



Forum For Integrated National Security

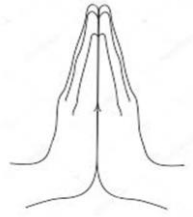
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THE BULLETIN

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FINS Wishes You Happy and Healthy New Year



NORTHEAST INDIA: India's greatest asset, with severest challenges:

By Dr Narendra Joshi

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People across India know precious little about the states in Northeast India. The students from Arunachal Pradesh told me when I was teaching there that on their study tour to South India, many mistook them as Nepali or Chinese. Till few years back the slogan that Beijing is closer than Delhi was heard in Northeast. In a recent Amazon prime OTT series, there was a character from northeast who is mistaken as 'Cheeni' and exploited in every possible way since his childhood, till it reaches the doorsteps of being labelled as terrorist. This is not new or exceptional. Their presence is seen ornamentally in some singing contests, in some dance shows, in few sports. As if this vast land, integral part of Mother India from Vedic age, from Mahabharata, to Puranas and from Bhakti to Tantra literature has nothing substantial to contribute to the growth story of India. Has nothing to contribute to energy sector, to development to culture, to exports, crafts and arts, to polity economy and sociology, to religion, spirituality and philosophy, to education, international relations and Asian resurgence?

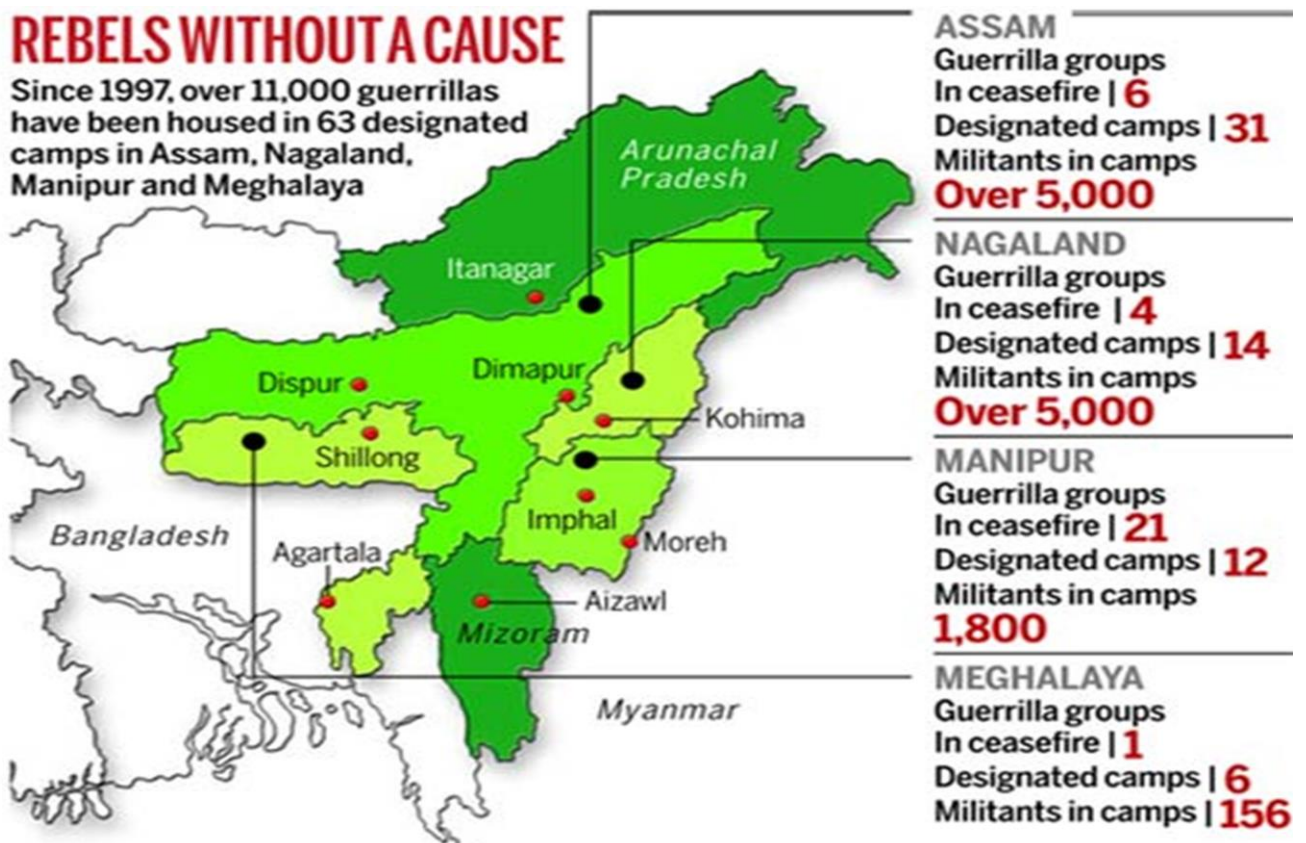
After having played a significant role in ancient, medieval and modern history of India from the Prehistoric age to the freedom struggle of India and post-independence wars...still it is a region of mist, myths and misconceptions!!

