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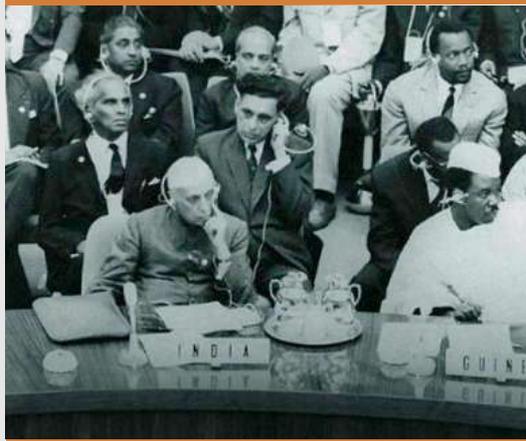
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# Policy WATCH

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## India's Place in the World



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RAJIV GANDHI  
INSTITUTE FOR CONTEMPORARY STUDIES

# I. Editorial

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The Rajiv Gandhi Institute for Contemporary Studies (RGICS) works on five themes:

1. Constitutional Values and Democratic Institutions
2. Growth with Employment
3. Governance and Development
4. Environment, Natural Resources and Sustainability
5. India's Place in the World.

This issue of Policy Watch is on the theme India's Place in the World. The issue begins with a tribute to Dr Bibek Debroy, who passed away on 1st November, 2024. Dr Debroy was the Director of RGICS for about five years in the early 2000s. We carry two obituary pieces written on him, one by economist Sajjid Chenoy, a member of the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister that Dr Debroy chaired. The other is by public intellectual Pratap Bhanu Mehta, who used to be the head of the Centre for Policy Research, which Dr Bibek Debroy joined after leaving the RGICS. Both the articles appeared in the Indian Express and are reproduced here with gratitude. They tell us what an insightful scholar and a warm human being Dr Debroy was. We also carry a graphic which features several of the books that Dr Debroy wrote/edited while he was Director, RGICS.

This month, on 14th November, it was India's first Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's 135th birth anniversary. As we wrote in the previous editorial on this topic: "Nehruji was not just one of the main leaders of India's freedom movement, but also a major contributor to the ideas enshrined in India's Constitution as also the chief architect of India's foreign policy. When India became independent, the Cold War had just started, with the US and the USSR trying to expand their influence globally. One of Nehruji's contributions was the idea of non-alignment with either bloc. Along with this, Nehruji tried to establish an atmosphere of peace and harmony among the newly independent countries, starting with Asia. It was in the context that he became a major proponent of the concept of Panchsheel." So we begin this issue of Policy Watch with an article in Hindi नेहरू की विदेश नीति के आधार तत्व by Shri Dinesh Dube, who was Senior Political Specialist at the US Embassy in New Delhi.

The next two articles deal with the big event of this month – the election of Donald Trump as the next President of the United States. The first of the articles is by our Trustee and former Commerce, Finance and Home Minister of India Thiru P. Chidambaram, where he talks of three contrarian facets of Trump – the mercantilist, the protectionist and the climate sceptic. We pair Thiru Chidambaram's article with a conversation between Justin Vogt, the Executive Editor of *Foreign Affairs* and Stanford Professor Stephen Kotkin, where the latter underlines "anything can happen" because of Trump's unpredictability, but ends with a reassuring thought "Well, he'll be a lame duck immediately after the inauguration, and second term presidencies generally don't get a lot done."

Images Courtesy:

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The next two articles are on India's "Neighbourhood First" policy. The first one is a succinct piece by Prof Yogendra Yadav, another of our public intellectuals. Though it was triggered by his recent short visit to Nepal, it covers India's relationships with the other neighbours as well. As Yogendraji says: "'Neighbourhood first' is the charming label of the Modi government's South Asia policy.

The official description doesn't help you understand what exactly comes "first". The government's priorities make you wonder if it is about putting first the concerns of our neighbours or about asserting our global power claims first in our neighbourhood. Would it not be better if we follow a policy of "neighbourliness first" — good old precepts of being decent neighbours?"

The second article in the same topic is much more detailed exposition by Prof Somnath Ghosh, Senior Honorary Visiting Fellow of RGICS, who did his doctoral work at the School of International Studies of the Jawaharlal Nehru University.

He describes how India's foreign policy over the last decade has systematically brought our relations with the neighbours to the lowest ebb. One wonders if abandoning Nehruvian idealism of non-alignment in favour of the aphorism, "There are no permanent enemies, and no permanent friends, only permanent interests"<sup>1</sup> was wise.

This article is part II of a three part piece that Dr Ghosh has written. Part I was published by us in the Policy Watch issue of May 2024 on the same theme. It was on the relations between India and China during the last five years, taking a geostrategic approach. In the article he traced the major events in the respective bilateral relations between India and China which went from cosy "Jhula" diplomacy to border skirmishes in both the western and eastern borders with China.

In part II, Dr Ghosh deals with our four Islamic neighbours – Afghanistan, Pakistan, Maldives and Bangladesh. Why this cut – because as Dr Ghosh suggests, part of the reason for the deterioration in the relationship has been the religious stance of the NDA government, both internally and externally. Part III will be published next month and will cover the other four neighbours – Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Bhutan and Nepal.

The final big event of this month was the global Climate Change conference COP29 at Baku, Azerbaijan from 10th to 24th November. Attended by over 50 heads of state and 55,000 participants including officials, environmental experts and civil society activists, plus media persons, the conference's main agenda was to discuss a proposed increase in the contribution that developed countries would make to financing action – mitigation and adaptation – to counter the effects of climate change.

The "group of like-minded developing countries" were asking to raise the developed countries' contribution from USD 100 billion a year to a whopping USD 1.3 Trillion a year. As expected they met with serious push back and eventually what was agreed to was just USD 300 billion a year, and that too by 2035. We carry the official announcement as well as a number of articles on COP29 in Baku.

We hope you enjoy reading this issue end to end. We would appreciate your feedback.

**Vijay Mahajan**  
**Director, Rajiv Gandhi Institute for Contemporary Studies (RGICS)**

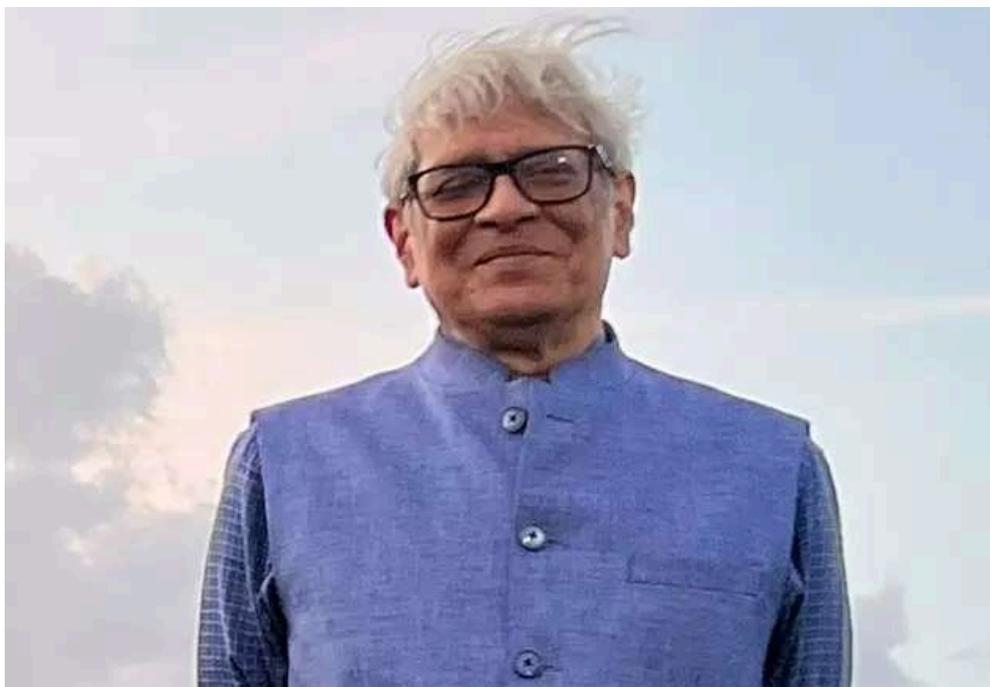
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<sup>1</sup> This quote is often attributed to Lord Palmerston, a British statesman and Prime Minister in the 19th century

## 2. Remembering Bibek Debroy: The eclectic economist

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Sajjid Z. Chinoy



*Bibek Debroy was the Director of the Rajiv Gandhi Institute for Contemporary Studies for four years till 2004. As a tribute to him, we reproduce an article by Sajjid Chinoy, Head, Asia Economic Research, J P Morgan and a part-time member of Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister. This article appeared first in the Indian Express on 5th November, 2024.<sup>2</sup>*

Bibek Debroy had a wide-ranging scholarship complemented with an elephantine institutional memory, the ability to marry the macros with the micros.

I had the pleasure of working under Bibek Debroy for five years as a part-time member of the Economic Advisory Council to the PM. During that time, one of the most revealing conversations I had with him was not about economics — it was about cricket.

I had just finished talking about the virtues of globalisation and free trade at a conference in Pune in February 2020 — a time when the US and China continued to ratchet up their bilateral trade war. My presentation harked back to familiar arguments:

No country had ever grown at 7 per cent or more for decades — like India needed to do — without relying on strong exports and global engagement. Exports, in turn, needed imports and, as a foundational theorem of international trade had shown, an import tariff was equivalent to an export tax. The challenge for India was to navigate and overcome the de-globalisation tendencies that were taking hold.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/remembering-bibek-debroy-the-jack-of-all-trades-master-of-one-9653660/>

In the coffee break that followed, Bibek Debroy approached me and, in his understated style, noted that while he agreed with my thinking, there was a simpler, more compelling way to make this argument come to life. Imagine, he said, that the IPL did not permit foreign players at all. This was the cricketing equivalent of imposing tariffs or prohibiting imports.

Imagine what the lack of foreign players would do to the quality of the IPL. Imagine what their absence would do to the development of the young Indian cricketers who got to rub shoulders with them. Imagine what that would do to the values of different franchises. Would the IPL really be able to compete as one of the marquee leagues globally? The virtues of “globalisation” were easy to appreciate when one recognised its intrinsic presence in day-to-day life.

But didn't the IPL offer broader lessons to economic management, we asked each other. Globalisation apart, the IPL thrived on competition. It was the sheer competitive intensity across franchises that had raised the quality of cricket in the league. That had induced 10 different franchises to aggressively scout for talent, unearthing some of India's finest prospects. It was competition that had meant facilities in stadiums had improved all around.

The league's success, in turn, boosted revenues to such an extent that administrators could invest heavily in domestic cricket and facilities so non-IPL events were benefiting from this “positive spill-over”. At the heart of the IPL, therefore, were two tenets that had been foundational to growth, development and prosperity in recent decades — competition and globalisation. We ended by agreeing to jointly write an op-ed drawing parallels between the IPL and India's economy and the lessons each had for the other. Alas, it never got written. The pandemic came within a few weeks and our little project was overtaken by the subsequent turn of events.

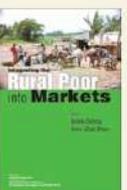
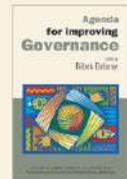
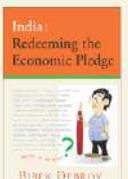
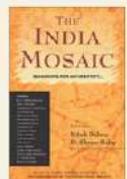
That conversation was revealing because it illustrated that, at his core, Bibek Debroy was a free-market reformist and globalist. Of course, the world is never black or white and there were occasions that called for nuance and deviating from these principles. So, even as he strongly espoused free trade, he would sometimes cite Keynes' 1933 piece “National Self Sufficiency” in the Yale Review that there were occasions in which strategic considerations should take precedence. But, as I saw it, these were the exceptions more than the rule.

Similarly, he believed it was important for governments to create safety nets — especially in the aftermath of the pandemic — as well as create an enabling mechanism for the private sector to thrive. But for any government intervention, you could almost hear him ask: What is the market failure? Have we studied the distortions? Have we undertaken a cost-benefit analysis? How would this be paid for? At a time when a renewed wave of industrial policy is sweeping through the world — spawned by Bidenomics in the US — a careful evaluation is invaluable. That Pune conversation also revealed he was instinctively eclectic and multi-disciplinary at heart.

The ability to find common cause between economic reform and cricket, between globalisation and the IPL, was a small, but illuminating illustration of how he could apply foundational principles across vastly different domains. But even as our discussion may have centered around the IPL, Bibek Debroy's approach to macroeconomic management embodied the finest virtues of Test cricket — patience, application and durability. He recognised that macroeconomic stability was the foundation on which growth prospers. That we should abandon short-termism and play the long-game instead. That we should seek to achieve steady and sustainable growth for long periods of time — and let the magic of compounding take over — rather than push the fiscal or monetary pedal excessively to achieve spectacular but unsustainable growth.

All told, Bibek Debroy brought a unique array of gifts to the table. A wide-ranging scholarship complemented with an elephantine institutional memory. The ability to marry the macros with the micros. The ability to juxtapose the (more romantic) poetry of high-minded economic principles with the (more challenging) prose of actual governance on the ground. If there is a risk, it is that the sheer breadth of his work — prolific, eclectic, multi-disciplinary — will mask the core economic principles that he continually espoused: Economically reformist and liberal; monetarily and fiscally prudent; institutionally pragmatic.

To the very end, his commitment was exemplary. Even in his last weeks in hospital, I got a request to assess the macro impact on India of fast-moving global events. At a time when the world is confronting so many forks in the road — globalisation versus inwardness, capital versus labour, markets versus the state, populism versus reforms — deploying the wisdom of his core economic thinking in resolving these debates will be the most befitting tribute we can pay him.

	<p><b>Reforming The Labour Market</b> Bibek Debroy, P.D. Kaushik (Eds.)• Hard-cover • 2005 • 417 • 5¾ x 9 (inch) ISBN 8171884415 • INR 1195 <a href="#">+ Read More...</a> <a href="#">+ Add to Cart</a></p>		<p><b>Integrating the Rural Poor into Markets</b> Bibek Debroy, Amir Ullah Khan, Hard-cover • 2004 • 470 • 5¾ x 9 (inch) ISBN 8171883907 • INR 995 <a href="#">+ Read More...</a> <a href="#">+ Add to Cart</a></p>
	<p><b>Small-Scale Industry in India Large Scale Exit Problems</b> Bibek Debroy, Laveesh Bhandari, Hard-cover • 2004 • 238 • 5¾ x 9 (inch) ISBN 8171884113 • INR 995 <a href="#">+ Read More...</a> <a href="#">+ Add to Cart</a></p>		<p><b>Agenda for Improving Governance</b> Bibek Debroy (Ed.)• Hard-cover • 2004 • 652 • 5¾ x 9 (inch) ISBN 8171883583 • INR 1295 <a href="#">+ Read More...</a> <a href="#">+ Add to Cart</a></p>
	<p><b>India : Redeeming the Economic Pledge</b> Bibek Debroy, Hard-cover • 2004 • 208 • 5¾ x 9 (inch) ISBN 8171883486 • INR 895 <a href="#">+ Read More...</a> <a href="#">+ Add to Cart</a></p>		<p><b>The India Mosaic</b> <b>Searching for an Identity</b> Bibek Debroy, Shyam Babu (Eds.)• Hard-cover • 2004 • 285 • 5¾ x 9 (inch) ISBN 8171883559 • INR 995 <a href="#">+ Read More...</a> <a href="#">+ Add to Cart</a></p>

Some of the books written/edited by Bibek Debroy while at the RGICS. See more at <https://academicfoundation.org/>



Stop Press: Just as this issue was getting ready to be uploaded we received a sad news. Dr PD Kaushik, Associate Director of RGICS, who worked closely with Dr Debroy, passed away on 28th Nov. May his soul rest in peace.



### 3. In government and outside, Bibek Debroy remained his own person

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*Pratap Bhanu Mehta*<sup>3</sup>

In both partisan alignments, first with Congress and then the BJP, he managed to remain his own person: Self-driven, mysterious, funny, but always industrious



*Source: Image*

When Bibek Debroy resigned from the Rajiv Gandhi Institute for Contemporary Studies and PHDCCI, the Centre for Policy Research smelled an opportunity. I immediately called him up and offered a professorship. He was gracious enough to accept it. But he had one concern. He said he was planning to devote much of his time to the translation of the Mahabharata. He would continue to do policy work. But he needed space for this project. I was in awe of his audaciousness.

I said something to the effect that this made him even more attractive to the Centre for Policy Research (CPR). But I told him I had one concern. Since the 19th century, no one who had attempted an English translation of the whole of the Mahabharata had lived to see it completed. I did not want him to tempt fate. He replied, "I feel I was born to do this. I will defy the odds." He joined the CPR immediately.

Much will be written about Bibek's intellectual brilliance, his preternatural grasp of almost all subjects, his photographic memory, his command of factual detail, his artistry in photography, and his myriad contributions to public policy.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/pratap-bhanu-mehta-writes-in-government-and-outside-bibek-debroy-remained-his-own-person-9649185/>

The word polymath seems to only circumscribe the range of his achievements, not describe it. What struck me most in that conversation about the Mahabharata was his character: His extraordinary tenacity, a sense of being possessed, as if he were following some inner law of his own being. By sheer determination, he defied the odds and how, not just producing a translation of the Mahabharata, but even more ambitiously, the Puranas.

For those who saw him up close, the sheer physicality of this project was daunting: Producing thousands of words per day for almost two decades. Even in meetings he was typing away on his Blackberry or phone, awkwardly drawn close to his already strained eyes. The sheer grit of the project would deserve an award all its own.

But ultimately, he could not defy the calling of Yama. I had a wonderful Diwali message from him at 9.15 am, the day before he passed on, the day he called, "panchotsava." But you got the sense, at least from the outside, that it was an ultimate call he was in no mood to defy, leaving us much too soon at the age of 69. I saw little of him the last few years since both of us moved on from the CPR. He had been seriously ill last year, but had recovered. At our last meeting a few weeks ago he was talking almost as if he had a premonition that he might be moving to a higher station. At least on that occasion, he had a sense of radiant calm at the prospect.

We were discussing one topic that we had incessantly touched on for years. Texts were important to the recovery of Indian traditions, and he had done more in this vein than anyone in his generation. But we also had a sense, in different ways that dealing just with texts was not enough. The sense of these texts was clear, but the references were not. It was a bit like reading philosophy of science texts, without any sense of what the practice of science might be like. It is like reading a meta discourse about an object without experiencing the object itself. He took off from that point to say that he was practising a new form of Shiv Aradhana, and was beginning to finally have a sense of luminescence. Hope he finds it.

To reveal this is not to betray any confidences. But it is to point out that in a city like Delhi, where intellectual life has a lot of glittering surfaces, Bibek always seemed to have unplumbed depths. You peel one layer off and another emerges. I did not know him as well as many others, and did not regularly hang out with him. But as you grow older you realise what matters is the quality and depth of encounters, not their frequency. I almost got the sense that it was impossible to really know Bibek, there was something enigmatic about him that the encyclopedic knowledge of facts, droll humour, policy wonkishness, his love of pens, photography and dogs, candour about people, the torrent of written words was only disguising.

It is a measure of Bibek's achievement that his towering feat of translations will stand out for the ages. Many five-star economists have got more credit for India's economic reforms. But few had the kind of impact in changing our default sensibility to economic liberalisation as Bibek did. There is no aspect of economic reform which was not touched by his intellectual prowess: Trade reform, legal reform, regulatory reform and his shepherding of the committee of reform of the Railways. He was one of the rare economists who consistently maintained a liberalisation-oriented outlook, but could really dive into arcane details of law and regulation.

We used to tease him by saying that he secretly had a bureaucratic mind: No one outside the bureaucracy could remember sub-clause X of clause Y of sub-section Z of thousands of statutes and dig them up when necessary. In retrospect you can see the continuity with his translation work: He had a shastric mind, a practitioner of the mnemonic arts who could absorb whole bodies of texts. It is also extraordinary to think that there was a moment in Indian intellectual life when the most brilliant constellation of economic liberalisers was with the Congress and a Bibek Debroy was heading the Rajiv Gandhi Institute.

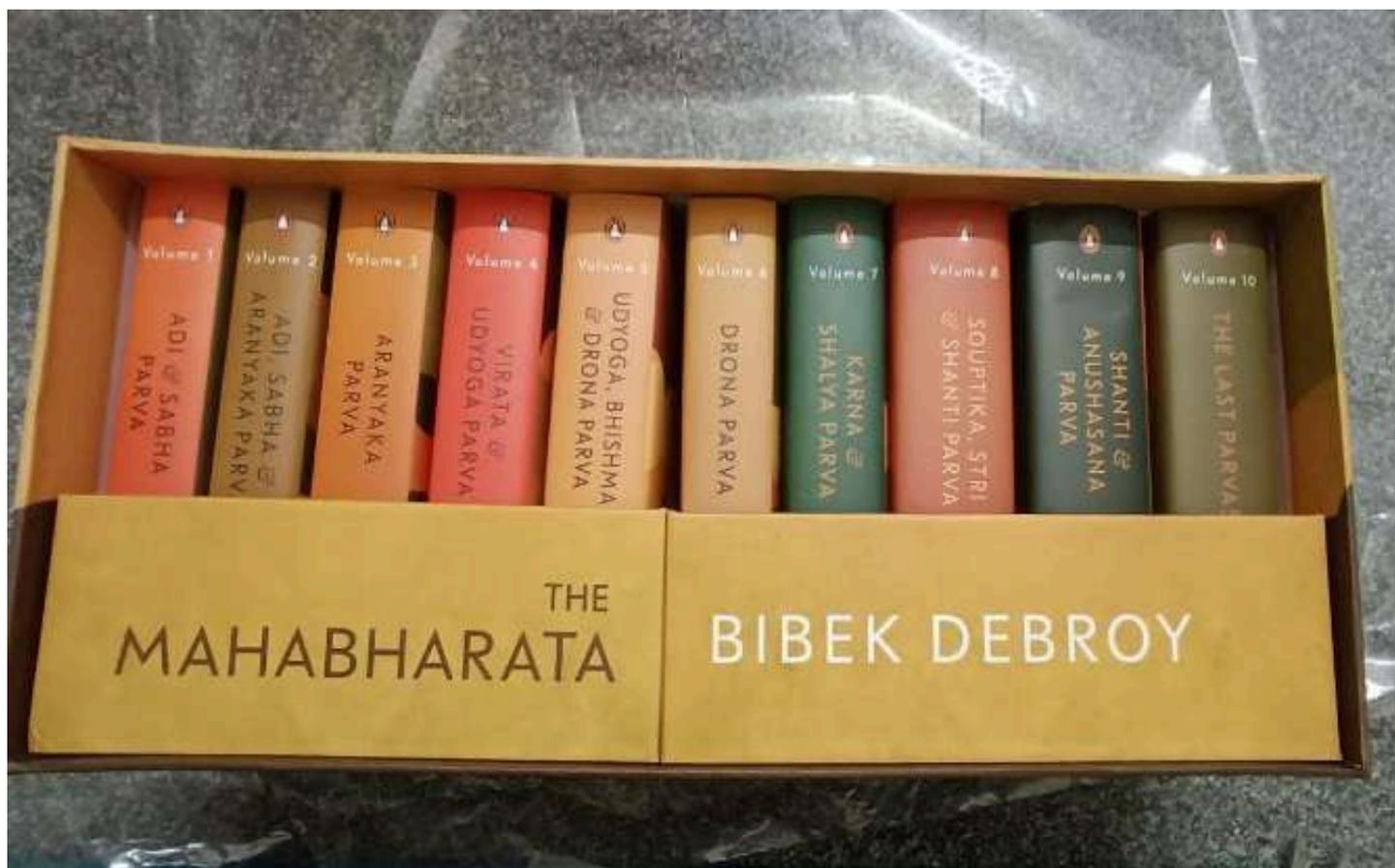
Bibek's outlook was broad-minded. His political allegiances were always enigmatic. It was his co-authored report while at the CPR where he laid a lot of the intellectual groundwork for decimating the Left's economic model in Bengal that helped pave the way for the TMC.

Even when he joined this government, except for the awkward spectacle of having to defend demonetisation, he managed the artful feat of staying above the fray: Writing more between the lines.

But more miraculously, unlike almost everyone in this government, he did not succumb to the path of rank communalism to prove his allegiances. In both partisan alignments, first with Congress and then the BJP, he managed to remain his own person, as evidenced in the outpouring for him.

His own person he remained: Self-driven, mysterious, funny, but always industrious. He could also be, on occasion, quite exasperating, making no room for norms other than his own; his silences could sometimes be strategic.

But the magnitude of his impact is easy to miss, paradoxically because it was so far-reaching across so many domains.



