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Intractable conflicts need Charismatic leaders

India-Pakistan ties have been in limbo ever-since the NSA level talks failed to happen. Since then from concerts to book launches, cricketing ties to trade nothing has escaped the vitriol in the air. Ties have yet again been jolted by the [deferment of the two-day meeting India-Pakistan business forum by Pakistani authorities which was to be held from November 30 2015](#). Predictably this has not come as shock to the scholars and practitioners.

One has to understand that India-Pakistan ties are dogged by an intractable conflict in Kashmir. Unfortunately for India and Pakistan structured negotiation as in the Composite Dialogue Process (CDP) also has inbuilt structural impediments. Progress on all issues is halted if the process is disrupted. Kashmir and terrorism issues have the strength to impact progress on all other issues of mutual concern. It is difficult in the case of Kashmir to make concessions and even if an exchange of concessions is made on other issues it may not necessarily be able to assuage the public opinion in case of Kashmir. Domestic factors coupled with politics never render the parties a politically opportune moment when a deal can be reached. Even as both sides deem the status-quo as unfavorable.

The push for better India-Pakistan ties therefore has to come at the track one level. Surely at the track two and track three levels, constituencies which benefit from better ties should lobby for it, but intractable nature of the conflict in India-Pakistan ties means only a top-down approach can create space for economic and cultural initiatives which must be necessarily complemented with a liberal visa regime. The security dynamics between India-Pakistan overwhelmingly dominates narrative which implies that foreign policy in both countries is much centralised in nature and federal constituents have less say in the decision making.

Longevity of the conflict in Kashmir has given birth to a history and hence a historical narrative which overshadows all political initiatives. Structural and functional changes in India-Pakistan relations therefore cannot be brought about in short time horizon. If this task is entrusted to the bureaucracy it will probably not materialise even in the longer horizon. The single biggest achievement of the CDP which was first mooted in 1997 was the establishment of ceasefire which held for many years but has broken down remarkably ever since the new dispensation has come to power. Siachen, Wullar Barrage/Tulbul navigation project and Sir Creek are yet to be resolved.

To detect any changes in momentum in India-Pakistan relations the analysis cannot be at the level of the state or just domestic politics. The level of analysis should be at the individual agency in India-Pakistan relations. Seldom has positive rhetoric around India-Pakistan ties acquired significant media space, mostly media anxiety in anticipation is evident with big events. But that is perhaps the best it has come to since Vajpayee's famed trip to Lahore which ended in the Kargil debacle. Only political charisma of the leadership on both sides can overcome the negativity surrounding India-Pakistan ties.

When one talks about political charisma Narendra Modi would easily one up Nawaz Sharif who despite being in his third stint as the prime minister of Pakistan lacks the skill, wit and verve required to capture the imagination of the youth of Pakistan. A simple look at the media headlines would conspicuously show that it is the other Sharif who has caught the public imagery as the saviour for Pakistan. Any expectations from the dialogue process as long as the internal balance of power in Pakistan is skewed should therefore be tempered until that time.

Organised political cult can unleash forces around an individual just like religion and nationalism which can bring about political reform that are otherwise tedious especially when it comes to the balance of power between different institutions within the state. In Pakistan the imbalance between judiciary, legislature and the military has left little scope for external powers to engage with just the government of the day. More than for India-Pakistan relations and even as a precursor Pakistan needs a charismatic leader, a rabble-rouser perhaps for its own good.

The anticipation and attention should be more directed towards figures like Imran Khan who has the charisma to muster the crowds and is considered the hero and the architect of Pakistan's world cup win in 1992. The quest for a solution to the Kashmir quagmire will have more hopes of coming to fruition if he comes to power in Pakistan because that could lead to structural changes in Pakistan which a simple election exercise in five years cannot.

–Joy Mitra

DECEMBER 14, 2015

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The Changing Fate of English Language in Nepal

In Nepal the students who go to private and boarding schools are exposed to the English language from an early age. The first lessons taught at homes as well as in schools are in the English language, along with the Devnagari script. In many private schools, students are penalised for speaking in Nepali except during Nepali language classes. By virtue of the global acceptability of English language, the stress to achieve proficiency in it cannot be questioned. The language has become a source of security for many, but the unequal access to it has increased insecurity for others.

The use of any language is more than just being able to communicate; it is about expressing the inner-self, claiming rights and dynamic identities and interests. Language connects as well as divides people. Linguistic differences in the process have caused many revolutions and increased the sense of insecurity for many. Language also constructs identity; it is a source of belongingness. When people speak a language it connects them to their histories, ethnicities, social groups/class and religion. However, when popularity of one language outweighs the other, categorisation starts between people, creating a divide in the society.

The English language gained foothold in South Asia with the establishment of British rule in India. Slowly through administrative provisions and changes in the education system, in India, the language made a place for itself alongside Hindi which was the official language. Soon, the language pervaded much of South Asia.

Nepal is a linguistically diverse nation. There are around 123 different languages that are spoken in the country. According to the Central Bureau of Statistics Nepal (2011), 44.6% population speak the official national language that is Nepali. Unlike its neighbouring countries, Nepal was not colonised but was under the Rana autocracy for 104 years. The Rana autocracy was not in favour of widespread education policies to commoners. It was after Prime Minister Jung Bahadur Rana's visit to England in the 1850s, that the first government run English medium school was established in the country, but it was open to only Rana families and other elites because they feared an educated and empowered public which could revolt against their tyranny. Slowly, other liberal prime ministers established Nepali medium schools in several cities around the country for the public as well. A few English medium schools were established in Kathmandu and other major cities before the Second World War. Later in the year 1918 country's first post-secondary institution was established to lessen the flow of students travelling to India for further studies.

The end of Rana autocracy in the 1950s brought democracy in the country which was followed by the establishment of the Shah Dynasty and under the new monarchy, certain major changes took place. A constitution was finally promulgated in 1959 and major reforms were made in the education sector. The new king focused on accessibility to educational opportunities with large number of students having access to education. This included the establishment of the Ministry of Education which appointed a Board of Education and Nepal National Educational Planning Commission (NNEPC) to direct reforms regarding school management and governance. This gave the government lesser control over schools and the role of community and school management was strengthened. The educational plan of NNEPC, 1956, was in favour of promoting Nepali as the medium of instruction in schools to strengthen national unity and establish a unilingual nation. In 1960s, the then King Mahendra overthrew the popularly elected government to establish a non-party Panchayat System, but at the same time the major education reform of 1971 supported the education plan of 1956. Though after the 1970s, English was recognised as an international language of science. The National Education System Plan (NESP) nationalised the education system in the 1970s in a bid to promote the Nepali language, a common religion and to ensure people's faith to the monarch through education, politics and the media. However, it had to amend its policies due to financial and social pressures in 1980s. It decided to support the privatisation of education. English language once again flourished as the medium of instruction and learning.

The restoration of multiparty democracy in 1990s again changed the Nepali educational policies and programs. Under the influence of globalisation post the 1990s, Nepal experienced an overhauling of the higher education system. The National Education Commission (1992) suggested the government to design appropriate education policies at par with other SAARC and industrialised nations. Funds from international organisations like the World Bank (WB), the Asian Development Bank (ADB) flooded Nepal. These international institutions brought with them a culture which was westernised and favoured those who were proficient in the English language.

The ten year long insurgency under the Maoists (1996-2006) had caused chaos in the country. The civil war impacted industries and educational institutions were majorly affected. The period saw an increase in the out migration of people for purposes of work and education. As people returned to Nepal post the insurgency, a significant change that emerged in the society was the ease with which English established itself. The language percolated into the Nepalese society through education, influence of international organisations, role of global food chains and establishment of technology hubs. The media also played a major player in the spread of English in Nepali society. This happened through the dissemination of international news, increasing influence of English movies, advertisements, and television channels. English suddenly became symbolic of one's status in society.

