



Wang Yi's Visit To Delhi

By Srikanth Kondapalli

Author is Dean of School of International Studies, JNU.

Wang's ostensible purpose of visiting India at a short notice is to prepare for the upcoming BRICS summit meeting later this year in China.

The whirlwind tour of China's foreign minister Wang Yi and his mission for "united front" with India against the West remained elusive and his non-committal and evasive approach to Galwan skirmishes and aftermath received a cold-shoulder in New Delhi.

Multilateral cooperation is the main signal during this visit as bilateral ties are marred with several controversies or even enmity. Wang's ostensible purpose of visiting India at a short notice is to prepare for the upcoming BRICS summit meeting later this year in China. While the previous meetings hosted by Russia and India were in a virtual mould, China intends to invite the BRICS leaders for an in-person meeting after it recently hosted the Beijing Winter Olympics.

Nevertheless, with 19 cities in China in various stages of lockdown due to the spread of the pandemic, doubts are expressed on whether China will be able to host such a meeting. Communist Party portals promoted "vulture journalism" in India during the virus-upsurge in April last year, not perhaps knowing that a similar situation could arise in China itself.

However, China is not intending to let India into the largest multilateral institution, the UN Security Council. Being the only permanent member not to have endorsed Indian candidature explicitly, Beijing has been non-committal on this issue, as External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar pointed out.

Second, in the background of the June 2020 border carnage that resulted in 20 Indian and 4 Chinese soldiers killed, Wang's visit has nothing new to offer.

Wang did not re-iterate the border agreements that China signed with India in 1993, 1996, 2005 and 2013, nor did he commit to ushering in peace and tranquility in the border areas, except for an anodyne comment that India needs to take a “long term vision”.

However, as it happened just before the BRICS summit meeting in September 2017 at Xiamen in the aftermath of the Dokhlam incident, China may likely concede to the Indian demand for complete “disengagement and de-escalation in all friction points” on the border, but not before gaining terrain military operational advantage across the Line of Actual Control.

Already, China had built civil-military use 200 “well-off society villages” across the LAC out of a total of 624 in Tibet. Some of these are inside the Indian claimed areas. It had also constructed bridges across Pangong Tso. Indian military response then has to be proactive in nature.

The ensuing “abnormal” nature of the bilateral relations was stressed by Dr Jaishankar when he reminded Wang about the troop deployment across the borders and the necessity to resolve this issue as a precondition for normalising bilateral relations.

Third, Wang’s visit to Delhi should be seen from the recent Russian invasion of Ukraine since 24 February and the intractable and inextricable nature of the warfare. A day after the war began, President Xi Jinping extended “in principle” support to Moscow. Aligning gradually with the Russian position, China had been vocal of Western sanctions on Russia and its envoy to Moscow had made statements encouraging Chinese companies to seize the initiative to invest in Russia. A joint statement between Presidents Putin and Xi earlier on 4 February declared “no forbidden areas” in strategic cooperation between the two.

Pursuing this coordination, Wang’s visit is intended to rope New Delhi into this “united front” with the intensification of Russia-India-China trilateral meetings. The 18th meeting of this grouping on 25 November last year extended their support to Beijing Winter Olympics, although China’s move to pitch Qi Fabao — a military officer involved in the carnage at Galwan — to carry the torchlight led to Indian diplomatic boycott of these sports events.

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The House Of Elders!

By Sanjay Sahay

Author is former Police Officer of Karnataka. Now he is Founder & Director, of TechConPro Pvt Ltd. Bengaluru

The Rajya Sabha or the Council of States as it is legally known in one of the houses of the bicameral Union Legislature of India. How elderly has been its approach in the last decade or so, needs an in-depth study? Has the Council of States behaved any differently from the directly elected House of Representatives or is it the number game, which just needs to be sorted out? The recent nominations and elections to the House from Punjab keeps bringing back the same issue to the table over and over again- the insider / outsider issue. Has everything in the world of electoral politics and elected representatives become a part of distribution of the spoils of elections. You win a state and you get Rajya Sabha seats as a bonus.

Today if we were to define the House of States, it would be extremely difficult to state its exact role. The Constituent Assembly in its wisdom suggested a bicameral legislature for independent India connecting to the fact that the federal system was considered to be more feasible form government, given our immense diversities.” A second chamber known as ‘Council of States’, therefore, was created with an altogether different composition and method of election.’ Any elector to the parliamentary constituencies of the state, could fight for the election to Rajya Sabha. In 2003,

the Representation of the People Act, 1951, it was amended to allow an outsider to get elected to a Rajya Sabha seat from a state. To create an outstandingly distinct debating / legal or state or contribution to federal ethos history of this house will certainly be an uphill task.