## 4. नेहरू की विदेश नीति के आधार तत्व

दिनेश दुबे



[Source: Image](#)

आधुनिक भारत के अप्रतिम शिल्पी पंडित जवाहरलाल नेहरू एक महान स्वतंत्रता संग्राम सेनानी, राजनेता तथा मौलिक चिंतक थे। वे ज्ञान, कर्म और संकल्प की अद्भुत त्रिवेणी थे। स्वभावतः झूठ, छल-छद्म तथा अन्याय का विरोधी होने के कारण अपनी उन्मुक्त सोच और स्वायत्त विचारों पर किसी क्रिस्म का समझौता उनके बौद्धिक तेवर के खिलाफ़ था। मानवतावाद, अंतरराष्ट्रीयतावाद, मध्य मार्ग तथा तार्किक एवं वैज्ञानिक दृष्टिकोण उनकी विश्वदृष्टि का अहम हिस्सा थे। इन सबका प्रतिबिम्बन उनकी विदेश नीति में भी स्पष्ट रीति से दिखता है।

दरअसल, नेहरू जी की विदेश नीति के तीन प्रमुख उद्देश्य थे। सर्वप्रथम, एक लंबे अरसे के बाद औपनिवेशिक प्रभुत्व से मुक्त हुए राष्ट्र की स्वाधीनता और संप्रभुता की रक्षा करना तथा द्विराष्ट्रवाद के सिद्धांत पर बँटे हुए राष्ट्र को भावनात्मक स्तर पर एकजुट रखने के लिए विशेष प्रयास करना। दूसरे, भारत के राष्ट्रीय हितों की पूर्ति के लिए ऐसा अंतरराष्ट्रीय परिवेश बनाना जो समावेशी आंतरिक विकास के अनुकूल हो। तीसरे, अपने स्वायत्त चिंतन के माध्यम से विश्व में भारत की एक विशिष्ट पहचान बनाना तथा यह सुनिश्चित करना कि भारत की आवाज़ वैश्विक मंचों पर सुनी जाए और वह नव-स्वतंत्र राष्ट्रों की आवाज़ बन सके।

किसी भी राष्ट्र की विदेश नीति उसके आंतरिक सरोकारों, सामाजिक-आर्थिक एवं भूराजनीतिक परिस्थितियों तथा राष्ट्रीय नेतृत्व की विश्वदृष्टि से निर्धारित होती है। एक लंबे अरसे के स्वातंत्र्य संघर्ष के बाद मिली आज़ादी, वह भी दुनिया की सबसे ताकतवर उपनिवेशवादी मुल्क के खिलाफ़, ने पूरे राष्ट्र में अभिनव विश्वास तथा अपरिमित उत्साह का संचरण किया। राष्ट्र के अंतरिम प्रधानमंत्री के बतौर नेहरू जी ने आज़ादी मिलने के पाँच माह पूर्व ही दिल्ली में एशियन रिलेशंस कांफ्रेंस (अप्रैल 1947) का आयोजन किया जिसमें 28 राष्ट्रों के प्रतिनिधियों ने भाग लिया। यह पहला और शायद आखिरी अंतरराष्ट्रीय जमावड़ा था जिसमें महात्मा गांधी ने शिरकत की। इस सम्मेलन ने उपनिवेशवाद के विरुद्ध संघर्षरत राष्ट्रों में उम्मीद की नयी रोशनी एवं संचेतना का संचरण किया। लगभग दो वर्ष बाद दूसरी एशियन रिलेशन कांफ्रेंस (जनवरी 1949) ने भारत को उन तमाम मुल्कों को गोलबंद करने में मदद की जो उपनिवेशवाद से मुक्ति के बाद एक ठोस राजनीतिक और आर्थिक धरातल के लिए चिंतित थे। इस अंतरराष्ट्रीय सम्मेलन में 18 राष्ट्रों ने भाग लिया और इंडोनेशिया के डच आधिपत्य के विरोध में सर्व सहमति से प्रस्ताव भी पारित किए गये।

पंडित नेहरू नव स्वतंत्र राष्ट्रों के एक प्रकृत्या एवं सुपरिचित अगुआ थे और आज़ाद भारत उनका नया आदर्श। 1954 का भारत-चीन पंचशील समझौता तथा 1955 में बांडुंग में आयोजित अफ़्रीका और एशियाई देशों के अंतरराष्ट्रीय सम्मेलन में भारत की विदेश नीति का वैचारिक एवं सैद्धांतिक खाका देखने को मिला जिसकी तामीर आगे चलकर बेलग्रेड के प्रथम गुट-निरपेक्ष सम्मेलन (1961) में हुई।

नेहरू जी के साथ यूगोस्लाविया के राष्ट्रपति जोसिप ब्रोज टीटो, मिस्र के राष्ट्रपति गमाल अब्देल नासेर, इंडोनेशिया के राष्ट्रपति सुकर्णो, बर्मा के प्रधान मंत्री यू नू तथा घाना के राष्ट्रपति क्वामे नक्रूमा गुट-निरपेक्ष आंदोलन के महत्त्वपूर्ण नेता के रूप में उभरे। शनैः-शनैः गुट-निरपेक्षता का वितान इतना विस्तृत हो गया कि हर नव-स्वतंत्र राष्ट्र इस अंतरराष्ट्रीय आंदोलन से सहर्ष जुड़ना चाहता था।

## 4.1 वैचारिक पृष्ठभूमि

शास्त्रों में ' वसुधैव कुटुंबकम् ' की जीवंत भावना यानि ' अयं निजः परो वेति गणना लघुचेतसाम्, उदारचरितानां तु वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम् ' ( यह मेरा है, वह पराया है, ऐसी गणना छोटी बुद्धि के व्यक्ति ही करते हैं। उदार चरित्र के लोग तो समस्त संसार को अपना परिवार मानते हैं) पंडित जी को सर्वदा प्रेरित करती थी।

उनका यह विचार कि ज्ञान को राष्ट्रीय सीमाओं में बांध कर नहीं देखा जाना चाहिए ऋग्वेद की इस ऋचा, जिसे स्वस्ति-वाचन भी कहते हैं, से मेल खाती है: ' आ नो भद्राः क्रतवो यन्तु विश्वतोऽदब्धासो अपरितासउद्भिदः '। (कल्याणकारी, न दबनेवाले, पराभूत न होने वाले, उच्चता को पहुँचानेवाले विचार चारों ओर से हमारे पास आयें)।

नेहरू जी एक शांतिदूत थे। वे सम्राट अशोक की ' रणभेरी के विरुद्ध धर्मभेरी ' के सिद्धांत से प्रेरित थे। अशोक ने अपनी पुत्री संघमित्रा और पुत्र महेंद्र को बौद्ध धर्म और भारतीय संस्कृति के प्रचार-प्रसार के लिए श्री लंका तथा कई धर्मभेरी जत्थों को दक्षिण पूर्व एशिया के देशों में भेजा। वैयक्तिक संयम पर आधारित पंचशील का सिद्धांत बौद्ध धर्म से लिया गया था जिसका व्यापक प्रयोग कर अशोक ने शांति और सदभाव का संदेश भारत के पड़ोसी देशों में प्रसारित किया।

मध्ययुगीन भारत में वे अकबर की सुलह कुल की नीति तथा दीने-इलाही के संदेश में हिंदुस्तान की धार्मिक सहिष्णुता की झलक देखते थे। उनकी वैश्विक सोच पर भारतीय परंपराओं के साथ-साथ अमेरिकी स्वाधीनता के राष्ट्रनायकों जॉर्ज वॉशिंगटन, थॉमस जेफरसन, अब्राहम लिंकन, जर्मन एकीकरण के सूत्रधार बिस्मार्क, इटली को एक सूत्र में पिरोने वाले मज्जिनी और गैरीबाल्डी तथा टर्की की आधुनिकता के जनक कमाल अतातुर्क जैसे नायकों का गहरा प्रभाव था। कैम्ब्रिज में अपने छात्र जीवन के दिनों में उनको मार्क्सवादी चिंतकों तथा फेबियन समाजवादियों के चिंतन ने भी प्रभावित किया। इन सतरंगी प्रवाहों को महात्मा गांधी और रवीन्द्रनाथ टैगोर के विचारों ने न केवल शीतलता प्रदान की वरन् उनकी सोच को भारतीय परिप्रेक्ष्य भी दिया।

## 4.2 अंतरराष्ट्रीयतावाद का दर्शन

वास्तव में नेहरू का अंतरराष्ट्रीयतावाद उनके प्रखर, बहिर्मुखी एवं व्यापक राष्ट्रवाद की ही अभिव्यक्ति थी। वे उस राष्ट्रवाद के विरोधी थे जो संकीर्ण एवं अंतर्मुखी हो। उनका मानना था कि अंतर्मुखी राष्ट्रवाद ही हिटलर और मुसोलिनी जैसे समग्रवादी अधिनायकों को जन्म देता है। राष्ट्रवाद की यही व्यापक सोच उनके उदात्त मानवतावादी दृष्टिकोण के साथ जुड़ कर जन्म देती है उनके अंतरराष्ट्रीयतावादी दर्शन को।

उनके अंतरराष्ट्रीयतावाद की बुनियाद हिंदुस्तान की आज़ादी के मूल आदर्शों में निहित थी जिसका प्रतिबिम्बन भारत के संविधान में स्पष्ट रीति से देखा जा सकता है। संविधान के अनुच्छेद 51 में प्रावधान है कि ' राज्य अंतरराष्ट्रीय शांति तथा सुरक्षा को बढ़ावा देने ' का प्रयास करेगा तथा देशों के बीच ' न्यायपूर्ण एवं सम्मानजनक रिश्ते कायम करने ' और ' अंतरराष्ट्रीय कानूनों के प्रति सम्मान जगाने ' के साथ साथ ' अंतरराष्ट्रीय विवादों का मध्यस्थता द्वारा समाधान ' को प्रोत्साहित करेगा।

अनुच्छेद 51 के प्रतिपादन से कुछ ही वर्ष पूर्व, भारत ने संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघ के घोषणा पत्र पर विचार-विमर्श और उसको अंगीकार करने की कार्यवाही में भाग लिया था। इसलिए अनुच्छेद 51 में संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघ के घोषणा पत्र की भाषा की छाप नजर आती है। भारतीय संविधान का अनुच्छेद 51 एक ऐसा विशिष्ट प्रावधान है जो सरकार को अन्य राष्ट्रों के साथ अच्छे तथा मैत्रीपूर्ण संबंध बनाने के लिए प्रयास करने का दायित्व सौंपता है। यह संविधानिक निर्देश सदैव भारत की विदेश नीति का केंद्रीय तत्त्व रहा है।

स्वराजिस्ट पार्टी का भारतीय राष्ट्रीय कांग्रेस में विलय होने के बाद, 1925 में पंडित जी ने अपनी विश्व दृष्टि के मुताबिक पार्टी के विदेश नीति प्रभाग की रूपरेखा तैयार की। उन्होंने 1926 -27 में ब्रिटेन, सोवियत संघ तथा यूरोप की यात्रा की तथा ब्रसेल्स में कांग्रेस ऑफ ऑप्रेसिड नेशनल्टीज़ के सम्मेलन में भारत का प्रतिनिधित्व किया।

विश्व युद्ध की विभीषिका में झोंके जाने से पहले नेहरू ने 1938 में फिर से फ्रांस, ब्रिटेन और अन्य यूरोपीय देशों की यात्रा की। हिंदुस्तान की जंग-ए-आज़ादी का नेतृत्व करते हुए उन्होंने विश्व में द्रुत गति से बढ़ती प्रतिगामी शक्तियों के उभार तथा पूंजीवाद के अंतर्विरोधों को करीब से जानने और समझने की कोशिश की।

### 4.3 खेमों की दुनिया में भारतीय पहचान का आग्रह

द्वितीय विश्व युद्ध के बाद जिस दुनिया में भारत का जन्म हुआ वह दुनिया दो सैन्य और आर्थिक खेमों में विभक्त थी। एक खेमा अमेरिका और पश्चिमी यूरोप के पूँजीवादी और उपनिवेशवादी मुल्कों का था जिसका नेतृत्व नार्थ अटलांटिक ट्रीटी ऑर्गेनाइज़ेशन (नेटो) के माध्यम से अमेरिका कर रहा था और दूसरा खेमा पूर्वी यूरोप के साम्यवादी मुल्कों का था जो वारसा पैक्ट के तहत सोवियत संघ (रूस) द्वारा नियंत्रित था। साम्यवादी खेमे में चीन का प्रवेश कोरियाई युद्ध के साथ हुआ। एक ओर अमेरिका मदद और सुरक्षा के नाम पर तथा लोकतंत्र का हवाला देकर भारत को अपने प्रभाव क्षेत्र में लाने की कोशिश कर रहा था, तो दूसरी ओर स्टालिन का सोवियत रूस भारत को भी चीन की ही तरह लाल झंडे की छत्रछाया में देखना चाहता था।



[Source: Image](#)

नेहरू जी हिंदुस्तान की विशालता, उसके वैविध्य तथा सिविलाइज़ेशनल पृष्ठभूमि को बखूबी समझते थे। इसीलिए वैश्विक पटल पर वे भारत की विशिष्ट पहचान के लिए सर्वदा चिंतित और प्रयासरत थे। 1949 के अक्टूबर-नवंबर महीने में अमेरिका की लगभग एक माह की यात्रा के दौरान राष्ट्रपति हैरी ट्रूमन ने बँटवारे के विभीषिका से जूझ रहे हिंदुस्तान के लिये खाद्यान आपूर्ति की पेशकश की, किंतु पंडित जी उसे मात्र इसलिए स्वीकार नहीं किया कि कहीं दुनिया भारत को अमेरिकी खेमे में चिन्हित न करना शुरू कर दे।

1950 में अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति ने पंडित जी को यह संदेश भिजवाया कि वे चीन को नहीं बल्कि भारत को संयुक्त राष्ट्र की सुरक्षा परिषद का स्थायी सदस्य बनाना चाहते हैं। नेहरू जी ने इस प्रस्ताव को यह कहकर ठुकरा दिया कि वे भारत की सदस्यता को चीन के साथ न जोड़ें।

चीन के आज़ाद होने के बाद उसका हक़ है कि श्वेत चीन (ताइवान) के स्थान पर उसे सदस्य बनाया जाय। 1954 और 55 में चीन और रूस की यात्रा करने के बाद रूसी प्रधानमंत्री निकोलाई बुल्गानिन ने भी प्रस्ताव रखा कि भारत को सुरक्षा परिषद का छठा सदस्य बनाने के लिए रूस पूरी कोशिश करेगा। मगर इस प्रस्ताव में साफ़ ध्वनित होता था कि रूस अमेरिका के विरुद्ध अपनी ताक़त को संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघ में स्थापित करना चाहता था।

आज यह प्रश्न उठाया जाता है कि आखिर नेहरू जी ने दोनों महाशक्तियों के प्रस्तावों को क्यों ठुकरा दिया। उनके खिलाफ़ चल रहे दुष्प्रचार तंत्र से जुड़े व्यक्ति और दल यह कहने से बाज नहीं आते कि नेहरू जी निरा आदर्शवादी थे और अंतरराष्ट्रीय राजनीति की व्यावहारिकताओं को बिलकुल नहीं समझते थे। सलाह भी दी जाती है कि उनकी जगह यदि सरदार पटेल जैसा कोई प्रधानमंत्री होता तो भारत बहुत पहले संयुक्त राष्ट्र सुरक्षा परिषद का सदस्य बन गया होता। सुनने में ये किसी को भी आश्चर्यजनक लगेगा कि नेहरू ने आखिर ऐसा सुनहरा मौक़ा क्यों गँवा दिया?

पर, हकीकत इससे कोसों दूर है। दरअसल अंतरराष्ट्रीय राजनीति की बारीकियों को कम से कम तत्कालीन भारत में तो नेहरू जी बेहतर कोई नहीं समझ सकता था। दोनों महाशक्तियों के प्रस्तावों को उन्होंने इसलिए कोई तरजीह नहीं दी क्योंकि वे छद्मजाल के सिवा कुछ भी नहीं थे। अगर वे अमेरिकी प्रस्ताव मानते और चीन की जगह भारत को सुरक्षा परिषद में शामिल किए जाने की पेशकश करते तो सोवियत रूस खुलकर मुखालिफ़त करता और उसका वीटो भारत को सुरक्षा परिषद में शामिल होने से रोक देता।

पड़ोसी राष्ट्र चीन के साथ खुली दुश्मनी अलग से हो जाती। नतीजतन, भारत के समक्ष अमेरिका का मुस्तकिल पिछलगू बनने के सिवा कोई विकल्प शेष न होता। इसी तरह यदि वे सोवियत रूस का प्रस्ताव मान लेते तो न केवल सुरक्षा परिषद में छठे सदस्य को शामिल करने के लिए संयुक्त राष्ट्र के चार्टर में तब्दील करनी पड़ती वरन् अमेरिका, ब्रिटेन, फ़्रांस और श्वेत चीन का वीटो और बॉयकॉट भी झेलना पड़ता।

जो कुछ भी हो, प्रश्न यह है कि आज कोई महाशक्ति भारत को सुरक्षा परिषद में ले आने का प्रस्ताव या पहल क्यों नहीं करता। जब भी भारत की सुरक्षा परिषद में स्थायी सदस्यता की बात आती है उसे संयुक्त राष्ट्र के सुधारों से जोड़कर चार देशों के नाम और गिना दिये जाते हैं। डॉ. मनमोहन सिंह के प्रधानमंत्रित्व में इंडो-यूएस सिविल न्यूक्लियर डील संसद द्वारा पारित हो जाने के बाद ऐसा लगता था कि शायद अब भारत को सुरक्षा परिषद में स्थायी सदस्यता मिल जाय, पर आज 16 साल बाद भी स्थिति जस की तस है।

इसी से मिलता-जुलता प्रकरण राष्ट्रपति जॉन एफ़ कैनेडी के कार्यकाल में आया जब नेहरू जी को यह संदेश भेजवाया गया कि भारत को आणविक परीक्षण कर लेना चाहिए। अमेरिकी पेशकश थी कि भारत चूँकि साम्यवादी मुल्क रूस और चीन से घिरा हुआ है उसे बिना समय गँवाये परमाणु परीक्षण का प्रयास करना चाहिए। तर्क था कि रूस पूर्व से ही आणविक शक्ति है और अमेरिकी खुफ़िया तंत्र के मुताबिक चीन आने वाले कुछ वर्षों में परीक्षण की तैयारी कर रहा है इसलिए और भी ज़रूरी हो जाता है कि भारत परमाणु परीक्षण की तैयारी करे।

नेहरू जी यद्यपि इस हकीकत से वाकिफ़ थे कि चीन साम्यवादी महाशक्ति सोवियत रूस की मदद से आणविक शक्ति बनने की पूरी कोशिश कर रहा है, उन्होंने अमेरिका के साथ इस सिलसिले में फ़िलहाल कोई बातचीत आगे नहीं बढ़ाई क्योंकि उनके समक्ष गोवा का बड़ा मसला सामने था और उस मुद्दे पर अमेरिका का रुख भारतीय हितों से 180 डिग्री के कोण पर था। फिर भी नेहरू जी ने अमेरिका से दोस्ती बरकरार रखी। उसके बाद 1962 की चीन की लड़ाई ने उन्हें पूर्णतया घरेलू मुद्दों तक सीमित कर दिया।

#### 4.4 विदेश नीति का घरेलू विरोध

कहना न होगा कि नेहरू जी को राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर अपनी अंतरराष्ट्रीयतावाद के लिए जो समर्थन मिलना चाहिए था वह नहीं मिला। एक तरफ़ वामपंथियों ने नेहरू जी की सरकार के खिलाफ़ मुहिम छेड़ रखी थी तो दूसरी तरफ़ दक्षिणपंथी दलों जैसे स्वतंत्र पार्टी और भारतीय जनसंघ ने नेहरू जी की विदेश नीति पर हमला बोल रखा था। और तो और एक दौर में कांग्रेस पार्टी के समाजवादी खेमे यानि कांग्रेस सोशलिस्ट पार्टी में नेहरू जी के वैचारिक सहोदर रहे नेताओं ने भी कांग्रेस पार्टी की हुकूमत के विरुद्ध कदम-कदम पर प्रतिरोध की नीति अपना रखी थी।

पार्टी के अंदर भी नेहरू जी को एक खास तबके का विरोध झेलना पड़ रहा था जो शुरू से दक्षिणपंथी रुझान का था। शायद इन्हीं कारणों से पंडित जी ने आज़ादी के बाद से मृत्युपर्यंत विदेश विभाग का कार्यभार खुद ही सँभाल रखा था।

वामपंथी हलकों में उठने वाले नारे 'ये आज़ादी झूठी है, देश की जनता भूखी है' और 'कॉमनवेल्थ का दासी नेहरू, फिर से गुलामी लाने न पाये, मार लो साथी जाने न पाये' तब तक नहीं शांत हुए जब तक सोवियत संघ में जोसेफ़ स्टालिन की हुकूमत रही।

इन नारों में तब्दीली तब आयी जब नेहरू जी ने जून 1955 में रूस की यात्रा की तथा रूस के नये नेतृत्व सोवियत संघ की कम्युनिस्ट पार्टी के महासचिव निकिता ख़ुशेव और प्रधानमंत्री निकोलाई बुल्गानिन ने उसी वर्ष के नवंबर माह में भारत की जवाबी यात्रा की।

वैचारिक रीति से यह बदलाव और पुख्ता हो गया जब 1957 में सोवियत कम्युनिस्ट पार्टी की बीसवीं कांग्रेस ने उपनिवेशवाद के खिलाफ़ संघर्ष कर आज़ादी पाये हुए राष्ट्रों को स्वाभाविक मित्र तथा उन दलों को जिनके नेतृत्व में स्वाधीनता संग्राम लड़ा गया 'फ़्रेटर्नल ऑर्गेनाइज़ेशन' की कोटि में रखना शुरू कर दिया।

तर्क था कि सत्ता का परिवर्तन हमेशा शासक वर्ग की व्यवस्था को बलात् उखाड़ फेंकने (फ़ोर्सिबल ओवरथ्रॉ ऑफ़ द बुर्जुआ स्सिस्टम) से ही संभव न होकर शांतिपूर्ण और अहिंसक तरीक़े से भी हो सकता है। सोवियत संघ की 'ग्रेट सोवियत इनसाइक्लोपीडिया' जो नेहरू को 'लैकी ऑफ़ इंपीरियलिज्म' और महात्मा गांधी को 'हिंदू रिलीजियस एक्सप्लोडर' घोषित करती थी उसमें सकारात्मक परिवर्तन की पेशकश शुरू हुई।

इन तमाम झंझावातों में घिरे पंडित जी ने जिस अर्थ व्यवस्था और विदेश नीति की नींव रखी वह देश, काल और परिस्थिति के हिसाब से सर्वथा उपयुक्त थी। ज़ाहिर है कि अगर अर्थव्यवस्था मिश्रित है तो उसका बाह्य अभिव्यक्तीकरण गुट-निरपेक्षता में ही होगा। दूसरे, सामाजिक समरसता और धार्मिक सौहार्द के लिए यह ज़रूरी था कि राज्य किसी एक वर्ग या धार्मिक समुदाय के साथ चिह्नित न हो। नेहरू जी का धर्म-निरपेक्षता का आग्रह भी अंतरराष्ट्रीय स्तर पर भारत द्वारा धर्म संचालित देशों से एक निश्चित दूरी बनाने में मददगार बना।

विदेश नीति और अंतरराष्ट्रीय राजनीति का कोई भी अध्येता नेहरू जी की विदेश नीति को विश्व शांति, शांतिपूर्ण सह-अस्तित्व के दर्शन पर आधारित पंचशील, सैन्य और आर्थिक खेमेबंदी के मुखालिफ़ गुट-निरपेक्षता, उपनिवेशवादी एवं नव-उपनिवेशवादी मंसूबों का डटकर विरोध तथा रंगभेदवादी नीतियों का विरोध इत्यादि विंदुओं से रेखांकित करेगा। पर ऐसे समीक्षक अक्सर नेहरू की विदेश नीति की एपिस्टमोलॉजी यानि ज्ञान पद्धति को समझने और समझाने तक ही सीमित हो जाते हैं जबकि ज़रूरत है नेहरू की विश्वदृष्टि के तत्वज्ञान (मेटाफिजिक्स) तक पहुँचने की।



Source: Image

यह तत्वज्ञान सदियों गुलाम रहे राष्ट्रों को जागृत एवं एकजुट होने की प्रेरणा देता है एक ऐसे विश्व के निर्माण के लिए जहां निर्धनता, भुखमरी, अशिक्षा, नफ़रत, हिंसा और युद्ध के लिए कोई जगह न हो और तमाम जनगण अपने गौरव, अस्मिता और पहचान के साथ बड़े राष्ट्रों के साथ बराबरी का दर्जा हासिल कर सकें। उनके इस तत्वज्ञान की एक झलक गुरुदेव रबीन्द्रनाथ टैगोर की उस कालजयी कविता में मिलती है जहां वह लिखते हैं कि: "जहाँ मन भयहीन हो और मस्तक ऊँचा हो/जहाँ ज्ञान मुक्त हो/जहाँ दुनिया संकीर्ण घरेलू दीवारों द्वारा खंडों में विभक्त न हो/जहाँ शब्द सत्य की गहराई से निकलते हों/जहाँ अथक प्रयास पूर्णता की ओर अपनी भुजाएँ फैलाता हो/जहाँ तर्क की स्पष्ट धारा मृत आदत के उदास मरुस्थली रेत में अपना रास्ता न खोती हो/जहाँ मन तुम्हारे (परमात्मा) द्वारा बढ़ाया जाता हो निरंतर व्यापक होते चिंतन और कर्म की ओर/स्वतंत्रता के उस स्वर्ग में, हे मेरे पिता, मेरे देश को जगा दो।"

शीतयुद्ध से प्रकंपित दुनिया भले ही नेहरू की नीतियों को प्रत्यक्षतः स्वीकार न कर पा रही थी, अमेरिका, रूस, फ़्रांस, ब्रिटेन, यूरोप के राजनेता उन्हें विशेष सम्मान की दृष्टि से देखते थे। यूनाइटेड नेशंस या किसी अन्य अंतरराष्ट्रीय मंच पर उनको ध्यान से सुना जाता था और उनके उद्गारों की नीर-क्षीर विवेचना होती थी। जर्मनी के चांसलर कोनराड एडेनौर ने तो यहाँ तक कहा कि "पूरी दुनिया में रूस और अमेरिका के बीच बढ़ते तनाव में नेहरू और भारत ही विश्व शांति के लिए एक उम्मीद की किरण हैं।" (इंडिया फ़ॉर्म कर्ज़न टू नेहरू एंड आफ्टर - दुर्गादास)

१९४८ में संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघ की तीसरी महासभा में बोलते हुए नेहरू जी ने कहा था कि: "इतिहास का सबक, इतिहास के लंबे क्रम का सबक, और विशेषकर पिछले दो महान युद्धों का सबक, जिन्होंने मानवता को तबाह कर दिया है, यही रहा है कि घृणा और हिंसा से केवल घृणा और हिंसा ही पैदा होगी।" भय के मनोविज्ञान को ध्वस्त करने का आवाहन करते हुए नेहरू जी ने कहा कि "मैं भविष्य से नहीं डरता। मेरे मन में कोई डर नहीं है, और मुझे कोई डर नहीं है, भले ही सैन्य दृष्टिकोण से भारत का कोई खास महत्व नहीं है। मैं महान शक्तियों, उनकी सेनाओं, उनके बेड़े और उनके परमाणु बमों की महानता से नहीं डरता। यही वह सबक है जो मेरे गुरु (महात्मा गांधी) ने मुझे सिखाया। हम एक महान देश और एक शक्तिशाली साम्राज्य के खिलाफ एक निहत्थे लोगों के रूप में खड़े थे। हमें समर्थन और मजबूती मिली क्योंकि इस पूरे समय में हमने बुराई के आगे न झुकने का फैसला किया, और मुझे लगता है कि यही वह सबक है जो मेरे सामने है और जो आज हमारे सामने है।"