The Northeast region of India comprises eight states – Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Tripura and Sikkim. North East India is connected to the Indian mainland by a small corridor – Siliguri Corridor (also known as Chicken Neck – with a narrow width of only 23 kilometers). The region is surrounded by other nations ie Bangladesh, Myanmar, Tibet, China, and so on. There is ‘Bangladesh to the west, Myanmar to the east and Bhutan and China to the north. The Northeast states of India remain geographically isolated from the rest of the country. They are also ethnically, culturally and linguistically distinct, predominantly speaking Sino-Tibetan and Austro-Asiatic languages (around 220 of them with a strong Christian presence. Although the states of Northeast India are small—physically, numerically and economically—they are increasingly gaining a significant strategic value.’

‘The region shares an international border of 5,182 kilometres (3,220 mi) (about 99 percent of its total geographical boundary) with several neighbouring countries – 1,395 kilometres (867 mi) with Tibet Autonomous Region, China in the north, 1,640 kilometres (1,020 mi) with Myanmar in the east, 1,596 kilometres (992 mi) with Bangladesh in the south-west, 97 kilometres (60 mi) with Nepal in the west, and 455 kilometres (283 mi) with Bhutan in the north-west. It comprises an area of 262,230 square kilometres (101,250 sq mi), almost 8 percent of that of India’.

Northeast India is a bridge to South East Asia and is a bridgehead between India and the vibrant economies of Southeast Asia, including southern China. Economic Significance of Northeast is endowed with huge natural resource (oil, gas, coal, hydro, fertile land, etc) which can be harnessed for nation development.

The region has been facing problems of insurgency for almost 5 decades. Although, now things are looking bit more peaceful in recent years.



(Source: Vision IAS)

Northeast is in news many times and most of the times it is for wrong reasons and worries some issues and entanglements. The Assam government recently has extended the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 (AFSPA) in the state for six more months with effect from August 28, 2020. The state was again declared a “disturbed area” on account of recent insurgent attacks on security forces and due to recovery of illegal arms and ammunition from different areas of Assam. After every six months this law has to be withdrawn or extended and it has been extended several times in last few decades. However, many NGOs, and activists have been opposing this extension and say the solutions are not in extending such laws but in understanding the local issues and having a constructive way to dialogue and effort to solve them or at least, a genuine displayed intention to solve them. Some are even demanding the withdrawal of the ‘AFSPA 1958’ termed ‘draconian law’ by some of the social groups.

There was also a news recently that the insurgents from other States are considering Arunachal Pradesh as a safe haven for their hideouts, extortion, and fresh recruitment operations. Addressing the 68th plenary session of North Eastern Council (NEC) at Guwahati which was chaired by Home minister Amit Shah, he said, “There is an intense drive by various insurgent groups to pick local youth from Tirap, Changlang and Longding districts for their recruitment.”