Nepal's foreign policy is greatly influenced by her neighbours, and with India becoming the second largest English speaking country after the United States of America and China investing greatly in English language education, it is not surprising that the Nepalese Government has become proactive in promoting the English language. Even though the constitution of Nepal does not recognise English as the official language, however the Public Service (PSC) exams can be written in English. Some public schools are being retrofitted as 'model schools' which run separate boarding wing with English language courses to lower secondary level at an upgraded fees. Given the increasing English speaking population, the importance attached to it has caused considerable panic in a linguistically diverse society like ours. It would be useful to consider whether the globally accepted language has increased the level of insecurity for the non-English speaking population. The importance that was attached to English was not because of the number of people who spoke the language; it had to do with the power that comes with it.

The dissemination of English language in Nepal happened under the purview of the state. The revised education policy of directing institutes to make the language primary as well as secondary mode of instruction came from the state. The society is divided between those who go to public schools run by the government and private schools where the curriculum is in English. Public schools have an affordable fee structure and less or no emphasis on the English language in general. Private schools on the other hand are expensive and claim to provide students access to an education that would equip them to deal meet the demands of globalisation and consequently benefit from it.

The government has given English enhanced status in the country to establish a favourable image of Nepal internationally. More often than not the non-state organisations in the rural areas operate within an institutional framework biased towards English.

While many are debating the threat to the linguistic diversity in Nepal posed by the English language most agree that the language which once belonged to the elites should now be accessed by the commoner. A country which saw only a few hundred graduates a few years ago, now produces thousands of them with access to the English language. It is widely recognised today in Nepal that the English language gives her citizens a comparative advantage even if it may not ensure access to opportunity at all costs.

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Indo-Bangladesh Energy Trade



by Adarsh Kumar

South Asia, fastest growing part of the world, has registered significant economic growth, however the energy sector, which is very important for sustainable development and economic prosperity, has faced several challenges. So for better energy efficiency it's essential to have healthy relationship with our neighbours, healthy and profitable relationship with neighboring country increases the wellbeing of commons at large. South Asia consumes world's most of the energy. China and India, two biggest consumer of energy in this world, need more and more energy to sustain their economy. In that case cross border energy trade becomes essential for whole South Asia. India, world second most populous country is rapidly growing in terms of population, (it is expected that it will surpass China's population by 2050) economy and power, will need more and more energy in future. For growth of India it's essential that their neighbours also achieve highest peak of growth, because in long run they will be responsible for growth of India.

India and Bangladesh diplomatic relations are very important for South Asia as a whole. India and Bangladesh share cordial relationship since partition, share similar cultural values, ethnic identity and problems of energy, water and food. Both nations are key trade partners for each-others. Although Bangladesh has a high trade deficit with India, India's imports from

Bangladesh have grown more than sevenfold between 2001 and 2012, while India's export to Bangladesh has increased four times in between these years. A study by World Bank indicates that free trade agreement between these two countries could increase Bangladesh's export to

India by 180% and India will also gain 126% of increase in its export. For India, closer economic cooperation with Bangladesh can be an important stepping-stone to reduce the economic isolation of its northeastern states. Bangladesh has a predominantly gas-based electricity generation while India has substantial amounts of coal and hydro-based electricity potential. Both can utilize their energy potentials for cumulative productivity gain and economic prosperity.

India-Bangladesh Electricity Trade

Nowadays for any economy electricity is as important as water for any plant. It helps in economic growth and prosperity of nation. India and Bangladesh has different demand seasonal and daily demand of electricity. The difference in weekly and festival holidays and the 30-minute time difference can also provide opportunities for exchanging power. In this context, Bangladesh and India are examining the modalities for mutually beneficial mechanisms to share the benefits from their respective generation assets, considering also the importance of the energy security of both countries.

The possible routes for the exchange of power are between

1. The eastern region of India and the Western Grid of Bangladesh
1. 2. The northeastern region of India and the Eastern Grid of Bangladesh

The detailed analysis done by Asian Development Bank and Government of India so far shows that interconnection between the northeastern region of India and the Eastern Grid of Bangladesh would have limited attractiveness since any power transmitted would exacerbate the critically overloaded East–West power interconnector of Bangladesh. Development of the 750 MW gas-operated power plant at Tripura, close to Agartala in India, adds to the case for reconsidering possible cross-border interconnections. The most attractive interconnection between Bangladesh and India in the near term is through the route between the Western Grid of Bangladesh and the eastern region of India. The proposal to connect Bangladesh and India (on the western side) through an HVDC¹ back-to-back link of 500 MW capacities has been approved, and construction will commence shortly. It is expected that this interconnection will be upgraded to around 1,000 MW in the longer term².

India Bangladesh Gas Trade

In this world India is most energy hungry country after China, its increasing population and infrastructure will demand more and more energy as time will pass. India and Bangladesh both have significant amount of gas resources but due to lack of any substitute it's very difficult to swap it with any other energy resource because of its illumination and general use. Amongst different sources of energy, gas provides a highly competitive alternative, not only in terms of environmental benevolence but also helps in securing energy needs. Gas, thus provides, a better political and financial option and for these reasons search for gas has increasingly become a policy imperative in India. One critical aspect about securing access to gas is that transport related reasons underscore the importance of gas rich neighbours. The Indian access to assured gas supplies continues to be uncertain and India frequently pays higher pricing for spot LNG (Liquefied natural gas) purchases. The importance of gas to development aspirations in India, can also be seen by the fact that in 2011-2012, 10% of energy produced in India, came from gas, next only to coal and hydro-power. The first proposal to export natural gas from Bangladesh to India came from one of the foreign producers operating in Bangladesh. Unocal (now Chevron) which had developed a gas field in north-eastern Bangladesh proposed the construction of 847mile (1363km) gas pipeline from Bibiyana to New Delhi³. However, the issue became politically contentious in Bangladesh and the proposal was nipped in the bud.

A report Gas Strategy for Bangladesh (January 2006) prepared for Petrobangla by Wood Mackenzie Ltd assumes a proved level of 9.2 tcf⁴, proven plus probable reserve of 14.4 Trillion Cubic Feet(tcf), and a proven plus probable plus possible reserve of 22.2 tcf, these being the most conservative estimates. The government has been reluctant to make any commitment for the export of gas or gas based electricity on account of the uncertainty of its reserves position. It is claimed that if coal mining and coal based power development takes root, and if the country has access to the hydropower of Nepal, Bhutan and Myanmar, it might adopt a little more liberal approach to gas exports (World Bank 2007).

Triangular Gas Trade (Myanmar-India-Bangladesh)

Myanmar has estimated natural gas reserves of 89.722 tcf, of which 18.012 tcf are considered proven recoverable reserves. Many Investors from Thailand, Australia, Britain, Canada, China, Indonesia, India, South Korea, and Malaysia are engaged in gas and oil extraction from Myanmar. From India ONGC and GAIL have a 30% stake in the partnership with Daewoo of South Korea (60%) and South Korean Gas Corporation (10%) in the off-shore gas exploration of Blocks A-1 and A-3 off the western Rakhine coast. GAIL and Essar have other assets as well in Myanmar. Indian company *ONGC Videsh Ltd* has successfully bid for two on-shore blocks in the 2013 Myanmar Oil and Gas Bids recently. For the transportation of gas to India, in July 2005 Bangladesh permitted 559 mile of pipeline, but with many trade restrictions and asked for several trade concessions, including removal of tariff, non-tariff and administrative barriers to Bangladesh exports to India, provision of access to hydroelectricity from Nepal and Bhutan and an establishment of the free trade corridor to these countries. The construction of the Myanmar-China pipeline project which consists of dual oil and gas pipelines originating at Kyaukryu port on the west coast of Myanmar and entering China at Yunnan's border city of Ruili also worked in favor of China.

Indo-Bangla Hydro Power

Whenever we talk about hydro-power project between India and Bangladesh, Tipaimukh project accrue immense importance. This Project is designed for Generation of 1500 MW hydro-power and prevention of flood in Manipur and Mizoram. This involves building a 162.8 meter high rock-fill dam around 500 meters downstream of the confluence of river Barak with Tuivai. It is also believed that it will control flood in Bangladesh too. But Bangladesh feels that, a water resource from Barak has been reduced and it will harm ecology and economy of Bangladesh. Bangladeshi opponents have often compared the project with Farraka Barrage, although Government of India took note of these opposition and convinced Bangladeshi team.