## 4.5 पंचशील का महामंत्र

नेहरू जी की मृत्यु के ६२ साल बाद भी उनकी विदेश नीति की संस्थापनायें आज भी उतनी ही प्रासंगिक हैं जितना शीत युद्ध के दौरान। भारत आज भी लोकतांत्रिक रीति से पंचशील के मुख्य सिद्धांतों यानि अखंडता और संप्रभुता के लिए पारस्परिक सम्मान, परस्पर अनाक्रमता, परस्पर अहस्तक्षेप, समानता और पारस्परिक लाभ, तथा शांतिपूर्ण सहअस्तित्व के लिए प्रतिबद्ध है। केवल भारत ही नहीं अब तो पंचशील के सिद्धांतों का पूरी दुनिया में गुणगान हो रहा है।

जब शीत युद्ध के कारण समूची दुनिया तनाव की स्थिति में थी और विश्व में भय के माध्यम से संतुलन स्थापित करने का प्रयास किया जा रहा था, तब ऐसे परिवेश में पंचशील की वकालत एक अनूठी पहल थी।

पंचशील समझौता पर २९ अप्रैल, १९५४ को हस्ताक्षर किए गए जो औपचारिक रूप से चीन और भारत के तिब्बत क्षेत्र के बीच व्यापार पर समझौते में प्रतिपादित किए गए थे। आगे चलकर पंचशील अंतर्राष्ट्रीय संबंधों के संचालन का आधार बना। इसके माध्यम से 'सार्वभौमिकता का सिद्धांत' प्रस्तुत किया गया था, जो "भय पर आधारित शक्ति संतुलन" की अवधारणा को बड़ी चुनौती थी।



पंचशील के सिद्धांतों के आलोक में बांडुंग सम्मेलन के पश्चात् गुटनिरपेक्ष आंदोलन की नींव पड़ी। जिसके परिणाम स्वरूप नव स्वतंत्र देश शीत युद्धकालीन तनावपूर्ण माहौल से अलग अपने-अपने राष्ट्रों के विकास पर ध्यान केंद्रित कर सके।

एक न्यायसंगत और शांतिपूर्ण विश्व व्यवस्था स्थापित करने के हेतु कृतसंकल्प ये सिद्धांत वर्तमान में म्यांमार, इंडोनेशिया, युगोस्लाविया, मिस्र तथा विभिन्न अफ्रीकी देशों द्वारा अपनाए गए। अपनी प्रकृति में शाश्वत इन सिद्धांतों ने विश्व का नैतिक मार्गदर्शन किया है। ये सिद्धांत विश्व के कमजोर और ताकतवर, दोनों तरह के देशों को एक समान मंच प्रदान करने तथा सभी के साथ समानता के व्यवहार करने के पक्षधर हैं।

पंचशील सिद्धांत संयुक्त राष्ट्र घोषणा पत्र के प्रावधानों से मेल खाते हैं और विभिन्न देशों के मैत्रीपूर्ण संबंधों और सहयोगात्मक रवैये को बढ़ावा देने का प्रयास करते हैं।

वर्ष १९७४ में संयुक्त राष्ट्र महासभा ने एक नई अंतर्राष्ट्रीय आर्थिक व्यवस्था स्थापित करने से संबंधित घोषणा पत्र में पंचशील सिद्धांतों को शामिल किया था।

इन संबंधों के महत्व को रेखांकित करते हुए एक बार नेहरू जी ने कहा था कि "यदि इन सिद्धांतों को सभी देश अपने आपसी संबंधों में शामिल कर लेते हैं, तो शायद ही कोई ऐसा विवाद बचेगा, जो विश्व के देशों के बीच शेष रह जाए।"

## 4.6 गुट निरपेक्षता का मध्य मार्ग

द्वितीय विश्वयुद्ध से उपजे द्वि-ध्रुवीय विश्व का नेतृत्व कर रही महाशक्तियों में गलाकाट होड़ थी नवस्वतंत्र देशों को अपने खेमे में शामिल करने की। यह होड़ किसी विश्व कल्याण की भावना से प्रेरित नहीं थी। विचारधारा के मुलम्मे के पीछे ठोस आर्थिक कारण थे। ऐसे वैश्विक परिदृश्य में नेहरू जी ने गुटनिरपेक्षता को भारतीय विदेश नीति का आधार बनाया क्योंकि वे किसी एक गुट में शामिल होकर भारत के लिए अनावश्यक तनावपूर्ण स्थिति पैदा नहीं करना चाहते थे।

उनका मानना था कि भारत को अपनी आर्थिक नीतियों तथा शासन प्रणाली में किसी गुट विशेष की विचारधारा या दृष्टिकोण को हावी नहीं होने देना चाहिए। चूँकि भारत की भौगोलिक सीमाएँ साम्यवादी देशों से जुड़ी थी, अतः अमेरिकी नेतृत्व में पश्चिमी देशों के गुट में शामिल होना अदूरदर्शी कदम होया वहीं दूसरी ओर, रुस के नेतृत्व में साम्यवादी खेमे में शामिल होने पर भारत को पश्चिमी आर्थिक व तकनीकी सहायता से वंचित होना पड़ता। जबकि एक नवस्वतंत्र देश होने के कारण भारत को आर्थिक विकास हेतु दोनों गुटों से तकनीकी व आर्थिक सहायता की जरूरत थी, जिसे गुटनिरपेक्ष रहकर ही प्राप्त किया जा सकता था।

गुटनिरपेक्षता स्वतंत्रता संघर्ष के दौरान घोषित आदर्शों व मान्यताओं का भी पोषण करती थी तथा यह नीति भारत की मिश्रित एवं सर्वमान्य संस्कृति के अनुरूप थी।

अतः तात्कालिक परिस्थितियों में नेहरू जी बहुत सोच समझकर गुटनिरपेक्षता को भारत के अंतरराष्ट्रीय व्यवहार का मानदण्ड बनाया।

नेहरू जी के विचार में अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय शांति व सुरक्षा बनाये रखने तथा उपनिवेशों के लोगों के आत्मनिर्णय के अधिकार को बढ़ावा देकर समानता पर आधारित अंतरराष्ट्रीय समुदाय की स्थापना के लिए गुट-निरपेक्षता एक आवश्यक शर्त थी। दोनों महाशक्तियों के प्रभाव से मुक्त रहकर ही भारत अफ्रीका व एशिया के देशों की स्वतंत्रता का समर्थन तथा अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय विवादों एवं संघर्षों के शांतिपूर्ण निपटारे की पहल कर सकता था। संयुक्त राष्ट्र व्यवस्था के अन्तर्गत रंगभेदवादी नीतियों का खुला विरोध, आणविक निरस्त्रीकरण की पुरजोर वकालत तथा नवीन आर्थिक व्यवस्था की स्थापना का मार्ग गुट-निरपेक्षता द्वारा ही प्रशस्त हो सकता था।

## 4.7 पड़ोसी राष्ट्रों के साथ विशेष संबंध

अंतरराष्ट्रीय संबंधों को परखने की पहली शर्त है कि हम विश्व के तमाम राष्ट्रों के राष्ट्रीय हितों को बखूबी समझें। इन राष्ट्रीय हितों को साधने की प्रक्रिया में यह समझना भी ज़रूरी है कोई भी देश अपने मित्रों को काल और परिस्थिति के अनुसार परिवर्तित कर सकता है पर वह अपने पड़ोसियों को नहीं बदल सकता है। इसलिए नेहरू जी का सर्वदा यह प्रयास रहा कि भारत अपने पड़ोसियों के साथ शांति एवं सौहार्द के रिश्ते क्रायम रखे। यह उनकी विदेश नीति की प्राथमिकताओं का सर्वाधिक अहम पहलू था। चीन, बर्मा, नेपाल, पाकिस्तान, अफ़ग़ानिस्तान तथा श्री लंका के साथ रिश्तों की गर्मजोशी बनाये रखने के लिए नेहरू जी विशेष प्रयास किए। दरअसल, उनका पंचशील का सिद्धांत पड़ोसी राष्ट्रों में यह विश्वास जगाने के लिए भी था कि भारत उनकी संप्रभुता तथा अखंडता का सम्मान करता है।

नेहरू जी बखूबी जानते थे कि भारत का कोई भी पड़ोसी भारतीय वायु मार्ग या भू-मार्ग का उपयोग किए बिना दूसरे पड़ोसी से संपर्क नहीं स्थापित कर सकता। उनकी इसी भावना का परिणाम था कि कालांतर में प्रधानमंत्री राजीव गांधी ने दक्षिण एशिया क्षेत्रीय सहयोग संगठन की स्थापना की पहल की। यह दुर्भाग्यपूर्ण है कि 'नेबर्स फ़र्स्ट' (पड़ोसी पहले) की नीति की वकालत के बावजूद हमने सार्क को पिछले दस वर्षों से लगभग भुला ही दिया है। सार्क का आखिरी शिखर सम्मेलन २०१४ में काठमांडू में हुआ था। नतीजन, चीन ने बड़ी तेज़ी से पिछले वर्षों में दक्षिण एशिया के देशों पर अपना प्रभुत्व जमाने में कोई कोर कसर नहीं उठा रखी।

भारतीय जनता पार्टी के संस्थापक और मूर्धन्य नेता अटल बिहारी वाजपेयी यद्यपि नेहरू में ब्रिटिश प्रधानमंत्री चर्चिल और चेम्बरलन का अद्भुत विरोधाभासी मिश्रण देखते थे और उन्हें दोहरे व्यक्तित्व का राजनेता मानते थे, पर उनके हृदय में प्रधानमंत्री नेहरू के प्रति एक विशेष सम्मान था। लेखक ने १९९० के दशक में जब वे विपक्ष के नेता थे जब उनसे बातचीत के प्रसंग में नेहरू जी के बारे में उनकी राय जाननी चाही तो उन्होंने स्वभावतः कुछ क्षणों के विराम के बाद कहा कि: "वह विशाल व्यक्तित्व के स्वामी थे। तमाम अन्तरराष्ट्रीय दबावों के बावजूद उन्होंने राष्ट्र के चिंतन, कर्म और व्यवहार की स्वतंत्रता के साथ कभी भी समझौता नहीं किया।"

इतिहासकार रामचंद्र गुहा लिखते हैं कि जब 1977 में वाजपेयी जी विदेश मंत्री बने तो कांग्रेस शासन के सभी चिह्नों को हटाने में अतिउत्साहित नौकरशाही ने साउथ ब्लॉक के उनके कार्यालय से नेहरू जी की तस्वीर हटा दिया। अपने कार्यालय में प्रवेश करते ही वाजपेयी ने दीवार पर खाली जगह को तुरंत नोटिस किया और अपने सचिव से कहा कि "यही वह जगह है जहाँ पंडित जी की तस्वीर हुआ करती थी। मुझे याद है क्योंकि इस कमरे में मैं पहले भी कई बार आ चुका हूँ। वह कहाँ चली गई? मुझे वापस चाहिए।"



[Source: Image](#)

इसमें कोई दो राय नहीं कि नेहरू जी की स्वतंत्रचेता विदेश नीति द्वितीय विश्व युद्ध के बाद दो खेमों में बँटी दुनिया को रास नहीं आयी और समय-समय पर उसका खामियाज़ा भी हमें भुगतान पड़ा किंतु ' विचार और कर्म की स्वायत्तता ' पर आधारित विदेश नीति आज भी उतनी ही प्रासंगिक है जितनी शीत युद्ध के दौर में।

राजनीतिक वैचारिक मतभेदों के कारण कुछ दल इसे स्वीकार करे या न करें, इस बात से इनकार नहीं किया जा सकता कि सरकार कोई भी हो, नेहरू की विदेश नीति की संस्थापनाओं से इतर शब्दों के उलट फेर के सिवा कोई मूल परिवर्तन करना संभव नहीं है। यद्यपि दुनिया बहुत कुछ बदल चुकी है पर आज भी भारत सरकार जिस विदेश नीति का सैद्धांतिक पोषण करती नज़र आती है वह कमोबेश शांति, परस्पर सहयोग, कर्म और विचार की स्वायत्तता से ही प्रेरित है भले ही हम उसे ' स्ट्रेटेजिक ऑटोनॉमी ' तथा ' मल्टी-अलाइनमेंट ' की संज्ञा दे दें ।

**नेहरू जी के विचार, कर्म और व्यक्तित्व की महानता का कोई भी वर्णन अटल बिहारी वाजपेयी जी द्वारा संसद में उनके ऐतिहासिक श्रद्धांजलि भाषण, जिसने पूरी संसद की आँखें नम कर दी, के बिना अधूरा है:**

‘एक सपना टूट गया, एक गीत खामोश हो गया, एक ज्योति अनंत में विलीन हो गई। भय और भूख से रहित दुनिया का सपना था, यह उस महाकाव्य का गीत था जिसमें गीता की प्रतिध्वनि और गुलाब की खुशबू थी। यह उस दीपक की लौ थी जो सारी रात जलती रही, हर अंधेरे से लड़ी, हमें रास्ता दिखाया और एक सुबह निर्वाण प्राप्त कर गई। ... भारत माता आज शोकग्रस्त है - उसने अपना सबसे लाड़ला राजकुमार खो दिया है। मानवता आज दुखी है - उसने अपना पुजारी खो दिया है। शांति आज अशांत है - उसका रक्षक नहीं रहा... रामायण में महर्षि वाल्मीकि ने भगवान राम के बारे में कहा है कि उन्होंने असंभव को संभव कर दिखाया। पंडित जी के जीवन में हमें महाकवि ने जो कहा उसकी झलक मिलती है। वे शांति के उपासक थे और फिर भी क्रांति के अग्रदूत, वे अहिंसा के उपासक थे लेकिन स्वतंत्रता और सम्मान की रक्षा के लिए हर हथियार का समर्थन करते थे, वे व्यक्तिगत स्वतंत्रता के पक्षधर थे फिर भी आर्थिक समानता लाने के लिए प्रतिबद्ध। वे कभी किसी से समझौता करने से नहीं डरते थे, लेकिन उन्होंने कभी किसी से डरकर समझौता नहीं किया।’



## 5. The Trump effect on India

*P. Chidambaram, former Cabinet Minister of India and serving Trustee, Rajiv Gandhi Foundation*



Mr Donald Trump is not POTUS — President of the United States — yet. That date is seven weeks away, but the talk of the town, all over the world, is what will be the impact of the Trump presidency — on the world, on your country, on your town, on your job, or on almost everything. Pre-election and after the election, the market indices are in a slide. On November 5, the Sensex closed at 78,782 and the rupee-dollar rate was Rs 84.11. As I write, the Sensex closed yesterday at 77,156 and the dollar exchange rate was Rs 84.50.

### 5.1 Trump, the mercantilist

Let's look at the core beliefs of Mr Trump. We know he is a mercantilist and believes that high tariffs alone can protect American interests. He has threatened to impose high tariffs on imported goods, especially from China. The U.S.'s trade deficit with China under the Biden Administration was USD 352 billion (2021), USD 382 billion (2022) USD 279 billion (2023) and USD 217 billion (until September 2024).

The U.S.'s affluent population needs large quantities of China's merchandise, clothing, electronics and machinery. High tariffs will increase costs to American industry and consumers, inflation will rise, and the U.S. Fed will increase the policy interest rate that it had cut twice this year. At the other end, China must continue to produce the goods in order to maintain employment. U.S. tariffs will cause China to 'dump' goods on other countries. India has already the highest number of anti-dumping duties on Chinese goods. High U.S. tariffs may trigger retaliatory tariffs and have consequences for world trade.

Few people in the U.S. talk about the fiscal deficit in the way that India and other countries are concerned about containing the fiscal deficit. The reason is that America easily finances its deficit because other countries — including China — buy U.S. Treasury bonds. China owns about USD 1170 billion of the total U.S. national debt of USD 21,000 billion. But if the U.S.'s fiscal deficit rises it will trigger inflation. Consequential higher interest rates will reverse the flow of capital and developing countries like India will witness outflow of funds. Against a stronger dollar, the Indian rupee will lose value.

## 5.2 Trump, the protectionist

Mr Trump has promised to bring the factories back to the United States. He may give large incentives to American industry to locate their factories in the U.S. and that will dampen foreign direct investment. If businesses still wish to locate their factories abroad, Mr Trump may impose restrictions on export of technology.

Mr Trump has, in the past, accused India of imposing high tariffs on American goods and of being a 'currency manipulator'. Whether the 'dosti' between Mr Trump and Mr Modi will soften his attitude to India, and make an exception for India, is a moot question.

The other grave issue is alleged 'illegal' immigration on which Mr Trump blames everything from unemployment to crime to drugs. Mr Trump has promised to forcibly deport up to one million illegal immigrants in the first 100 days. He has picked a hardliner, Mr Tom Homan, to be in charge of 'all Deportation of Illegal Aliens'. How many Indians will be deported is not known, but some will be, and that will have a fall-out on India-U.S. relations.

Mr Trump may also tighten the regulations on acquiring H1B1 visas although U.S. industry, universities and the healthcare system would like more qualified Indians to re-locate in the U.S. and eventually become U.S. citizens. If Mr Trump holds firm and U.S. employers also hold firm, it will be a case of an irresistible force meeting an immovable block.

## 5.3 Trump, the climate sceptic

A Trump presidency will have profound consequences for the oil and pharmaceutical industries. Mr Trump has nominated Mr Chris Wright to be the Energy Secretary. Mr Wright is a strong votary of fracking and drilling, and denies there is a climate crisis. The COP talks on Climate Change may not collapse but may suffer a serious setback. India's present position is that it supports the effort of COP but wants the pace to slow down, and this may happen.

On the pharmaceutical front, pharma stocks have risen in the U.S. in anticipation of lesser regulation and higher prices. Prices of drugs will rise around the world and will be a drag on our effort to universalize healthcare.

Finally, what will be Mr Trump's attitude toward the two wars that are killing dozens of innocent people every day and destroying critical infrastructure like schools and hospitals? Mr Trump has promised to "stop wars", but he has not spelt out what he will do. His past record and pronouncements indicate that he will support Israel. He may pressure Mr Zelensky to conclude a deal with Russia. Any rash step will have consequences and there is no certainty that either war will end and lead to durable peace. On the contrary, if the wars intensified, supply chains will be further disrupted and gravely affect developing countries.

Mr Trump's 'Make America Great Again' is not likely to make the planet a better or safer or more prosperous place. It is, according to Mr Trump, in America's self-interest. The results of the American elections proved it is in Mr Trump's self-interest too.



## 6. Trump and the future of American power: A Conversation with Stephen Kotkin

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[Source: Image](#)

Stephen Kotkin is a preeminent historian of Russia, a fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution and Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies, and the author of an acclaimed three-volume biography of Joseph Stalin. (The third volume is forthcoming.) Kotkin has also written extensively and insightfully on geopolitics, the sources of American power, and the twists and turns of the Trump era. Executive Editor Justin Vogt spoke with Kotkin on Wednesday, November 6, in the wake of Donald Trump's decisive victory in the U.S. presidential election.

**Justin Vogt (JV):** *You've written a number of times for Foreign Affairs about the war in Ukraine and what it means for the world and for American foreign policy. So let's start with an obvious question. It's impossible to know, of course, but what do you imagine Russian President Vladimir Putin is thinking right now, with Donald Trump poised to return to the White House for a second term?*

**Stephen Kotkin (SK):** I wish I knew. These opaque regimes in Moscow and Beijing don't want us to know what they think. What we do know from their actions as well as their frequent public pronouncements is that they came to the view that America was in irreversible decline.

We had the Iraq War and the shocking incompetence of the follow-up, where Washington lost the peace. And we lost the peace in Afghanistan. We had the 2008 financial crisis and the Great Recession. We had a lot of episodes that reinforced their view that we were in decline. They were only too happy to latch onto examples of their view that the United States and the collective West, as they call it, is in decline and, therefore, their day is going to come. They are the future; we are the past.



*Donald Trump and Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky, during a meeting in New York, September 24, 2024. JULIA DEMAREE NIKHINSON / AP*

Now, all of that happened before Trump. True, it looks like Trump is potentially a gift to them, because he doesn't like alliances, or at least that's what he says: allies are freeloaders. But what happened under Biden? It's not as if American power vastly increased under Biden, or under Obama, for that matter. So Trump may accelerate what Moscow and Beijing see as that self-weakening trend. But he's unpredictable. They may get the opposite. And they have revealed a lot of their own weaknesses and poor decision-making, to put it mildly.

On Ukraine, Trump's unpredictability could cut in many directions. Trump doesn't believe one thing or the other on Ukraine. And so in a way, anything is possible. It may turn out to be worse for Ukraine, but it may turn out to be better. It's extremely hard to predict because Trump is hard to predict, even for himself. You could even have Ukraine getting into NATO under Trump, which was never going to happen under Biden.

Now, I'm not saying that's going to happen. I'm not saying there's even a high probability—nor am I saying it would be a good thing, or a bad thing, if it happened. I'm just saying that the idea that Trump is some special gift to our adversaries doesn't wash with me. And he may surprise them on alliances and on rebuilding American power. It might well cut in multiple directions at once.

***JV: OK, but if you had to give Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky advice right now, what would it be?***

***SK:*** I'd say the same thing I've been saying for the past two years or so, which is similar to what Richard Haass wrote so eloquently in *Foreign Affairs* just this week. [Editor's Note: Haass wrote, in part, that Washington "should jettison the idea that, to win, Kyiv needs to liberate all its land. So as the United States and its allies continue to arm Ukraine, they must take the uncomfortable step of pushing Kyiv to negotiate with the Kremlin—and laying out a clear sense of how it should do so."]

The main problem is that there's been insufficient political pressure on the Putin regime. Until he worries that he has to pay a political price for his war, until his regime might be at risk—not his per capita GDP, not his soldiers, his cannon fodder, not his replaceable weapons—he can expend things that he doesn't care about: the lives of his own people, more and more ammunition, his domestic automobile industry, whatever.

So if Trump is unable to bring significant pressure on Putin's political regime, then the outcome is that Ukraine will be condemned to fight a rear-guard action, a war of attrition against a superior power that can sacrifice lives more easily at a far higher scale. And even if the Ukrainians can be successful in the short term, and keep surviving through continued courage and ingenuity, they still have to figure out some modus vivendi with Russian power, which is adjacent to them and isn't going anywhere. Ukraine has to win the peace.

And the reality is that Russian aggression is hardly the biggest risk Trump faces.



**JV:** So what is?

**SK:** The nontrivial chance of a great-power war breaking out in the Pacific theater in East Asia—a war that the United States could lose, which is something we as a nation haven't talked about in a long time. I'm not defeatist by any means; I'm not suggesting we would lose. But the mere fact that it's thinkable is a big change.



**JV:** *It's also been a long time since Americans have thought about mobilizing for such a war.*

**SK:** Right. And to put it bluntly, we don't have the people to die in a war at that scale. Everyone talks about the demographic problem the Chinese face. But they have 50 million 18-to-24-year-old men. [Editor's Note: There are around 12 million American men between 20 and 24 years old.] So even if a lot of young Chinese men go down to the bottom of the Taiwan Strait, a lot more can be sent into action.

The United States is used to renting a land army. That's how U.S. military power works. It's a lend-lease approach to war. In World War II, we sent the Studebakers and the Jeeps and the radios and the Spam, and the Soviets sent 27 million people to die in defeating Hitler's land army. In the Pacific theater, we sent Chiang Kai-shek some planes and weapons, and he provided the soldiers. And he lost at least 13 million. So we rented the Soviet land army in one theater and the Chinese land army in another theater, and we sent materiel and finances, and we won in both theaters as a result. But who are we going to rent now? Who's available to rent?

Yes, in the first Gulf War, we used superior technology. That keeps casualties low, even in a land war, which is usually very deadly for soldiers and civilians. But that degree of technological superiority is gone now, vis-à-vis China, in too many ways.

**JV:** *Earlier this year, you wrote this in Foreign Affairs: "The supreme irony of American grand strategy for the past 70 years is that it worked, fostering an integrated world of impressive and shared prosperity, and yet is now being abandoned. The United States was open for business to its adversaries, without reciprocation. Today, however, so-called industrial policy and protectionism are partially closing the country not just to rivals but also to U.S. allies, partners, friends, and potential friends. American policy has come to resemble China's—right when the latter has hit a wall." How does Trump fit into that story?*

**SK:** Well, we weren't ready for our success. The goal was to create this open global system that everyone could join and prosper from: a liberal international order. And it was going to be amazing for everybody. And they could join on a voluntary basis, not through some coercive "spheres of influence" approach. And they were going to get wealthy; they were going to go from poor to middle income. Win-win.

And it worked. It happened. It's stunning how many people around the world benefited from this U.S.-led order, including in America. And we're not just talking about China; we're also talking about India. It's our neighbors, too, in Mexico. And it's the developed world, as well, to a certain extent: Japan and Germany, the two enemies of World War II, became our closest allies and the second- and third-largest economies. There's never been a geopolitical turnabout bigger than that.

So it worked, but we're not ready for this success. It turns out that well, geez, you know, these other countries, they want a voice. They're not just going to become middle-income countries and continue to be told what to do. They want international institutions that reflect their achievements, their hard work, their entrepreneurialism, their creation of middle classes, their place in the world. They're justifiably proud countries. And we don't know how to accommodate their aspirations.

The conventional argument is seductive: the liberal order is supremely flexible and can accommodate everybody, and so therefore it's going to survive. But it doesn't work in the Iranian case, it doesn't work in the Russian case, and it doesn't work in the Chinese case. What are the terms of the accommodation? They see themselves, in several cases, as rooted in ancient civilizations that predate the U.S.-led order. What if they don't accept our terms, even if they're the beneficiaries?

Beyond the Eurasian land powers, what about the rising powers, whose rise the open order facilitated and who don't see the existing U.S.-led order as a threat to their regime's survival? What's the opportunity set for them? Where do they fit in? How are their voices heard?

