recent crisis is a complex mix resulting from ethnic cleansing and sectarian violence inside Myanmar, human trafficking, illegal and irregular movement of people in Southeast Asia, lack of coordination in tackling human rights issues of this magnitude within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) member states and a negligent approach towards social and democratic rights of people in the region. It is important to pay attention to the recent exodus of Rohingyas for several reasons. First, as Myanmar is fast approaching the next general election in late 2015, it is worth watching how the country is treating its minority. This would also explain the main drivers behind the crisis. Second, it would be logical to see how ASEAN, as a regional organisation, is responding to this situation which beckons urgent action. The way ASEAN is handling the Rohingya issue not only demonstrates the lack of proper institutional mechanism and political agreement within the regional grouping, but also showcases difference of opinion within its members. As the 48 year old organisation is moving towards building an ASEAN Community by the end of 2015, it would be interesting to watch its response and analyse its limitations towards resolving the Rohingya crisis (or the issue of the boat people, as often referred to by the media). Finally, it is important to understand the larger security implications of the Rohingya crisis.

The recent crisis has received large-scale attention from the international community as pictures of a great multitude of Rohingyas stranded in boats, accompanied with news about

their abandonment by the Southeast Asian countries have been widely circulated and published by the media. Some rough estimates place the number of recently displaced Rohingyas at 8000. Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand have denied taking responsibility and Myanmar has mentioned that no evidence is available regarding their origin of movement from Myanmar. Myanmar also indicates that there are many Bangladeshis in the boats and henceforth, the country cannot be blamed for this influx. The Rohingya migration within the region however is not an isolated instance of illegal movement of people in Southeast Asia. In fact, since 1980s, the region has been witnessing intra-regional migration, caused by socio-economic and political factors.¹

Rohingyas and their Moves: A Brief History

The irregular and illegal movement of Rohingyas is not a recent phenomenon. The 1982 Citizenship Law in former Burma made the Rohingyas stateless people. They are perhaps one of the most persecuted minorities in the world. The government of Myanmar has severely restricted their freedom of movement; and denied them basic human rights (including land rights) which are necessities of a dignified living in any part of the world. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that approximately 800,000 people live in Rakhine state (traditional Rohingya base in Myanmar).² Harassment and discrimination forced them to leave Burma and the trend witnessed a surge since the late 1980s, shortly after the military government staged a coup-d'état in the country and came to power by weakening the democratic movement and ignoring the outcome of the general election held in the same year. Zafar Ahmad bin Abdul Ghani's story is one example. He was a Rohingya living in the then Burma who fled persecution in 1988. He first moved to Bangladesh, then to India. He then undertook a boat journey to Thailand only to be caught by the Thai Police who handed him over to an 'agency'. Zafar finally reached Malaysia in 1992 after paying the 'agency' \$300. He was lucky that he could borrow the required amount from his relatives in Thailand.³ Another story is of 27 year-old Mohammed Salim Ullah's, who migrated to Delhi along with his wife and 2 year-old son in 2012. Ullah said in an interview that the brutality on the Rohingyas by the government forces in Myanmar is endless and he has no reason to expect any change. He runs a small tea-shop in the settlement where they live along with 60 other Rohingya families in a slum (without access to clean water, sanitation and electricity) and he prefers to stay here rather than going back to his own country because of the freedom of religion and movement being enjoyed here.⁴ The reluctance of the Rohingya migrants living in low-lying slums in Delhi and other states in India to return to Myanmar reflects on the much worse situation back home in Rakhine state. They prefer staying in other countries, even though there is very little hope of any change in their everyday life which is at stake as they are not eligible for any civic rights except the scanty aid provided by the UNHCR. Like Zafar and Ullah, there were thousands of Rohingyas who fled from Burma and reached various destinations including Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, China, Australia and various Southeast Asian nations. While most of them undertook the boat journey, few of them could acquire (illegal) passports of other countries (like Bangladesh) and reached third countries.⁵ The Burmese/Myanmar government believes that Rohingyas are migrants from Bangladesh who moved to Burma during the British period and hence, they are not native to Myanmar. Derogatory words like 'Kala' are often used to describe the Rohingyas who are considered *Bengalis* by Myanmar. Bangladesh is the largest recipient of Rohingya refugees and as of now, around 32,000 Rohingyas are staying in the camps run by UNHCR in Bangladesh and an approximate 50,000 are living outside the camps.⁶ They fled from Burma/Myanmar in various waves since the 1970s. These are rough estimates and actual figures are likely to be much higher.

