

# Revisiting Political Thought of B.R. Ambedkar

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## ABSTRACT

Among the galaxy of great political thinkers and leaders of modern India, Dr. BR Ambedkar is known as a social revolutionary for his advocacy of the complete annihilation of caste and the removal of all forms of injustice. He is known as the father of the Indian Constitution for the chairmanship of its drafting committee. He provided a brilliant critique of the Hindu scriptures and exposed the illogical, inegalitarian, and inhuman character of the Hindu caste-based social order and its shastras. He pleaded for a social revolution before the attainment of swaraj or political independence. He was opposed to religious nationalism and cautioned against the dangers of majoritarianism to freedom and democracy in a post-independent parliamentary democratic framework. He influenced the making of finer print of the Constitution with his brilliant legal knowledge, social philosophy, and commitment to secularism, equality, and freedom.

**Keywords:** Jati, Chaturvarna, Purush Sukta, Shastras, Annihilation, Majoritarianism, Self-Determination,

## INTRODUCTION

Among the galaxy of leaders of modern India who by their ideas and political activities have contributed significantly to the process of social and political transformation, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar stands foremost and has aroused great controversies and criticisms. The study of Ambedkar's social and political ideas has acquired a greater urgency today with increasing social cleavages and conflicts. Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar stood for the complete annihilation of India's social structure based on jati and varnashrama dharma. The historical contribution of Dr. Ambedkar lay in mainly raising the Dalit question on the agenda of politics of national movement and of pioneering the constitution for free India. Even after seven decades of the Republic, the institution of jati has not disappeared rather it has taken new forms and roles.

The father of the renaissance in India, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, in the 19th century, was the first to challenge the Indian's orthodox socio-economic and cultural structure based on liberal democratic egalitarian ideals. That was only the beginning. In the 20th century, the Vedantic order on the one hand was reinforced, of course, with casual modifications and, on the other, was found unfit for the future designs of Indian nationalists. A liberal society based on liberty, equality, and fraternity was projected as the future model for free India. The prevailing caste system as the basis of socio-economic and political order became antithetical with the projected new system. However, few stood for the complete annihilation of the decadent social structure. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar emerged as the foremost leader among the nationalists who not only presented a sound understanding of the caste problem but also its solution through its annihilation.

The life, career, and thought of Ambedkar is a curious combination of anti-thesis of Hinduism and modern nationalism whose essential thrust is on fraternity. He took advantage of the compulsions of the Indian National Movement without being opposed to it and he took advantage of the contradictions

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of the British Raj without being an ally of it. His central idea was that the social revolution should not lag behind the anti-imperialist struggle. His thought process is marked by an attempt to harmonize the ideals of the French Revolution, Mill's liberalism, English Fabianism, Buddhism, anti-imperialist national movement, and destruction of caste and varna-based social order.

In his social mission, Ambedkar played skillfully with the inner contradictions and compulsions of the British imperial rulers, the Indian National Congress, and the Muslim League. He became a member of the West Bengal Constituent Assembly with the help of the Muslim League. His approach was basically like political bargaining with the British rulers and the Congress leaders in order to secure a political program for restructuring of the Indian society. He criticized both the British rulers and the Congress leaders for not doing anything to eradicate untouchability and the caste system. Ambedkar agreed to the Poona Pact (1932) with Mahatma Gandhi and accepted the chairmanship of the Drafting Committee of the Constitution of India and the office of Law Minister in free India. Ambedkar demonstrated his commitment to remain within the broad framework and mainstream of the Indian national movement.

With the pace of industrialization, urbanization, and democratization, the caste system today has lost much of its ritualistic, ideological, and economic basis. However, the taboos, prejudices, and social discriminations based on caste have not disappeared and instead role of caste in identity politics as a symbol of political mobilization has increased. Not only has Dr. Ambedkar's idea of the annihilation of caste been forgotten but also caste identities have been strengthened. The present research article is a humble attempt to examine the social and political ideas of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and assess his relevance in addressing the challenges of establishing an egalitarian society.