**JV:** *Let's talk about Trump himself a little bit. In 2019, you wrote an essay for Foreign Affairs about the investigation into Trump's 2016 campaign and its links to Russia. As I watched the returns last night, I kept thinking about one passage from that piece: "Showmanship, a buccaneering spirit, and go-for-broke instincts are [among] the traits that made America what it is. ... Trump is a phenomenon. Only a genuinely formidable personality could withstand such intense, unremitting investigative pressure and hostility, even if he has brought no small degree of it on himself. Trump lacks the facility to govern effectively, but he knows how to command the attention of the highly educated and dominate the news cycle. There is a reason he proved able, in a single election cycle, to vanquish both the entrenched Bush and Clinton dynasties." "Trump," you wrote, "is as American as apple pie."*

*The results of this election seem to confirm the idea that, far from the aberration or fluke that many observers have portrayed him as being, Trump captures and reflects the American spirit, at this moment in history, far more accurately than his meritocratic, elite, Establishment foes.*

**SK:** I get impatient when I read or hear people say about Trump, "That's not who we are." Because who's the "we?" I don't mean when Trump is called a racist and people insist "we" are not racists. Or when Trump is called misogynist and people say "we" are better than that. I just mean that Trump is quintessentially American.

Trump is not an alien who landed from some other planet. This is not somebody who got implanted in power by Russian special operations, obviously. This is somebody that the American people voted for who reflects something deep and abiding about American culture. Think of all the worlds that he has inhabited and that lifted him up. Pro wrestling. Reality TV. Casinos and gambling, which are no longer just in Las Vegas or Atlantic City, but everywhere, embedded in daily life. Celebrity culture. Social media. All of that looks to me like America. And yes, so does fraud, and brazen lying, and the P. T. Barnum, carnival barker stuff. But there is an audience, and not a small one, for where Trump came from and who he is.



Source: [Image](#)

The system proved incapable of punishing Trump personally for his concerted, multifaceted refusal to accept his defeat and accept a peaceful transfer of power in 2020.

Paradoxically, the efforts to punish him, legally, ended up propelling him back from political irrelevance to the top of the Republican ticket. At the same time, this election saw massive turnout, extraordinary levels of voter commitment, by American standards.

And it happened in a great year for democracy, for all the efforts in multiple countries to deny or overturn the voters' will. Globally, half the adult population participated in or will participate in elections this year, and around the world, voters by and large threw out or incumbents when they could. Even in stolid Japan!

In America, no incumbent party with presidential approval ratings as low as Biden's has ever retained power. Voters in democracies cannot always get what they want, but they can punish those in power. The Democrats overreached.

Biden eked out an electoral college victory, having campaigned as a moderate, a stabilizer. He proceeded to govern as if he had won in a landslide, and often from the hard left, on a whole range of things: the border, climate and energy, gender, race, crime and policing, and so on.

And, as I wrote, Trump is a phenomenon. In addition to the Clinton dynasty and the Bush dynasty, he has now vanquished the Cheney dynasty. And he co-opted the Kennedy dynasty, of course, in what many would regard as a degraded form—although some people would regard the current incarnation of the Kennedy dynasty as reflecting, in some ways, the trajectory of America.

And Trump vanquished the military and national security establishment that served him and came out against his reelection. He vanquished the scientific establishment. Wow.

You know, they made fun of [Soviet leader] Nikita Khrushchev when he denounced Stalin in 1956, in the "secret speech" at the 20th Party Congress.

In that speech, Khrushchev condemned the cult of the personality that Stalin had developed. But Khrushchev, he wasn't known for his commanding presence, and behind his back, people said, "It's true, there was a cult—but there was also a personality!"

***JV: Speaking of Stalin: one of the reasons I wanted to talk to you today is that you've spent decades closely studying him and his regime, and few people know more than you do about authoritarianism. Trump's critics often accuse him of being or aspiring to be a strongman, or an autocrat, or even a fascist dictator. What do you think of that critique?***

***SK:*** Not much. Trump no doubt has a lot of desires. He would no doubt like to have the kind of control over the American political system that Xi Jinping has in China or Putin has in Russia. He's said so. I'm not sure Trump's personality would be conducive to wielding that kind of power and control. And that's not the system that we have.

Stalin was effective in his system. But what if you put a personality like Stalin in our system? What do you get? Someone who is supremely skilled at despotism maybe finds himself bereft in a system with innumerable checks and balances and a free press and open society, doesn't know how to manage. You have to consider the larger system, the set of institutions, the political culture, not just the personality, not just the fantasies of the individual person.

**JV:** But surely you would agree that Trump represents something different from the kind of leadership that has guided American government in the postwar era, right? The constant overt lying, the demand for loyalty to him above loyalty to the Constitution or the country—and especially the “big lie” about winning the 2020 election and his efforts to undermine the results and stay in office. Those things don’t have much precedent in U.S. history or in the U.S. system. And he’s threatened things that have been unimaginable in this country for decades: using military force against critics he calls “the enemy within,” jailing opponents, purging people who won’t pledge loyalty, mass deportations. Should we not worry that some of those things could do permanent damage to American democracy and the U.S. system?

**SK:** I don’t like any of that. I don’t like it at all. But is it American fascism? OK, you’re going to mass deport ten million people. Where is your Gestapo? Sure, you have ICE [Immigration and Customs Enforcement]. You have some police forces. But how are you going to round up that many people and forcibly evict them from the country and keep them out? So I don’t like the idea of mass deportation—and by the way, the Obama administration conducted a high number of deportations. But this is just nothing at all like the kind of stuff that I study and write about. And yes, it’s worrisome to hear rhetoric that is expressly antidemocratic, but some of that rhetoric is about stirring the pot, driving the other side into a frenzy, and whipping up your side, especially in this social media age.



[Source: Image](#)

When radio was introduced on a mass scale, many elites panicked: “This is the end of democracy, the end of civilization, what are we going to do? They can just broadcast anything and everything right into the living rooms of people, unfiltered, we cannot control what they say.” The establishment couldn’t censor it, and over the radio someone could just say anything and could just make stuff up. And Mussolini was great at radio, and Goebbels was amazing at radio. And lo and behold, we got Franklin Roosevelt, who mastered the medium and was a transformative president; whether one approves or disapproves of what he did, it was significant and enduring.

And so we’ve been through this before, with radio. It was very destabilizing, and yet we managed to assimilate it. And then we got the TV version of that story, which was even worse because it was images, not just audio.

And again, they could just broadcast anything and everything right into people's living rooms. They could just say anything they wanted to, and the establishment, the self-assigned filters, couldn't censor it. And we got Kennedy, as opposed to his opponent, Richard Nixon, who sweated on TV and was mopping his brow while Kennedy shined and beamed.

And now we have social media, which is potentially even more destabilizing for an open society. Everyone's their own National Enquirer, and everyone is connected. And everyone can broadcast these previously fringe conspiracy theories that are now mainstream. Not because everybody believes them. I don't know whether more people believe them now than did before. But everybody can see them, hear them, propagate them, forward them.

We always disagree on what the truth is. But now we have a problem with the truth regime. The truth regime is how we determine the truth: evidence, argument, proof. But that truth regime has been destabilized. No one has the truth alone, and we should argue about the truth. But we used to have a consensus on how we got to the truth and how we recognized truth. Not anymore. So how are we going to manage this, to assimilate this new technology and media?

Strong, successful countries have competent and compassionate leadership and social solidarity and trust. It's been a long time since we had both competence and compassion at the top. And the loss of social solidarity and trust is debilitating for our institutions. We are an open society and must remain so. But how?

***JV: Earlier this year, in trying to sketch out a way forward for the United States, you wrote this in Foreign Affairs: "The government and philanthropists should redirect significant higher education funding to community colleges that meet or exceed performance metrics. States should launch an ambitious rollout of vocational schools and training, whether reintroducing them in existing high schools or opening new self-standing ones in partnership with employers at the ground level. Beyond human capital, the United States needs to spark a housing construction boom by drastically reducing environmental regulations and to eliminate subsidies for builders, letting the market work. The country also needs to institute national service for young people, perhaps with an intergenerational component, to rekindle broad civic consciousness and a sense of everyone being in this together." How would you rate the Trump administration's chances of grasping this challenge and taking those kinds of steps?***

***SK:*** Well, he'll be a lame duck immediately after the inauguration, and second term presidencies generally don't get a lot done. And he has a lot of grievances that he might pursue that have nothing to do with that agenda I was describing. I think the Justice Department is going to be in his cross hairs, potentially the Federal Reserve, maybe the CIA. Trump is passionate about retribution and those he perceives as having wronged him, gone after him, and some of these grievances are legitimate, even if retribution does not bode well for a successful presidency.

But there are some things he'd be well positioned to do that would be significant contributions to American revitalization. Fund AI-inflected vocational training to reward the people who helped sweep him back into office, are not going to college, yet need pathways forward, opportunities. Invest in community colleges, where a gigantic proportion of American students are but where a lack of resources often thwarts their ambitions.

Trump is a builder, and Trump is a deregulator. So he could lift environmental regulations when it comes to housing, which have very little to do with environmental protection and more to do with a not-in-my-backyard blockage.

Build housing, which would increase supply and therefore lower rents and real-estate prices. There is an entire package of things that could make for effective policy and effective politics. He'd need people in an administration to implement it all, and he'd need the Senate and the House to pass legislation where necessary. And he'd have to want to do it. But it's there for the taking.

Trump's reelection, even before his inauguration, has dealt a blow to American soft power. This is a critical component of our strength, our security, our prosperity. Trump might be unaware of this or indifferent to it. Part of the challenge is not his fault: sometimes foreigners, even our allies and partners, do not understand America as well as they think.

What [the novelist] Philip Roth called the "indigenous American berserk"—which was always there but which social media has revealed and to an extent enhanced—frightens many of them. Many, though not all, see Trump as a breakdown, as a turn away from the America they know and hope to see again. So Trump's administration will have some work to do in this regard, as many of his officials did in his first term. There's an opening here: he wants America, and himself, to be perceived as strong.

Maybe the biggest weakness of the liberal international order is that the whole world feels the consequences of U.S. elections but has no say in them. We Americans elect what is often called "the leader of the free world." And our allies and friends, to say nothing of our enemies, have to suck it up: the person we choose is now in charge of the U.S.-led international order.

Most foreign governments have become adept over the years at managing Washington, the multilayered and federal U.S. political system. And most have experience from Trump's first term. Still, the return of Trump has already affected what they think of America's commitments, political stability, long-term trajectory. I think those who feel confirmed in their pessimism are mistaken, for a host of reasons. But their impressions are a reality that affects U.S. soft power.

As a historian, my tendency is to focus less on the cut and thrust of politics of the moment and more on the longer term, the structural directions and the big drivers of change. The deepest structural trend for the U.S. is, in some ways, the gulf that opened up between our commitments and our capabilities.

We have been talking about taking on more commitments—whether it's bringing Ukraine into NATO or signing a treaty alliance with Saudi Arabia—even as there are doubts at home and abroad about whether we have the will and the capabilities to meet our current commitments. Whether our defense industrial base is up to the task of defending all our current treaty allies. And doubts about our fiscal situation, which has been very severely eroded and will likely erode still more under Trump 2.0, as it did under Biden and Trump 1.0.

Obama tried to enact retrenchment, but he kept getting buffeted by demands for more applications of American power—and we saw the results. Biden wanted out of Afghanistan, come what may, and found he had to react to the war in Ukraine and the Israel-Hamas war with significant additional commitments. So that is at the top of Trump's inbox. His approach, rhetorically, looks night-and-day different from Obama's and Biden's. And he faces the same dilemma, and it's been building, and I'm not sure his critics had answers.

Still, he needs an answer. Because America needs an answer.



## 7. Is India really ‘neighbourhood first’?

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Yogendra Yadav<sup>4</sup>



*Source: Image*

If we live in a neighbourhood where every single neighbour is unhappy with us, it may not be a bad idea to ask: Did we do something wrong?

What exactly is India’s “national interest” in our neighbourhood? Is it in our long-term interest to flex our muscles, browbeat our neighbours and create a zone of India’s dominance in our backyard? Even if this were desirable, is this feasible? Or, is this foreign policy counter-productive, leaving us in an unenviable position where we are neither feared nor loved?

A recent visit to Nepal prompted me to ask this question. Normally, foreign policy is the domain of experts and diplomats, as it should be. Besides, the unwritten code of Indian public life dictates that differences over external relations are not aired in public. This may have created an unhealthy situation where lack of public scrutiny of foreign-policy decisions may not serve public interests.

At least in some cases, diplomacy is too serious a business to be left to diplomats. When it comes to framing our neighbourhood policy, we must not let go of the common sense that we deploy in dealing with our neighbours in the colonies and villages that we reside in.

This is especially relevant at the present juncture when we are in a particularly tight spot vis-a-vis our neighbours. K P Oli, with a track record of India baiting, is back as the Prime Minister of Nepal. Recently, he bypassed the established convention of Nepalese PMs visiting India first and announced his first official visit to China.

Mohammed Yunus in Bangladesh is no India baiter, but it is hard to disentangle the anti-Hasina revolt that brought him to power from the anti-India sentiment that has gained ground in recent years. The new government’s latest demand for extradition of Sheikh Hasina is bound to put the Modi government in a spot. In Maldives, the main plank of Mohamed Muizzu’s successful election campaign was his promise to oust Indian forces from the island.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/yogendra-yadav-writes-is-india-really-neighbourhood-first-9676641/>

The Sri Lankan President Anura Dissanayake, whose left-wing coalition National People's Power secured a two-thirds majority, did not campaign on an anti-India platform but his party's dislike for Indian intervention is no secret and goes back to civil-war days. Bhutan has not seen any regime change, but the King has leaned a wee bit towards China, away from India.

Even if we keep China and Pakistan aside, where we do not expect very friendly regimes, the current set of regimes in the rest of the neighbouring countries is about as hostile as it can get. And we are unable to deal with these regimes by muscle flexing. Maldives, Sri Lanka, Nepal and even Bhutan have all learnt the art of using China for counter-balancing. We cannot browbeat our neighbours.

To be fair, the Modi government cannot be solely blamed for the entire mess. There is an element of coincidence in many of these not-so-friendly regimes coming together at the same time. Many of the policies that led to the present situation started much before the Modi government.

Some of these have become the DNA of Indian diplomacy in South Asia. And there is no denying that playing the anti-India card is a rewarding game for many leaders in our neighbourhood. Even so, if we live in a neighbourhood where every single neighbour is unhappy with us, it may not be a bad idea to ask: Did we do something wrong? And if we own the biggest house, we might take the onus of resuming a decent relationship, even if we did not break it. That's not woolly dovishness. It's prudence.

Take Nepal, the one country in this region we cannot possibly have a cultural or historical basis to quarrel with. But complaints about the Indian government's "big brother" attitude cut across its political spectrum. These are not just some vague allegations about the distant past. Nepali opinion makers and leaders have not forgotten India's vacillation during Nepal's democratic transition — first declaring the Maoist rebels as "terrorists", then supporting them and insisting that they be part of the transition and finally sending an ex-prince as emissary when Nepal was getting rid of its monarchy. Much of the current unease is about developments since 2014, after PM Modi received a historic and truly public welcome in Nepal following his victory.

Every Nepali believes that the Modi government put severe conditions on what it wanted in Nepal's new constitution; and that the "blockade" of 2015 was a punishment to Nepal for not heeding the Indian government's diktats.

The Indian government denies that it imposed any blockade; the official version is that it was a bandh organised by the Madhesi movement within Nepal. But there are few takers for this in Kathmandu. Neutral observers agree that the jamming of the Indo-Nepal land border could not have happened without covert support from India. For a land-locked country, the memory of the blockade is a wound to its psyche. Whatever the exact details, the onus of healing is on us.

After the promulgation of the new constitution as well, the Indian embassy is seen as a major player in Nepal's domestic politics. It has its favourite parties — the Nepali Congress now has an official relationship with the [BJP](#) in India — and its favourite leaders. And of course it has its favourite Indian businessmen to promote in Nepal.

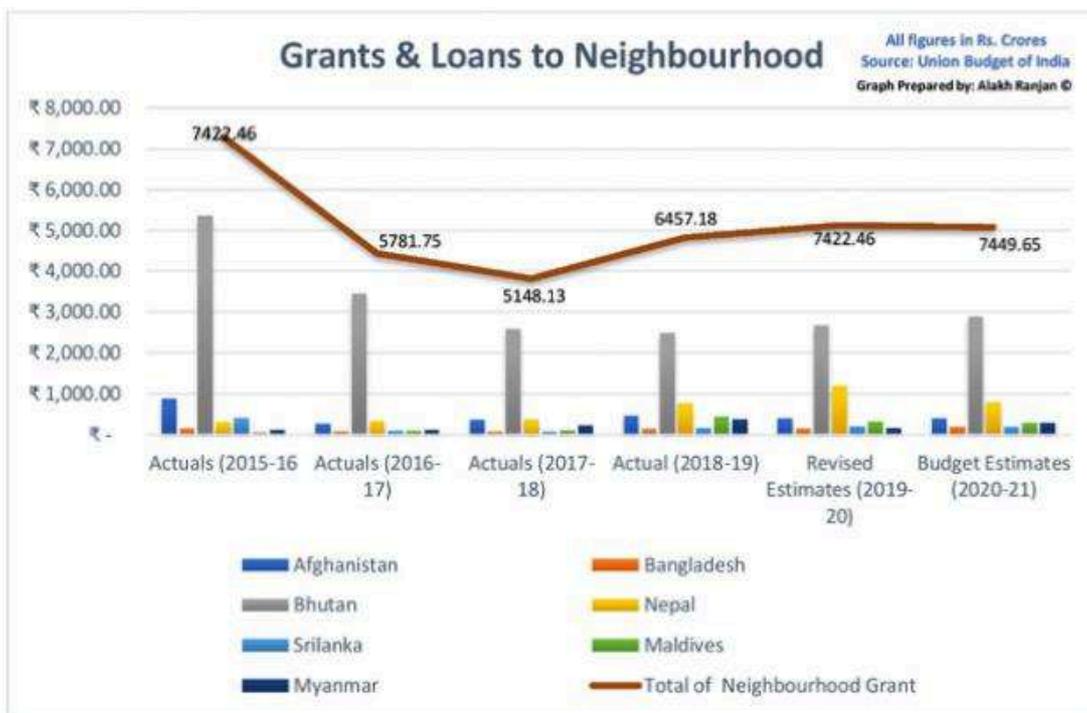
Of late, the RSS is believed to be backing its counterpart in Nepal, the Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh. Indian intervention has had the salutary effect of forcing the hill elites to listen to the voice of the hitherto marginalised Madhesi communities. Other than that, it is unclear as to which larger interest the Indian intervention serves.

It is not clear if the Indian leadership is directly invested in shaping some of these interventions. An astute observer of Nepali politics explained the shift thus: “Earlier, the Nepali leaders were speaking directly to Indian leaders. Later, the Indian diplomats and civil society leaders became their principal interlocutors. Now, we have reached a point where Nepali leaders are made to engage with Indian intelligence operatives and wheeler-dealers.”

I heard of many political nobodies in India who wield unbelievable clout in Nepal. Kathmandu is full of stories about conspiracies hatched by Indian agencies like RAW. Most of these are hard to believe. But this widespread perception is a reality in itself. More often than not, it is the worst of both worlds: We cannot claim a moral high ground, nor have we achieved much success in these operations.

“Neighbourhood first” is the charming label of the Modi government’s South Asia policy. The official description doesn’t help you understand what exactly comes “first”. The government’s priorities make you wonder if it is about putting first the concerns of our neighbours or about asserting our global power claims first in our neighbourhood. Would it not be better if we follow a policy of “neighbourliness first” — good old precepts of being decent neighbours? Such a policy would involve respect for sovereignty of each country, non-interference in its internal affairs, not allowing one’s space to be used for activity hostile to another and peaceful settlement of any dispute. To these general principles, former PM Inder Kumar Gujral had added another in the case of neighbours like Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and Maldives: India should not ask for reciprocity but accommodate what it can in good faith and trust.

One can imagine how foreign-policy hawks would balk at this “naive” suggestion. But we must ask — what exactly have our too-clever-by-half policies in our neighbourhood achieved for India’s national interest? Whose interest is national interest anyway?



Source: Image



## 8. India's relations with its neighbours - Part II – Afghanistan, Pakistan, Maldives and Bangladesh

*Prof Somnath Ghosh, Senior Honorary Visiting Fellow, RGICS*



INDIA



BANGLADESH



AFGHANISTAN



MALDIVES



PAKISTAN

*Source: Image*

### 8.1 Introduction

In the May 2024 issue of Policy Watch, we had presented a geostrategic perspective of India-China relations. In this follow-up piece, we focus on India's relations with her remaining eight neighbours over the last decade.

When we take an integrated view of India's relations with her neighbours, four aspects stand out. First is the element of continuity and change in India's foreign policy in dealing with our neighbours where ideological underpinnings have largely given way to realpolitik of security and trade. Second is the overwhelming influence of the China factor impacting on our relationship with each of our neighbours.

This involves the question of choice that our neighbours exercise based on their geopolitical and geostrategic compulsions. Third is the conflation of power, politics and people dimension manifesting in myriad ways with the potential to upend relations such as pandering to nationalist sentiments for electoral gains or responding to regime change, violent or otherwise. Finally, given the above three factors, what is the framework that should guide India's relations with our neighbours for a mutually sustainable relationship?

Before we map India's relationship with her eight neighbours, it may not be a bad idea to consider a very recent event. Leaders of Sri Lanka, the Maldives, Seychelles, Bangladesh, Mauritius, Nepal, and Bhutan were in New Delhi for the 9th June 2024 ceremony of the new government being sworn in. Writing for The Hindu, Suhasini Haidar quotes a press release by the Ministry of External Affairs which said that "this was in keeping with the highest priority accorded by India to its 'Neighbourhood First' policy and 'SAGAR' vision."

The occasion also provided the Prime Ministers of Bangladesh and Bhutan the opportunity to hold bilateral talks with regard to Bangladesh's desire to import hydropower from Bhutan, which requires a tripartite transit agreement with India, on the lines of a similar agreement discussed with Nepal.

Haidar however noted that since New Delhi does not formally recognise the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, or the military regime in Myanmar, and does not maintain any high-level engagement with Islamabad, the grouping did not represent the entire neighbourhood, but only the countries in India's "comfort zone".<sup>5</sup> Nonetheless, we shall consider these three countries as well.

But before we proceed to country-specific details, it may be worthwhile to note the observation of Meera Srinivasan, senior assistant editor with The Hindu: "While Mr. Modi has called for 'deeper people-to-people ties and connectivity in the region', people in neighbouring countries evaluate India's engagement based on many factors, not just financial assistance driven mostly by geopolitical insecurity. While nearly all neighbours value their friendship with India, they have not signed up for an uncritical embrace.

## 8.2 Afghanistan

India and Afghanistan share historical and cultural ties that have coloured much of the bilateral relationship. But the fly in the ointment has been the Taliban. The first Taliban regime (1996-2001) was not recognised by any country except by Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and UAE. For India, this period was especially painful. Just after it took control of Kabul, Taliban men had dragged the former Afghan president Najibullah — a close friend of India — out of the UN compound in which he had been hiding, tortured him and hanged him from the nearest lamp-post in the city.



*Source: Image*

Next was the 1999 hijacking of Indian Airlines flight 814. The plane was hijacked by five militants of the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, an anti-India terror group then operating out of Pakistan and Bangladesh, and was flown to a number of locations in India before being diverted to Kandahar. The Taliban are believed to have thwarted any rescue attempt by the Indian government.

After the hijack of IC-814, then external affairs minister Jaswant Singh had to travel to Kandahar. "Singh took then Taliban foreign minister Muttawakil's arm and traded three terrorists for the lives of the plane's passengers and crew. One of those terrorists, Masood Azhar, would go on to establish the Jaish-e-Mohammed in Pakistan. That incident still haunts the Indian establishment."<sup>6</sup>

*Regime change and period of warmth and active friendship:* In international relations, regime change – especially reflecting radical departures in ideological and economic frames - brings about significant shifts and reordering in bilateral relations.

Events turned in India's favour soon after the Taliban was bombed out by the US in 2001 following 9/11 and Hamid Karzai helmed the new Afghan government. By 2002, India had opened four consulates, apart from a mission in Kabul. How this came about is an interesting story:

"In the wake of the Bonn Agreement, when Kabul asked New Delhi to reopen its mission in Kabul and four more consulates, Pakistan protested. India is probably the only nation in the world to earn the abundant love and affection of the Afghans and Pakistan knows that. The relationship with the rest is largely fear, and sometimes awe.

Interestingly, the Americans protested too. US diplomats told their counterparts in India that Pakistan needed to be given another chance (it had been only one of three countries to have recognised the Taliban, besides Saudi Arabia and UAE), that it had influence in the region and that the US did not want to offend it by allowing India to establish its presence, especially in southern Afghanistan, a region Pakistan considered part of its own sphere of influence. Cushioned by what the Afghans wanted, India decided to spurn the Americans. Four consulates were opened."<sup>7</sup>

If America wanted to appease Pakistan because "it had influence in the region", there's no gainsaying that India's relations with Afghanistan would be impacted by Pakistan. Why Pakistan was against India opening four consulates and why this still happened may be gleaned from William Dalrymple's captivating Brookings essay, "A Deadly Triangle: Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India":

"After the Taliban were ousted by the U.S. after 9/11, a major strategic shift occurred: the government of Afghanistan became an ally of India's, thus fulfilling the Pakistanis' worst fear. The president of post-Taliban Afghanistan, Hamid Karzai, hated Pakistan with a passion, in part because he believed that the ISI had helped assassinate his father in 1999.

At the same time he felt a strong emotional bond with India, where he had gone to university in the Himalayan city of Simla, once the summer capital of British India. When I interviewed Karzai in Kabul in early March (2001), he spoke warmly of his days in Simla, calling them some of the happiest of his life, and he was moved almost to tears as he recalled the sound of monsoon rain hitting the tin roof of his student lodgings and the sight of the beautiful cloud formations drifting before his windows.