Table 1: Figures of Internally Displaced Population (IDP) in Myanmar (as of September 2014)

IDPs in Kachin State	97,000
IDPs in Rakhine State	140,000
IDPs in Southeast Myanmar (Mon, Kayah, Kayin States and Tanintharyi Region)	230,400
People Without Citizenship	1,090,000

Source: [UNHCR](#)

The recent crisis has received large-scale attention for few reasons. Myanmar is a country which is being closely watched as after five decades of military government, the country has its first nominally civilian government since late 2010 and is slowly and gradually transiting towards democracy. Most of the financial and economic sanctions imposed on the country have

been lifted by the United States, European Union, Australia and other countries who had placed those restrictions during the *Junta* era. Myanmar is now considered as one of the last frontiers of globalisation and the country is receiving huge foreign investments in fields like infrastructure, energy, human resources development, health care etc. World leaders have shown their optimism regarding the path that Myanmar has taken towards democracy. However, there are three issues which are still jeopardising the image of Myanmar and its government. These include the problem of ethnic unrest which is still persistent despite the government's efforts to sign a nation-wide ceasefire agreement; the issue of amendment of the Constitution which bars Daw Aung San Suu Kyi from participating in the upcoming general election in late 2015; and the issue of Rohingyas and their rights. Rohingyas, as mentioned earlier, are a continuing victim of discrimination and oppression in Myanmar, both by the government and by the majority community, predominantly Buddhists. In an attempt to further discriminate against the religious minorities (including Rohingyas) the Myanmar government has been trying to pass a package of few acts including the Religious Conversion Bill, Buddhist Women's Special Marriage Bill, the Monogamy Bill and the Population Control Healthcare Bill. In March 2015, the government has withdrawn the white cards or temporary registration cards which had enabled the Rohingyas to cast their votes in 2010 general election that ended the five decades of *Junta* rule in Myanmar. During the last census in Myanmar organised in 2014, the Rohingyas were instructed to identify themselves as 'Bengalis'. The Burmans too (the ethnic majority community in Myanmar) have shown their hostility towards the Rohingyas many times. The 2012 riots in Rakhine state forced the displacement of nearly 100,000 Rohingyas. President Thein Sein declared an emergency but did little to recognise the Rohingyas. Even last year, nearly 140,000 Muslims were displaced as riots surfaced in the aftermath of a killing of a Buddhist monk and gang-rape of a Buddhist woman.⁸ Inside Myanmar, the Rohingyas, thus, not only face the wrath of the government but are also victims of sectarian violence with no one coming to their rescue but for a few international human rights groups. On May 19, Myanmar's Foreign Ministry issued a media statement and mentioned that the Myanmar government is concerned for the boat people, but Myanmar cannot be held responsible for this problem and a long-term solution is required. Nowhere in the statement has the government acknowledged that it would consider giving the citizenship to the Rohingyas.⁹

Response from Neighbours and Beyond

The plight of the Rohingyas does not seem to end and pictures taken by reporters, volunteers and staff of international human rights organisations are a testament to this. However, UNHCR data show that even before the recent displacement, the agency office in Indonesia has already received 888 refugees from Myanmar as of September 2014.¹⁰ One UNHCR report indicates that till May 19, a total of 1396 boat people have landed in Indonesia, 1107 at Malaysia and 106 in southern Thailand.¹¹ The same report indicates that another 4000 were stranded in water as of May 19. The concerned countries in the region are worried that if they accept the Rohingya refugees from Myanmar, they would have to accept the Bangladeshi economic migrants too who are on the same boats.