Last year the Governor of **Arunachal Pradesh** had a press meet and mentioned the heinous killing of Late Tirong Aboh, elected MLA and 10 others in Tirap District. The Governor requested for cooperation from Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India to provide assistance to our State and bolster our counter insurgency operations, by providing men, material, and technological help. The Governor requested for cooperation from Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India to provide assistance to our State and bolster our counter insurgency operations, by providing training to police. The Governor apprised the Council that the biggest problem which the State of Arunachal Pradesh faces now is that of the lack of robust Land, Air, Internet and Mobile Network.

In fact there is an urgent need at every level of governance to really give lot more attention to the northeast. Infrastructure and basic amenities, water supply, housing, roads, railway network, buses, launch services must be on par with many other places in India. Natural resources and energies are to be much more effectively harnessed. The potential of northeast to be energy capital of India with her rich possibilities in solar, water, wind energy generation is hardly tapped so far. The stunning beauty of her locations and flora fauna is not even seen as tourism heaven. However, here is the delicate issue in this problem. It must be noted that many times such development has been synonymous with the eurocentricism, the notorious white man’s burden!! Destroying beautiful fabric and organic nature of societies in such areas. This has happened in all parts of the world and Northeast is not exception to it. However, often such overenthusiastic, sincere but insensitive implants of the modern world are devastating for individuals, for families and for communities to say the least. Their traditional customs, rituals, systems, institutions: their culture as a whole is ridiculed and bulldozed mercilessly under the steam rollers of westernized ideas of civilization. It is seen and is on record that many times such loss of culture results in loss of identity, isolation, self negation and that in turn leads to schizophrenia of rootlessness, -Insurgency and agitations are just surface phenomena in such deep rooted division in consciousness. It results in ‘Future Shock’ to use the pertinent term used so well by Alvin Toffler. That was the fear and thereby the basis of isolation policy which Verrier Elwin so eloquently promoted and which became dream policy for NEFA after independence. However, that was other unfortunate extreme: meaning, if destruction of local culture is one extreme, the isolation and neglect was no way better. We saw the blunder in this policy after 1962 Chinese aggression and then the correction was started though slowly. To summarize, what we need today is ‘Development through culture’ not development versus culture. Development problem has to be seen in the light of Indian culture and her inseparable links with local cultures, indigenous faiths, ethnic diversity, biodiversity and such unique but eco-friendly things of this vast and unique area.

Cultural and developmental renaissance of the Northeast area will give us an elevation to be once again a dominant soft power in South East Asia and Northeast Asia. That is exactly what this area was throughout the historic ages. Development of region with most modern means and yet deeper and strengthened bonds of rich art, craft and culture, restoring lost identity is the mantra for the Northeast India. We will attempt to detail and decode it as we go ahead in this mission of Looking East and especially its subset of Looking Northeast which the present government has wonderfully intensified into the policy of ‘Acting East.’

RUSSIA’S CRITICISM OF INDIA’S ENGAGEMENT IN QUAD: WHAT DOES IT MEAN INDIA-RUSSIA RELATIONS?

By Utkarsha Mahajan

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The 24th edition of Malabar exercise was concluded in November 2020 (in Phase-I and Phase-II) with a notable comeback of Australia after a decade. The invite to join the exercise was quickly accepted by Australia and was observed as a collective resolve by four major Indo-pacific democracies and also all QUAD members i.e. United States, India, Australia and **Japan**, to support an open and prosperous Indo-pacific.

On December 09, 2020, Russia’s Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov criticized the QUAD mentioning it as a “devious policy” by western powers to engage India in “Anti-China Games”. Moscow also condemned the **United States’** Indo-Pacific policy and has termed the Quad as a ‘divisive and exclusivist concept’. Lavrov also accused the West of undermining Russia’s privileged relations with India.

India’s MEA spokesperson Anurag Srivastav, responding to India’s all-weather ally Russia, mentioned that India doesn’t see Indo-pacific as a ‘strategy’ or a ‘club of limited members’ and also reminded that India-Russia ties stand independent of any third-party. China has also lashed out at QUAD mentioning it as a China-containment policy. The Chinese State Counsellor and foreign minister Wang Yi stated that the US wanted to use this grouping as the basis to build an “Indo-Pacific NATO”.