With this amendment, the 238 of 250 seats were up for grabs notwithstanding the states / union territories territorial boundaries. Council of States without the state's territory being main consideration becomes superfluous. Every political party gains out of it. Helps in keeping the flock together, and a big carrot for the super loyalists and friends. The current status has not been tested for constitutional validity. What does an outside person know of the state and how does he subserve the states interests? When an All-India Service officer becomes a part of the state, he moves their lock, stock and barrel, and picks up everything that is required by the state. Part of the federal structure. Here it is free parachute landing. One nomination and it's over. Things cannot be simpler.

If politicians cannot make it to the Lok Sabha and smarter still want a direct safe entry, then Rajya Sabha becomes a natural port of call. Pre 2003 even addresses have been played around with. Popular leadership is at the core of democracy, still even the Prime Minister has managed to come through this route. Perks and privileges of an enamoured everyone, we even have an ex leading judge as a member of the Rajya Sabha. He made it to the category of 12 persons who are nominated to this house 'having special knowledge or practical experience in respect of such matters as literature, science, art and social service.' While the prerogative remains with the government, we can certainly have people who are interested in democracy and governance of this country, rather than just providing governmental perks to special knowledge / experience personalities, who have already made a successful life. It is rare to find differences in the method of passage of bills in this house. Numbers, elders' acumen and federalism do not connect. Do we need this 250-member house? For all practical purposes, it has outlived its utility.

UTILITY OF A DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTION HAS TO BE FELT, SEEN, EXPERIENCED BY THE PEOPLE.

Ukraine Validates Our NPT Mistrust

By Bhopinder Singh

Author is a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry.

The hopeless Ukrainian situation corroborates the Indian perspective of securing its sovereign and strategic interests, and not falling for the NPT trap

Invaluable lessons have emerged from the Ukraine crisis — one is the validation of India's age-old apprehension of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Promoted with the supposed objectives of preventing the misuse of nuclear weapons and fostering complete nuclear disarmament, India despite its avowed pacifist moorings, has historically and consistently opposed the treaty. While wholeheartedly supporting the cause of a nuclear weapon-free world, Delhi never believed that NPT was the formulation to achieve the same. India has maintained that the treaty was structurally discriminatory as it perpetuated the hegemony of the 'haves' (exclusive club of pre-1967 'nuclear weapon States' ie, the US, Russia, United Kingdom, France and China), without obligating them to liquidate their own dangerous stockpile. The exclusivity of nuclear deterrence with the so-called 'non-nuclear weapon States' (as per NPT definition) by debarring others from acquiring a similar and equal nuclear deterrence with its implied retaliatory or mutually destructive portents, is unfair entitlement.

Not only have the NPT 'nuclear weapon States' not destroyed their stockpile, their belligerence and intimidatory expansionism on the 'have-not' nations has been disconcerting. From unsubstantiated case of the WMDs (Weapons of Mass Destruction) in Iraq, renegeing of Iran N-treaty despite IAEA's confirmation of full compliances,

China's blatant territorial expansionism, to now Russia's free run in Ukraine — the privileged five beneficiaries of NPT have hardly demonstrated reassuring and responsible behaviour. Even on Article 1 of the NPT that mandates 'nuclear weapon States' to not transfer N-weapons or knowhow, China's assistance to Pakistani, North Korean and Iranian nuclear programmes is a proven fact that shreds all pretences of NPT suppositions. For India, memories of the 1962 Chinese aggression (followed by Chinese nuclear test in 1964), or the intimidating sailing of the US 7th fleet flotilla in 1971, were staring concerns of regional and strategic threats that warranted hedging its own options, deterrents and asserting its sovereign freedom of action. India demonstrated its N-capability with 'Smiling Buddha' in 1974 (albeit calling it 'peaceful nuclear explosion').

Nonetheless, this opposition to signing the NPT has put India in an unlikely set of non-signatories (each for different reasons) with Israel, North Korea, Pakistan and South Sudan. However, unlike many NPT signatories and especially of the 'haves', India's responsible behaviour towards non-proliferation speaks for itself. Delhi remained committed to any non-discriminatory treaty that truly entailed fair play and guaranteed security amongst all, without privilege to some. India has a policy of credible minimum deterrence based on 'no-first-use' and 'non-use' of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon States. Unlike China, Russia or the US, it has undertaken no territorial expansionist endeavours. Despite being routinely chided as an outlier from the prism of NPT, India's insistence on the proof of the pudding in terms of efficacy or consequential sovereign behaviour has been its compelling case.