Thus, Myanmar is not the only country refusing accountability towards the Rohingyas; its other ASEAN neighbours too are on the same track. The recent problem emerged as the poverty-stricken Rohingyas, in their attempt to flee the camps, were lured into human trafficking. Their alleged traffickers abandoned them as they understood that no ASEAN country is ready to welcome them. Now as they are helpless stranded in the water, Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia conveyed their strong reservation to accepting them as permanent settlers in their territories. Among these countries Malaysia, has been a favourite destination for many Rohingyas until recently as the country is in need of cheap labour. Even this time, the boat people were quite sure and optimistic about their destinations in these countries. Unfortunately, for them, while the push factors in Myanmar are still in force, the pull factor has suddenly disappeared. Malaysia, which recently hosted the 26th ASEAN Summit in Kuala Lumpur and Langkawi in April 2015 under the theme of *Our People, Our Vision, Our Community* did not take long to forget about the 'people' of the region except providing them with temporary shelter, food and medicine as decided in a meeting between the foreign ministers of Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand on May 20 at Putrajaya in Malaysia.¹² The Joint Statement issued by the Foreign Ministries of Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia mentioned that 7000 stranded people will be given humanitarian assistance on a temporary basis.¹³ Besides ASEAN members, the UNHCR has been assisting the internally displaced Rohingyas in Rakhine state as well as in Bangladesh through camps and shelters. On May 19, UNHCR along with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and

Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for International Migration and Development (SRSG) issued a Joint Statement urging Southeast Asian countries, especially, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand to take urgent action towards search and rescue operations, to work in accordance with the *principle of non-refoulement* and other basic human rights, avoid imprisonment of the boat people, act against traffickers and smugglers and strengthen international cooperation vis-à-vis the push factors – the original factors responsible for the move of the Rohingyas.¹⁴

The Philippines, a relatively distant neighbour of Myanmar, has offered official help to the boat people. Its Presidential Communications Operation Office's spokesperson, Herminio Coloma Jr. mentioned in a statement that Philippines would extend humanitarian assistance to the boat people and do the needful as sketched under the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, to which Philippines is a signatory.¹⁵ Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Myanmar are not parties to the 1951 Convention or its 1967 Protocol.

Rohingyas and the Limits of ASEAN Community

The ASEAN Secretariat has not yet issued any official statement on the issue. So far, ASEAN has not been successful in formulating a legal framework to address the issues of refugees, illegal migration and movement. The 2007 ASEAN Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers (ACMW) makes a reference to a free environment as well as equity for the workers who migrate in search of better livelihood within ASEAN. Likewise, in 2012, ASEAN adopted the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration. But in an ethos where the ASEAN Way and its principle of non-interference are of primary importance, none of these documents had any mention about addressing the root causes of illegal movement (which are often found in the domestic situation of a country) of people across the region. In a true sense, the non-interference policy of ASEAN is holding it back as the organisation has incapacitated itself from devising any strong policy that can prevent a member from harming its own people.¹⁶ In 2014, when Myanmar was the country chair of ASEAN, it took the advantage of the policy of non-interference of the grouping and successfully kept the Rohingya agenda out of the ASEAN Summit and its Foreign Ministers' meeting.¹⁷ ASEAN is now looking to adopt an ASEAN Convention on Trafficking in Persons (ACTIP) and a related action-oriented document, the Regional Plan of Action (RPA). Both these drafts will be submitted at the 10th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime (AMMTC), to be held in Kuala Lumpur on September 28 to October 1, 2015.¹⁸ The Rohingya issue and ASEAN's little attention to the problem actually puts a question mark on the regional organisation's much-hyped ASEAN Community project which is expected to be achieved by the end of 2015. It seems like the group and its members are talking about a community minus its people.