India, on several occasions, has reiterated its adherence to a free and open Indo-pacific (FOIP) and its engagement within the region being strictly based on its national interest. On December 11, 2020, while delivering a keynote address at the Global Dialogue Security Summit, CDS Bipin Rawat specified a need for change in approach to security from unilateral to multilateral mode which mandates increasing training engagement with partner nations in order to fortify the future.

Russia’s recent statement lies in tandem with Chinese skepticism towards India’s participation in QUAD and the Malabar Exercise. Lavrov’s remarks can also be seen as a testimony of increasing Chinese influence on Russia’s foreign policy and its deepening economic ties with China. The trade between Russia and China has doubled after the western sanctions, which amounts to around \$108 billion. The two countries have also signed a \$400 billion deal over 30 years to supply gas to China along the 1,800 miles long pipeline known as the Power of Siberia. Russia’s central bank has increased its Chinese currency reserves from less than one per cent to over 13%. China has also surpassed Germany as the principal supplier of industrial plant and technology.

Despite the risk of financial sanctions from the US, India has continued with its expansive defence relationship with Russia, which includes the signing of mega arms deals. On October 5 (2020), India had signed the \$5.43 billion (over Rs 39,000 crore) deal for five squadrons of the Russian S-400 Triumph air defence missile systems. The US has already imposed sanctions on China for acquiring the same S-400 systems under its new law called CAATSA (Countering America's Adversaries through Sanctions Act), which seeks to prevent countries from buying Russian weapons or Iranian oil. On the other hand, India has also signed a number lucrative defence contracts with the US as well, costing \$17 billion approximately. The US has already bagged lucrative Indian defence contracts worth \$17 billion since 2007 which includes one of the recent \$2.6 billion deal with a major American defence firm Lockheed Martin. Under this deal, India will be buying 24 MH-60 Romeo, world's most advanced maritime helicopters, for Indian Navy.

It is important to see how India balances itself within the two emerging power blocks with its bilateral and multilateral engagement with the US, Russia and China. Sumit Ganguly, in his article in [Foreign Policy](#) (July 2020), recommends for India to re-calculate its relationship with Russia. Ganguly suggests that a strategic partnership with Russia based on the absence of fundamental conflicts of interest and a shared belief that some form of multipolarity is better than any sort of Sino-U.S. condominium and is important for India.

India and Russia have been members of various international bodies such as the United Nations, BRICS, RIC, G20 and SCO and have supported each other on a wide range of issues from time to time. A robust strategic partnership based on five major components i.e. politics, defence, civil, nuclear energy, anti-terrorism cooperation and space, is bound to continue and will help India compensate for its engagement with US by means of QUAD or '2+2 Dialogue'.

OFFSETS IN DEFENCE PROCUREMENT POLICY

By Lt Gen VA Bhat

Author served as the Director-General of Quality Assurance (DGQA) at the Department of Defence Production (Ministry of Defence)

It is well known that India is the Largest Importer of Defence Platforms in the world. Almost 70% of the existing Equipment held with the Services are imported or manufactured in Defence Public Undertakings with Transfer of Technology. Unfortunately the Defence Research and Development (DRDO) have left much to be desired in research and development of Equipment for the Service. Even the Atmanirbhar policy announced recently is not going to change the situation of imports as any initiative proposed or announced will take time to mature and give results. Next five six years are required to see if this policy is yielding results. It will have to be relentlessly pursued nurtured and will require Hand Holding of the Private Sector to succeed. Industry also will have to look around for proper partners who will be able to meet the exacting needs of the Armed Forces. All defence equipment has to perform in the rigorous terrain and climatic conditions where our adversaries are flexing their muscles. The exposure to extreme Hot, very severe cold and the effect of sand plays havoc on the maintenance of the equipment. The Defence Procurement Policy was launched in 2000 by Late President Mr Pranab Mukerjee. When promulgated it had a mandatory Clause that an Original Equipment Manufacturer will adhere to 30% offsets in the Contract being inked. Steadily it was increased to 50% by the time Rafale was procured. Enhanced offset was intended to progressively induce manufacture of defence related new high technology items in the country, weapon system producers to assist Indian companies achieve capability to indigenously design, develop and build such platforms in future. So what are these defence offsets and how do new changes in the policies fail to address the indigenous production of extremely complex and exorbitantly costly platforms in the country?