Tipaimukh Dam is largely a power generation project and not a water diversion project. This dam has capacity to keep monsoon water of 10 days, which controls flood in Bangladesh and also help in augmentation of water in crisis session thus it (Dam) manage water in critical condition. Due to limited communication from the Indian side and little objective study, speculative fears in Bangladesh still prevail and certain sections in Bangladesh and they are not convinced with this Tipaimukh Dam project. But if Government of India assures that Bangladesh will get access to a part of power generated in the project that can change the situation. In fact,

India has plans to generate substantial hydro-power in its north-eastern states which can entire change the power supply scenario in the entire eastern south Asia sub-region and India-Bangladesh energy relation can assume a new level.

Conclusion

For the growth of south Asia, energy generation plays an important role, but nations seek well planned cooperation to garner peak of energy production. India and China are most populous countries in this world and their increasing demand for energy must be fulfilled for the holistic growth and wellbeing of world. India, which comprises nearly 1.2 billion people, will surpass china by 2050 in terms of population. In terms of growth rate India can surpass China by 2020 (Datta, Sreeradha -2008). Thus India needs energy cooperation and technological innovations with neighboring nations. Although Government of India has initiated research on energy crisis and management, and in continuation of this nearly all IITs and few central universities (such as Delhi University, JNU and BHU) has center for energy research and The Energy resources Institutes are working tremendously well. In long run India's geographical position will also help in achieving its goal.

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- ¹ High Voltage DC technology enables the interconnection of two asynchronous AC networks.
 - ² Taken From *Energy Trade in South Asia Opportunities and Challenges*By Asian Development Bank.
 - ³ Bose, Srinjoy (2007), Energy Politics: India-Bangladesh-Myanmar Relations, IPCS Special Report, No 45, New Delhi: Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies
 - ⁴Trillion Cubic Feet – Tcf' A volume measurement used by the oil and gas industry. A trillion cubic feet (1,000,000,000,000 cubic feet) is a volume measurement of natural gas that is equivalent to approximately one Quad.

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FDI and Indian Railways: Is 100% Not Enough?



by Manash Pratim Hazarika.

The Indian Railway is considered to be one of the best railway systems in the world. It is said to have established a wide range of areas covered with immense customer base all around the country. Founded by the British Government and later on developed by the Indian Government after the independence it has mostly covered all cities across the country. The Indian railway maintain tourism and catering corporation which in turn has a network of hotels and restaurants that will help the customers in reaching out to the nearest and best hotels for stay. The tourism and catering corporation of the Indian Railway have large connections with the local tourism development boards of each state. The e-booking of the tickets have proved to be a major success and nearly 75 percent of the journey tickets are booked through

internet.

But when it comes to travelling aboard a train in India one would definitely come across unhygienic lavatories, ghutka stained marks everywhere, poorly maintained railway stations and railway tracks, outdated technologies, and a train schedule that very rarely is punctual. This is how railway has always been and everyone availing train in India seems to have settled for it. Until the current government allowed 100% foreign direct investment (FDI) in this arena in 2014, the Ministry of Railway always had monopoly of control and regulation over railways in India, thus discouraging competition.

There are reasons as to why this change has taken place now after so many years of enjoying monopoly. Although the change in the political scenario of the country has mainly molded this outcome, reality check reveals that Indian Railway was making profit but not progress. Despite protests and apprehensions, the Indian Railway has little choice but to woo foreign investors as it currently lacks both resources and new technology to undertake expansion or modernization programmes. According to the last Railway budget presented in July after the Narendra Modi-led government came into power, gross traffic receipts in 2013-14 stood at Rs 1,39,558 crore but the operating ratio was high at 94%; in other words, for every Rs 100 that the Railways earns, it spends Rs 94 for day-to-day expenses leaving only Rs 6 for investment. Moreover the Indian Railway's operating ratio has remained above 90% for six consecutive years, the best ever being 74.7% achieved way back in 1963-64.^[1]

Indian Railway being the 4th largest railway network in the world transports the most number of passengers every day than any other railway network (2.4 Crore everyday). The Indian Railways is also the largest employer in the world, means it provides the highest number of jobs amongst all the sectors and departments throughout the world. Every year along with the Yearly Budget, a separate Railway Budget is introduced in the Parliament that proposes projects that never see completion because of improper allocation of funds.

The Indian Railway technically is now fully opened up. A foreign player can invest up to 100% in most segments of rail infrastructure such as suburban rail, metro rail, locomotive and rolling stock and dedicated freight lines. The objective for permission of FDI as stated in the Ministry of Railways's Notification for Domestic/Foreign Director Investment has been stated as:

To augment capacity, modernize and bring efficiency through technology up-gradation on Indian Railways network and to generate finances for undertaking these activities from both domestic and foreign investors.

100% FDI under automatic route is permitted for the following^[2]:

- Construction, operation and maintenance of suburban corridor projects through PPP.
- High speed train projects.
- Dedicated freight lines.
- Rolling stock including train sets and locomotive/coaches manufacturing and maintenance facilities.
- Railway electrification.
- Signaling systems.
- Freight terminals.
- Passenger terminals.
- Infrastructure in industrial parks pertaining to railway line/siding including electrified railway lines and connectivity to main railway line.
- Mass Rapid Transport Systems.

The government is aware of the fact that although such schemes have been undertaken, investors are skeptical of whether to invest in India. It is because of an uncertainty relating to whether such policies of the government would remain stable. It must also be ensure that the environment is investor friendly and there is no sort of road blockage when the project is initiated. It is to be noted that indecisiveness has been a culture in Rail Bhawan for a long time now but in addition to that one other factor that has affected the Indian Railway's reputation is that in recent times no railway minister has remained in his post for a long duration. If the Indian government fails to carry on with similar policies and change their scheme of 100% FDI then the investors might have to incur losses. Companies such as EMD (USA), Bombardier Transportation (Canada), GE (USA), Siemens (Germany), and Alstom (France) have showed keen interest in extending their business into these ventures but the wait for how the first investor is treated in Indian market is what the current anticipation is all about. Japan has already agreed to modernize 400 railway station across India in addition to providing technology and expertise in solving problems of sanitation of toilets in trains and stations.

The current government's 'Make in India' slogan is making hits across continents. Modi government is trying to establish 'business friendly' market for investors to come and produce their goods in India and export the same from here to the rest of the world. This way the aim is to employ millions of people in manufacturing sectors. Currently India lacks infrastructure capable of executing this plan and therefore a scheme for connecting all the major ports in India through railway has taken a major place in the next five year plan of the government. Industrial Corridors have been identified with the aim of connecting major cities to boost development and accelerate the flow of goods. The idea also involves developing smart cities in and around these Corridors which will be a sign of progress. Industrial Corridors include:

- Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor
- Bengaluru-Mumbai Economic Corridor
- Chennai-Bengaluru Industrial Corridor Project
- Vizag-Chennai Industrial Corridor
- Amritsar-Kolkata Industrial Corridor

According to the Union Railways Minister, Suresh Prabhu, *"The Indian Railways will continue to be owned by Government of India only. It will not go into the hands of multi-nationals. There are no second thoughts about it. We need to decongest our network by doubling, tripling or even quadrupling lines wherever we can. In urban areas it could only mean we go above the road. As two-thirds of our revenue comes from freight, we are going for dedicated freight corridors"*.^[3]

All such initiatives are in order to relieve the railway from its cash strapped condition with which the opportunity race for expanding the Indian Railway has begun. At the end Indian Railway must grow for India to grow, railway officials must feel secure at jobs, and all Indians must have the fruits of such lumps of planned investment. Railway has always been the backbone of Indian economy and 100% FDI in this sector is the first major change in Railway since its inception. Whether it is going to make Indian Railway better at affordable ticket prices for Indians or not? The answer to that question will be only be known in due course of time.