In the latest movement, the Rohingyas from Myanmar and Bangladesh boarded on boats and sailed towards Thailand. In the face of the Thai government's vigorous attempt to curb irregular movement of people along its shore, the boats were diverted towards Indonesia and Malaysia. While closing Malaysia's door to the displaced people, its Deputy Home Minister Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar said, "We need to send a very strong message to Myanmar that they need to treat their people with humanity".¹⁹ Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, Malaysia's Deputy Prime Minister mentioned that Myanmar government has to take the responsibility of the recent influx of the Rohingya people and other ASEAN countries should not be burdened with this.²⁰ Former ASEAN Secretary General Surin Pitsuwan, who is a Thai national, categorically stated that the origin of the boat people is not Thailand. However, he admitted to Thai traffickers' involvement in the incident. As a whole, the ASEAN countries are busy in blame-game while avoiding their own responsibilities. The fact is, countries in Southeast Asia, especially, Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand have already adopted a huge number of Rohingyas and therefore, it is not surprising that they are now unwilling to take any further responsibilities. The concerned members of ASEAN are however trying to resolve the issue amicably as they are signatories to Jakarta Declaration on Addressing the Irregular Movement of Persons. In 2013, Indonesia, Malaysia and Myanmar became signatories to the Jakarta Declaration and pledged to foster "political, social and economic conditions to mitigate the underlying factors that make individuals more vulnerable to irregular migration" as well as recognised the need for collaboration between countries of origin, transit and destination to resolve issues of illegal migration and trafficking mutually and peacefully.²¹ In view of that, ASEAN countries will host a talk on May 29 on the issue in Thailand to resolve the catastrophe. Initially, Myanmar responded to this invitation negatively. Zaw Htay, a Director in the office of President Thein Sein, mentioned that Myanmar will not participate in the meeting if the name

'Rohingya' is mentioned.²² However, after holding separate meetings with the visiting Foreign ministers of Indonesia and Malaysia, President Thein Sein softened his attitude and Myanmar declared that its representative would participate in the meeting. It was however decided that the name 'Rohingya' would not be used during the discussion. Hence, it is unlikely that the ASEAN talk would be able to crack the issue. On the contrary, it actually proves how inept ASEAN is in handling such issues as a regional organisation. The ineffectiveness of ASEAN in handling the issue of illegal migration has also been tested earlier when few hundred forced labourers, mostly from Myanmar, were rescued from Benjina Island in Indonesia, as they were deprived of basic facilities including food and payment for work on a regular basis. Even those labourers had illegally migrated to Indonesia in search of daily earning of wages. In fact, illegal migration and trafficking are rampant in ASEAN especially from the countries like Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia to countries like Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand.

Security Implications of Neglect of Rohingyas

At the time of writing, according to the UNHCR report, several hundred Rohingyas (the recent boat people) have been forced to go back to Myanmar as they found it difficult to enter countries like Thailand, Indonesia or Malaysia.²³ For their return, they paid approximately US\$ 200 to the agencies that brought them to the shores of those countries. Largely, the ASEAN countries feel that it should be the government of Myanmar's concern to prevent illegal migration of the Rohingyas to the neighbouring countries. Countries like Indonesia and Malaysia have only agreed to assist the Rohingya migrants with temporary relief which is no permanent solution to the problem. The question is, whether ASEAN members can deny responsibilities towards its people, as it aims to create an ASEAN Community by the end of 2015 where economic integration is not the sole criterion, socio-cultural issues and political security do have their due share in forming an integrated ASEAN Community. Shared sense of responsibility, protection of human rights, social rights and justice and social welfare- all are parts of the projected ASEAN Community and by denying responsibilities towards the Rohingyas, ASEAN is actually contradicting its own agenda. The response from the international political community too is not very encouraging. The US, EU and neighbours like India and China are most unlikely to exert international pressure on Myanmar to stop discriminating against the Rohingyas largely because of their own economic interests in the country. Therefore, any lasting solution to the humanitarian aspect of the problem seems unattainable right now. In the meantime, one should not overlook another equally serious implication of the unaddressed Rohingya issue. A few months ago, the Islamic State has announced their possible future operational areas, which also include Myanmar, a country where Muslim population has to face discrimination based on their ethnicity and religion. Hence, it is likely that the dreadful experience of the boat people and other Rohingyas living inside Myanmar and other Southeast Asian countries may push them towards Islamic extremism. This adds to the reasons why the Rohingya issue requires immediate attention not only from Myanmar, but also its regional neighbours and the international community.