What are defence offsets?

In simplest terms, the offset is an obligation by an international player to boost India's domestic defence industry if India is buying defence equipment from it. India has, like many other countries, hoped to use its buying power to not just secure the lowest prices but force foreign vendors to plough back a certain percentage of the overall contract value into the country on terms and conditions stipulated by it. The objective has been to use these capital acquisitions as a catalyst or a bargaining chip to bring in high-end manufacturing/production technologies to the country. Attract foreign direct investments, facilitate and promote defence exports so as to become part of the global chain, promote domestic R&D in defence. It will also expose India's workforce to and train it in cutting edge technology. Aim plus is develop a strong indigenous defence ecosystem. A Defence Offset Facilitation Agency was also set up. Broadly speaking, India envisaged direct offsets (wherein the ensured benefits are directly related to the supplies envisaged under the principal contract) and indirect offsets (where in the defence contractor helps India and Indian companies in areas unrelated to the principal contract).

A Platform introduced and accepted for induction will continue to be a part of the inventory of the Services for next 40 years or so. Example is the MIGs which has played a stellar role in the service it has rendered to the Nation and the Air Force. The OEM which wins the contract will have actually received a HEN WHICH LAYS A GOLDEN EGG IN PERPETUITY. In the Journey from its Womb (Introduction) to its Tomb (Final Discard) the OEM will have a major role to play in the Upgrades to follow. All majors OEMs in the Defence Industry are trying to improve the existing Equipment in all spheres. Be it Speed (In Tanks or Vehicles increased Mobility Armament Technology (Lethality in Ammunition or increased Range or Rate of Fire) Vision Devices (Both Night and Day Better Clarity or increased Range) Command Electronics (In a Gun System the kind of Radio Sets which are used for Communication or even Radars which can detect Enemy Guns Earlier). This will enable the equipment to match the Inventory of our adversaries. Our neighbors will be looking for better and more efficient matching capabilities to challenge us in armed Combat. The requirements of Maintenance Spares are also of a huge order. The kind of benefit and Foreign OEM is set garner if its Equipment is accepted for the Armed Forces. This makes Offset clause attractive for India if utilised properly. Look at what benefits the Indian offset partner (IOP) is set to garner if it is chosen as an offset partner.

The first question is to ask if the aim with which the offsets were introduced really achieved its aim. The CAG reports of the Government of India have clearly mentioned that the Stated Objectives have not been met. The technology transfers have not taken place at all. The audit "found that the foreign vendors made various offset commitments to qualify for the main supply contract but later, were not earnest about fulfilling these commitments"

There are many reasons for this dismal situation to arise. Firstly no OEM today manufactures all components in its own in house facilities. To Illustrate a Gun. The barrel, carriage, recoil system may be manufactured in house. But the command and communication, Sighting and Laying Systems Night Radars Auxiliary Engine is procured from other specialised Vendor in his field. This implies the Defence Contractor cannot part Technology related to these outsourced aggregates. Secondly the Contractor may not have the Technology we are looking for. There is a mismatch on the road map of Technology Transfer. Suffice to say that no OEM is going to part with cutting edge technology with ease. There have been instances where a Contractor has exported minor assemblies to its IOP carried out value addition in local Indian industry. These Items are then imported and used these very minor assemblies defeating the very objective of offsets. The Offset Map has to very clearly be thought about and executed. For that our Indian Companies or DRDO must know what they are they looking for. Defence Offsets are used as Barter of goods. One Major reason is the control exercised by MOD on Offsets. Offset guidelines elaborately specified ways for Defence Contractors to discharge this obligation but concurrently robbed them of the freedom to do so by stipulating that its MODs prior approval was mandatory. Even changing an Indian offset partner (IOP) or either re-phasing or restructuring the offset implementation schedule necessitated MoD's prior approval. This not only hindered offset execution, but also severely tried the vendors' patience to an extreme.