He also expressed his love of Indian food and even admitted to liking Bollywood films. Karzai views India as democratic, stable and relatively rich, the perfect partner for Afghanistan, a "best friend" as he frequently calls it."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Suhasini Haidar, "Seven leaders from India's neighbourhood watch swearing-in event together", *The Hindu*, June 9, 2024 <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/leaders-of-delhis-comfort-zone-in-the-neighbourhood-minus-afghanistan-pakistan-and-myanmar-at-swearing-in/article68270996.ece>

<sup>6</sup> Jyoti Malhotra, "India scored an own goal in great Afghan game by closing two consulates. Here's how", *The Print*, 19 May, 2020 <https://theprint.in/opinion/global-print/india-scored-an-own-goal-in-great-afghan-game-by-closing-two-consulates-heres-how/424591/>

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> William Dalrymple, "A Deadly Triangle: Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India", *The Brookings Essay*, June 25, 2013 <http://csweb.brookings.edu/content/research/essays/2013/deadly-triang>

In the years afterward, India made wise use of its opportunity to forge a close partnership with Afghanistan. The aid and reconstruction program it set in motion during the 1980s was so generous that it quickly established India as the single largest donor in the country. Noted journalist and author, William Dalrymple says “it was also carefully thought out, praised as one of the best planned and targeted aid efforts by any country.”

India built roads linking Afghanistan with Iran so that Afghanistan’s trade can reach the Persian Gulf at the port of Chabahar, thus freeing it of the need to rely on the Pakistani port of Karachi. India donated or helped to build electrical power plants, health facilities for children and amputees, 400 buses and 200 minibuses, and a fleet of aircraft for Ariana Afghan Airlines.

India was also involved in constructing power lines, digging wells, running sanitation projects and using solar energy to light up villages, while Indian telecommunications personnel built digitized telecommunications networks in 11 provinces. One thousand Afghan students a year were offered scholarships to Indian universities. India also played a key role in the construction of a new Afghan parliament in Kabul at a cost of \$25 million. All this led to India becoming enormously popular in Afghanistan: an ABC/BBC poll in 2009 showed 74% of Afghans viewing India favorably, while only 8% had a positive view of Pakistan.



*Violence as a “moderating” factor in bilateral relations:* If about 2,500 US soldiers were to die in the killing fields of Afghanistan “fighting someone else’s war”, it was obvious that the Taliban, while it was ousted was very much a fighting machine, and it couldn’t have been so if it did not have strong sponsors and backers. Along with US, India started paying the price.

By 2008, the Indian embassy in Kabul was bombed, killing 40 and wounding more than 100. Fifteen months later, on October 8, 2009, a massive car bomb set off just outside the Indian embassy killed 17 people and wounded 63. Most of the dead were ordinary Afghans caught walking near the target. A few Indian security personnel were wounded, but the blast walls built following the 2008 attack deflected the force of the explosion, so that physical damage to the embassy was limited.

Less than six months later, on February 26, 2010, two of the Indian guest houses, the Park and the Hamid - which housed small Indian army English Language Training Team, and all the Indian army doctors and nurses staffing the new Indira Gandhi Kabul Children's Hospital – were attacked by militants. The front portion of Hamid guesthouse was completely destroyed - there was just a huge crater. Everything had been reduced to rubble.

A car bomb had rammed the front gate and leveled the front of the compound. Three militants then appeared and began firing at anyone still alive. In all 18 people were killed in the attack that morning, nine of them Indians, and 36 were wounded. Among the dead found beneath the debris was the assistant consul general from the new Indian consulate in Kandahar.

*The Pakistan angle:* According to Dalrymple, this consulate was a particular bugbear of the Pakistanis, who accused it of being a base for RAW—the Research and Analysis Wing, India's external intelligence agency. The Pakistanis believed RAW was funding, arming and encouraging the insurgency in Baluchistan, the province that has been waging a separatist struggle ever since it was incorporated into the new nation of Pakistan in 1947.

Dalrymple contends that it was not difficult to figure out the motive for the attack. The operation was soon traced by both Afghan and U.S. intelligence to a joint mission by the Pakistani-controlled Haqqani network, a Taliban-affiliated insurgent group under the leadership of Jalaluddin Haqqani, and the Pakistan-based anti-Indian militant group Lashkar-e-Taiba (Army of the Righteous), which carried out the November 2008 assault on the Taj Hotel and other targets in Mumbai. Both the Haqqani network and Lashkar-e-Taiba are believed to take orders from the ISI—Inter-Services Intelligence, which is closely linked to the military. Pakistan made no public comment on the attack, other than to refuse permission for the planes.



[Source: Image](#)

Sleeping with the enemy: Maintaining relations with a country that had a new dispensation as an outcome of turbulent change and has had an adversarial relation with India, may be not just a tricky situation but a Hobson's choice.

Veteran journalist Jyoti Malhotra holds that over the years, as the Taliban morphed in and out of the Islamic State, Al-Qaeda, the Haqqani Network, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's men and a variety of other terror groups that may or may not have owed allegiance to the Pakistani establishment, it became clear that "the need to keep your channels open with the Taliban were largely about gauging whether they would be an alternative source of power in Kabul."<sup>9</sup>

Perhaps this was the reason why US special envoy for Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad recommended that India start talking to the Taliban, in recognition of the fact that it was expanding its presence across the country.

Maybe that's why then Afghan president Ashraf Ghani was signing a new unity agreement with his former number 2, Abdullah Abdullah, having been persuaded by Khalilzad that the conjoined leadership should embark upon a power-sharing dialogue with the Taliban to bring about a permanent peace – even though Ashraf Ghani accused the Taliban to have intensified the war and for shedding Afghan blood.

The above is in line with the first lesson in diplomacy: Keep your friends close, but your enemies closer. But so far as India was concerned, in early April 2020, India shut down two out of the four consulates in Afghanistan – Herat in the west, ostensibly because of rising Covid cases, and Jalalabad in the south, the gateway to the Khyber because it was getting increasingly insecure for Indians to function from there.

According to one analyst, this was a cruel blow for Indian interests as shutting down of the consulates was a "clear and grim reminder that Delhi's South Block has little time to pay close and continuous attention to the goings-on in its neighbourhood once-removed.

Perhaps, its mandarins would rather serve in the posher capitals of the West."<sup>10</sup> Evidently, Pakistan was breathing a huge self-congratulatory sigh.

On 15 August, 2021, the Taliban regained control of Afghanistan as American troops withdrew from the country following a twenty-year "war against terror". India's response was swift.

A press release dated August 17, 2021 read as such:

In view of the prevailing situation in Kabul, it was decided that our Embassy personnel would be immediately moved to India.

This movement has been completed in two phases and the Ambassador and all other India-based personnel have reached New Delhi this afternoon.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Malhotra, op. cit.

<sup>10</sup> Jyoti Malhotra, op. cit.

<sup>11</sup> <https://eoi.gov.in/kabul/?13299?000?000>



Source: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=il\\_cMITgCnU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=il_cMITgCnU)

India now has a “technical team” in Kabul. While it continues to provide much-needed humanitarian assistance, especially wheat to Afghanistan, joint infrastructure projects remain stalled and e-visas have reportedly mostly been extended to Afghans from Hindu and Sikh faiths, New Delhi’s approach towards Taliban 2.0 seems a little unclear.<sup>12</sup> Meanwhile, India remains the largest regional contributor to Afghanistan’s reconstruction and development efforts with pledges of \$3 billion.

According to Gautam Mukhopadhaya, former Indian Ambassador to Afghanistan “India’s position on the Taliban is the same as elsewhere in the region — which is to deal with the ‘reality’ of its current dominance so long as it is not anti-India, primarily for its security interests. It is a security-centric and realist policy in which it is trying to preserve its equities.”<sup>13</sup>

The Taliban also placed its own officials in over 14 diplomatic missions across the world such as in Iran, Turkey, Pakistan, Russia and China. But the power struggle in the Afghan embassy in Delhi — between the Taliban and Afghanistan’s previous democratic government — shows how it hasn’t been successful everywhere.

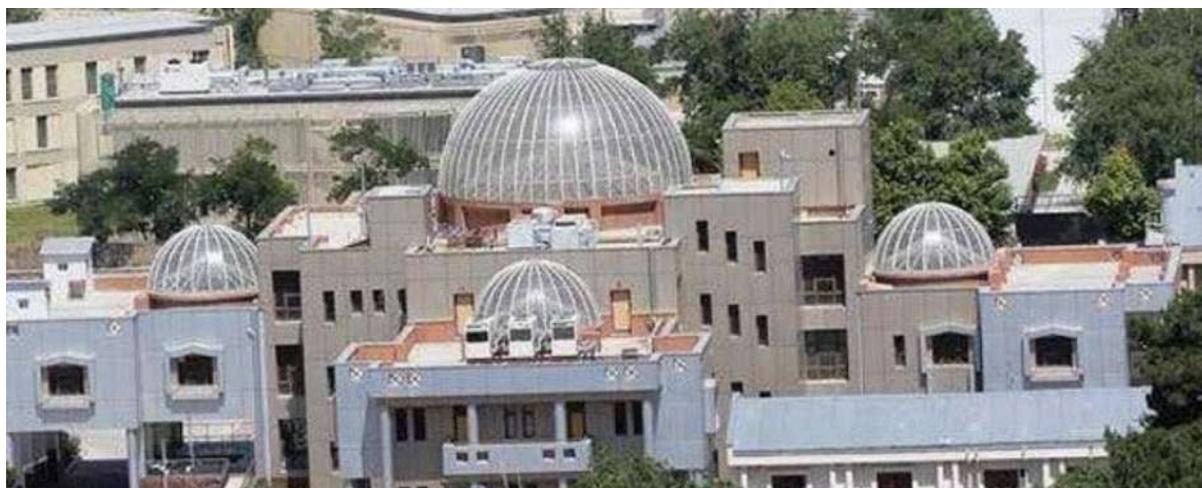
On 24th November 2023, the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (not to be confused with Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, the new name of Taliban government) announced permanent closure in New Delhi. The embassy blamed both the Taliban rulers in Kabul as well as the Government of India for pressuring it to stop operations in India permanently. The embassy had stopped functioning on September 30 when the senior Afghan diplomats and the ambassador representing the Government of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan left India.

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<sup>12</sup> Pia Krishnankutty, “2 yrs of Taliban in Afghanistan — ways ‘Taliban 2.0’ is different, and not so different after all”, The Print, 15 August, 2023 <https://theprint.in/theprint-essential/2-yrs-of-taliban-in-afghanistan-ways-taliban-2-0-is-different-and-not-so-different-after-all/1712784/>

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

India has not recognised the Taliban administration in Kabul and it has not restarted full-scale diplomatic activities at its embassy in Kabul after closing it in August 2021. The permanent closure of the embassy of Afghanistan will create a challenging situation for traders and travellers who want to apply for Afghan visas. That apart, it also severs the formal link that India had with the ruling elite of the previous government headed by Dr. Ashraf Ghani.<sup>14</sup>



*Source: Image*

*How intelligent is India's response in the unfolding scenario?* From dire forebodings in 2021 when the Taliban came to power to 2024, New Delhi has come a long way in Kabul. On Jan 29, 2024, the Taliban administration in Afghanistan hosted a meeting titled 'Afghanistan Regional Cooperation Initiative' in the Afghan capital.

The meeting was addressed by the Taliban Acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi and was attended by representatives from neighbouring and regional countries. An Indian delegation participated in this meeting which was the first international meeting hosted by the de facto authorities in Afghanistan since they seized power in Afghanistan on August 15, 2021.<sup>15</sup>

A few days later, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) reiterated India's relation with the Afghan people and acknowledged that Indian diplomats have been engaging the Taliban on "various formats", although India has refused to recognise the Taliban government and has a "technical team" at the Embassy in Kabul catering only to the humanitarian requirements of the Afghans.

While India has remained cautious, China has increased diplomatic engagement with Kabul as represented by the exchange of envoys between Kabul and Beijing. On January 30, 2024, President Xi Jinping of China accepted the letter of credential of Taliban's official Ambassador to China, Mawlawi Asadullah.

So, what could this diplomatic pirouette be attributed to? Is it because of Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanikzai, Afghanistan's Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs since 7 September 2021? "Stanikzai is certainly an important factor.

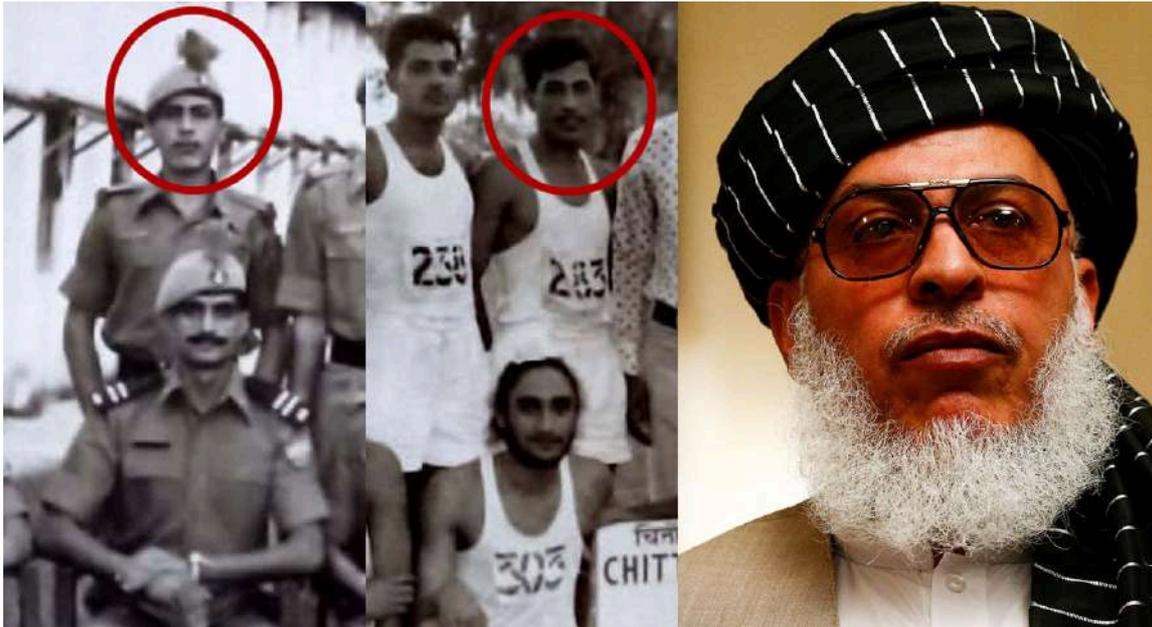
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<sup>14</sup> Kallol Bhattacharjee, "Afghanistan of embassy in India", The Hindu, November 24, 2023 <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/afghanistan-embassy-closes-permanently-in-india/article67568717.ece>

<sup>15</sup> Anwasha Ghosh, "Taliban hosts 'Afghanistan Regional Cooperation Initiative' Meeting in Kabul", *Indian Council of World Affairs*, 31 January, 2024 [https://www.icwa.in/show\\_content.php?lang=1&level=3&is\\_id=10459&lid=6670](https://www.icwa.in/show_content.php?lang=1&level=3&is_id=10459&lid=6670)

He is an important member of the Taliban and like many, who have had connections with India, is aware of the Indian ethos and culture. He would know that India has no territorial ambitions, and that New Delhi is a contributor to the development of Afghanistan,” says Ashok Sajjanhar, former Indian ambassador to Kazakhstan, Sweden, and Latvia.

It is reported that Stanikzai has old India connections. He trained as a soldier at the Army Cadet College of the Indian Army at Nowgaon in India for three years from 1979 to 1982 under an Indo-Afghan cooperation programme. Stanikzai, an ethnic Pashtun of the Stanikzai sub-tribe, also spent time as an officer cadet for a year-and-a-half with the Keren Company of the Bhagat Battalion at the IMA, Dehradun, one of 45 foreign cadets in the Keren Company.



[Source: Image](#)

According to Sajjanhar, “India has a half-way house in Kabul and the threat of terror attacks on India at the behest of Pakistan from the Afghan soil have receded. In fact, relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan have soured. India remains the largest regional donor for Afghanistan with pledges amounting to \$3-4 billion.

In December 2022, Taliban’s Minister for Urban Development, Hamdullah Nomani, held talks with members of the Indian technical team in Kabul where he called for renewal of Indian projects, invited investment in New Kabul Town, raised visa issues and urged more scholarships for Afghan students.

On March 7, 2023 a high-level Indian delegation led by J P Singh, the joint secretary heading MEA's division for Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran, met with Taliban foreign minister Amir Khan Muttaqi in Kabul - marking the first acknowledged meeting between senior officials after the shift of power in Afghanistan in August 2021.

Singh also met with former Afghan president Hamid Karzai, officials from the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and members of the Afghan business community, Jaiswal explained during the weekly press briefing.

The development came after the embassy of Afghanistan in New Delhi that was earlier run by officials with affiliation to the pre-Taliban government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan was shut down and the consular responsibilities were taken over by Afghan officials who are considered to be pro-Taliban. The Afghan readout of the meeting highlighted that Singh commended the efforts of the Taliban in “ensuring overall security and stability, countering narcotics, fighting the ISKP and corruption in the country”.<sup>16</sup>

On the other hand, the MEA's briefing focussed on India's humanitarian assistance to the people of Afghanistan and the use of Chabahar port by Afghan traders.

About two weeks later, Afghan consul generals in India — seen as the de facto “leaders” of the Afghan embassy in Delhi after a power struggle last year — met top officials from the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) Saturday to discuss the status of bilateral fund - the India Afghanistan Foundation (IAF).

This fund finances projects aimed at promoting scientific, educational, technical and cultural cooperation between the two countries. A 10-member board of directors, co-chaired by ambassadors from both countries, supervises the fund.

The meeting came shortly after US Special Representative for Afghanistan Thomas West's visit to India earlier that week to discuss the situation in the Taliban-ruled country. He had met Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra and joint secretary Singh in Delhi.

In a post on X, West acknowledged that “India continues to deliver critical humanitarian aid and medicine to the Afghan people, and we discussed 2024 needs. Also exchanged views on development of a unified diplomatic approach in support of collective interests.”<sup>17</sup>

These developments also came amid deteriorating ties between Pakistan and Taliban-ruled Afghanistan. Earlier that week, Pakistan carried out airstrikes in Khost and Paktia provinces of Afghanistan and the Taliban defence ministry said it carried out retaliatory strikes.<sup>18</sup>

In 2021 when the Taliban had come to power, naysayers had written off India with dire forebodings about the Islamic crescent at India's frontiers and the threat of ISI-backed Taliban terrorists to wage a full-scale battle in Kashmir. While we do see India has taken many steps in dealing with the current Taliban government, in official circles it is recognised that “India (can) scarcely afford to let its guard down because of the presence of terror groups in Afghanistan, even though the situation in bilateral ties is much improved.”<sup>19</sup>

So far, the Ministry of External Affairs has not elaborated if India would follow the example of others who have established diplomatic relations with the Taliban-ruled Afghanistan, and grant de facto recognition.<sup>20</sup>

In contrast, on January 30, 2024, after over two years of negotiations, China recognised Bilal Karimi, a former Taliban spokesman, as an official envoy to Beijing, making Xi's government the first in the world to do so since the group seized power in Afghanistan in 2021.

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<sup>16</sup> Keshav Padmanabhan, “Indian delegation discussed access to Chabahar, humanitarian assistance with Taliban, says MEA”, The Print, 08 March, 2024 <https://theprint.in/diplomacy/indian-delegation-discussed-access-to-chabahar-humanitarian-assistance-with-taliban-says-mea/1993369/>

<sup>17</sup> Pia Krishnakutty, “Afghan consuls general meet with MEA, discuss status of bilateral fund, Taliban”, The Print, 23 March, 2024 <https://theprint.in/diplomacy/afghan-consuls-general-meet-with-mea-discuss-status-of-bilateral-fund-taliban/2013184/>

<sup>18</sup> ibid

<sup>19</sup> Ranjit Bhushan, “India-Taliban thaw on Afghanistan: What really is happening?”, Hindustan Times, Feb 05, 2024 <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/indiataliban-thaw-on-afghanistan-what-really-is-happening-101707110103889.html>

<sup>20</sup> Kallol Bhattacharjee, “India engaging the Taliban in ‘various formats’, says MEA spokesperson”, The Hindu, Feb 01, 2024 <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-engaging-the-taliban-in-various-formats-says-mea-spokesperson/article67801854.ece>

While China clarified acceptance of diplomatic credentials did not signal Beijing's official recognition of Afghanistan's current rulers, Taliban's isolation was ready to roll back. China's action has a lesson for India.

At a time when Afghanistan's Taliban rulers are treated as outcasts by much of the world, China has stepped up engagement with the group. News portal Al Jazeera reports that in 2023, several Chinese companies signed multiple business deals with the Taliban government. The most prominent among them was a 25-year-long, multimillion-dollar oil extraction contract with an estimated investment value of \$150m in the first year, and up to \$540m over the next three years. But this was made possible because China had been maintaining relations with the Taliban since the late 1990s even when it was considered a pariah by the almost the whole world.

We may conclude the section on India-Afghanistan relations by raising just two related questions: (a) how sensible and at what cost is New Delhi's reluctance to engage meaningfully with actors inimical to its liking; and (b) is this a pattern that we shall witness vis-à-vis other countries?

Quo Vadis? To our mind, the first question we raised in the foregoing para contains the seeds of future course of action. Learning from our own actions and the actions of others – particularly China, the United States, Pakistan and of course, the Taliban - the pathway lies in robust engagement and not tentative dalliance. After all, the reserves of goodwill that India has among Afghans are deep and they don't dry up easy.

After all, the most enduring way of normalising relations is strengthening people-to-people contact in myriad ways, humanitarian or cultural. Thousands have stayed long periods in our country, including Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanikzai, an important member of the Taliban and Afghanistan's Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs for over That India has no territorial ambitions is well recognised. three years now. And India still remains the biggest regional benefactor of Kabul with its aid efforts praised as one of the best planned and targeted aid efforts by any country.

So, India should do more of the same, use its soft power, and given its increasing economic might, pursue aid and development diplomacy with greater vigour. It has taken three years too long to find its bearings again. It's time it moved to higher gear.



*In this Feb 19, 1999, file photo former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee waves from the maiden Delhi-Lahore bus service on his arrival at Lahore to attend a Summit in Pakistan*

## 8.3 Pakistan

Our review of India-Afghanistan relations has indicated the long shadow that organised violence on Indian assets can cast. But unlike with Afghanistan, India has gone into war with Pakistan on three occasions: 1947, 1965 and 1971, apart from the Kargil war of 1999. In each of these battle encounters, Pakistan has had to pay a heavy price, including surrendering about 93,000 personnel after the 1971 war leading to the dismemberment of East Pakistan and the birth of independent Bangladesh.



*Source: Image*

*Existential threat perception:* While then Pakistan Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto did sign the Shimla Agreement in 1972, he was the same person who had declared “a thousand year war” against India in a speech in UN sometime in 1965.

Five years after Bhutto signed the Shimla Agreement, he was deposed by his army chief General Zia ul-Haq in a military coup, and executed after a controversial trial. But Zia did implement Bhutto’s “thousand year war” with ‘Bleed India through a Thousand Cuts’ doctrine using covert and low intensity warfare with militancy and infiltration.<sup>21</sup>

Normalising relations and the most famous attempt that soon failed: We mustn’t forget the most famous attempt at normalising relations and strengthening people-to-people contact. This was when Vajpayee took a bus ride and it seemed peace with Pakistan was possible.

“Hum jung na hone denge ... Teen bar lad chuke ladayi, kitna mehnga sauda... Hum jung na hone denge...” Atal Bihari Vajpayee’s words reverberated through Lahore as the Indian prime minister arrived in the city by bus on 19 February, 1999.

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<sup>21</sup> Balbir Punj, “A thousand cuts bleed Pakistan to death”, The Pioneer, 22 December 2014, <https://www.dailypioneer.com/2014/columnists/a-thousand-cuts-bleed-pakistan-to-death.html>

*Writing for The Print, Nayanima Basu recalls that the 'bus yatra' was part of a confidence-building measure or CBM that both Vajpayee and his then Pakistani counterpart Nawaz Sharif had taken at the SAARC Summit in Colombo in 1998 in the aftermath of the nuclear tests that were carried out earlier that year by both neighbours that had sent shockwaves around the world. As a result, both leaders came under severe pressure from the international community, especially the US which threatened sanctions on both, that both countries have good neighbourly relations.*<sup>22</sup>

Vajpayee went to extra lengths and made sure that he visited Minar-e-Pakistan, a symbolic icon of Pakistan's creation, as part of this 'bus diplomacy' despite stiff resistance from the Pakistani security. Basu also quotes former Research & Analysis Wing (R&AW) chief A.S. Dulat's book, *Kashmir: The Vajpayee Years*. Vajpayee not just visited the monument, he even wrote in the visitor's book there: "A stable, secure and prosperous Pakistan is in India's interest.

Let no one in Pakistan be in doubt. India sincerely wishes Pakistan well." Sharif on his part left no stone unturned to welcome Vajpayee, organising an event for Vajpayee at the Lahore Fort, which was carefully arranged by Salima Hashmi, then principal of the National College of Arts and daughter of poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz. Vajpayee and Sharif signed the Lahore Declaration in which both countries vowed to avoid conflict and committed to implementing the Shimla Agreement of 1972, recognising the Line of Control in Kashmir.



*Source: Image*

*Within just three months of his historic initiative, India and Pakistan were embroiled in another jung — the Kargil War. In May 1999, Pakistani forces infiltrated the high mountains of Kargil district of Ladakh. By the time it was detected by the Indian Army patrols, the total area seized by the ingress was estimated to be between 130 and 200 sq km. India responded with Operation Vijay, a mobilisation of 200,000 Indian troops along with the Indian Air Force (IAF) launching Operation Safed Sagar in support of the mobilisation. The joint operations led to fierce fighting, involving heavy artillery, ground attacks in difficult terrain to recapture the peaks such as the Tiger Hill, and air support by the IAF. Eventually the infiltrators were pushed back and the war ended on 26th July 1999.*

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<sup>22</sup> Nayanima Basu, "When Vajpayee took a bus ride and it seemed peace with Pakistan was possible", *The Print*, 19 February, 2019 <https://theprint.in/politics/when-vajpayee-took-a-bus-ride-and-it-seemed-peace-with-pakistan-was-possible/194551/>

According to Dalrymple, for the Pakistani military, the existential threat posed by India has taken precedence over all other geopolitical and economic goals. The fear of being squeezed in an Indian nutcracker is so great that it has led the ISI to take steps that put Pakistan's own internal security at risk, as well as Pakistan's relationship with its main strategic ally, the U.S. Since the early 1980s, the ISI has funded and incubated a variety of Islamic extremist groups.