Conclusion

The Rohingya issue has so far been a concern of the human rights groups. The government of Myanmar has been urged to stop discriminating against the Rohingyas based on their religion and ethnicity. The Myanmar government, on the other hand, has always claimed that the Rohingyas are migrants from Bangladesh and hence, they should be deported there. However, in this tussle of words, the security aspect of the Rohingya issue has largely been overlooked. Illegal movement of people, combined with human trafficking and cross-border migration, can weaken Myanmar's relations with its neighbour Bangladesh and its ASEAN partners. It may, in effect, undermine ASEAN's efforts towards integration by spoiling mutual trust and confidence in each other. In addition, continuous ethnic violence inside Myanmar goes against its own agenda of being recognised as a democratic nation. In view of that, it can be concluded that Myanmar needs to take a pragmatic approach towards the Rohingyas and denying responsibilities would result in more criticalities not only for the country, but also for the region as a whole.

Decoding China's Military Strategy White Paper: Assessing the Maritime Implications (IDSA ,IR ,GS paper 2)

China's new military strategy white paper released last week is creating ripples in global strategic circles. The document, released by China's State Council, the chief administrative body of the Chinese government, is the ninth in a series of white papers released since 1998. But it is the first on 'military strategy' and it calls for a hard posture in China's near-seas, even discussing the possibility of greater PLA-N presence in the distant oceanic spaces.[1](#)

Media reports in the past few days have highlighted four aspects of the new military strategy: One, greater emphasis on 'open seas protection' rather than continuing with 'active offshore defence' (the mainstay of Chinese maritime strategy so far). Second, a shift in air operations from territorial air defence to both 'defence and offence'. Third, an increase in the PLA's mobility. And, last, the strengthening of Chinese nuclear forces for "medium and long-range precision strikes". Since the central theme of the white paper is the "long-standing task for China to safeguard its *maritime rights and interests*," much space is devoted to explaining the shift in PLA thinking from ground operations to joint naval and aerospace operations, and attendant changes in other aspects of future military modernization.

Whilst many of China's maritime policy positions in the new document are well known, the timing of the white paper's release says something about its message and intended addresses. At a time of heightened regional tensions over Chinese reclamation of disputed islands in the South China Sea, Beijing's new military strategy is meant to signal increased resolve to the United States and its allies in the Pacific. The document pointedly raises the possibility of "military struggle" if Washington and its allies in the Pacific continued taking a hard line on China's activities in the South China Sea. In keeping with the popular nationalistic sentiment in China, the strategy recommends a muscular approach in dealing with maritime territorial threats.

In one significant area, however, the new white paper breaks fresh ground. Stressing on the ongoing transformation of China into a true maritime power, the document emphasises greater high-seas presence and offensive naval operations. China's emphasis, the white paper states, will be on "building a combined, multi-functional and efficient *marine combat force structure*". The shift to an expeditionary combat template is noteworthy, for it highlights China's desire for a greater security role on the global stage, especially in the wider Pacific region, where the new document projects the PLA as a virtuous force, and the US Navy as a destabilising presence.

From an Indian perspective, the most interesting aspect of the new strategy is the possibility of greater military activity in the Indian Ocean. In the past few days, discussions on the Chinese white paper have revolved around one key announcement: a gradual shift in PLA-N operations to "offshore defence with open seas protection". The document's assertion that the PLA-N will soon "enhance its capabilities for strategic deterrence and counterattack, maritime manoeuvres, joint operations at sea, comprehensive defence and comprehensive support" is a matter of concern because such maritime missions represent an enhanced capacity for sustained presence in the IOR littorals.