In 1991, when Ukraine broke from the USSR construct, it had one-third of the entire Soviet nuclear arsenal and means of production — notionally, third largest nuclear stockpile (1,700 warheads) in the world. It could have practically persisted with its nuclear deterrence status given the inheritance and availability of the wherewithal, but it traded the same for financial compensation and ostensible security assurances from three of the five 'nuclear weapon States' as per NPT (Russia, US and United Kingdom) under the Budapest Memorandum. It was a move made in good faith on the word of the 'haves'. The memorandum had explicitly noted, among many guarantees, "to respect the independence and sovereignty and the existing borders of Ukraine" as also "reaffirm their obligation to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of Ukraine". It had further captured "to refrain from economic coercion designed to subordinate" and, above all, "to provide assistance to Ukraine, as a non-nuclear weapon State party to the treaty on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, if Ukraine should become a victim of aggression or an object of a threat of aggression". Today, as Russia unconcernedly violates Ukraine's territorial integrity, and the US and UK (as principal components of Nato) leave Ukraine high and dry —the assurances of Budapest Memorandum sound so hollow.

Despite the 2014 annexation of Crimea, Ukraine had cavalierly persisted with reaffirming its 1994 decision towards NPT. Calls by odd Ukrainian parliamentarians and security strategists to arm themselves, too, went unheeded. Instead, Vladimir Putin had brazenly invoked N-weapons in defending Crimea, just like he has again dangerously posited the language of nuclear weapons today. In 2019, Secretary of the Ukrainian National Security and Defence Council admitted "nuclear disarmament was a historic mistake" and that "guarantees given to us are not even worth the paper they are written on". It was a classic case of fatally late realisation.

Ensuing drama of the hopeless Ukrainian situation validates the Indian perspective of securing its sovereign and strategic interests, and not falling for the NPT trap. As Kyiv desperately beseeches Delhi to intervene, memories of Ukraine condemning India's nuclear re-testing ('Operation Shakti') in 1998 is a conveniently forgotten footnote. India has consistently charted its own security considerations beyond the NPT imperatives, which have delivered far more responsible outcomes than those of most NPT signatories.

It's Biden's US That's Shaky, Not India — From China To Afghanistan

By Dr Seshadri Chari

Author is a commentator on foreign policy, strategy, and security affairs. He is Secretary General of the Forum for Integrated National Security (FINS) and former editor of English weekly Organiser.

Biden is free to chart a foreign policy that suits his regime the best but shouldn't 'shake' the foundations on which the post-Second World War order stands.

India-US relations seem to be entering a 'shaky' phase; and for the US President Joe Biden looking from the Wild West, India appears to be shaky vis a vis the Russia-Ukraine crisis.

"The Quad is — with the possible exception of India being somewhat shaky on some of this... but Japan has been extremely strong, so has Australia, in terms of dealing with Putin's aggression. We presented a united front throughout NATO and the Pacific," Biden said while addressing a meeting of US business leaders in Washington.

Biden lauding Quad's unity should be seen with Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's recent India visit during which he raised the issue of the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine. What appears to be a genuine cause of worry, should also be seen as a veiled suggestion to New Delhi for supporting the US' stand on the war in Europe instead of taking the non-aligned route. New Delhi continues to be firm on its non-aligned stand by not supporting a Russian resolution on the humanitarian issue. China supported the resolution, days after the Biden-Xi Jinping talks seeking to wean China away from Russia.

Yet another Quad member, Australia, announced an enhanced investment package during the second India-Australia Summit but spoke very little about the Russia-Ukraine crisis. Both countries reaffirmed their commitment to the success of Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.

US is shaky...

In a clear departure from Trump administration's policy of confronting Chinese hegemony and economic domination, Biden has begun to please China by reiterating US commitment to one-China policy 'guided by the Taiwan Relations Act, the Three Joint Communiqués, and the Six Assurances' and greater economic engagement. There seems to be no commitment from Beijing to refrain from using coercive methods and intimidation against Taiwan. It remains to be seen what the Biden administration will do in the event of Beijing doing to Taiwan what Russia did to Ukraine, as Taiwan too is not a NATO member. In August 2003, the George Bush administration submitted a letter to Congress, designating Taiwan as a major non-NATO (MNNA) ally.

Beijing has made clear its resolve to settle the 'Taiwan question and realising China's complete reunification (which) is a historic mission and an unshakable commitment of the Communist Party of China'.