Pakistani journalist Ahmed Rashid wrote there are currently more than 40 such extremist groups operating in Pakistan, most of which have strong links with the ISI as well as the local Islamic political parties. Pakistani generals have long viewed the jihadis as a cost-effective and easily-deniable means of controlling events.<sup>23</sup>

In the table below, we catalogue some of the prominent attacks on Indian assets and people by Pakistan<sup>24</sup>

Dec 2000	Red Fort stormed. 2 Indian military personnel killed. (Significant because attack carried out just 2 days after declaration of cease fire.
Oct 2001	Car bomb explosion near J&K State Assembly. 27 killed
Dec 2001	Indian Parliament attack
Sep 2000	Attack on Swaminarayan Temple . 30 killed
July 2003	Qasim Nagar market attack.at Srinagar. 27 killed
Aug 2003	2 car bomb attacks in Gateway of India and Zaveri bazar. 48 killed
Jul 2005	Srinagar bomb attack near Indian Army vehicle. Suicide bomber among 5 other killed
July 2005	Budhsha Chowk attack near City Centre, Srinagar. 2 killed, 17 injured
Nov 2008	Also known as 26/11 attack, Mumbai lasting 4 days. A total of 175 people died, including nine of the attackers, with more than 300 injured. Interestingly The Composite Dialogue between India and Pakistan from 2004 to 2008 addressing all outstanding issues had completed four rounds and the fifth round was in progress when it was paused in the wake of the Mumbai terrorist attack.
Feb 2010	Two separate attacks in Pune and Sidda Camp attack in West Bengal, killing 17 and 28 people respectively
Jul & Sep 2011	The Mumbai bombings took 28 lives; Delhi bomb attack claimed 15 lives
Feb 2013	Hyderabad blasts claimed 18 lives
Mar 2015	Terrorists attack police station in J&K.: 2 militants and 4 others killed
Jul 2015	Gurdaspur attack. 33 gunmen in army uniforms open fire on a bus and then attack police station. 10 people killed, including the Superintendent of Police.
Jun 2016	Pampore attack. 8 Killed. Carried out by LeT militants
Sep 2016	Uri attack on army convoy. 18 killed; 20 injured
Oct 2016	Army camp attacked at Baramulla. 5 killed
Feb 2019	Pulwama attack on CRPF convoy. 38 jawans killed

<sup>23</sup> William Dalrymple, op. cit.

<sup>24</sup> A more detailed catalogue of "Major Islamist Terrorist Attacks in India by Pakistan-Based Groups in the Post- 9/11 Period" can be found at South Asia Terrorism Portal <https://www.satp.org/islamist-extremism/data/Major-Islamist-Terrorist-Attacks-in-India-by-Pakistan-Based-Groups-in-the-Post-9-11-Period>

*Another assault; restrained response:* On November 26, 2008, fears that India and Pakistan would once again head towards direct military confrontation abounded after militants laid siege to the Indian capital of Mumbai. Over three days, one hundred sixty-six people were killed, including six Americans. Both India and the United States blamed Pakistani-based Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), a militant group with alleged ties to the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI)—Pakistan’s primary intelligence agency—for perpetrating the attack.

Although evidence suggested linkages between LeT and facets of the Pakistani government, India’s response was even-handed. Instead of escalating tensions, the Indian government took the diplomatic route by seeking cooperation with the Pakistani government to bring the perpetrators of the attack to justice, paving the way for improved relations.

Shivshankar Menon, the former foreign secretary, provides an insider account on the restraints shown by the UPA government towards Pakistan after the terror attacks:



I am often asked, “Why did India not attack Pakistan after the 26/11 attack on Mumbai?” Why did India not use overt force against Pakistan for its support of terrorism? I myself pressed at that time for immediate visible retaliation of some sort, either against the LeT in Muridke, in Pakistan’s Punjab province, or their camps in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, or against the ISI, which was clearly complicit. To have done so would have been emotionally satisfying and gone some way toward erasing the shame of the incompetence that India’s police and security agencies displayed in the glare of the world’s television lights for three full days.

The then national security adviser, M.K. Narayanan, organized the review of our military and other kinetic options with the political leadership, and the military chiefs outlined their views to the prime minister. As foreign secretary, I saw my task as one of assessing the external and other implications and urged both external affairs minister Pranab Mukherjee and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh that we should retaliate, and be seen to retaliate, to deter further attacks, for reasons of international credibility and to assuage public sentiment.

For me, Pakistan had crossed a line, and that action demanded more than a standard response. My preference was for overt action against LeT headquarters in Muridke or the LeT camps in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and covert action against their sponsors, the ISI. Mukherjee seemed to agree with me and spoke publicly of all our options being open.

In these discussions we considered our options, the likely Pakistani response, and the escalation that could occur.

But on sober reflection and in hindsight, I now believe that the decision not to retaliate militarily and to concentrate on diplomatic, covert, and other means was the right one for that time and place...

*The choice of restraint:* The simple answer to why India did not immediately attack Pakistan is that after examining the options at the highest levels of government, the decision makers concluded that more was to be gained from not attacking Pakistan than from attacking it.

An Indian attack on Pakistan would have united Pakistan behind the Pakistan Army, which was in increasing domestic disrepute, disagreed on India policy with the civilian elected government under President Asif Zardari, and was half-heartedly acting against only those terrorist groups in Pakistan that attacked it. An attack on Pakistan would also have weakened the civilian government in Pakistan, which had just been elected to power and which sought a much better relationship with India than the Pakistan Army was willing to consider.

Zardari's foreign minister, Shah Mehmood Qureshi, was actually visiting Delhi on the night the attack began. The Pakistan minister of information, Sherry Rehman, who admitted publicly that Kasab was a Pakistani, soon lost her job under pressure from the army.

In fact, the Pakistan Army mobilized troops and moved them to the India-Pakistan border immediately before the attack began, then cried wolf about an Indian mobilization. Once again, a war scare, and maybe even a war itself, was exactly what the Pakistan Army wanted to buttress its internal position, which had been weakened after Gen. Pervez Musharraf's last few disastrous years as president.

A limited strike on selected terrorist targets—say, the LeT headquarters in Muridke or the LeT camps in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir—would have had limited practical utility and hardly any effect on the organization, as U.S. missile strikes on al Qaeda in Khost, Afghanistan, in August 1998 in retaliation for the bombing of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania had shown.

The LeT camps were tin sheds and huts, which could be rebuilt easily. Collateral civilian damage was almost certain since the camps, and particularly the LeT buildings in Muridke, had deliberately been sited near or beside hospitals and schools. Even if there were no civilian casualties from Indian actions, casualties could nonetheless be alleged and produced by the ISI.

The real problem was the official and social support that terrorist groups in Pakistan such as the LeT were receiving, and that was not likely to stop because of such a limited strike. So this consideration was really irrelevant to the decision.

And a war, even a successful war, would have imposed costs and set back the progress of the Indian economy just when the world economy in November 2008 was in an unprecedented financial crisis that seemed likely to lead to another Great Depression.

Now let's consider what did occur when India chose not to attack Pakistan. By not attacking Pakistan, India was free to pursue all legal and covert means to achieve its goals of bringing the perpetrators to justice, uniting the international community to force consequences on Pakistan for its behaviour and to strengthen the likelihood that such an attack would not take place again. The international community could not ignore the attack and fail to respond, however half-heartedly, in the name of keeping the peace between two NWS. The UN Security Council put senior LeT members involved in the attack on sanctions lists as terrorists.

The real success was in organizing the international community, in isolating Pakistan, and in making counterterrorism cooperation against the LeT effective.

India began to get unprecedented cooperation from Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf countries, and China, too, began to respond to requests for information on these groups. Equally, success could be measured in dogs that did not bark in the night, in avoiding the outcomes that would have resulted from a decision to attack Pakistani targets and the high probability of war ensuing from such a decision.

All the same, should another such attack be mounted from Pakistan, with or without visible support from the ISI or the Pakistan Army, it would be virtually impossible for any government of India to make the same choice again. Pakistan's prevarications in bringing the perpetrators to justice and its continued use of terrorism as an instrument of state policy after 26/11 have ensured this. In fact, I personally consider some public retribution and a military response inevitable. The circumstances of November 2008 no longer exist and are unlikely to be replicated in the future.<sup>25</sup>

*Later Developments:* In 2014, there were hopes that India would pursue meaningful peace negotiations with Pakistan after India's then-newly elected Prime Minister Narendra Modi invited Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to attend his inauguration. After a brief period of optimism, relations turned sour once more in August 2014 when India cancelled talks with Pakistan's foreign minister after the Pakistani high commissioner in India met with Kashmiri separatist leaders.

A series of openings continued throughout 2015, including an unscheduled December meeting on the sidelines of the UN Climate Change Conference in Paris. This was followed by a meeting between national security advisors in Bangkok a few days later, where the Kashmir dispute was discussed. In the same month, Prime Minister Modi made a surprise visit to Lahore to meet with Prime Minister Sharif, the first visit of an Indian leader to Pakistan in more than a decade.



*Source: Image*

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<sup>25</sup> Shivshankar Menon, "Why India didn't attack Pakistan after 26/11 Mumbai attacks", Mint, 22 Nov 2016  
<https://www.livemint.com/Leisure/29IXP57cHDAloqUf2uJOHM/Why-India-didnt-attack-Pakistan-after-2611-Mumbai-attacks.html>

According to Center for Preventive Action, Council on Foreign Relations, momentum toward meaningful talks came to an end in September 2016, when armed militants attacked a remote Indian Army base in Uri, near the LOC, killing eighteen Indian soldiers in the deadliest attack on the Indian armed forces in decades. Indian officials accused Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM), another group with alleged ties to ISI, of being behind the attack. In response, the Indian military announced it had carried out “surgical strikes” on terrorist camps inside Pakistani-administered Kashmir while the Pakistani military denied that any such operation had taken place.<sup>26</sup>

This period was marked by an uptick in border skirmishes that began in late 2016 and continued into 2018, killing dozens and displacing thousands of civilians on both sides of the Line of Control. In 2017, more than three thousand cross-border strikes were reported, while nearly one thousand were reported in the first half of 2018. Militants launched attacks in October 2017 against an Indian paramilitary camp near Srinagar and, in February 2018, against an Indian army base in the Jammu region, which killed five soldiers and a civilian.

In February 2019, an attack on a convoy of Indian paramilitary forces in Pulwama, killed at least forty soldiers. The attack, claimed by the Pakistani militant group JeM, was the deadliest in Kashmir in three decades. India retaliated by conducting an air strike that targeted terrorist training camps within Pakistani territory; these were answered by Pakistani air strikes on Indian-administered Kashmir.

The exchange escalated during which Pakistan shot down two Indian military aircraft and captured an Indian pilot; the pilot was released two days later.<sup>27</sup> In February 2021, India and Pakistan issued a joint statement for a strict observance of all agreements, understandings and cease firing along the Line of Control (LoC) and with effect from the midnight of Feb 24, 2021.

*Looking into the Future:* Since 2019, diplomatic relations between the two neighbours have been especially strained. In response to the Indian abrogation of Article 370 that year, Pakistan downgraded its diplomatic ties with India and halted trade between the two countries. At present, India and Pakistan have vacant positions for high commissioners, and both countries have appointed deputy high commissioners and charge d'affaires respectively in each other's countries.

In a realistic yet forward looking article in *The Diplomat*, Khurram Abbas and Mohammad Khan<sup>28</sup> see both scope and hope in improving India-Pak relations. They do note the prerequisites that both sides place on each other: EAM Jaishankar's statement that that India is open to dealing with Pakistan but not under conditions where terrorism is seen as a legitimate tool for diplomacy; likewise, Islamabad has conditioned talks on the undoing of abrogation of Article 370. Yet Abbas and Khan also identify two factors – though small by itself - that are indicative of an improved relationship.

First is the strict compliance with the understanding between the two countries in 2023 on ceasefire. Second, in 2023, despite a severed diplomatic relationship between the two countries, Pakistan issued close to 7,000 visas to Indian Sikh and Hindu pilgrims to visit Pakistan to attend various religious festivals and occasions. Similarly, the release of roughly 500 Indian fishermen and 9 civilians was also reassuring.

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<sup>26</sup> “Conflict Between India and Pakistan”, Center for Preventive Action, Council on Foreign Relations, April 09, 2024 <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/conflict-between-india-and-pakistan>

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Khurram Abbas and Mohammad Ahmad Khan, “Could the India-Pakistan Relationship Normalize in 2024?”, *The Diplomat*, January 12, 2024 <https://thediplomat.com/2024/01/could-the-india-pakistan-relationship-normalize-in-2024/>

So given the present two “bright spots” and some of the positives of the past, one can look forward to incremental confidence building measures in trade, travel and tourism. These could be followed up in collaborative efforts on matters such as combating the fallout of climate change in the Indus Basin, and addressing HDI issues.

Pakistan is suffering as much India is from the scour of terrorism. It would take a little of a Vajpayee on both sides to move forward. If the experience of the global community with Taliban is any indication, hope lies in India-Pak relations too.

## 8.4 Maldives

If we stick to the geopolitical and geostrategic frame employed in this paper, then Maldives’ “India Out” campaign contains sufficient material to enable us to have a nuanced understanding of India-Maldives relations.



*Source: Image*

According to an analyst, the anti-India sentiment didn’t just sprout overnight in 2020, but is nearly a decade old and can be traced back to when Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom of the Progressive Party (PPM) became president in 2013.<sup>29</sup>

She quotes Dr. Gulbin Sultana, a research analyst at the Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, whose area of research includes the Maldives to inform us that India-Maldives relations deteriorated during the PPM’s five-year rule and the anti-India sentiment was apparent even back then: “A lot of anti-India rhetoric was used during that time because the Maldivian government was pro-China”.

But it would be an oversimplification of diplomatic relations between the two countries to say that the Yameen government and its predecessor, the Waheed government, were “anti-India”. Although the Yameen government’s tilt in favour of China was clear, it had also openly discussed an ‘India-First’ policy for the Maldives.

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<sup>29</sup> Neha Banka, “What’s behind the India Out campaign in Maldives?”, *The India Express*, July 9, 2021  
<https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/the-maldives-india-out-campaign-explained-7396314/>

Still, there were some specific issues that have agitated sentiments against the Indian government in the Maldives. The first is the long-standing controversy over the two Dhruv Advanced Light Helicopters (ALF) that were given by India to the Maldives in 2010 and in 2015, both of which were used for ocean search-and-rescue operations, maritime weather surveillance and for airlifting patients between islands, and were based in Addu Atoll and at Hanimaadhoo.<sup>30</sup>

These helicopters were for humanitarian purposes only, but some in the anti-India constituency, particularly Yameen's party PPM, were trying to portray that by gifting these helicopters, India was creating military presence in the country because they were military choppers.

According to the terms of bilateral agreements between the two countries, Indian officers had been sent to the Maldives to train the Maldives National Defence Force, under whose command these helicopters operate. When domestic fervour against the perceived military presence of Indian forces in the country reached its peak in 2016, the Yameen government had asked India to take back these gifted helicopters and refused to extend the term of the agreement that would extend their stay and use in the country. One of the main reasons behind the 'India Out' campaign was rooted in this controversy surrounding the ALF choppers and India's reported refusal to take them back.

By 2018 when Ibrahim Mohamed Solih assumed office, he immediately re-signed these agreements, extending the stay and use of these choppers in the country. The Solih government's visibly warm relations with India had only served to fuel anti-India sentiment in the country, Sultana explained.

"Contrary to what you may read... sometimes, it's not as much as India with the current administration and PPM being pro-China. It's far from it. We've had good relations with India as well. But the sort of relations that this government has, has transcended what we believe to be normal diplomatic and development ties," Mohamed Shareef, vice-president of PPM is reported to have said: "While we welcome India being a very close development partner, the issue arises when certain boundaries are overstepped, particularly when it comes to sovereignty, national defence issues, and the government in particular has opted at times to keep the relationship under wraps which is where the criticism stems from."<sup>31</sup>

Among the many grievances of prominent members of 'India Out' campaign, a recurring complaint was the lack of transparency in agreements being signed between the Solih government and India. Specifically, the demand was to share the terms of the agreement in the Parliament, which was not done on grounds of national security. This may seem strange, if not absurd, for why wouldn't you share details if the issue related to humanitarian and non-strategic matters.

Sultana agrees that much of the criticism leveled by the Maldivian opposition and the 'India Out' campaign wouldn't have arisen had these bilateral agreements been publicly discussed in the Maldives Parliament. But the ruling government and the defence ministry saying that these agreements are confidential led to agitation in political circles that percolated down to ordinary Maldivian nationals and took the form of a wave of criticism, inflammatory rhetoric and unverified allegations, especially on social media platforms.

A lot has happened in the two years since the Solih government came to power, Shareef agreed and that is reflected in the wide-ranging criticisms and accusations levelled at the Indian government in the Maldives.

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

He points to the UTF Harbour Project agreement signed between India and the Maldives in February 2021, that first came about during the Yameen government, where India was to develop and maintain a coastguard harbour and dockyard at Uthuru Thilafalhu, a strategically located atoll near the capital Malé.

In 2016, an Action Plan between India and the Maldives was signed for 'defence cooperation' to enhance "shared strategic and security interests of the two countries in the Indian Ocean region". After the Solih government came to power, in 2019, local Maldivian media speculated that this UTF project would be turned into an Indian naval base.



[Source: Image](#)

Shareef told the Indian Express that leaked documents had shown that the agreement involved "the Indian military staying back here for decades and decades and having exclusive rights over using" the UTF facility. "We occupy such a large area of the Indian Ocean, it seems there is a tug of war going on over the Indian Ocean, and we are right in the middle of it," Shareef added. "When we say we don't want Indian military presence, we are really saying that we don't want any foreign military personnel in the country. No other country has any military presence in the country—not even China," said Ahmed.

Researchers say that the issue is complex and involves bilateral relations, geopolitical interests and economic arrangements for both countries. During the Yameen government, India had looked on in concern as the Maldives began to develop stronger ties with China and its Belt and Road Initiative. "We are against the permanent stationing of military presence in the Maldives, even the stationing of military equipment. So that is what the (India Out) movement is about. We also demand that India not interfere in domestic affairs," Ahmed added.

"Any sort of military presence on our soil is not welcome and it is not welcome by a vast majority of Maldivians and these agreements have given India that right. We are going to annul these agreements because they don't conform to our Constitution and sadly, we're going to have to ask the Indian military to leave the day the government changes, which is going to be in another two years," Shareef said.

Parliamentary Group leader of Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP), MP Ali Azim however, believes that the anti-India campaign is the result of the Solih government's "hesitancy to take swift and firm action" against "groups of people are currently operating at their whim". "The 'India Out' campaign is a false and dangerous narrative being promoted by groups of a few individuals through media platforms, both traditional media and social media, trying to fuel negative and vilifying perceptions about India.

I believe this is the same group of people who are desperately trying to instill fear and use public emotions to character assassinate current leaders, using various religious slogans,” Azim told IndianExpress.com.

“What we are currently witnessing is the newfound freedom of expression being deliberately abused by few in our society. They are actively involved in defaming, slandering and even inciting violence against current leaders, institutions and even foreign countries,” Azim said of the ‘India Out’ campaign.

*How does the Indian government view the “India Out” campaign in Maldives?:* There have been two distinct strands of response. In June 2021 when the “India Out” campaign was at its peak, India’s high commission in Malé asked the Maldivian government to take steps to protect the high commissioner and diplomatic personnel from “malicious” and “personal” articles in the local media. A note verbale from the Indian high commission to the Maldivian foreign ministry, dated June 24, was accessed and published in the Maldivian media.

In the letter India complained about “recurring articles and social media posts attacking the dignity of the High Commission, the Head of the Mission, and members of the diplomatic staff by certain sections of the local media... These attacks are motivated, malicious and increasingly personal” and it requested the Maldivian government to ensure the protection of India’s diplomats to “prevent any attack on his/their person, freedom and dignity, and prevent any disturbances to the peace of the Mission or impairment of its dignity in accordance with relevant articles of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (1961)”.

Besides, the high commission also called for action “in accordance with International Law and Maldivian Law, against the perpetrators for these gross violations of the Vienna Convention”.<sup>32</sup> Such charges and calls for action were viewed by many in Maldives as clear evidence of Indian interference in internal matters of Maldives.

On the other hand, External Affairs Minister, S Jaishankar has been quite upfront on this matter, to the point of appearing sanguine. During an interactive session with students of Indian Institute of Management, Mumbai, he said there are problems in every neighbourhood, but ultimately “neighbours need each other”.

And being a major economy, China will deploy resources and try to shape things in its way, adding, “why should we expect otherwise, but the answer to that is not to complain that China is doing it.” Jaishankar also distinguished between political posturing and diplomacy. While sharp positions are taken in politics, diplomacy does not always go by those sharp positions. “At the end of the day, neighbours need each other. History and geography are very powerful forces. There is no escape from that,” he added.<sup>33</sup>

*Reset in relations:* So far as Maldives-India relations are concerned, Muizzu set about to do four things. The first three were like waving the proverbial red rag to India, while the fourth was aimed at seeking concession from India.

First, he insisted India withdraw 76 military personnel by 10th May 2024 and replace them with civilian personnel to operate the two helicopters and one Dornier aircraft gifted by India. Second, his first port of call on assuming office was China and not India – a definite departure from tradition.

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<sup>32</sup> “India Asks Maldives to Act Against ‘Malicious’ Media Reports Targeting High Commission Staff”, *The Wire*, 30/Jun/2021  
<https://thewire.in/diplomacy/india-asks-maldives-to-act-against-malicious-media-reports-targeting-high-commission-staff>

<sup>33</sup> “China will influence our neighbourhood, India shouldn’t be scared of competition: Jaishankar”, PTI, 31 January 2024  
<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/china-will-influence-our-neighbourhood-india-shouldnt-be-scared-of-competition-jaishankar/articleshow/107264093.cms?from=mdr>

Third, he inked twenty agreements with China that included financial and military assistance. Fourth was his request to India to extend the repayment deadline for \$ 150 million of a \$ 200 million debt. The loan was secured by the previous government upon assuming office in 2019.<sup>34</sup>

According to Professor Rajesh Rajagopalan, that smaller countries such as the Maldives or others would be tempted to play the China card should not be surprising. He says, it is logical, rational, and represents the kind of self-interested behaviour that New Delhi frequently invokes, such as in its relationship with Russia or Iran. Responding to such strategic ploys by Male with hyper-nationalism is counterproductive.

Thankfully, this has been largely confined to India's media and social media warriors from whom nuance is hardly to be expected. Obviously, absurd social media comments by Maldivian officials need to be countered, and the official Indian response was largely the correct one. It was a self-goal by Male that put it on the defensive, and official New Delhi's relatively restrained reaction underlined this fact.<sup>35</sup>

Muizzu in turn does not want to replace India with China, but rather seeks to use the two countries' tenuous relationship as leverage to secure the best deal. The Maldives is still part of Modi's "Neighbourhood First" foreign policy strategy, which aims to bolster relations with India's geographic neighbours. Under this doctrine, New Delhi loaned Malé \$500 million for road and bridge projects in 2021 and announced a \$100 million line of credit in 2022 to support development initiatives, including for cybersecurity and affordable housing.



Protesting students reject Bangladesh PM's dialogue offer, demand her resignation, 3 August 2024

[Source: Image](#)

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<sup>34</sup> See [Rhea Basarkar](#), "The Maldives Is Moving Toward China. Here's What to Know", Council on Foreign Relations, May 2, 2024 <https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/maldives-moving-toward-china-heres-what-know> and "India Has Said Yes To Extend Debt Repayment Deadline: Maldives Foreign Minister", PTI, May 12, 2014 <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/india-has-said-yes-to-extend-debt-repayment-deadline-maldives-foreign-minister-5646833>

<sup>35</sup> Rajesh Rajagopalan, "China has changed the equation for India's neighbours. New Delhi can't neglect them anymore", *ThePrint*, 15 January, 2024 08:45 am IST <https://theprint.in/opinion/china-has-changed-the-equation-for-indias-neighbours-new-delhi-cant-neglect-them-anymore/1923443/>

## 8.5 Bangladesh



*Source: Image*

If trade, commerce and other facets of relationship between India and Pakistan have reduced to a trickle because of Pakistan's never-ending support of cross-border terrorism, the story of India's relationship with our eastern neighbour Bangladesh is exactly the opposite. If we were to go to a branded shop to buy a shirt, chances are it would have been made in Bangladesh.

This is an indication of the type and volume of bilateral trade between India and Bangladesh which was about \$6.6 billion. There are estimates that the trade potential is at least four times more. However, quoting a PTI newsfeed, The Hindu reported that the bilateral trade has dipped to \$14.2 billion in 2022-23, from \$15 billion in 2021-22.<sup>36</sup>

In the first half of FY2024-25, India exported Rs 43,455 crore worth of merchandise to Bangladesh and imported Rs 8142 crore of merchandise from Bangladesh, resulting in a positive trade balance of Rs 35,313 crore or about \$ 420 million. In the previous year too, exports of India increased by 18.5%, while imports decreased by 11.8%.<sup>37</sup> The five countries for import into Bangladesh in 2022-23 were China (21.5%), India (12.2%), Hong Kong (5.5%), Singapore (5.2%) and Indonesia (4.6%).<sup>38</sup> If we club Hong Long and China, the total imports by Bangladesh from there are over double from neighbouring India. In terms of exports from Bangladesh, India was nowhere among the top partners. The top five were the US (19.4%), Germany (14.7%), UK (11.0%), Spain (5.8%) and France (5.5%). This is not surprising since Bangladesh's top export items were readymade garments.