Observed in conjunction with the latest strategic developments in South Asia, the new white

paper outlines a more assertive Chinese far-seas strategy – particularly the possibility of greater PLA-N posturing in the IOR. It is no coincidence that a key component of President Xi's recent proposal committing \$46 billion to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is the development of Gwadar Port – a potential staging-post for the PLA-N and a crown jewel in a new 'silk noose' around the Indian peninsula. With other strategic sites in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Maldives forming part of a broader network of PLA-N presence, China could soon be chipping away at India's regional maritime influence.

While the latest military strategy does not directly allude to PLA-N presence in the IOR, some parts resonate strongly with previous semi-official documents that address the question of Chinese naval activity in the Indian Ocean. There are echoes, for instance, with the Blue-Book in the Indian Ocean, released two years ago by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS). Modestly named "Development Report in the Indian Ocean", this 2013 document had painted a comprehensive picture of China's growing economic and security interests in the Indian Ocean, including the possibility of the PLA-N playing a larger security role in the region. In a curious parallel, the latest white paper mentions the need for the PLA-N to pay "close attention to the challenges in new security domains", and also work hard to "seize the strategic initiative in military competition". The fact that the PLA-Navy will now actively "participate in both regional and international security cooperation and effectively secure *China's overseas interests*" should give pause to Indian strategic planners.

To be sure, the immediate 'trigger' for China to clarify its military posture does not lie in the Indian Ocean at all. The white paper appears to be a reaction to US-led moves to constrict Beijing's strategic space in the South China Sea and the East Sea, especially the release of fresh guidelines for US-Japan defence cooperation that bind Washington and Tokyo in a tighter strategic embrace. With Japan upping the ante by announcing its openness to partner the United States in military operations in the wider Western Pacific, China's political elite sense that the regional strategic dynamic may have deteriorated to the point of no-return.

Beijing, in fact, has been under severe pressure to come up with a suitable response to provocative forays by US surveillance planes into territorial zones surrounding the disputed islands, even counter allegations that the PLA has placed mobile artillery weapons systems on a reclaimed structure. Not surprisingly, the white paper is positioned as a strategic response to the US rebalancing strategy, and Japan's attempts to "dodge the post-war mechanism, overhauling its military and security policies".

Japan, in fact, seems to be a key point of reference in the new white paper. With Tokyo's announcement that Japanese self-defence forces (JSDF) airplanes might be pressed into patrols in the South China Sea, and Prime Minister Abe's attempts to expansively interpret Article 9 of the Japanese constitution, the white paper's authors seem to be driven by the need to act before the world perceives China as having conceded vital strategic ground.

Even so, the document offers no reasonable explanation for Chinese reclamation in the South China Sea. In the past 18 months, geo-engineering on a massive scale has resulted in the reclamation of over 2000 acres of submerged islands and reefs, leading to a significant rise in regional tensions. China claims that the reclaimed features are meant to further regional humanitarian aid and assistance efforts and also ensure greater freedom of navigation, but the justification is a barely disguised pretext. The new strategy document does not explain Beijing's blatant attempts at reshaping the status quo in the South China Sea, allowing itself a stronger point of leverage in its maritime disputes.

For India, the new Chinese military strategy is a cause for concern, simply because it illustrates China's expansionist mind-set. Till some time ago, the PLA-N's stated distant-seas strategy was one of benign cooperation, but that no longer appears to be the case. The new white paper's reference to open-seas protection hints at a more robust military posture in the IOR, and lends credence to recent speculation about China's effort to establish a naval logistics base in Djibouti.

The Indian Navy's (IN) response to the latest development has been one of characteristic guardedness. Following the Naval Commanders' Conference in New Delhi last week, the Navy Chief, Admiral Robin Dhowan, observed that "Chinese maritime activities in the Indian Ocean were being monitored minutely", which cautiously expressed Indian anxieties about recent PLA-N submarine deployments in the IOR. The IN has been emphasising its own plans to develop the Andaman and Nicobar Islands into a strategic outpost – crucial in countering Chinese influence in the region. On the eve of the Commanders Conference, the Navy released a 15 year

perspective plan for infrastructure creation, a clear indication of India's strategic stakes in the Indian Ocean.