The 'shaky' nature of Biden's foreign policy is once again evident as he prefers to overlook China's history of using PLA's muscle and economic coercion to repress political dissidents, ethnic groups, neighbours and economic beneficiaries through BRI projects.

The US should take note of the fact that Quad members included, the world is witness to its failure in mitigating the crisis and come to the rescue of Ukraine or initiate the de-escalation process.

...from Afghanistan to Galwan

The 'shaky' foreign policy of the Biden administration was evident from the time he took over nearly a year ago. Although the US' withdrawal from Afghanistan was no surprise, the abrupt exit without holding any joint consultations with allies and NATO members speaks volumes of Biden administration's unilateralism. After the botched-up withdrawal, without consulting the Quad members, the US announced the formation of Quad-2 with US-Afghanistan-Pakistan-Uzbekistan as members. This 'shaky' Quad was a non-starter. Then the White House suddenly launched the Australia-UK-US (AUKUS), again without having a word with Quad members and brazenly stepping on the toes of France — torpedoing its submarine contract with Australia.

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EAM Jaishankar Formally Hands Over Coastal Radar System To Maldives

The Coastal Radar System, which is already operational and comprises 10 radar stations, will contribute in enhancing maritime security for the Maldives and for the entire region.



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar shakes hands with President of Maldives Ibrahim Mohamed Solih, during their meeting, in Maldives. (PTI Photo)

External Affairs Minister (EAM) S Jaishankar on Sunday formally handed over the Coastal Radar System to the Maldives Chief of Defence Force Maj Gen Abdulla Shamaal as he described it as a fine example of India's SAGAR and Neighbourhood First policies.

The Coastal Radar System, which is already operational and comprises 10 radar stations, will contribute in enhancing maritime security for the Maldives and for the entire region.

“Handed over the expanded Coastal Radar System in Maldives to Chief of Defence Force, @CDFofMNDF. Product of MEA-Navy partnership for regional security. A fine example of our SAGAR and Neighbourhood First policies. A strong statement of our Special Partnership,” Jaishankar tweeted.

SAGAR or “Security and Growth for all in the Region” is aimed at cooperative measures for sustainable use of the oceans in the region.

The Maldives is one of India's key maritime neighbours in the Indian Ocean region and the bilateral defence and security ties have been on an upward trajectory in the last few years.

Later in the evening, Jaishankar also inaugurated the Meedhoo eco-tourism zone one of the 20 projects being implemented by India in the Maldives in diverse areas of health, education, fisheries, tourism, sports, gender empowerment and culture.

Courtesy – Indiatoday.in

Why The Australia-India Relationship Has Nowhere To Go But Up, Despite Differences On Russia And Trade

By Ian Hall

Author is Deputy Director (Research), Griffith Asia Institute, Griffith University Organiser.

Few of Australia's relationships with countries in Asia have progressed so far and so fast as its ties with India. Over a decade, Canberra and New Delhi have constructed a broad strategic partnership, catalysed by shared concerns about China.

The recent virtual summit between Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison and his Indian counterpart, Narendra Modi, illustrated this new closeness well.

The two made a point of emphasising their personal bonhomie. Morrison greeted Modi in Gujarati, the language of his home state, while the Indian leader dropped his usual formality, addressing the Australian prime minister as "Scott".

There was also substance in this discussion. Morrison and Modi unveiled no fewer than 11 agreements on things like exchanging military officers, harmonising tax on pension funds and facilitating greater mobility for skilled workers, among others.

Working through points of disagreement

However, one much-anticipated pact was not announced. Australia and India have been negotiating a free-trade deal – the so-called Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement or CECA – for more than a decade.

Free-trading Australia and protectionist India have struggled to agree on the deal, not least because Canberra wants market access for agricultural produce and New Delhi wants to protect farmers who might not be able to compete with Australian imports. This is a hard issue to fix, because all Indian governments depend on the votes of farmers and their families, who comprise more than half the population.

Differences over Russia's invasion of Ukraine also overshadowed the Modi-Morrison meeting. India is Russia's biggest arms importer and has not publicly rebuked Moscow or voted against it in the UN Security Council over its invasion.

On this issue, India is in a bind – it needs Russian arms to defend itself from China. Extricating New Delhi from this predicament will take time, investment and a reorientation of Indian strategy, but also careful diplomacy by its partners, including Australia.

For that reason, Morrison, like his American and Japanese counterparts, refrained from publicly hectoring Modi about India's lack of direct criticism of the war.