The Defence Ministry came up with its latest **Defence Acquisition Procedure 2020 (DAP 2020)** in October 20. **Changing a 15-year old policy**, the government has decided to **remove the clause for offsets** if the equipment is being bought either through deals or agreements between two countries, or through an abinitio single-vendor deal.

Most of the defence procurement done in the past 6/7 years are through the FMS (Foreign Military Sales) or direct one to one between the two Governments. Ex RAFALE, AIRCRAFTS ULTRA LIGHT HOWITZER M777 or APAPCHE HELICOPTER, S 400 anti aircraft equipment and so on.

Does this mean that we need to abandon this OFFSET POLICY for good? The answer is an emphatic 'NO'. We must include this clause to help our R&D be it in the Private or Public Sector to boost our Technology which we so severely lack. No Nation can ever think of being a SUPER POWER if we rely on imports of Military Hardware. Globally today we read that Drones UAVs Artificial Intelligence is the WEAPONS of the Future.

The MOD & Three Services need to sit down and think of the way ahead. Once decided there should be no looking back. Off sets can be used to facilitate our own industry to benefit from what the OEM is looking at the future of its own Platform. Take the case of Vajra K9 Self Propelled Gun manufactured by L&T under South Korean Technology for the Indian Artillery Regiment. This gun is South Korean now in service today has not been developed in a day or two. It has taken many years to reach this level of precision. An Ideal situation presents itself to the Planners in MOD as of today for developing gun technology by extending our hand to South Korea for cooperation. One Major concern will be taken care off. Strategize our needs of Weapons required say in 2030 and take a decision to contact Foreign Vendors and Negotiate with them Transfer of Technology in niche areas. MOD needs to bite the Bullet and seek cooperation of Foreign Vendors. Once decided there is no looking back even if some opposition parties cry foul and make a hue and cry. That is the need of the Nation. A classic example is of TAL.

TAL Manufacturing Solutions Ltd (TAL), a 100 % subsidiary of Tata Advanced Systems Limited, and Boeing [NYSE: BA] celebrated the milestone of the delivery of the 25,000th Advanced Composite Floor Beam (ACFB) for all the Dreamliner airplane variants – 787-8, 787-9 and 787-10, at TAL's state-of-the-art aerospace manufacturing facility in Nagpur. (November 2019)

Boeing awarded TAL the first contract to manufacture floor beams for the Dreamliner family of airplanes in 2011. TAL shipped the first set of floor beams in 2014.

Floor Beams are not niche technology as compared to State of the Art Defence Technology. Release MOD from being a holy cow and go ahead. If this government does not take the lead then our future is bleak.

Contours of India's Foreign Policy: An Analysis

By Gayatri Rajpurohit

Author is a research scholar at the School of International Studies Central University of Gujarat

Following paper is critical exploration of speech delivered by **EAM Dr S Jaishankar** on the occasion of **Second Manohar Parrikar memorial** Lecture. Dr Jaishankar spoke about Contours of India's foreign policy: relationship between defence and diplomacy to underline the importance of greater integration in the policy-making.

Keywords: Diplomacy, Defence, Securitisation, Foreign Policy, Multilateralism, Perennial Problems, Transnational Linkages.

India is going through massive churns on multiple fronts and geo-strategically. India is positioned in a sweet spot like never before. The leadership right at the top is being recognized globally and domestically as well. We are witnessing a huge resurgence of nationalistic fervour. The demographic dividend needs to be channelized to build a nation of our dreams. We dream of India as a strong nation, politically, economically, militarily as well as culturally.

This era of unconstrained military conflicts may be a thing of the past and the reality of limited war and coercive diplomacy is still very much a fact of life. Today, India is facing “very different” national security challenges, it continues to witness some “perennial problems” in terms of cross-border terrorism, said External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar. The national security challenges faced by this rising India are also going to be very different. At one level some of the more perennial problems associated with our national consolidation and development will continue. In particular, a long-standing political rivalry is expressed today as sustained cross-border terrorism by a neighbour.