Yet, there is wariness about hyping up the Chinese threat in the IOR. Many senior Indian naval officers acknowledge China's economic interests in the Indian Ocean and its need to secure the vital sea lines of communication. A section of India's strategic elite too feels that there is a strong case for greater engagement with China. The pragmatists oppose trilateral maritime exercises in the IOR involving India and the United States, even while pushing for greater nautical cooperation with China. Not surprisingly, the Indian Navy has extended an invitation to the PLA-N to participate in the International Fleet Review at Visakhapatnam in 2016, even as doubts are being raised over Japan's participation in the Malabar exercises later this year.

For the moment, it may be advisable to interact with the PLA-N and improve bilateral strategic trust. But given China's growing confidence in the maritime domain, India's senior political and military leadership will need to come up with a more imaginative response than 'episodic engagement' to deal effectively with the Chinese challenge in the IOR. The new defence strategy white paper is a clear indication that China's stated ambition to be a formidable force in global security affairs is driven by cold calculations of national power. It is not a matter of a minor shift in the Indian Ocean's balance of maritime power, but one that impacts India's capacity and will to impose a deterrent cost.

Views expressed are of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the IDSA or of the Government of India

India's Foreign Policy By Sumit Ganguly (One of the Best source to read Foreign Policy of India for both GS mains and Political Science Optional)

Dare we begin to hope? (Hindu , Political Science)

Two events, the BJP's electoral loss in Delhi, and the stir against the Land Bill, offer two slivers of hope. They represent first, a preparedness in people to correct their past electoral misjudgements, and second, they raise hope of a possible united front of opposition

In its dark night of the soul this past year, Indian politics saw two chinks of light beckon with some small encouragement. These apertures are tiny and tentative and one should be careful not to invest them with an optimism they do not warrant. Still, they are not nothing: first, the loss suffered by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the Delhi Assembly elections in February; second, the recently recurring agitation against the Land Acquisition Bill.

The Delhi election took place nine months after the BJP victory in the general election, just about the canonical period to test whether the birth of a new era

of BJP dominance had been delivered. That the party should have suffered the proportions of a rout gives hope that it has not. Such a dramatic defeat reflects the scepticism in a wide range of voters about their own previous judgement that the Congress party's massive failures of the previous years could only be corrected by the BJP. Muslims, lower and middle-class Dalits, in general the vast numbers of the Delhi poor, and (most encouraging of all) even many in the middle classes reversed their previous conviction, a conviction shaped by a sustained public relations campaign that refurbished a leader with a deservedly non grata status into a seeming beacon. Nine months were sufficient to reveal the true colours of a government whose prominent members were raising the Hindutva rhetoric to new heights of vulgarity and menace, while it was also busy trying to dismantle the few remaining policies and institutions that sought to protect the poor and working people of the country.

An awakening

That the party (the Aam Aadmi Party) which stopped what appeared unstoppable has since imploded and, in any case, had no serious analysis of what has been chronically wrong in the nation's politics and political economy in the last two and a half decades, is not the main point of relevance. What is heartening rather is that it awakened people to correct their judgement of only nine months ago and it did so with hardly any resources, thereby giving the lie to the idea that the future of Indian parliamentary politics lies in cash-debased, American-style, electioneering given over to the sinister manipulations of public relations companies and a shallow mainstream media cheerleading for elitist ideas of "development". There is no more urgent task than to consolidate and build on this no small, though local, achievement in Delhi; and, at this particular juncture, it is not a task that can be carried out by any one party all on its own. I will return to this last point in a moment. The agitation against the Land Acquisition Bill is heartening for two quite separate reasons.

"The agitation against the Land Acquisition Bill reflects an understanding of the current malaise in notions of 'development' that has afflicted governments both Central and regional, including some in the Left."