A shared wariness over China

Indeed, Australia and India have had much success in defence and security cooperation and diplomatic coordination in recent years. They have obvious overlapping interests here, principally the management of China's assertiveness across the Indo-Pacific region.

New Delhi's concerns about China long predate Australia's. The scale of the threat Beijing could pose to India is much greater, too.

In 1947, the British bequeathed independent India an unsettled northern border – a situation exacerbated by Chinese leader Mao Zedong's invasion of the erstwhile buffer state of Tibet a couple of years later.

Since then, China and India have watched each other warily and periodically come to blows. They had a border war in 1962, a large-scale confrontation in 1986-87 and a brief but nasty engagement in 2020.

Since the 1962 border war, New Delhi has handled the potential threat with a mix of strategic partnerships with other countries and military power.

In 1971, India signed a treaty with the Soviet Union that gave it access to advanced defence technology and Moscow's diplomatic backing.

Then, in 1998, as India watched Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping's reforms work their magic on China's economy, New Delhi acquired a nuclear deterrent as an added safeguard.

And since the mid-2000s, India's leaders have looked to new potential partners to invest in its economy, boost its military capabilities even further and bolster its regional influence. These include its partners in the Quad security grouping – the US, Japan, and Australia.

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Nation is Indebted to:

IRAPPA NAIK

Son of Labourer, This Engineer Runs a Free School for 500 Kids of Waste Pickers on the outskirts of Miraj town



For nearly 20 years, Irappa Naik worked hard and saved money to open a free school for poor children in Maharashtra

Irappa Naik grew up in a very poor household—his parents were wage labourers, and education had no place in their list of priorities. In fact, both his elder brothers were forced to drop out of school to increase the family's income.

“My dada (elder brother) was a very bright student, but due to our financial situation, he had to discontinue his studies. However, he made sure I completed my education and worked extra shifts as a labourer to pay my school fees,” Naik said once to an interviewer.

Naik was in Class 10 when he decided that one day, he would acknowledge his brother's selfless act, and in 2000 he fulfilled that promise by opening a free school on the outskirts of Miraj, a city in Maharashtra, for impoverished children.

“Poverty did not stop my brother from funding my studies, and that lesson stayed with me. Even before I passed my tenth boards, I took an oath to teach underprivileged children after I would finish my education,” says the 51-year-old.

Naik stuck by his promise, and in the last 20 years, he has taught around 500 children between grade 1 and 10. Most of the students are children of daily wage workers and waste pickers.

In 1987, Naik completed his diploma in Electronic Engineering from the Walchand College of Engineering, Sangli district. It was a massive achievement for the Naik family. Naturally, his parents expected him to get a high-paying job, and he did.

Alongside the job, he wanted to teach the kids around his area but soon realised there was no space in his basti to conduct a classroom.

“The dream of building a school took shape when I was working as a government contractor. I needed permission to register a school along with proper classrooms and uniforms. So, I started saving income for my goal,”

Thankfully, his parents supported him unconditionally in his endeavour. Once he saved enough, he purchased a small land on the outskirts of the city and built ten classrooms (one for each grade).

With help from a local MLA, he registered his school with Maharashtra Education Board and started the Marathi-medium school called ‘Krantiveer Umaji Naik High School’ with 20 children.

It was undoubtedly a daunting task for Naik to convince parents to send their kids to a school far away from their homes. He solved their concern about transportation by employing a bus driver who would pick up and drop children from school daily.

But there was another problem.

Many parents refused to send their children to the free school on the grounds of low income. “Some children would often accompany their parents on construction sites to work to earn extra money. They even chose to ignore the unlawful practice of child labour for livelihoods,” informs Naik. It was only when he gave his own example of how education helped him get a well-paying job, did some parents come on board.

Presently, the state education department pays the salaries of three teachers, and Naik pays the rest. The school department also provides mid-day meals to the students, thus taking care of their nutritional needs.

Naik also bears other expenditures like uniforms and stationery.

While the man is working out on a plan to get more financial help from the education department, he does not want to compromise the education of his students.

“Two Hundred’s of my students cleared tenth board and went to pursue higher studies or start small-time businesses. This gives me immense strength to continue working for the school and the hope that my school can change their lives,” he concludes.

A Saying that “If there is a will, then there is a way” is true without a doubt, when we find a person like Irappa Naik, amongst us, who has reformed the lives of most needy poor children by ensuring their reach to education.

Write to us at:

bulletin@finsindia.org

OFFICE :4, Belle View, Lakhamsi Nappu
Road, Dadar (East), MUMBAI – 400014

Phone 022 24127274

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