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LEAVE A COMMENT

A Vibrant India and Resurgent Africa



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his government continued their aggressive pursuance of carving out a niche for India in International Diplomacy by hosting the 3^d India-Africa Forum Summit at New Delhi. The summit hosted dignitaries from 54 African countries in this edition of the event which is the largest participation of African Countries in this event, seeing an increase from a participation of 14 African countries and 15 African countries in the first and second edition of the Summit respectively. The Summit commenced on the 26th of October, 2015 to the 29th of October, 2015.

The official website of the India-Africa Forum Summit describes it as "a celebration of the close partnership between Africa and India, acknowledging a shared history as well as future prospects."^[1] This is India's single-largest diplomatic outreach program with Africa, with an estimated 1000 diplomats attending the Summit at New Delhi, which saw participation from three levels of the attending countries: The head of the government, foreign ministers and senior officials.

The Summit was scheduled to be held in the month of December, 2014; however, it had to be rescheduled due to the outbreak of Ebola in the continent of Africa. The UN Security Council had also declared the outbreak of the Ebola virus in West Africa a "threat to international peace and security". The deadly Ebola virus that hit the region last year has killed thousands of people in several African countries.^[2]

Nonetheless, the rescheduling of the event can be said to have benefitted the incumbent BJP-led Government at the centre as it coincides with India's campaign for a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council, which was one of the major issues of discussion in India's agenda for the summit. Prime Minister Modi said that India and Africa must speak in 'One Voice' to push for reforms in the United Nations Security Council. "These institutions have served us well, but unless they adjust to the

changing world, they risk becoming irrelevant. We cannot say what will replace them in an uncertain future. But we might have a more fragmented world that is less capable of dealing with the challenges of our era. That is why India advocates reforms in global institutions,” he said.[3]

While most of the African leaders did not disclose their stance on India’s aspirations for reforms in the Security Council, some leaders were extremely vocal in their support for the same. Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe joined India in strongly pitching for the UN reforms, adding that there should be two seats for African countries in the reformed Security Council and one for India. South African President Jacob Zuma, who is part of G-4 grouping, also strongly backed India’s candidature for the UNSC seat.[4]

India, in pursuance of its aspirations for playing a more proactive role on the international stage, pulled out all the stops to charm the African Leaders by announcing \$600 million in assistance for aiding development projects in Africa, of which \$100 million would go towards a new India-Africa Development Fund and \$10 million to an India-Africa Health Fund. India also promised \$10 billion in new soft loans, in addition to \$7.4 billion in soft loans and \$1.2 billion in aid provided since the first India-Africa summit in 2008.[5]

Yet India, soon to become the world’s most populous country, has its work cut out to catch up with China, whose annual trade with Africa is three times larger than its own \$72 billion. However, the Indian economy and trade has been showcasing a positive trend in the recent times, and such a summit can only act as a stimulant to the further development of economic relations. While the majority of the world’s poor are still concentrated in Africa and India, the regions have been showcasing a high rate of economic growth which points towards a positive future for its people.

The success of the Third India-Africa Forum Summit demonstrates more than ever the fact that the fires of the dream of a Vibrant India and a Resurgent Africa continue to burn brightly.

– **Pritam Dey**

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[5] <http://www.cnbc.com/2015/10/29/reuters-america-indias-modi-pitches-partnership-of-prosperity-to-africa.html>

Image Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/2/25/Third_India-Africa_Forum_Summit_Logo.jpg

NOVEMBER 16, 2015

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A Study on India-Nepal Relationship



The relation between India and Nepal go way beyond that of neighbours. Both the countries share a unique bond in various aspects. Cultural, traditional and religious similarities among the people of both countries cannot be considered belittle. The basis of such a strong connection comes from the fact that both the countries have a lot of common factors. There has been a long tradition of free movement of people across the borders. This implies that the citizens of both the countries are exempted from procedures such as procurement of passports and visas in order to travel to either of the two countries. Nepal shares a border of over 1850 kilometers with five Indian states namely Sikkim, Bihar, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand. The foundation of India Nepal relationship can be traced back to the India-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship, 1950. India remains as one of the best destination for Nepali citizens for working as well as staying. Nepal with its luring picturesque natural features often serves as the ideal tourist destination for Indians.

India proved that it is the loyal and reliable neighbor when Nepal was devastated by the 7.8 magnitude earthquake that struck on April 25th, 2015 followed by persistent aftershocks. Not only did India send aids to Nepal, it ensured that every form of assistance was constantly made available to its landlocked neighbor. The total Indian relief assistance amounted to US \$ 67 million. (About India-Nepal Relations) .

India's main interest from Nepal would be to see a peaceful and stable political, economic, religious and cultural environment in its neighborhood. Obviously, an unstable neighborhood will bring down not only its reputation in the international arena but also its prospects of emerging as a global leader. Amid protests, Nepal's second constituent Assembly promulgated a Constitution in September, 2015. India had played a major role in the recent events and developments in Nepal which will be discussed in detail in the following sections.

Bilateral trade has been a strong bonding factor for both the countries since a very long time. Since 1996, Nepal's exports to India have grown more than eleven times and bilateral trade more than seven times; the bilateral trade that was 29.8% of Nepal's total external trade in 1995-96 reached 66% in 2013-14. Exports from Nepal to India increased from INR 230 crore in 1995-96 to INR 3713.5 crore (US\$ 605 million) in 2013-14 and India's exports to Nepal increased from INR 1525 crore in 1995-96 to INR 29545.6 crore (US\$ 4.81 billion) in 2013-14. (Taneja, 2011). The main items of exports from India to Nepal include petroleum products, machinery, spare parts, cement and chemicals. India's main imports from Nepal include polyester, yarn, textiles and jute etc. Indian firms contribute to a great extent in the Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) in Nepal as they are some of the biggest investors.

Neighboring countries have certain geographical characteristics which sometimes act as a bonding factor and sometimes as a deterrent. Rivers fall under this category. The Mahakali River is one of the five major river basins of Nepal which is shared with India. In 2008, a three-tier mechanism was established between the two countries to discuss and resolve the bilateral issues relating to river linking, hydropower etc.

India has contributed extensively to various projects in Nepal spanning over sectors including health, infrastructure, water resources, education, community and rural development.

As is the case with most of the countries and their neighbours, all is not perfect with India and Nepal. India shares a 1,751km (1,088-mile) open border with Nepal through which people pass freely but it has often concerned the country's security agencies because of its use by smugglers, human traffickers and terror suspects. (BBC News, 2015) The recent turn of events have brought certain internal issues between the two countries into the limelight. Nepal promulgated its new Constitution which has led to bitter relations with its neighbor. The Constitution defines Nepal, a majority Hindu country as a secular republic divided into seven federal provinces. India is worried that the Constitution is very narrow and do not cater to minorities within Nepal and that this would lead to conflicts and violence which can eventually spill to its own territory. Nepali disapproval of India's reaction intensified when New Delhi imposed an unofficial blockade of critical goods and supplies across its border with Nepal. India maintains the blockade is unofficial and truck drivers are simply hesitant to cross the border into the unstable and turbulent Nepali plains. (Panda, 2015)

Adding on to the crisis, Nepal is currently facing severe shortage of fuels owing to disruption in the supply lines within India. Shortage in fuel has led to shortage in the supply of essential food items and even medicines. At this point, Nepal was on the verge of a humanitarian crisis. What comes as an even bigger blow to India is the fact that china has stepped up to supply fuel to India. This puts India in an even more vulnerable position. The fuel crisis has caused the Nepali government to implement rationing and price hike. This has caused the public anger against India. By stepping in at this juncture, China is not only proving to be a better neighbor but is also being successful in receiving the goodwill lost by India. China has promised 1.3 million liters of gasoline to Nepal. Although this started as an immediate response from China, there are possibilities of it evolving into a long-term bilateral trade relationship between the two countries at the expense of India.