## VIEWS ON JATI AND CHATURVARNA

Dr. Ambedkar made a deep study of the social history of India. He enquired into the origin, growth, and development of caste and untouchability. He wrote books related to the subjects like Who were the Shudras and how they came to be the Fourth Varna in Hindu Aryan Society; Caste in India; their origin, Genesis, and Mechanism; Annihilation of caste, and many more. He described the features of the caste system in India as follows: i) Hierarchy; ii) Lack of social efficiency; iii) Social immobility; iv) Responsible for disruptive tendencies; v) Ex-communication; vi) Endogamy and vii) Anti-social spirit.

According to Ambedkar, "Caste is an artificial chopping off of the population into fixed and definite units, each one prevented from fusing into another group through the custom of endogamy.<sup>2</sup> Endogamy is the only trait that can be called the essence of the caste system. The rule of endogamy is largely responsible for the caste mechanism. The membership of a caste is by birth and it cannot be acquired by change of faith. Castes are autonomous and there is no authority anywhere to compel a caste to admit a new-comer to its social life.

That is why Dr. Ambedkar believed that the shuddhi movement of Dayanand Saraswati shall not succeed in winning reconversion of old Hindu converts back to the fold of Hinduism. An individual has to be first the member of a caste group identified by its distinct rituals and symbols to be a Hindu. Social hierarchy and not a form of worship is the essential criterion to be a Hindu. Caste has weakened Hindu civilization and it will weaken the process of nation-making. Caste strengthens social exclusiveness and is, hence, antithetical to modern nations.

Having diagnosed the ills of Hindu society centered around caste Dr. Ambedkar stated that only the complete annihilation of caste could start the process of revitalizing the Hindu society and the rise of a strong nation. He made the annihilation of caste the most important agenda in his program of social reforms. During those days the anti-colonial nationalist freedom struggle was trapped in the debate between social reforms vs. political reform.

## **AMBEDKAR, CONGRESS, AND SOCIAL REFORMS**

The political reformers believed in the urgency of constitutional progress and the advancement of the nationalist movement for political freedom from the British Raj. Social reformers, on the other hand, believed that progress and prosperity of the country were not possible without social change and emancipation of the people from injustice and exploitation. Social reforms acquired only peripheral importance in the agenda of the nationalist movement. Behind the two hostile camps of National Congress and Social Conference, the point at issue was whether social reform should precede political reform.

While the Congress was primarily concerned with removing the weak points in the political organization and constitutional agitations, Social Conference was devoted to removing the weak points in the social organization of the Hindu society. It is an irony of the history of social reforms that they were more for change in the family relations and improvement in the status of women rather than in the emancipation of the untouchables and downtrodden. A radical change in the caste system never acquired primacy in the program of social reforms.

For some time during the Moderate era, the National Congress and the Social Conference worked as two wings of the common activity and they held their annual activities in the same pandal. However, this honeymoon between the National Congress and Social Conference was short-lived. Bal Gangadhar Tilak also accorded primacy to political reforms and swaraj over social reforms. From the time of Lokmanya Tilak, Social Conference was not allowed to even use the Pandal of the Congress for its annual conferences. In course of time, the party in favor of political reform won and Social Conference vanished and was even forgotten.

With this, the social reform took a back seat on the agenda of the nationalist movement. The majority of the educated Hindus in the Congress were for political advancement and indifferent to reform in social organization. As a result, in the 1920s, anti-caste movements in the form of temple-entry under the banner of the justice party in South India and Depressed classes movements in Maharashtra grew outside the organizational framework of the nationalist movement. On account of the failure of the Indian National Congress to take up the cause of social reform particularly the issue of caste, Dr. Ambedkar asked the politically minded caste Hindus:

“Are you fit for political power even though you do not allow a large class of your own countrymen like the untouchables to use the public school? ..Every congressman who repeats the dogma of Mill that one country is not fit to rule another country must admit that one class is not fit to rule another class”.<sup>3</sup>

Dr. Ambedkar made a fervent appeal to the Congress and the Communists to take up the cause of the social reform by the annihilation of caste. Citing the examples from history he declared that political revolutions have always been preceded by social and religious revolutions. The political emancipation and industrial growth in European countries could be launched only after the religious reformation started by Martin Luther. In England, Puritanism led to the establishment of political liberty. The emancipation of the mind and the soul is a necessary condition for the political liberty of the people. Hence, Dr. Ambedkar pleaded that the annihilation of caste would prepare the necessary social conditions for the emancipation of the downtrodden which would widen the social basis and deepen the strength of the Indian National Movement.