First, it reflects an intuitive understanding of the current malaise that lies at the heart of notions of "development" that has afflicted governments both Central and regional (including even some Left governments). It suggests that ordinary people and the leaders who have mobilised them in the recent agitations may be moving to a deeper understanding of the corruption that is at stake in the country's governance.

There is, of course, the reprehensible large-scale corruption of politicians that the AAP – and its antecedents in a popular movement – brought to nationwide public attention and resentment. But underlying this is the more submerged corruption of a set of policies which for 25 years have systematically taken actual and potential resources and opportunities away from the working people of both rural and urban India and handed them over in grotesquely large measure to a

minuscule domestic and foreign elite. The manner in which this is done is shrouded in high-sounding economic policy rhetoric and so it appears to have a veneer of respectability, but it is a criminal transfer that any clear-eyed analysis would reveal to be a form of corruption that is far more deep-going than the more visible, titillating (and, no doubt) venal acts of politicians that the media pruriently displays, while hiding from public view the more structural malaise which has vastly more debilitating effects on ordinary people.

The tragedy has been that the urban middle classes see in this corrupt transfer a chance to locate their own aspirations and future. But that is an illusion of our age, an illusion that has been thoroughly exposed by even mainstream economists in the West such as Thomas Piketty and Joseph Stiglitz, while our own advisers to the Prince of the last two and a half decades have been ostrich-like in their obliviousness to it.

An understanding of corruption

The acquisition of land has been at the centre of this ideal of development and what is encouraging about the agitation against it is that it may be the beginning of a spread of understanding among our citizens that we cannot any longer consistently oppose this state-facilitated land-seizure for domestic and foreign corporate gain without also seeing that it is merely a symptom of the larger tendencies summarised in such terms as “development” as they are deployed in the prevailing economic zeitgeist that we have witnessed around Manmohan Singh and now Narendra Modi; tendencies such as the privatisation of the nation’s resources, the loss of national sovereignty in the Indian state’s inability to pursue policies that uplift its own population due to having surrendered control to highly mobile international finance capital, the rendering helpless of the labour force in every corner of the land through informalisation and impermanence of employment...We can perhaps hope that in these recent mobilisations that oppose the land policies of the government, we are at the cusp of such a more penetrating understanding of what needs to be opposed than the mere cry against corrupt politicians – a more fundamental and more structural corruption at the heart of our entire political economy.

Stirrings of an opposition

The second encouraging feature of the agitation is that a wide spectrum of parties has supported it, raising the hope of a growing united front of opposition. And Sonia Gandhi’s initiatives in the agitation reflect a potentially interesting emergence in the Congress party, one in which the technocrats approved by international economic interests and domestic elites might cease to be the dominant influence on its political and economic agenda. If that were to happen, there may be real prospects for an alliance to emerge against the present government in which the Left parties and the AAP put aside their seemingly unburiable hatchets with the Congress, hatchets that owed to their perfectly justified disgust with the second regnum of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA).

In the present political situation, these parties are natural allies, just as the BJP is a natural ally of the “development”-minded core (one hopes, in the future, a rump) of the Congress. (Indeed, I have heard from completely reliable sources that a member of this core, a close economic adviser to the second UPA government, actually found more promise in the BJP government to pursue policies that his own government was prevented from pursuing by those overly concerned to provide employment and food to people instead.)

As I said, it is utterly premature to think that these two shafts of light in the darkness of the past year that I have been commenting on really do have the scope suggested by these preliminary possibilities that seem to have surfaced. But if they do, and the hard work of pursuing their potential is undertaken without once again falling prey to the current illusions around “development” that are slowly beginning to be exposed, then the wide-spectrum united front of opposition that emerges could prove to be formidable. It is far too early to tell whether this is even so much as seriously conceivable and the roadblocks in the path are many and long-standing, not least among which is the fact that the learning curve of some of the parties I mentioned, especially the Congress, has in recent years been close to flat. Still, to repeat, the past year, as we have known it, has offered nothing else of any hope, and the prospects as I have presented them, even if slim, are not negligible.

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