The Nepali finance Minister Ram Sharan Mahat rightly pointed out that Nepal is not a landlocked country. But it is virtually an India locked country. This is a clear indication towards Nepal's dependency on India. However, the recent event of fuel blockade has served as a source of enlightenment for the Nepali people. They have learnt to diversify their sources and not depend on only one country for their requirements. Nepal is naturally blessed with mountain fed rivers that has the potential to generate hydroelectricity which can power the entire country. There are constant clashes between the Nepali police and protesters which serve as a major threat to India.

Nepal has always proved to be a loyal and true neighbor to India. The issues should that exist between the two countries should be resolved by the efficient foreign policy inputs. This would enable both the countries to help in the economic, social and cultural developments of both the countries.

– **Anna Elias**, Research Team YFFP Guwahati

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NOVEMBER 10, 2015

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The Pakistan Syndrome



I find it suitable to note that there are few things, emerging from the other side of the LoC, and yet, proving to be favourable to us. So, when a Pakistani author endeavoured to chronicle their saga of 'foreign policy', it was expected to liberate some sort of excitement in India. However, the fact that the formidability of the repercussions would be so disgraceful was never considered to be an issue. Probably that accounted for the outright condemnation, by the Indians who are still concerned about the country's ethos, when the extreme right-wing political party 'Shiv Sena' decided to honour the author by disrupting his book launch in Mumbai and resorting to the highest extents of obscenity by smearing ink over the ORF Chairman, Sudheendra Kulkarni. But then, if a book is to be judged by the grandeur of its launch, then probably scores of sub-continental authors would already have clinched the Booker's Prize. And that's why, despite the unsuccessful launching ceremony, Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri's '*Neither a Hawk nor a Dove*' has found a generous market in India.

Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri served as the Foreign Minister of Pakistan from 2002 to 2007 under Parvez Musharraf, a period when we came closest to settle a deal on Kashmir and catalyze our peace process. However, despite scores of unaccounted track two discussions, proposed bilateral talks and avid diplomatic channelizing, both the countries have maintained their historical status quo over the issue. Pakistan's foreign policy has predominantly been shaped out by the policies of two regions, namely, the West and India. Therefore, it is quite propionate that whatever India plans out for its neighbours invariably ends up affecting their internal affairs. It's not possible to pen down a synopsis of Pakistan's foreign policy, starting from 1947, in a seven-hundred-words worth article. Hence, barring the golden age of Quaid-i-Azam, the speculative period of Ayyub Khan, the charismatic aura of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and the lost decade of Zia-ul-Haq, let me focus on the period of developments between the ties of both the countries during Musharraf's time.

Vajpayee had once boarded a bus from Amritsar to embark on a peace mission to Lahore. There, shaking hands with Mian Nawaz Sharif, the then PM of Pakistan, they committed to avoid the prospects of war at any cost. Meanwhile, a Pakistani Army General was covertly deploying his troops at the vacated Indian posts on the frontline in the Gilgit-Baltistan region. A couple of months later, the whole international community questioned the authenticity of that handshake as Pakistan's adventurism in Kargil came to light. Although, these strategies of Pakistan did not earn them any substantial laurels, they sure enough acquired a decade long military dictatorship. But, looking through India's perspective, this was the most fruitful period in terms of accelerating the peace process. In the words of Manmohan Singh, India inched closer than ever to close-in a deal on Kashmir. Even the previous NDA government had their share of milestones during this period. When Musharraf visited Indian in 2001 for the Agra Summit, speculations loomed large that the long yearned peace between the two brothers of partition was at last in the offing. Fourteen years hence the summit, we probably perceive the results as otherwise. It was also the period of realization for Pakistan, that the proxy war launched in Kashmir by Zia Ul Haq, as a counter measure to the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation, was a long lost dream. Around that time, Kashmir restored from being an unfinished agenda of partition to a battle ground of egos. Pakistan's involvement in Kashmir was directly governed by the very fact, out of many others, that their withdrawal would mark another voluntary surrender to India. However, parallel peace was also in their agenda as Musharraf presented his four-point solution to Kashmir in 2006. It was around that period that the reverberations caused by artillery guns stopped echoing the Saltoro Mountains. But today, with Mian Sharif back in Power, and Musharraf out of both the government and the barracks, Kashmir still remains a battleground for half a million troops on both sides of the border.

Kasuri had the most favorable view of this saga and now that he pens it down, we are left with more than just a mere opportunity of taking a glimpse at their side of diplomacy. Kasuri's book is undoubtedly the most grasping tale of 'foreign policy' of Pakistan.

– **Dikshit Sarma Bhagabati**, YFFP Guwahati

Analyzing the tension prevalent in the South China Sea



“China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) are totally able to safeguard well the peace and stability of South China Sea,”

The statement came during the recent ASEAN Regional Forum in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar, from the office of the foreign minister of People’s Republic of China, Wang Yi in immediate response to the so-called tense situation propagated by some countries over the South China Sea. But does this statement depict the exact situation of the tensions prevalent in South China Sea? Well, most political thinkers will term it as a pall on the deeply concerning issues that grip the long disputed area. But, before critically examining the whole issue, let me give you a brief of what exactly are the tensions that exist in one of the most crucial shipping routes of the world, The South China Sea.

The Dispute

The territorial dispute on who has the sovereign authority on which part of the South China Sea involves various countries including People’s Republic of China, Vietnam, Malaysia, Taiwan, Philippines among others. The areas under dispute include the Spratly and the Parcel islands, Maritime boundaries in the Gulf of Tokin and the waters near Indonesian Natuna Islands.

Long claimed as their own territory, People’s Republic of China arrogates its own order on most of the area of the South China Sea. In fact, citing various historical instances, China in 2009 also submitted a map to the United Nations which included the 9 dash line thereby claiming most of the regions of the South China Sea. This and other previous activities of China concerning the area has led to prolonged and increased tensions among the concerning countries sometimes even resulting in a war like situation.

Most of the dispute lies due to the speculated huge reserves of resources beneath the Sea. [The Ministry of Geological Resources and Mining of the People’s Republic of China](#) estimated that the South China Sea might contain 17.7 billion tons of crude oil. However, many other sources cite the number to be much smaller, probably at around a billion tons of crude oil. The U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) estimated discovered and undiscovered oil reserves in South China Sea at 28 billion barrels, as opposed to the Chinese figure of 213 billion barrels. The same EIA report also pointed to a wide variety of natural gas resource estimations, ranging from 900 trillion cubic feet (25.5 trillion cubic meters) to 2 quadrillion cubic feet (56.6 trillion cubic meters), likely located in the contested [Reed Bank](#).

Foreign Intervention

A hawk’s eye would never miss a place presenting a huge interest. Well! So is the case with the dispute over the South China Sea. Not directly alleging any country’s efforts to instigate the tensions, I would like to point out that the region is not immune to foreign interventions which have with time, only increased. The country which plays a very crucial role here or in fact in most of the disputed areas of the world is The United States of America. Today, if tensions have only increased, or so China claims is because of the US’ intervention in the area. De facto, in recent times, the present Obama Government has not only worked to strengthen ties with ASEAN, but has also ensured better relations with individual countries like Myanmar. Security Cooperation with Vietnam, Singapore and Malaysia has only added to the cause.

The vulnerability of a possible conflict, if not armed then through a dialogue also surfaced when India’s amphibious assault vessel INS Airavat, en-route Vietnam on a friendly visit, was contacted by a party claiming itself to be Chinese Navy. The so called contact was made to warn the vessel of entering into the Chinese waters. The Indian Navy though later clarified that “there was no confrontation involving the INS Airavat.”

Another diplomatic confrontation resurfaced in 2011 when India’s state run Oil and Natural gas Corporation (ONGC) tied up with PetroVietnam after accepting the country’s offer to explore oil in certain blocks of the South China Sea. As soon as the news broke out, the foreign ministry of China issued a statement indirectly objecting to a possible future Indian presence in South China Sea.

Peace Efforts

While most peace efforts have been marred due to prolonged diplomatic confrontation through dialogue, countries directly and indirectly involved in the dispute are constantly trying to solve the issue. Though, not enough has been done until now so as to put a rest to this long standing issue. The ASEAN summit of July 2012 did attempt to address the issue but the efforts went down the drain when the summit ended without producing a communiqué.