Dr Jaishankar, while delivering the Second Manohar Parrikar Memorial Lecture, organised by Forum for Integrated National Security noted, “In some cases, activities of some insurgent groups need to be continuously monitored and neutralised. But the world is a competitive place and India’s rise will evoke its own reactions and responses. There will be attempts to dilute our influence and limit our interests. Some of the contestations will be directly in the security domain; others could be reflected in economic, connectivity, even in societal context.” Change, however, is not just external, India is the fifth largest economy in the world and third actually by PPP terms, our relationship with the world cannot be the same as when our ranking was much lower. Similarly, if our contribution to global talent and skills demand is so much larger, then so too will be our relevance in the calculations of others. A growing domestic demand will give our markets a salience in the business planning of the world that was not happened earlier.

The national security challenges faced by this rising India are obviously also going to be different. At one level, some of the more perennial problems associated with our national consolidation and development will continue. In particular, a long-standing political rivalry is today expressed as sustained cross-border terrorism by a neighbour. But the world is a competitive place and India’s rise will evoke its own reactions and responses. There will be attempts to dilute our influence and limit our interests. Some of this contestation can be directly in the security domain; others could be reflected in economics, connectivity and even in societal contacts. Indeed, as the metrics of measuring power themselves undergo change, so too will their application when it comes to the games that nations play. As a nation, we are in an increasingly interdependent world, with many of the accompanying constraints- said Dr. Jaishankar.

Utilizing diplomacy to achieve military objectives extends of course beyond issues of sourcing supplies and accessing technology. Today, our maritime domain awareness has been developed through partnerships with other nations. A combination of coastal radar surveillance systems, white shipping agreements, hydro graphic cooperation and provision of equipment and training has given the SAGAR doctrine a very strong foundation. If the International Fusion Centre at Gurugram has emerged as the region’s hub for maritime security, it is in no small measure due to the larger relationship that India has developed with the participating countries. A similar logic drives the range of military exercises that all three Indian Services undertake today with their foreign counterparts, bilaterally or plurilateral. They too parallel the strategic convergences that have been developed through the use of multiple instruments and policies. These endeavours all contribute to greater regional and global stability and security, a goal as much of defence policy as it is of foreign policy.

Since 2014, nation has witnessed number of conceptual changes in Indian foreign policy. The contemporary Indian approach towards China is driven by structural factors and to a lesser degree by economic considerations. Attaining major power status also involves shouldering regional and global responsibilities in diverse domains such as energy, the environment, global trade, human rights, good governance and international security.

India also needs to pivot its foreign policy to the Asia–Pacific where the center of gravity of international relations is shifting. India’s policymakers had to contend with the monumental transformation in the world order following the end of the Cold War while determining and reorienting foreign policy in the new era. Under Modi 2.0, India seems more confident in dealing with its formidable regional security agenda, new multilateral trading arrangements were set up under the auspices of the World Trade Organisation in which India has a large stake. Narendra Modi’s foreign policy style during the last five years has been dizzying.

From vortex visits around the globe to stadium-packed appearances abroad to selfies and bear hugs with business elites and world leaders alike, he has left a distinctive mark on the international stage.

Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar ideas on Foreign policy is undoubtedly hailed as master class in foreign policy But master class it isn't: a combination of historical half-truth and evasions, the resplendent robes in which Jaishankar dresses-up India's new foreign policy are spun from the purest fantasy.