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<sup>36</sup> "India, Bangladesh discuss preparations to start talks for free trade agreement", The Hindu, **October 01, 2023**  
<https://www.thehindu.com/business/Economy/india-bangladesh-discuss-preparations-to-start-talks-for-free-trade-agreement/article67368793.ece>

<sup>37</sup> <https://oec.world/en/profile/bilateral-country/ind/partner/bgd>

<sup>38</sup> <https://wits.worldbank.org/CountrySnapshot/en/BGD>

Economic and people-to-people cooperation: If we were to restrict our overview to the last decade, the appropriate place to begin would be with late Sushma Swaraj, then Foreign Minister of India. In June 2014, during her first official overseas visit, various agreements were concluded to boost ties. These included:

- Easing of Visa regime to provide 5-year multiple entry visas to minors below 13 and elderly above 65.
- Proposal of a special economic zone in Bangladesh.
- Agreement to send back a fugitive accused of murder in India.
- Provide an additional 100 MW power from Tripurs.
- Increase the frequency of Maitree Express and start buses between Dhaka and Guwahati and Shillong.
- Bangladesh allowed India to ferry food and grains to the landlocked Northeast using its territory and infrastructure.

During Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's state visit to Bangladesh during June 2015 as many as 22 agreements were signed by two sides:

- US\$2 billion line of credit to Bangladesh and a pledge of US\$5 billion worth of investments.
- India's Reliance Power to invest US\$3 billion to set up a 3,000 MW LNG-based power plant (which is the single largest foreign investment ever made in Bangladesh).
- Adani Power to set up a 1600 MW coal-fired power plant at a cost of US\$1.5 billion
- Maritime safety co-operation and curbing human trafficking and fake Indian currency.<sup>39</sup>

Following this, at midnight on 31 July 2015, around 50,000 people became citizens of India or Bangladesh after living in limbo for decades. Ending a prolonged dispute, the two nations swapped 162 enclaves on the border region, allowing the people living there to stay or opt out to the other country.

*Inherent strains:* When geospatial issues are involved that have a bearing on core interests of neighbouring countries, resolution can be a tricky matter. An ideal example relates to sharing of waters of Teesta river that impacts on the livelihoods and environmental concerns of two countries. In a federal structure like India, the concerned state government's – here, West Bengal - legitimate stand can make negotiations complicated to the point of stalling any agreement. While a fairly detailed account has been presented by The Hindu explaining what is holding up the Teesta treaty<sup>40</sup>, we may flag the core issues.

The stalled Teesta treaty surfaced recently when during the recent state visit of Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of Bangladesh, to India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on June 22 said: "A technical team will soon visit Bangladesh to discuss conservation and management of the Teesta river in Bangladesh", focussing "more about the management of the water flows within Teesta (and) less about water sharing per se".

The remark triggered fresh speculation about the Teesta water sharing treaty with Bangladesh, a key bilateral agreement that has been pending between the two countries for over a decade. West Bengal Chief Minister, Mamata Banerjee, pointed out that if Teesta's water is shared with Bangladesh, lakhs of people in north Bengal will get severely impacted, and had added "If I had the ability, I would have definitely shared Teesta waters with them." In 2017, the Chief Minister had also referred to an alternative proposal of sharing waters of the Torsa, Manshai, Sankosh and Dhansai rivers but not Teesta.

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid

<sup>40</sup> Shiv Sahay Singh, "What is holding up the Teesta treaty?", The Hindu, June 30, 2024  
<https://www.thehindu.com/incoming/what-is-holding-up-the-teesta-treaty-explained/article68349392.ece#:~:text=In%202011%2C%20when%20the%20proposal,5%2C280%20metres%20in%20north%20Sikkim>

In all, 54 rivers flow between India and Bangladesh and sharing of river waters has been a key bilateral issue. India and Bangladesh agreed on the sharing of waters of the Ganga in 1996 after the construction of the Farakka Barrage and by the 2010s the issue of sharing of the Teesta came up for negotiation. In 2011, during the United Progressive Alliance-II government, India and Bangladesh were close to signing an agreement on the Teesta but Ms. Banerjee walked out of the deal, and since then, the agreement has been pending.



Source: Image

Interestingly, the Ganga water sharing treaty with Bangladesh completes 30 years in 2026 and a renewal of the agreement is on the cards. The Trinamool Congress chairperson has pointed out that water sharing with Bangladesh has changed the Ganga's morphology and affected lakhs of people in West Bengal owing to river erosion.<sup>41</sup>

*Defence Cooperation:* Bangladesh does not share a border with China. But that has not stopped China to have an almost three times bilateral trade than what Bangladesh has with India. Chinese investments in Bangladesh far outstrips India's. It would therefore not be surprising if Chinese defence relations with Bangladesh outstrips India's.

According to a detailed write-up on India-Bangladesh defence cooperation, it appears India has been wary of the Sino-Bangladesh defence relationship, and the purchase by Bangladesh in 2013 of two submarines from China hastened the demand by security analysts to cement the bilateral ties.<sup>42</sup> There was talk of a comprehensive bilateral defence cooperation agreement being signed during PM Hasina's visit to India in April 2017. This was met with reservation—even scepticism—from Bangladesh, for reasons outlined below.

- A defence agreement with India would upset China, a major partner in the areas of defence and development. China is the only country with which Bangladesh has a formal defence cooperation agreement, though this has mostly gone unnoticed by the majority in Bangladesh.
- The agreement would be an infringement on Bangladesh's sovereignty and would restrict its strategic autonomy. The India–Bangladesh Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Peace, 1972 is often used as an example to support this argument.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Joyeeta Bhattacharjee, "India-Bangladesh Defence Cooperation: Coming of Age, At Last?", ORF Issue Brief, July 2018, Issue No. 250 (PDF available at <https://www.orfonline.org/research/india-bangladesh-defence-cooperation-coming-of-age-at-last>)

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

During Prime Minister Hasina's 2017 visit to India, the two countries signed a series of agreements and MoUs in areas of defence cooperation in the field of strategic operational studies, a line of credit worth US\$500 million for the purchase of defence equipment, and coast guards of the two countries. While India was sceptical about the signing of an MoU instead of an agreement, according to analysts, a comprehensive defence pact may not find easy acceptability but MoUs will create opportunities for expanding defence cooperation in the future.



[Source: Image](#)

Before that, however, it is important to discuss the India–Bangladesh Friendship Treaty, traditionally viewed as a defence pact, and understand why it failed. While it was a comprehensive and wide-ranging document, and included other areas such as art and literature yet, the treaty was mostly considered a security and military pact, since the important provisions were in these areas: the two countries would not enter into any kind of military alliance against each other; they would refrain from aggression against one another; and they would restrict the use of their territories against the other.

Additionally, the treaty indicated that the two countries would jointly deal with any third party that would threaten the security of either one.

The treaty, instead of cementing the relationship, added to the apprehensions and resentment of the Bangladeshi people, fuelling suspicions about India's intentions in their country. The Bangladeshi defence forces also felt that the treaty undermined their importance.

The assassination of Mujibur Rahman in 1975 was a game changer: it transformed the dynamics of the relationship, which in turn affected the implementation of the treaty. The treaty completed 25 years in 1997, when the Awami League was the ruling party. Despite its India-friendly image, Bangladesh showed reluctance in renewing the treaty. India did not pursue the matter either, and the treaty simply lapsed.

*Countering Terrorism:* India and Bangladesh share more than 4,000 km of porous borders. They have shared history, culture and language, all adding to the relationship. Both countries understand that incidents in one country have ramifications across the border.

Thus, the solution lies not in conflict but in cooperation. The issue of militancy is a case in point. Despite punitive actions taken by the Bangladeshi government, militancy continues to be an issue largely because of the cross-border network of radicalised groups that threaten the security of both countries and the entire region. The need to increase security and defence cooperation is driven by this convergence of interests.

Counter-terror cooperation is an important aspect of the defence relationship between India and Bangladesh, as both countries have been victims of terrorism and continue to face evolving security threats. India is subject to cross-border terrorism from groups based in Pakistan, and these groups use Bangladesh as a transit point into India.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh suffers acts of terror committed by indigenous organisations with external linkages. The veterans of the Afghan Jihad established Harkatul Jihad Bangladesh in the 1990s. The terrorist organisations started to make their presence felt by 2000. Although Bangladesh pursues a policy of zero-tolerance towards terrorism and has undertaken strict counter-terrorism measures, including the execution of top leaders of Jamaat-ul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) in 2007, terror groups have managed to survive in its territory because of the cross-border network, especially in India.<sup>44</sup>

To address these threats effectively, there is need for greater synergy, coordination and cooperation between agencies, joint training and exercises, greater interaction and understanding among the armed forces of the two countries.

Domestic issues; bilateral relations: In 2019, the Indian Parliament passed the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) following which Bangladesh's Foreign Minister and Home Minister cancelled their trips to India. Later, another minister, Shahriar Alam also cancelled his visit to India.

Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was critical of the CAA, describing it as "not necessary", but nevertheless affirmed CAA and the National Register of Citizens were "internal matters" of India. But when India had effected the Nepal blockade in 2015, Bangladesh Commerce Minister was critical of India's action, stating that blockades hit at agreements like the BBIN because the agreement was created for the regulation of passenger, personal and cargo vehicular traffic between Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal (BBIN) to boost economic growth in the region.

In 2023, Bangladesh backed India in its diplomatic feud of India with Canada over the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, describing Canada as a "hub for murderers".

Sometimes however, issues can take an ugly turn. As one analyst has pointed out that remarks from among the political class which alluded to the supposed one crore undocumented Muslims immigrants in West Bengal who are "thriving" on the government's Rs 2 per kg subsidised rice and are involved in arson should have been censured for their lack of sensitivity by the larger political establishment.

And statements like "half of Bangladesh will be empty (vacant) if India offers citizenship to them (Bangladeshis)" reek of an arrogance that is distasteful in its implications. In the face of these repugnant announcements by politicians, it becomes difficult for the leaders of our neighbouring nations to consider warmer relations.<sup>45</sup>

*India Out campaign:* After Maldives, Bangladesh is also witnessing an "India Out" campaign. While the above distasteful statements of powerful members of India's ruling elite may have no cause and effect relationship or even a correlation with the "India Out" campaign, it might help us understand why far-right leaders tend to arouse ultra-nationalistic and jingoistic sentiments for political ends.

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Vaishali Basu Sharma, *The Wire*, 20 Aug, 2020 <https://thewire.in/diplomacy/india-south-asia-neighbours-foreign-policy-respect>



Source: Image

According to SNM Abidi New Delhi's stakes are many times bigger and higher than in the tiny Indian Ocean state. The hard-hitting campaign in Maldives cost our close and dependable ally Ibrahim Mohammed Solih the presidency and installed the China-leaning Mohamed Muizzu, who is cold-bloodedly taking the island nation into Beijing's orbit and proving to be more than a handful for our overworked diplomatic and security establishments.<sup>46</sup>

The "India Out" campaign exhorts Bangladeshis to meticulously boycott all Indian products imported and sold in the country in order to teach New Delhi a "lesson". The movement kicked off barely 10 days after Awami League's Sheikh Hasina was sworn in as Prime Minister for a fourth straight term in a blatantly one-sided election, with its sponsors accusing India of keeping her in power to serve its own political, strategic and economic interests at the cost of Bangladeshis, imperilling democracy and Bangladesh's sovereignty.

*Start of the 'India Out' Movement:* The movement is the brainchild of a Bangladeshi doctor, Pinaki Bhattacharya, an unrelenting Hasina critic living in exile in Paris since 2018, who has over two million followers on social media platforms.

The activist openly says that Hasina has been conducting farcical elections since 2014 with "India's covert and overt backing", and until India's economic interests are badly hurt it will keep meddling in Bangladesh's internal affairs and supporting her.

His very first video on his YouTube channel advocating boycott of Indian products garnered a million views. Subsequently, the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party, human rights groups and civil society organisations threw their considerable weight behind the social media influencer's drive.

Abidi says that while our media is somehow shy of reporting the impact of "India Out" movement, but soon after it was launched Voice of America quoted employees of shops in Dhaka and Chittagong saying that they had a seen a drop in the sale of Indian products like cooking oil, processed foods, toiletry, cosmetics and clothing.

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<sup>46</sup> SNM Abidi, "After Maldives, Bangladesh sees an 'India Out' campaign; why New Delhi must stop China from taking advantage", MoneyControl, April 18, 2024 <https://www.moneycontrol.com/news/opinion/after-maldives-bangladeshs-india-out-campaign-new-delhi-must-stop-china-taking-advantage-12665511.html>

Similarly, Al Jazeera reported how suppliers for the Indian consumer goods giant, Marico, were facing a chilly reception in Dhaka, with grocery shops, usually eager to stock their shelves with its hair oil, cooking oil, body lotion and other products, refusing to take new deliveries – and a shopkeeper complaining that “Indian products just aren’t moving; we’re stuck with unsold stock and won’t be restocking.”<sup>47</sup>



[Source: Image](#)

Even more worrying is Nikkei Asia’s coverage of the campaign hitting Ramadan sales in the predominantly Muslim country prior to Eid: a “serious boycott” with customers specifically inquiring whether the products are Indian before purchasing – something which had never happened before – and shops cutting the prices of Indian imports to boost dwindling sales.

Abidi feels this is no laughing matter. If the campaign intensifies and there is indeed a sharp drop in the import of food, fuel, fertilisers and raw materials for industry from India, China stands to gain as Bangladesh will invariably turn to it as a substitute for Indian exports. And we all know of Chinese expertise in converting the gains from trade into military muscle.

But the anti-India wave that swept Bangladesh recently is nothing new. On June 10, 2022, thousands of people marched in Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh, to protest derogatory comments made by Nupur Sharma, a spokesperson of India’s ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) about Prophet Muhammad.

Angry protesters urged Muslim-majority nations to cut ties with India and boycott its products unless she was punished for defaming Prophet Muhammad. Unlike the governments of other Muslim-majority countries, Bangladesh’s Awami League government has remained silent on the offensive comments made by the BJP leaders.

Finally, Abidi suggest that we can defuse the “India Out” movement by engaging with the whole spectrum of political parties and civil society in the neighbouring country instead of cultivating only Hasina who anyway wears her allegiance to India on the pallu of her exquisite saris. Keeping all our eggs in one basket is hardly in our national interest. Let’s be flexible, pragmatic and not wear blinkers blindsiding us.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid

<sup>48</sup> Ibid

Ali Riaz, a political science professor at Illinois State University, however provides an altogether different perspective to the “India Out” campaign. He thinks that there is a political message underpinning this campaign that has implications beyond immediate success.

“The campaign reflects the simmering discontent about India’s disregard to the legitimate grievances of Bangladesh and its role in Bangladesh’s domestic politics”<sup>49</sup> And this has resonance with what Pinaki Bhattacharya, the exiled Bangladeshi physician and influential social media activist living in Paris and the star campaigner of the “India Out” had to say: the “India out” campaign harbours “no animosity towards the people of India”. “It is a vehement political fight aimed squarely at the governing elite of India, a relentless battle to reclaim the sovereignty and stewardship of our cherished motherland”.<sup>50</sup>

According to Partha S Ghosh, much of the blame for anti-India sentiments can be laid at the door of the current Home Minister. He says, “Of late, foreign policy loaded statements or actions emanate routinely from the offices of the Union home minister Amit Shah and the National Security Adviser Ajit K. Doval thereby systematically marginalising the assigned role of the Minister of External Affairs, S. Jaishankar. It seems his only job now is firefighting. The case of Bangladesh provides the most recent example. If one single person has to be identified who is solely responsible for vitiating the Bangladeshi popular mind against India, it is Amit Shah. His election rallies, whether in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, or northern India at large, irreparably damaged India-Bangladesh relations.”<sup>51</sup>

*The aftermath of Hasina’s re-election and job-quota protests:* Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina secured a fourth consecutive term in power earlier this year, with her Awami League party taking three-quarters of seats in parliament. Many observers termed the elections controversial, with the US saying it was neither free nor fair. The Election Commission too added to the confusion: it initially announced 27% voter turnout at its afternoon press briefing but later increased it to 41.8%, expressing the difference to lack of real time data.<sup>52</sup>



Source: Image

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<sup>49</sup> Quoted in “A new anti-India campaign in Bangladesh puts Indian influence in focus”, Deutsche Welle, Mar 05, 2024  
<https://frontline.thehindu.com/news/a-new-anti-india-campaign-in-bangladesh-puts-indian-influence-in-focus-narendra-modi-sheikh-hasina-india-out-campaign/article67916505.ece>

<sup>50</sup> Ibid

<sup>51</sup> Partha S Ghosh, “India, Canada and the Need for Quiet Diplomacy”, The Wire, Oct 23, 2024  
<https://thewire.in/diplomacy/india-canada-diplomacy-international-relations>

Two sets of facts are however uncontested. One, the vote was conducted by keeping almost all top leaders of the main opposition party and over 25,000 of its activists behind bars who were arrested in the run-up to the election on various charges—including arson attacks and vandalism—that some independent observers think were politically motivated. And two, while the major opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and its allies did sit out the election, not all opposition parties followed suit. Out of forty-four registered parties, twenty-seven fielded candidates.

Additionally, nearly 1,900 independent candidates threw their hats in the ring for three hundred parliamentary seats. Considering BNP and its allies have earlier won with similar vote share and seats, the boycott of 2024 elections by BNP and its allies have significance.

But even before the elections were held the Awami League's victory and the incumbent Prime Minister's fourth consecutive term in office became an inevitability after the main opposition, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), decided in December 2023 to boycott the election. It is for these Pranay Sharma, commentator and political affairs commentator foresaw great turmoil ahead for Hasina and questioned whether Hasina would be able to hold Bangladesh together.<sup>53</sup>

Further, based on analysis of past election results, noted South Asia scholar and Bangladesh specialist Partha S. Ghosh pulls no punches in declaring "If the above electoral statistics are analysed, one may surmise that had the elections of 2018 and 2024 been fair the AL might have lost them. If so, it was rather outlandish on the part of Sheikh Hasina to ride roughshod over the opposition and behave autocratically."<sup>54</sup>

Nonetheless, India was the first country to congratulate Hasina on her victory. The US on the other hand which had declared the elections to be neither free nor fair did not impose sanctions and accepted the results though it is believed New Delhi played a conciliatory role.

But a confident Hasina was soon to face opposition from unexpected quarters when students protested against reservation quota in government jobs. The trigger of the set of events that led to Ms. Hasina's downfall was an unpopular quota system for government jobs that was originally introduced by Mujib after the liberation of Bangladesh.

More than 50% of government jobs in Bangladesh were reserved for different sections, of which 30% were for the descendants of freedom fighters. Hasina had done away with this system in 2018 after protests but in June 2024, the old system was reinstated by the Bangladesh high court. This triggered student protests, first on university campuses.

Most observers agree that since Hasina had herself abolished the quota system, the student protests could have been handled. But tremendous force was used. Instead, she called the protesters 'razakars', a derogatory term which was used to refer to those who helped Pakistani troops during the Liberation War.

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<sup>52</sup> Gautam Lahiri, "Bangladesh's election: Widely boycotted or widely accepted?", *Atlantic Council*, n.d., <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/bangladeshs-election-widely-boycotted-or-widely-accepted/>

<sup>53</sup> Pranay Sharma, "Hasina retains power, but can she hold Bangladesh together?", *Frontline*, Jan 09, 2024 <https://frontline.thehindu.com/world-affairs/what-does-sheikh-hasina-re-election-in-bangladesh-mean-for-south-asia-implications-for-india-china-influence/article67705699.ece>

<sup>54</sup> Partha S. Ghosh, "Bangladesh: Beyond the Immediate", *The Wire*, 12 Aug 2024 <https://thewire.in/south-asia/bangladesh-beyond-the-immediate>

This inflamed passions. And Ms. Hasina made the mistake which authoritarian rulers always make — bank on excessive force to quell an uprising. She unleashed both police personnel and Awami League activists on the protesters, who were also violent. In July, some 200 people were killed, mostly protesters, in clashes. The government said hundreds of police personnel were wounded.

After the first round of protests, the Bangladesh Supreme Court scaled back the quota system, setting the reservation cap for the descendants of freedom fighters at 5%. The students had won a major victory. But they were not ready to call off the protests. On August 4, they called for another round of protests with a new demand — Sheikh Hasina should go. They also demanded accountability for the deaths of over 200 of their comrades. The Awami League called for counter-mobilisation of its members.<sup>55</sup>



[Source: Image](#)

All told, the protests were long drawn gaining momentum as greater force was applied them. History is witness that often, although not always, such mass movements tend to coalesce and spiral out of control.

That social media brings street protests realtime to people far and wide inflaming passion is no great discovery: “no exotic intelligence input was required to know the direction of the political wind. If so, why was India caught unawares when Hasina was ignominiously ousted?”<sup>56</sup>

On August 4, the night before Ms. Hasina stepped down, the army chief Gen. Waker-Uz-Zaman told the Prime Minister his troops would not be able to enforce a curfew she had called for.

The message was that she did not have the support of the military any more. This had sealed her fate. Ever since, the military has taken a public posture as a supporter of transition.

Representatives of student leaders demanded, and the army agreed, that Nobel Laureate Muhammad Yunus return from Paris and head the interim government until elections were held and popular government is sworn in.

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<sup>55</sup> Stanly Johny, “Analysis: Why Hasina fell”, *The Hindu*, Aug 07, 2024  
[https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/analysis-why-hasina-fell/article68495640.ece?utm\\_source=international&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=Newsletter&pnespid=671pDSMYZaMa2ffdoD69HMmRtk7.VZdpKbCh3.d1rQRmAN7jhkc4iQ.QjGCv7MWinNoISW2w](https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/analysis-why-hasina-fell/article68495640.ece?utm_source=international&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Newsletter&pnespid=671pDSMYZaMa2ffdoD69HMmRtk7.VZdpKbCh3.d1rQRmAN7jhkc4iQ.QjGCv7MWinNoISW2w)

<sup>56</sup> Partha S Ghosh, “Bangladesh”, op.cit.

Dr. Yunus represents the student movement. It was a key demand from the students to appoint him as the interim government chief. And by accepting their proposal, the military, the presidency and the mainstream political parties have all shown signs of reconciliation—which is a pragmatic first step. But Mr. Yunus doesn't have any political organisation to back him in Bangladesh's infamously fractious polity.

*Emerging Scenario:* With the collapse of Sheikh Hasina government and her flight to India, India-Bangladesh relationship has touched a nadir, or so it seems. Three unmistakable issues have come to the fore.

First is the deep antipathy that people of Bangladesh have for India, especially against the present government. In an interview where his comments about India will come as surprise to many and may be deemed offensive by some, Zafar Sobhan, the Editor of the Bangladeshi newspaper, the Dhaka Tribune, says Bangladeshis feel “an antipathy” for India and they hold the country “squarely responsible for everything they have suffered in the past decade of increasingly autocratic Awami League misrule”.

Zafar Sobhan says that, as a result, India today is viewed in Bangladesh in very similar terms to the way America was viewed in Iran in 1979 when the Shah was overthrown and fled the country. In a 30-minute interview to Karan Thapar for the Wire, Mr. Sobhan explained that the “antipathy” Bangladeshis feel for India is a direct result of their perception that Indians – particularly officialdom and ministers – look down upon Bangladeshis and are patronizing and condescending in their attitude to them.

He specifically cited the Home Minister's use of the word “termites” to describe Bangladeshis and the fact that Bangladeshis are commonly referred to in the media as “infiltrators”. He said: “Bangladeshis understand very well the low opinion that many if not most Indians harbour about us.”

The second conundrum revolves around Hasina's stay in India. According to Sobhan, “[I]t doesn't help that more than three weeks [*now almost four months*] after her ouster, India appears to still be supporting Hasina and the Awami League and that it hasn't at all come to terms with the catastrophe of its Bangladesh policy.”

He adds that if Sheikh Hasina is formally granted asylum in India it will have a negative impact in Bangladesh adding, however, that it will not be a “deal-breaker as we recognize that India is a burgeoning world power and that good relations with the two countries are not just desirable but in fact indispensable ... we also understand that the ties that bind our two countries are far greater than that which divides us.”<sup>57</sup>

Meanwhile, Dhaka has already issued an arrest warrant for the 77-year-old and has summoned her to appear in court in Dhaka to face charges of “massacres, killings, and crimes against humanity”. Mr Yunus said his administration was focused on ensuring those guilty of cracking down on the protests to oust Ms Hasina faced justice, and “[W]e will seek the extradition of the ousted autocrat from India,” Mr Yunus said, referring to Ms Hasina.<sup>58</sup>

The third is the emergent Bangladesh-Pakistan relationship. So long Hasina was in power, relations between Bangladesh and Pakistan was frosty. That has quickly changing, if not altogether vanished. Just a fortnight ago, in early November, Pakistani cargo ship docked at Bangladesh's Chittagong port, marking the first-ever direct maritime contact between the two countries in over five decades.

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<sup>57</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B96Zim1FtkU>

<sup>58</sup> Sanstuti Nath, “Dhaka, Islamabad Inch Closer With Historic Sea Link. How It Impacts India”, World News, NDTV World, Nov 18, 2024 <https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/pakistan-bangladesh-ties-dhaka-islamabad-inch-closer-with-historic-sea-link-1st-since-1971-how-it-impacts-india-7048203>

The vessel from Karachi successfully unloaded its containers at Bangladesh's southeastern coast, port officials told news agency AFP on Sunday, as both sides seek to rebuild ties frosty since the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War.

Pakistani goods were previously transferred onto feeder vessels, usually in Sri Lanka, Malaysia or Singapore, before being transported to Bangladesh.

However, in September, Bangladesh, under the new interim government led by Muhammad Yunus, eased import restrictions on Pakistani goods, which previously required a mandatory physical inspection on arrival resulting in long delays.

The opening of the direct maritime link is being seen as an attempt by Bangladesh's interim government to have robust ties with Pakistan.



[Source: Image](#)

The direct maritime links between Pakistan and Bangladesh underscores a historic shift in the traditionally complex relationship between India's western and eastern neighbours. It also has implications on New Delhi's security establishment especially due to Bangladesh's proximity to India's northeastern states.

Growing ties between Pakistan and Bangladesh could become a concern as New Delhi has been overtly cautious about the sea channels connecting the Chittagong and Mongla ports since the 1970s.

There may perhaps be a fourth unstated anxiety for the present government in India. What if the BNP comes back to power, with the Jamaat piggyriding? Evidence indicates that AL was not all that secular, just as BNP not all that fundamentalist party.