Experts however point out that the joint management of resources is the best way to alleviate the peace process in the area. For a start, China and Vietnam have identified and regulated certain common fishing zones in the Tonkin Gulf though what remains the important issue is that of regulation and area allocation of huge oil reserves lying in the area.

The Road Ahead

The South China Sea continues to be a region of strategic importance for not only the countries surrounding the area but also the ones indirectly involved in the concerning disputes. Moreover, with the coming of age of industrial revolution in Asia, the sea passage is one of the most used in the entire world and is constantly

becoming an area of increased activity. What lies ahead is a process of cooperation in which People's Republic of China will have a crucial role to play since it is already being cited by most experts as the next superpower of the expected new international order in a multi-polar world.

-Brij Pahwa

OCTOBER 31, 2015
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A conversation with Member of Parliament Gaurav Gogoi

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PHOTO: ARKADRIPTA CHAKRABORTY

YFFP: Sir, tell us about this recent visit to the MP delegation team to the US and what was the main agenda behind this team's visit to the US?

Gaurav Gogoi: Recently I was part of a delegation called the India-US forum of Parliamentarians. This delegation's objective is to discuss and debate issues of strategic importance, both of concern and importance to India and the US, was formed close to 13 years ago by a group of parliamentarians across various political parties, to at that point of time bring some more depth into the relationship between our two governments and since then it has been a very successful and largely informal initiative, it is not a government body or it is not a standing parliamentary forum. It is an initiative taken by the parliamentarians on their own, it's an individual and independent initiative. Over the last few years it has been supported by FICCI, [Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry](#) and it has visited the US and hosted delegations from the US.

YFFP: So you met the US counterparts as well?

Gaurav Gogoi: Yes, so, the objective of this delegation is to meet senators, meet congressmen, meet representatives from commerce and business, from think tanks and academia, meet with the Indian diaspora over there, also with our Indian diplomatic community in Washington DC and at the United Nations in New York.

YFFP: So since it's about strategic interests and basically about the business forums, so how do you think India and US relations regarding these strategic and the commerce related issues have flourished over the years?

Gaurav Gogoi: Well.

YFFP: Do you see any change?

Gaurav Gogoi: Well I think there has been a massive change at various intervals in the Indian-US relationship. Definitely one major interval was at the end of the cold war. During to the Cold War era, without meaning to, India and US were on positions which were contradictory to each other or in opposition to each other or in conflict with each other, that changed after the end of the Cold War and then with the economic liberalization reform in 1991, a lot of American companies got their chance to enter into the Indian market and participate and that really boosted the relationship. Going forward, America's interest in India took another turn after the nuclear deal because that was an initiative both by the then former Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh and former president George Bush, to clearly take the India us relationship to the next level and they put a lot of personal effort into the relationship and as a result both the Indian policy makers and the American policy makers worked very closely with each other and understood what was each other's economic and strategic interests are and that really opened up the door for more American investment to come into India for more Indian business to work in the US and now with Asia being such an economically important region and so many Asian countries which are an important market for the US, it becomes very important now for these two countries to develop a commercial relationship and business relationship that is mutually beneficial to the business and commerce interest of organizations and institutions in both countries.

YFFP: So then we were talking about the nuclear deal. So in the nuclear deal, recently, we have seen that US has been in talks with Pakistan regarding their nuclear deal, so what is your take on the growing connection between US and Pakistan in terms of their nuclear deal?

Gaurav Gogoi: Well, firstly, we think to oppose US military aid to Pakistan till the time it doesn't dismantle the support networks of all terrorist organizations and groups in Pakistan. I feel personally that continued nuclear US aid is only detrimental to the objectives of assuring peace and stability in the region. I think, there has been global concern and that concern has been shared by the US as well, as to Pakistan's ability to safely manage its nuclear facilities and secure them and protect them from falling into the wrong hands. So any understanding between the US and Pakistan should be only related to ensuring of safety of security of nuclear facilities in Pakistan so that it doesn't fall into the hands of anti-India organizations.

YFFP: I would like to focus towards the recent, Modi's Digital India Plan. So, we have seen that recently he visited US and there has been, his reach out in the Silicon Valley which shows the world that Indian leaders having an unwavering support and belief in the power of technology to transform the country. So, do you think this is a positive change, which will bring about investments in India, which will encourage the start-ups or innovations? So, what is your take on the entire Digital India initiative.

Gaurav Gogoi: I think what would really change the economic and investment scenario in India is substantive policy changes within our country and not announcements. We need to understand that domestic as well as global entrepreneurs are struggling to start-up businesses in India, struggling to get permits, struggling to understand, the various tax regulations. So, it is even difficult for Indian IT entrepreneurs to come back from California and set up a business here. So, while we outline the clear vision, the devil now lies with the details.

YFFP: (speaking simultaneously) the implementation...

Gaurav Gogoi: As how we will achieve, what is the roadmap to achieve that vision because the failure of any such announcements will create a massive ripple effect where the global community and the investor community and the entrepreneurial community will lose faith in India's policy and infrastructure. So you should set the expectations very carefully... and first of all manage...uh, both the taxation issues, our legal issues and so many of our companies, uh, even IT companies are finding it difficult to do business with the US because of US visa policies. So, these are all like, the nuts and bolts that we must address first before announcing grand vision statements which are hollow in details.

YFFP: So, I'll be focusing back upon the ministerial level forums that take place between India and US and how do you think, because I've read in one of the Indian embassy statements regarding these forums, that they're saying that these kinds of dialogue like the ministerial level economic and say, financial partnership or the ministerial representation in trade forum, how are they actually helping to strengthen the bilateral relations between the two countries?

Gaurav Gogoi: See, it's a good question. First of all, there has been a change in the recent structure of our dialogues where India and US earlier used to have discussions around the strategic dialogue. Recently, we've added a strategic and commercial dialogue, which means that, boosting India's economy and trade in the world is strategic to India's interests as well as boosting America's trade and commerce in Asia is strategic to America's interest. So, we must understand how our regulations related to commerce can synergize with each other and can help each other instead of acting as a stumbling block. So, these ministerial level delegations will really help unpack some of the complicated structures of Indian laws and American laws and find out a way so that both American businesses working in India and Indian business working there can operate more simply. Case in point is that India exports a lot of food to the US. It exports Basmati Rice, exports mangoes, exports other kind of uh,

YFFP: pulses...

Gaurav Gogoi: Horticulture, pulses products. Now, due to different standards, for packaging and labeling and pesticide content, a lot of Indian exports are not reaching American markets and are rotting in American warehouses just because they have different standards. We're both complying to standards. American are asking us to comply to American standards, we're complying to Indian standards. Because the standards are not uniform... as a result, our trade and commerce suffers, the Indian farmers suffer and the State's revenue suffers. So strategic commercial dialogue will help us understand how can we have uniform standards, or standards which are compatible with each other. So, therefore, tomorrow this problem of Indian food exports to US getting stuck does not, you know, does not arise.

YFFP: like we have seen in the case of mangoes, which was, France, that was... they didn't allow us to import our mangoes to France because of the pesticides.

Gaurav Gogoi: Exactly, because each country follows their own standards and we're not figuring out a way of how making sure standards are inter-compatible.

YFFP: A global sort of standards.

Gaurav Gogoi: A global consensus for standards and I think that's something is very important. Only through dialogues can we achieve that. Secondly, it is being said that, for American companies, who want to, you know, work here, they want to look at the passage of the GST Bill as a sign that Indian economic reforms are taking place and... where with respect to the GST Bill, what we're seeing now, is that, the GST Bill when it was introduced, was introduced as a major economic reform. But subsequent amendments which have crept into the GST BILL has ensured that instead of being a Big Bang economic reform, it will only be a very minor reform and that will defeat the purpose of GST. So, conditions like 1 percent every state can offer, conditions like, uh, certain commodities being outside of GST, having no ceiling, keeping a ceiling, which is so high. So these are amendments which are, you know, defeating or diluting the original purpose of GST and therefore it is getting stuck in an economic argument as to what is the best GST version we can come out, but the delay is definitely sending out a signal to the global community that our government is not doing enough to kind of build a consensus within Parliament.