The distinction between domestic and international is less and less meaningful in today's world, when we think of foreign policy we must also think of its domestic implications. The ultimate purpose of any country's foreign policy is to promote the security and wellbeing of its own citizens. We want a world that gives us the conditions of peace and security that will permit us to grow and flourish, safe from foreign depredations but open to external opportunities. Our foreign policy debates in Parliament and the media seem obsessed with Pakistan or with *curiosa*, or worse, *curiosa* about Pakistan. There is little appetite for an in-depth discussion about, say, the merits of participating in the Non-Aligned Movement or the Conference of Democracies, or the importance we should give to such bodies as SAARC or the Indian Ocean Rim Conference. In terms of neighbourhood first, the government's approach envisaged a "generous and non-reciprocal engagement of neighbours that was centred around connectivity, contacts and cooperation". However, the minister noted that this has happened by a greater understanding of "mutual sensitivity and mutual respect for each other's interest" in the immediate neighbourhood. Also the country's foreign policy provides the strategic framework for all its actions, it is the efficacious execution of that policy, the MFA's core task, which gives the country a cutting edge in obtaining optimal results in international engagement. Simply put, a foreign ministry firing on all cylinders is both the country's international trump card, and its thin line of first defence in safeguarding national interests. The globalized world is multidimensional, and its different facets support each other. It builds on the constructs of earlier periods, be it the colonial era, or the Cold War, or even the unipolar world. Identifying common ground and nurturing transnational linkages, it is most vigorously expressed in economic activities – especially over recent decades. A vast range of understandings and regimes were created that covered most aspects of our lives. As technology and economics threw up new domains, we responded by fashioning rules for them too.

Secondly, a more nationalistic approach to international relations will weaken multilateral rules in many domains. This will be particularly sharp in respect of economic interests and sovereignty concerns. This prospect of stronger multi-polarity with weaker multilateralism clearly suggests a more volatile near term. Such a world is also likely to fall back on balance of power as its operating principle rather than collective security or a broader consensus. World affairs will see a proliferation of frenemies. They will emerge in both categories like allies who publicly turn on each other or competitors who are compelled to make common cause on issues. A more transactional ethos will promote ad hoc groupings of disparate nations who have a shared interest on a particular issue. This could be supported by requirements of burden sharing and the need to reach out beyond alliance structures. Even if contradictions between China and the West sharpen, it is difficult to foresee a return to a bipolar world and the reason for that is that the landscape has now changed irreversibly. Other nations are independently on the move, including India. Half the 20 largest economies of the world are non-Western now. Diffusion of technology and demographic differentials will also contribute to the broader spread of influence. This different era is one of focused agreements, specific agendas, flexible arrangements and greater customization. Comfort is the new commitment of the nation states globally. So in this different era, there will be convergence with many but congruence with none. Finding common points to engage with as many power centres' will characterize diplomacy at its highest level.

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Nation is Indebted to:

Immortal Boat Boy: Baji Rout

The Youngest Martyr of India's Freedom Struggle



Baji Rout, a boat boy was born on October 5, 1926, at Nilakanthapur village in Dhenkanal district of Odisha. He lost his father at a very early age. His mother was surviving on the wages earned by rice-husking in the neighbourhood. Baji as a young boy, watched how mercilessly Dhenkanal King, Shankar Pratap Singhdeo was fleecing the poor villagers, including his mother of their earnings by using armed forces. So, when Baishnav Charan Pattanayak of Dhenkanal town, later, famous as Veer Baisnav, raised a banner of revolt against the King and founded Prajamandal and Banar Sena (of young boys) Baji joined it despite his tender age. Though he was a boy only, but had a steely nerve to fight against injustice. As such he stood against the cruel and oppressive rulers of Dhenkanal as well as British. After joining Banar Sena of Prajamandal, Baji Rout volunteered to keep an eye on river bank of Brahmani River at Nilakanthapur Ghat of Bhuban in Dhenkanal district. On the night of 11th Oct 1938, when British Police asked him take them across river in his boat, he refused. British Police shot him dead. He was only 12 Years of age then.

Then eminent poet of Odiya Literature, Sachi Rautroy was so overwhelmed with Baji's killing by oppressive British; he started writing a poem "Baji Rout" in the cremation ground itself in the light of burning pyre. It took several days for him to regain his composure to complete the poem.

Poet Sachi Rautroy's famous poem 'Baji Rout', which was translated into English by Harindranath Chattopadhyaya, had set the entire nation on an unprecedented motion for freedom of people from the Kings of the princely states.

In the known history of freedom struggle of India against British Raj, Baji Rout stands as the youngest martyr.

A short film on Baji Rout, "Baji – the Immortal Boat Boy", directed by Chinmoy Das was released in 2018.

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