But Jamaat-e-Islami is not just a fundamentalist Islamist party but is anti-Indian too. The political bosses have to learn to lower their rhetoric about "termites" and just as equally the mandarins manning foreign policy desks need to professional enough to tender correct advice.

## 8.6 Concluding remarks

So, what is the state of India's relations with her neighbours? It's tempting to start with what the External Affairs Minister (EAM) S Jaishankar has stated as recently as April 2024 - that India's ties with all neighbours, except China and Pakistan, have improved significantly compared to previous times. More significantly Jaishankar dismissed the suggestion that India has more unfriendly neighbours than a decade ago, stating that the country has strong and growing relations with Bangladesh. On the latter, he was very specific: "Please go to Bangladesh and ask people what they think."<sup>59</sup>

The EAM's assertion regarding ties with Bangladesh is symptomatic of the disconnect that hubris entails. Our paper carries extensive details to contradict the EAM's observation. In the concluding para on Afghanistan – which was the first country that featured in this paper - we had raised just two related questions: (a) how sensible and at what cost is New Delhi's reluctance to engage meaningfully with actors inimical to its liking; and (b) is this a pattern that we shall witness vis-à-vis other countries?

Academics as well as seasoned journalists have however a different take than Jaishankar's. In 2015, Tunku Varadarajan, Virginia Hobbs Carpenter Fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution, had said that Modi's biggest failure to date was one of foreign policy, and that the government has scarred its foreign policy with its policies on Nepal.<sup>60</sup>

Indian mandarins and their political masters have fallen short in their assessment as well responses in dealing with the China factor. As Rajesh Rajagopalan of JNU has pointed out difficulties with smaller neighbours are not peculiar to India but afflict all large powers to varying degrees. To an important degree, these are new problems for India precisely because one of these variables has changed. In China, India's neighbours now have an extra-regional power that is both able and willing to use the neighbourhood against India. Now that smaller countries can look to China, the situation is very different.<sup>61</sup>

But if we think that China's emergence as a financial and military powerhouse is responsible for India's decline among top choice in the neighbourhood, think again. In a letter to Edwina Mountbatten in 1950, C. Rajagopalachari, the last governor-general of India before the nation became a republic, wrote, "A country without material, men or money – the three means of power – is now fast coming to be recognised as the biggest moral power in the civilised world ... her word listened to with respect in the councils of the great." That moral high has been replaced by statements that reek of arrogance, it becomes difficult for the leaders of our neighbouring nations to consider warmer relations.



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<sup>59</sup> "India's relations with neighbours much better than earlier, says Jaishankar", *The Economic Times*, Apr 08, 2024 <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/indias-relations-with-neighbours-much-better-than-earlier-says-jaishankar/articleshow/109041305.cms?from=mdr>

<sup>60</sup> Tunku Varadarajan, "Reverse swing: Modi's biggest failure to date is one of foreign policy", *The Indian Express*, 1 November 2015 <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/india-nepal-relations-himalayan-blunder/>

<sup>61</sup> Rajagopalan, op. cit.



## 9. COP29 UN Climate Conference agrees to Triple Finance to developing countries, protecting lives and livelihoods

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*UN Climate Change News*



The UN Climate Change Conference (COP29) closed on 24 November 2024 with a new finance goal to help countries to protect their people and economies against climate disasters, and share in the vast benefits of the clean energy boom.

With a central focus on climate finance, COP29 brought together nearly 200 countries in Baku, Azerbaijan, and reached a breakthrough agreement that will:

- Triple finance to developing countries, from the previous goal of USD 100 billion annually, to USD 300 billion annually by 2035.
- 
- Secure efforts of all actors to work together to scale up finance to developing countries, from public and private sources, to the amount of USD 1.3 trillion per year by 2035.

Known formally as the New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance (NCQG), it was agreed after two weeks of intensive negotiations and several years of preparatory work, in a process that requires all nations to unanimously agree on every word of the agreement.

"This new finance goal is an insurance policy for humanity, amid worsening climate impacts hitting every country," said Simon Stiell, Executive Secretary of UN Climate Change. "But like any insurance policy – it only works – if premiums are paid in full, and on time. Promises must be kept, to protect billions of lives."

"It will keep the clean energy boom growing, helping all countries to share in its huge benefits: more jobs, stronger growth, cheaper and cleaner energy for all."

The International Energy Agency expects global clean energy investment to exceed USD 2 trillion for the first time in 2024.

The new finance goal at COP29 builds on significant strides forward on global climate action at COP27, which agreed an historic Loss and Damage Fund, and COP28, which delivered a global agreement to transition away from all fossil fuels in energy systems swiftly and fairly, triple renewable energy and boost climate resilience.

COP29 also reached agreement on carbon markets – which several previous COPs had not been able to achieve. These agreements will help countries deliver their climate plans more quickly and cheaply, and make faster progress in halving global emissions this decade, as required by science.

Important agreements were also reached on transparent climate reporting and adaptation as summarized below.

Stiell also acknowledged that the agreement reached in Baku did not meet all Parties' expectations, and substantially more work is still needed next year on several crucial issues.

"No country got everything they wanted, and we leave Baku with a mountain of work to do," said Stiell. "The many other issues we need to progress may not be headlines but they are lifelines for billions of people. So this is no time for victory laps, we need to set our sights and redouble our efforts on the road to Belem." The finance agreement at COP29 comes as stronger national climate plans (Nationally Determined Contributions, or NDCs) become due from all countries next year. These new climate plans must cover all greenhouse gases and all sectors, to keep the 1.5°C warming limit within reach. COP29 saw two G20 countries – the UK and Brazil – signal clearly that they plan to ramp up climate action in their NDCs 3.0, because they are entirely in the interests of their economies and peoples.

"We still have a very long road ahead, but here in Baku we took another important step forward," said Stiell. "The UN Paris Agreement is humanity's life-raft; there is nothing else. So here in Baku and all of the countries represented in this room we're taking that journey forward together."



[Source: Image](#)

A brief summary of other key achievements at COP29 follows below.

## 9.1 Article 6 of the Paris Agreement

A notable achievement during the past two weeks was the progress made on carbon markets. After nearly a decade of work, countries have agreed on the final building blocks that set out how carbon markets will operate under the Paris Agreement, making country-to-country trading and a carbon crediting mechanism fully operational.

On country-to-country trading (Article 6.2), the decision out of COP29 provides clarity on how countries will authorize the trade of carbon credits and how registries tracking this will operate. And there is now reassurance that environmental integrity will be ensured up front through technical reviews in a transparent process.

On day one of COP29, countries agreed standards for a centralized carbon market under the UN (Article 6.4 mechanism). This is good news for developing countries, who will benefit from new flows of finance. And it is particularly good news for least developed countries, who will get the capacity-building support they need to get a foothold in the market.

This mechanism, known as the Paris Agreement Crediting Mechanism, is underpinned by mandatory checks for projects against strong environmental and human rights protections, including safeguards that ensure a project can't go ahead without explicit, informed agreement from Indigenous Peoples. It also allows anyone affected by a project to appeal a decision or file a complaint.

Under the text agreed on Article 6.4, there is a clear mandate for the UN carbon market to align with science. It tasks the Body getting this market up and running to consider the best available science across all work going forward.

The work on carbon markets doesn't stop in Baku. The Supervisory Body setting up the new carbon crediting mechanism has been handed a long 2025 to-do list by Parties and will continue to be accountable to them.



[Source: Image](#)

## 9.2 Transparency

Transparent climate reporting made big strides forward in Baku, building a stronger evidence base to strengthen climate policies over time, and helping to identify financing needs and opportunities. To date, 13 Parties have now submitted their first [Biennial Transparency Reports](#) (BTR) – due from all Parties by the end of the year. Andorra, Azerbaijan, the European Union, Germany, Guyana, Japan, Kazakhstan, Maldives, Netherlands, Panama, Singapore, Spain, and Türkiye have led the way on transparent climate reporting, and set an example for others to follow.

In addition, all transparency negotiating items concluded successfully at COP29, with Parties expressing their appreciation for the timely completion of the Enhanced Transparency Framework (ETF) reporting tools, the technical trainings, and the support provided to developing countries for reporting under the ETF that took place in 2024.

A total of 42 events were organized under [#Together4Transparency](#), a UNFCCC collaborative initiative that promotes climate transparency with Parties and non-Party stakeholders. These events emphasized the vital role of transparency in preparing NDCs and net-zero pathways, as well as in recognizing climate action from non-Party stakeholders. Events included high-level sessions, mandated events and training sessions to prepare countries for their BTRs, as well as to equip technical experts for the upcoming review process.

The critical role of REDD+ was recognized through a £3 million pledge by the UK International Forest Unit to support UN Climate Change’s work over four years. This funding will bolster REDD+ activities in many countries, enabling the secretariat to create dedicated spaces for REDD+ experts to engage in technical dialogue. These efforts are expected to enhance the transparency and implementation of REDD+, in line with the Global Stocktake objective to halt and reverse deforestation and forest degradation by 2030.



[Source: Image](#)

## 9.3 Adaptation

COP29 was an important moment for adaptation, with the delivery of several key outcomes. The COP decision on matters relating to the least developed countries (LDCs) contains a provision for the establishment of a support programme for the implementation of National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) for the LDCs. Parties extensively discussed the second five-year assessment of progress to formulate and implement NAPs, and will continue that in June 2025.

A [High-Level Dialogue on National Adaptation Plans](#) convened ministers from least developed countries and small island developing States, financial experts and international donors to address the growing urgency of climate adaptation. Their discussions focused on innovative financing, technical support, and accelerated action to meet the 2025 submission deadline for NAPs. The event concluded with a strong call to action to expedite NAPs and translate plans into tangible outcomes.

The outcome on the global goal on adaptation sets a clear path forward on the road to COP30 for the indicators work programme, providing a process for experts to continue their technical work before passing the baton to Parties. COP29 also launched the Baku Adaptation Road Map and Baku high-level dialogue on adaptation to enhance the implementation of the UAE Framework. Finally, the outcome raises ambition by agreeing to continue unpacking transformational adaptation moving forward.

COP29 took a decisive step forward to elevate the voices of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in climate action, adopting the [Baku Workplan](#) and renewing the mandate of the Facilitative Working Group (FWG) of the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform (LCIPP). The adopted decision acknowledges the progress made by the FWG in fostering collaboration among Parties, Indigenous Peoples and local communities, and underscores the leadership of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in addressing the climate crisis.

## 9.4 Gender and climate change

Countries agreed a decision on gender and climate change, extending the enhanced [Lima Work Programme on Gender and Climate Change](#) for another 10 years, reaffirming the importance of gender equality and advancing gender mainstreaming throughout the convention.

They also agreed to develop a new gender action plan for adoption at COP30, which will set the direction for concrete implementation.



*Source: Image*

## 9.5 Civil society participation, children and youth

World leaders at COP29 were joined by civil society, subnationals, business, Indigenous Peoples, youth, philanthropy, and international organizations. More than 55,000 people attended COP29 to share ideas, solutions, and build partnerships and coalitions.

The decisions taken at COP29 also reemphasize the critical importance of empowering all stakeholders to engage in climate action; in particular under Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE). Parties recalled the importance of integrating ACE elements into national climate change policies, plans, strategies and action, and noted the secretariat's compendium of good practices for integrating ACE elements into NDCs.

COP29 marked a significant milestone as dedicated spaces were created to ensure the meaningful participation of children within the Youth-led Climate Forum for the first time. Four children, including the youngest at just 10 years old, took on roles as moderators and speakers, engaging directly with Parties and observer organizations. Their participation highlighted the importance of inclusivity and intergenerational collaboration in driving climate action.

In parallel with the formal negotiations, the Global Climate Action space at COP29 provided a platform for governments, businesses and civil society to collaborate and showcase their real-world climate solutions. An overview and summary of these can be found [here](#).

The High-Level Champions, under the Marrakech Partnership for Global Climate Action, launched their [2024 Yearbook of Global Climate Action](#) at COP29, showing that climate action by non-Party stakeholders, including businesses, investors, sub-national actors and civil society, is driving progress towards the goals of the Paris Agreement, and that their engagement is more crucial than ever.

More information: Read a transcript of UN Climate Change Executive Secretary Simon Stiell's [closing speech](#) at COP29 here. Read the COP29 decision texts [here](#).



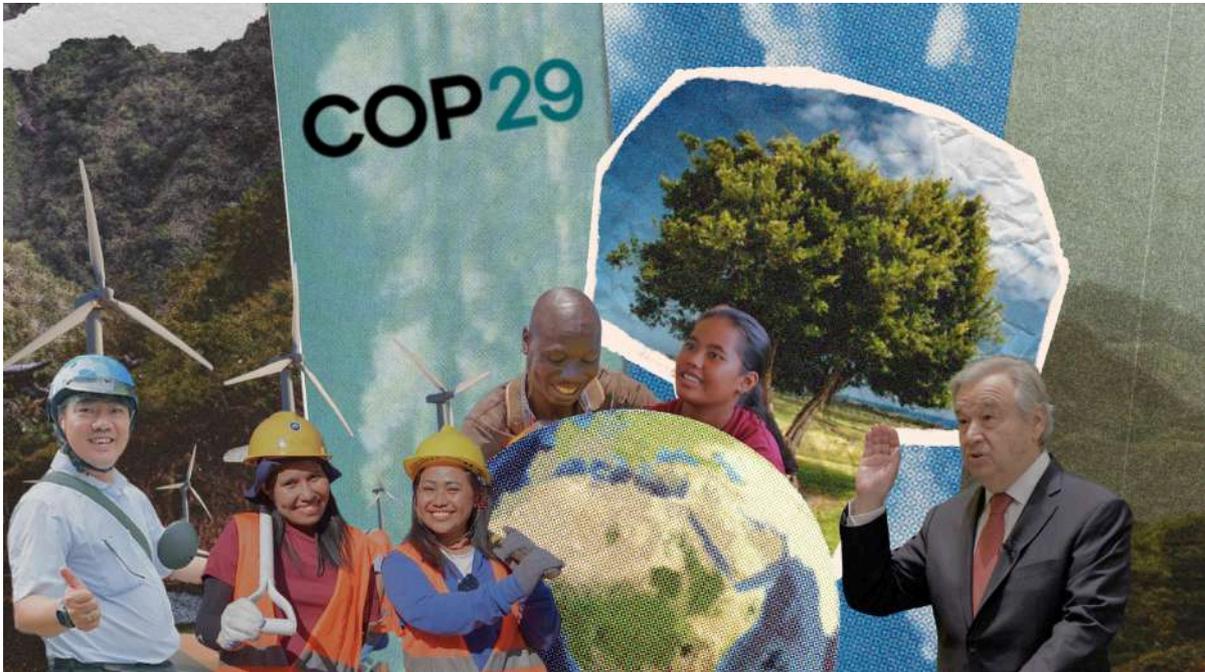
Activists stage a protest during Cop29.  
Photograph: Dominika Zarzycka/SOPA Images/REX/Shutterstock



## 10. COP29 in depth: Why \$300bn isn't anything like enough

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Fiona Harvey, *The Guardian's environment editor*<sup>62</sup>



*Source: Image*

COP29 in Baku finally finished at 5.31am local time on 24th November, 2024, more than 35 hours after it was due to conclude – and the extra time did not lead to a triumphant outcome.

On the biggest issue under discussion, the transfer of climate finance from the developed to the developing world, the headline figure in the agreement was \$1.3tn (£1tn) by 2035. But that masked much smaller commitments in direct finance, mostly in the form of grants and low-interest loans, which amounted to only \$300bn. Nor is the outcome an injustice whose impact is limited to the global South, of course: if the money isn't there to support a green energy transition in developing economies, temperatures will rise all over the world.

Last night, as negotiators flew home from Azerbaijan, there was clear consensus among developing nations: "\$300bn by 2035 is a joke," one Nigerian delegate said. "We do not accept this."

But with limited leverage to force any change and the Azeri presidency's gavel down on the deal, it is not obvious what other option there might be, at least for now.

Inadequate though the deal is, nothing at a Cop summit is ever final. Today's newsletter, with the Guardian's environment editor **Fiona Harvey** in Baku, is about the significant reasons to view this summit as a failure – and the small seeds of hope that remain.

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<sup>62</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/nov/25/first-edition-monday-cop-failure>

The strongest point in favour of the deal struck in Baku is that it is better than the alternative – that is, the summit ending without an agreement, meaning no increase to climate finance to the developing world. “It’s terrible,” Fiona Harvey said. “But it is also less bad than nothing.”

Tina Stege, the climate envoy of the Marshall Islands, summed up the mood in the most vulnerable countries. “We are leaving with a small portion of the funding climate-vulnerable countries urgently need,” she said. “It isn’t nearly enough, but it’s a start.” Here are some pointers on what the deal looks like.

### How much are developed countries offering?

With many world leaders absent from Baku – only 80 heads of state, against 154 last time – there was early pessimism about the prospects for meaningful action. Countries in the developing world had called for \$1.3tn a year by 2035 in financing to help them adapt to the consequences of climate change and transition away from fossil fuels. That figure is in line with a target published by the authoritative Independent High Level Expert Group on Climate Finance. And it does feature in the final text.

But, as Fiona notes in this analysis piece, the deal says that:

The money could come not just in the form of the grants and very low-interest loans that developing countries need, but ... from a “wide variety of sources, public and private, bilateral and multilateral and alternative sources”. Money will be “mobilised” rather than provided – a nice distinction that allows for the inclusion of private sector co-investing to be counted alongside public money from government budgets and development banks.

The direct commitment from the rich industrialised world is much lower: \$300bn. That may be a significant increase on the existing \$100bn a year goal, but that was set in 2009 and not reached until 2022, two years after the target date.

While it will largely be provided in grants and loans, the text also allows for the counting of private co-investing – and while in practice this will only be a small share of the total, it is viewed by some developing nations as a loophole. There is no allowance for the impact of inflation, further eroding the financing’s real value.

Some delegates from rich countries acknowledged the inadequacy of the offer. But they note that the prevailing mood in the west – with the impact of inflation, the war in Ukraine, and the impending Trump presidency among other political and economic crises – is not conducive to a more ambitious figure.

“In their defence, for developed countries to be able to stump up this cash requires them to sell it to their people,” Fiona said. “And even though most people in most countries want to see serious climate action, the success of right-wing parties at the ballot box makes it very difficult to achieve. We’re living in an Alice in Wonderland situation in which everyone agrees what is good for the planet, and yet the people who disagree are in the ascendant.”

### Why is the money important?

Headlines about billions in commitments from wealthier countries may understandably lead to a perception that this is about charity, or reparations. But while it is true that some of the money will be spent on protecting people living in the global South from the worst impacts of the climate crisis, a large proportion of the finance provided will be spent on transitioning to green sources of energy like solar farms and wind turbines.

That means it is also crucial to blunting global temperature rises that will ultimately devastate western economies and lives as well. As UN secretary-general António Guterres put it: “Finance is not a handout. It’s an investment against the devastation that unchecked climate chaos will inflict on us all.”

### Is \$300bn a year a fair figure?

Absolutely not. As much as \$300bn sounds, it is about 10% of what is invested in global energy infrastructure each year. And even the \$1.3tn overall figure falls well short of any just accounting of which countries did the damage. [An LSE study last year](#) estimated that countries in the global South would be entitled to about \$192tn by 2050 on the basis of the share of the global “carbon budget” consumed by the global North.

“If there was any justice in the world, developing countries would be receiving many trillions a year from the countries that emitted so much for so long,” Fiona said. Meanwhile, many of those same nations are paying huge sums in debt service that severely hamper their ability to invest in climate mitigation projects – \$443.5bn in 2022, with China now the world’s biggest bilateral lender even as it is responsible for about a third of the world’s current emissions.

Any concept of reparations is off-limits at Cop summits, considered unachievable and likely to close down negotiations – which adds to the sense of injustice in the developing world. As Samoa’s natural resources minister Cedric Schuster asked: “Is this how we treat the countries with the moral high ground in the process, who stand to lose the most and have already lost so much?”



*Source: Image*

### Is it enough?

That’s a slightly different, and even more complicated, question. “The estimate of the core finance needed to leverage other forms of investment provided by the high level expert group was about \$300bn a year,” Fiona said.

“That would need to come with about \$500bn a year from private sector investment, and the remainder would be new forms of finance – a whole mixture of things, from carbon trading to taxes on fossil fuels and frequent flyer levies.”

In theory, \$300bn could be enough to kickstart that wider investment and get somewhere close to the overall figure. But there are reasons to be sceptical. Individual countries have not yet been required to set out their national commitments towards meeting the overall goal, and past experience suggests that they will probably fall short. Meanwhile, new taxes and private sector investment need to be widely introduced to be effective, and are vulnerable to local political and economic crises.

“None of it really exists yet,” Fiona said. “A lot of these things are not that difficult to put in place, and it is very important to keep talking about things like a modest wealth tax so that it is understood as a reasonable idea. But there is a danger that they will be pie in the sky.”

### Are there any grounds for optimism?

You can find some, but they’re pretty scant. The deal at least reaches the \$1.3tn figure in theory, and developing countries have secured a commitment to a “roadmap to 1.3tn” that will act as a yardstick for future progress. And although carbon markets have failed in the past, new rules agreed in Baku could do a better job of funding climate mitigation projects and capping emissions.

Meanwhile, one major source of anger at COP29 was how the summit was managed by the Azeri hosts, who were widely viewed as falling short. The next round is in Belém, Brazil, where there are hopes that the organisers will prove more effective. “They wanted a relatively straightforward Cop focused on national plans to reduce emissions,” Fiona said. “Now they have to clean up a bit of a mess.”

It is also true that the Baku summit was in danger of failing totally – leading to the collapse of the least-bad mechanism available for international cooperation against the climate crisis. Angry though many developing nations are, they will already be planning for how to improve the outcome next time.

But even these slim pickings should be seen in the context of the real-world impacts that are already being felt, and sometimes seem very remote from officials hammering out the fine details of a diplomatic text. As things stand, most climate scientists consider the goal of limiting temperature increases to 1.5C above preindustrial levels as already out of reach. Even if every country on earth honoured their current commitments, the world would warm by about 2.7 degrees. “If countries don’t have serious commitments to keeping below 1.5 in Belém, we will be toast,” Fiona said. “It will be too late.”



Protestors at COP29 in Baku, Azerbaijan Joel Michael / CSE



# 11. The great escape from Baku: Global North abandons South, denies adequate climate finance at COP29

Upamanyu Das, Avantika Goswami, Down to Earth<sup>63</sup>

*The outcome of the New Collective Quantified Goal on climate finance will see \$300 billion per year in climate finance to developing countries, marred by a range of ambiguities*

A deal of \$300 billion per year to developing countries from developed countries and other sources was reached at the 29th Conference of Parties (COP29) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in the Azeri capital of Baku early on the morning of November 24, 2024.

The gaveling of the decision regarding the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) on climate finance followed a decade of anticipation, two plus years of negotiations and technical analysis, and the past two weeks of political bargaining.

Through the final days of COP29, Parties engaged in critical negotiations on the quantum and quality to be provided under the NCQG. The Presidency text on the NCQG, released on the morning of November 23, brought forth strong contestations from developing countries.

The text “calls on all actors” to enable scaled up climate finance for developing countries to at least US \$1.3 trillion per year by 2035 and encourages developing countries to contribute towards this target on a voluntary basis. This dilutes the legal obligation of developed countries to provide the entirety of the finance under the goal.

The text also extends the previous US \$100 billion goal to only US \$300 billion per year by 2035 (up from US \$250 billion mentioned in the previous draft) with developed countries “taking the lead”. The stated US \$300 billion figure falls miles short of the required scale of funds.

The demand from the G77 and China bloc — the largest negotiating bloc of 130+ developing countries — was for \$600 billion in public finance from developed countries, out of a larger demand of \$1.3 trillion per year by 2030. This was revised downwards to \$500 billion in the final days of the negotiations.

According to the UNFCCC’s Second Needs Determination Report, a cumulative US \$5.012-\$6.852 trillion is required until 2030 to support developing countries in achieving their Nationally Determined Contributions. The gap in adaptation finance alone stands at a staggering US \$194-366 billion per year. This only shows dismal levels of ambition from developed countries.



<sup>63</sup> <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/climate-change/the-great-escape-from-baku-global-north-abandons-south-denies-adequate-climate-finance-at-cop29>



## 12. Developing nations left stranded as adaptation finance falls short at COP29

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*Akshit Sangomla, Down to Earth*<sup>64</sup>

*The final NCQG text excluded a separate sub-goal for adaptation; poor nations left to contend with an unspecified share of the inadequate \$300 billion annual allocation.*

The adaptation needs of developing countries were at stake at the 29th Conference of Parties (COP29) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Baku, Azerbaijan, as Parties negotiated the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) for finance.

This text was intended to include a separate sub-goal for adaptation, but it did not make it to the final one. Many Parties, particularly the African Group of Negotiators, representing 54 African countries, had strongly advocated for the inclusion of this sub-goal under the NCQG.

Now, developing countries may have to settle for an unspecified fraction of the paltry sum of \$300 billion per year pushed through by the COP29 Presidency and several developed Parties, including the European Union.

This meagre allocation is intended to support countries in developing their National Adaptation Plans and Adaptation Communications to the UNFCCC, as well as in implementing the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA).

This reflects some progress towards achieving the Glasgow Climate Pact goal of doubling annual adaptation finance from developed to developing countries, from 2019 levels of \$19 billion to \$38 billion in 2025. Yet, this is far from sufficient to meet the actual requirements and the new contributions to adaptation finance announced at COP29 show little promise.

2022 recorded the greatest year-on-year absolute and relative increase in adaptation finance flows to developing countries, rising from \$22 billion in 2021 to \$28 billion in 2022, the report highlighted. However, the actual adaptation financing needs for developing countries amount to a staggering \$387 billion per year until 2030.

This reflects some progress towards achieving the Glasgow Climate Pact goal of doubling annual adaptation finance from developed to developing countries, from 2019 levels of \$19 billion to \$38 billion in 2025. Yet, this is far from sufficient to meet the actual requirements and the new contributions to adaptation finance announced at COP29 show little promise.

The Adaptation Fund could cough up only “around one-sixth” of its targeted commitments from the COP29. The Fund received only \$61 million against its annual target of \$300 million.

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<sup>64</sup> <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/climate-change/developing-nations-left-stranded-as-adaptation-finance-falls-short-at-cop29>





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