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YFFP: Since we are talking about GST at this I want to go off-track and ask you about the rising prices of pulses in India and I recently read somewhere that in a way the academic world and most of the people are blaming that in India, agriculture research has failed the farmers because they have not been able to provide high yield pulses or cost effective methods for the farmer to help evolve various kinds of technologies like the western counterparts like US, Canada or Mexico who are producing vast amounts of pulses and who are exporting and importing it to India. So what is your take on that? Has research really failed agriculture?

Gaurav Gogoi: Well research in agriculture has been very limited, that is without a doubt a statement of fact. Secondly, the rise in price of pulses has to be seen from two angles, from the farmer's angle and from the consumer's angle. You would assume that if the prices of Dal are rising in the market then Dal farmers or Dal producing states are becoming richer but that is not the case. So therefore there is some flaw in the way we in this correct system where the rise in prices is not helping the producer. If you look at from last year there were several indications relating to the fact that there is a drought, there has been unseasonal rainfall, there have been farmers suicides so there are many factors which are crippling the production of Dal and therefore any proper estimate would have told you that following year's Dal output would not be enough to satisfy consumer demand in India. Such a case is not new, this has happened before as well a government, which is using foresight, would have calculated how much would be the deficit of Dal in the following year and that deficit would have been met by imports. If my production is going to be small for next year then by importing Dal in time from other countries I would ensure that at this point of the year there is enough Dal to satisfy the demand. You would see that these import orders are only going right now which means there has been a mistake by this government to allow prices of pulses to reach an astronomically high level before you are sending out your import orders. By this delay neither have the producers benefited nor the consumers. The only people who have benefitted are the middlemen, the traders and even if you look at now there is been some effort which has come to release Dal from hoarders but that is too late and too miniscule amount to actually meet the demand. So I feel there have been a lack of coordination management and a lack of priority given to this given that we saw the warnings of this last year itself.

YFFP: So in this sense can India learn from other countries which are doing better in terms of producing pulses in terms of managing their productions because these countries we see like Canada they are sending back to India so they must be doing something with their farmers and their production function which we are lacking?

Gaurav Gogoi: Definitely, India has to learn in terms of not neglecting agriculture and this perspective that agriculture has failed us and therefore we should move to

manufacturing is a wrong perspective. Agriculture has not failed us, we have failed agriculture and if we put in the right amount of reforms needed in terms of production or market access or in terms of value addition food processing aggregating producers then we will ensure that farming is a sustainable livelihood for many of our people and it is one of the areas along with other areas such as manufacturing and services which employs India's youth. But the perspective has been agriculture has failed India and therefore is something to be neglected.

YFFP: Now I would like to focus back into the Indo-US relations. So currently we are seeing new presidential elections that are happening in US. So do you think there will be a progress reversal in the key areas in which India-US or do you see a kind of a further take over from this from the Obama administration, whatever it has achieved do you think if Hilary Clinton or if a person like Donald trump who is a hardcore business man coming into power will we see a change in the commercial aspect or ties between India and US undergoing drastic change?

Gaurav Gogoi- One, experience that we have gained from our evolution post-independence which is of building a democratic society is the respect for law and rule of law and the respect for institutions because that is the way India has managed to build a society which is extremely diverse but it is united by certain principles such as rule of law and held together but institutions such as the Supreme Court or the Election Commission. So, therefore we must ensure that these principles must translate within each. Now there is a rule of law ,we know what the law is and have a common understanding of the law, we understand that the law is enforced and second we build certain institutions which all the nations is Asia understand and are able to work with and these institutions eventually should lead to the development of our economies.

YFFP- My last question would be, how you see this government's sustainable growth in terms of power emission and in terms of climate change echo with the thoughts of U.S who is planning to cut down its emission, who is giving a kind of leeway to India in terms of India achieving its economic goals. So, how do you see this sustainable growth thing play out or how is this dynamic being played out in the Indian scene?

Gaurav Gogoi- Well, there are two things. From an environmental point of view, I think there is a global confidence in the fact that each country has given up INDC, which is a nationally determined contribution. So, that shows that every nation is committed towards reducing emissions and every nation has outlined a roadmap as to how they would reduce their emissions. In India, we have outlined a roadmap which will focus heavily of renewable technology and will focus a lot on afforestation. I think this INDC target of ours has been welcomed by the U.S. They also understand that it's really ambitious but again it's a huge step and the entire world, both domestic and the global community, while we appreciate large vision statements we all want details. So, we all are hoping that the Paris Conference will kind of outline more details as to how India will achieve its INDC targets. But this also opens up an interesting area, when we are focusing so much on renewable technology , to look at energy reforms within our own country .So many parts of our country don't have access to electricity, so many state electricity boards are bankrupt and they are not able to even buy electricity and our transmission networks are aged. So if we are looking at making a major reform to our energy demand by shifting from coal which supplies 60% of the energy to renewable energy which currently provides 2-3% but as per INDC will provide 40%, this target gives a good impetus to look at the energy scenario within our country and kind of reform the distribution and transmission. And also who is going to reduce this renewable energy, it's not going to be the state owned companies, it will the private companies who will invest in this. So, the government must create certain policies and incentives for the private companies to produce renewable energy and these private companies can be both domestic or American and therefore, this comes back to how America's interests are also aligned for us to switch from a coal based to a renewable energy based portfolio. But coming back to the fact again, that we must not get lost by lofty goals and remain grounded in reality. If 60% of our energy is produced by coal technology and again this technology really old and highly polluting, from 60% it will not come down to below 40% in a flash, it will happen gradually and in the process we must ensure that our coal gasification technologies also becomes more modern, so that even while we are using coal we don't emit as much of carbon as we are doing right now.

YFFP-So, basically you are trying to say that India, on its own needs to initiate steps to reform its archaic models of energy policy like the Indian energy sector needs to change its archaic policies to meet the new demands.

Gaurav Gogoi- Yes, We need to change the energy sector as well as ensure new technology within coal and ensure that policies are there for businesses to start producing renewable energy.

OCTOBER 22, 2015
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YFFP Interviews State Senators from the United States of America

State Senator Ellen Roberts and Representative Paul Thissen from the United States of America were recently interviewed by YFFP's Delhi Convener Brij Pahwa and Research Head Mittika Nandy. Given here is the transcript of the same.

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YFFP: So, the first question Ms. Roberts is that as the first woman to be elected to the Senate seat for District 6 and President Pro-Term for Colorado State Senate, do you think that the political spaces are as accessible for men as they are for women?

Ellen Roberts: Women do face some extra challenges, even in the U.S in terms of elected office. Much of that is balancing work and family life as well as access to donors in a campaign. That makes a big difference. The women don't have the same network of supporters, so it takes a lot of work to develop that. I think there is a lot of interest though, in the U.S to strengthen the role of women in our elected offices both at the State and National level.

YFFP: So we have seen you work extensively at the grassroots, tell us how would you define the coinage "Public Service"? Do you think the term has been corrupted by vested political agendas in the contemporary world scenario and to what extent?

Ellen Roberts: "Public Service" to me means that you work for the good of the people, your country, and your state. So, are there examples of corruption in the U.S? Yes, but I think it's more about the individual and if you have the heart to serve and the willingness to work very hard and reach out to your constituents, I think you succeed.

YFFP: Mr. Thissen, tell us a little bit about your innovative program '*access to persons with disability*'. What inspired you to start something like that?

Paul Thissen: Well, it goes back quite a ways but I'm a lawyer as well as a legislator and we are a part time legislature. So, a lot of the work I was doing as a lawyer in the court system was representing people with disabilities. There were legal issues at the hand but also their access to the court system is different. So what we tried to do was to work to make sure that the courts were equipped for people with disabilities to advocate more effectively for themselves, to train judges and other lawyers about the unique ways that you need to work with people with different disabilities so that the court systems work as well. It's an 'equal rights equal access' kind of issue and a lot of people got very engaged around it, a lot of people got very excited about it and I think we made some progress.

YFFP: Something like this came up in India as well at the university level where universities are trying to equip people with disabilities with several new technologies and they have collaborated with several organisations. I guess in the United States as well.

Paul Thissen: Yes, that's right.

YFFP: So the 2013 session was termed the most productive in the generation, and as Speaker of the House in 2013, what were the primary challenges you faced?

Paul Thissen: In Minnesota, that was a session unlike any that we'd had in a long time, that all the democrats, and I'm a Democrat, were in charge of all of the branches of government. So both houses of legislature and the Governor's office, and that hadn't been true probably for 25 years before that. And so I think the biggest challenge probably was trying to figure out. There's a lot of pent up demand for things that Democrats tend to prefer. The two biggest challenges that I'd say were kind of tempering the demands of people because they wanted a lot done and we did get a lot done but there were a lot more people wanted to do to go a lot further. And the other challenge in a state like Minnesota which is agricultural. We have a big city Minneapolis which is a metropolitan area, but the rest of the state is agriculture, timber or mining; trying to balance out those regional differences where people, you know, reflect where they come from. And trying to balance out those things is probably the biggest challenge of the Speaker of the House or the leader of the party.

YFFP: Do you think the Federal Government should increase the funding for healthcare for low-income individuals, considering the fact that illegal migrants should have more access to government subsidised healthcare?

Paul Thissen: Well I do think that the efforts that have been made in the last 5-8 years towards expanding access to healthcare have been really important. You know in our state we have about less than 5 % people in Minnesota who don't have access to see a doctor or nurse when they need to, so it's great. We've always been a leader in that but we've improved even from that. But the biggest gap, that make up that 4-5 % are folks that aren't in the United States legally, and trying to figure how to address that issue, from my perspective, speaking personally, my sense is that if someone is here, not in here, but in the United States, we need to deal with the kind of legalities of why they are here and whether we shouldn't do what we should do, but as long as they are here, we should also make sure that we take care of their basic human needs and access to healthcare, from my perspective, is one of those. So, I think finding out ways to help people who are not in the United States legally, to get access to a doctor or a nurse when they need them. It's not just good for them and their families, but it's also good for all of us because of the public health implications. You know, if someone gets sick, they are going to spread it to other people. So, we need to think about all those issues and we need to address that.

Ellen Roberts : Would like a slightly different take, so I'm a Republican, but I agree that people need access to health care. The big challenge that we have is for paying for it and so the recent change in federal law, under Obama care, or the affordable care act, presents real problems at the state level, because we have a balance budget requirement. So, we only spend what we take in from our constituents. What's happening in the state of Colorado, is more and more a part of our state budget is directed by federal law, rather than by the State, and we have less money for K12, education, kindergarten through high school years and higher education, Rhodes and others keys areas to pay for, so it's always a matter of making a choice, and it's not that health care doesn't matter, it matters very much, for many other reasons just mentioned, but it means, those Dollars cannot be put to education or other good uses. So, it's a challenge.

YFFP: Just adding on to that with the policy of Obama care, if you could shed some light on it, and put some light on the contentions Miss Roberts is raising right now?

Paul Thissen: Yes, I mean, there is no question that healthcare is expensive and is growing part of our budget, you know. Frankly, most of all, we spend our health care Dollars on it and this is true in just about every state, and particularly on old people. Our population is getting older and older, and so what we pay for Medicare, like nursing homes where people go and spend their retirement years, that makes up the vast majority and I don't know anybody, at least in Minnesota that thinks we should be cutting access for health care for older Minnesotans. So this clearly is an issue. The biggest challenge though is not whether we should cover people or not but it is cost. From my perspective, failure of Obama care so far hasn't gotten to the underlying issue of healthcare cost and how expensive it is in America to provide healthcare compared to any other country in the world, and we need to get that under control. There's a lots of things going on, but that's kinda the next unfinished business it seems.

YFFP: So just deviating from this particular topic of health and coming to elections next year, its estimated that more than \$200,000,000 will be pumped by Hedge funds

and private equity funds into state and the elections. What do you think will happen, if this trend continues, will political funding become a serious issue in the elections?

Ellen Roberts : Yes. And I think at the state level it is very different than at the national federal level, but it is concerning to me that people of average means will be unable to get elected because it is such a struggle, to compete with buying media, with just the impact of large donors. So regardless of Party, I think that we probably share concerns.

YFFP: That issue has always been there.

YFFP: So taking the same thread of thought, don't you think its important for Presidential candidates or any representatives to disclose the amount of money they spend in campaigning? This kind of a trend has been started in India by think tanks where they have furnished reports, stating the amount of black money that has been used or the use illegal money to sell out tickets. So don't you think, that presidential candidates during the run up to state elections should they disclose their expenditure to the public?

Paul Thissen: Absolutely, I think there should a lot more of it. You know in United states now our constitution has been interpreted essentially to say that money equals speech, so there is no way to limit the amount of money that someone is going to spend, but transparency and sunlight is one weapon that we have and we have pretty good laws in Minnesota, I imagine in Colorado too, about disclosure of what the candidates spend and what the party spends. But the big change that we have seen in Minnesota is what we call advocacy spending. So the groups don't say "vote for candidate X," but say, "Did you know candidate X supports Marijuana " or whatever it is, and I don't know why I thought of that, because Colorado, and though that is not disclosed that's the piece that I really think we need to figure out. We, as individual candidates, can spend about 60,000 US dollars on their campaigns, but in many of our closely contested state legislative races representing 40,000 people, you'll see almost a million Dollars being spent by outside groups trying to influence the elections and that really has distorted the politics.

YFFP: Going on to something a bit more informal and which was in news a few weeks back and that was Mr Trump in his campaign kick-off speech referred to Mexican immigrants as rapists and criminals but the July Washington Post, ABC news poll showed that 33% of the general public actually liked him, 17 percentage points higher than how he'd polled in May. So what according to you might be the reason behind such a rise in his polls when on the contrary one expects his polls to sink? Do you agree that he benefits from his celebrity status?

Ellen Roberts : Mr Trump definitely benefits from his celebrity status and being on television. He definitely benefits from being a billionaire. He does not speak for me as a Republican and I don't agree with a lot of his views including the ones you just mentioned, related to immigration. However, people are looking to shake up the field so as a Republican when you have so many who are running, I think Mr Trump represents somebody who because he is bold and daring in what he says...people like that being all shaken up. I, for one don't think that will last and I hope not for my party but we'll see how it plays out.

YFFP: Mr. Thissen, your views on this?

Paul Thissen: I agree with everything that Ellen just said and I just don't think it reflects the best spirit of America.

YFFP: Since now we have covered all the topics related to elections, we just put this interview to an end. I hope you guys enjoyed it.

The Fifth Edition of the International Youth Forum «Eurasia Global» is an international communication platform for the dialogue between young representatives of the Russian Federation and foreign countries. This year, the Forum will be held under the auspices of UNESCO. Participate in the forum online. At the moment, the forum is both offline and online. if you were not able to get to the forum, but still want to participate, use the online participation! Participate. Format of the each thematic day: Business program. Dialogue and interaction between participants in the context of the Forum's Lara Seligman, Pentagon Correspondent, Foreign Policy. Diego de Ojeda, European Commission Representative to the Political and Security Committee of the European Union. Major General William B. Hickman, Director, Strategic Plans and Policy, NATO Allied Command Transformation. The FP - Quincy Institute Forum will bring together the foremost leaders and thinkers from across the American foreign policy, defense and security communities to explore rising calls for military restraint and a shifting paradigm for U.S. global leadership and peacebuilding. See all. FP Events. See more of Youth Forum on Foreign Policy on Facebook. Log In. or. Create New Account. See more of Youth Forum on Foreign Policy on Facebook. Log In. Forgotten account? Representative Paul Thissen, speaker of the Minnesota House of Representatives from the United States of America talks about Youth Forum on Foreign Policy and pertinence of organisations such as YFFP in promoting diplomacy among the youth and bridging the gap between the leaders of today and those of tomorrow.