## **CRITIQUE OF HINDU SOCIO-RELIGIOUS ORDER**

Ambedkar was a social revolutionary and not a Marxian socialist/ communist. He was not opposed to religion per se and refused to accept the Marxist notion of religion as an illusion or opium. He believed that ‘True religion is the foundation of society, the basis on which all true civil

Government rests.’ Ambedkar could not imagine a stable society in the absence of a religion of principles. When corrupt practices enter the religious life of a people and its ancient rules become outdated, there is the need for reformation in the practice and privileges of religion. He wrote: “When I urge that these ancient rules of life be annulled, I am anxious that its place shall be taken by a Religion of principles, which alone can claim to being a true religion what I regard as necessary items in this religious reform”.<sup>4</sup>

In his opinion, there should be legal control and supervision over religious practices and priesthood. A priest should be the servant of the state and should be subject to disciplinary action by the state in the matter of his morals, beliefs, and practices, in addition to his being subject along with other citizens to the ordinary law of the land. Thus, he, inspired by the English and French Revolutions, favored bringing the priestly class under control by some such legislation. The legal control upon the priestly class is indeed a revolutionary idea because the priestly class among the Hindus has been subject neither to law nor morality. It recognizes no duties. It knows only of rights and privileges which is one of the important reasons for their mental and moral degradation. Ambedkar thus favored the democratization of religion and make the priestly class accountable. However, for his radical views on religion and caste Ambedkar could not become acceptable to a large section of the ruling establishment though they all pay lip service to his name.

Ambedkar provided a brilliant critique of the Hindu dharmshastras, its belief systems and exposed their logical inconsistency and moral degeneration that has crept into Hindu social and religious life. Ambedkar provided a critique of the Purusha sukta, a hymn 10.90 of the Rig Veda which is often quoted for the divine origin of chaturvarna from the body of Brahma. It provides the religious justification of the Chaturvarna giving it a sacred character beyond human interference. He said:

“ Though the existence of classes is the defacto condition of every society, nevertheless no society has converted this defacto state of affairs into a dejure condition of an ideal society. The scheme of Purush sukta is the only instance in which the real is converted to the dignity of an ideal. It not only regards class composition as natural and ideal, but also regards it as sacred and divine.”<sup>5</sup>

## **AMBEDKAR’S DIFFERENCES WITH GANDHI**

He disagreed with Mahatma Gandhi for his piecemeal and persuasive approach towards reforms of Hindu social organization. Gandhi stressed the values of pre-industrial economic and social organization. “Gandhi did not want to disrupt the organic structure of Hindu society”.<sup>6</sup> Gandhi was a great humanist and he appealed to the caste Hindus to give respect and dignity to the untouchables. He wanted to reform the Hindu society by making it more humanistic and morally strong. His concern was to save the Hindu society and religion from moral/social degradation and disintegration. He appreciated the idea of division of labor in Chaturvarna and wanted to revitalize the moral and spiritual foundations of traditional Hindu society.

Gandhi’s heart bled for the untouchables and he campaigned to provide them a place of honor and dignity within the Hindu social organization. His crusade against untouchability was more like removing a social evil than restructuring the Hindu society. Gandhi called the untouchables “Harijans”, the term which denoted his faith in God, Hindu religion, and social integration of the Harijans within the Hindu socio-religious order. Gandhi was not at all prepared to consider the option of the destiny of the untouchables outside the Hindu social and religious life. Gandhi could not think beyond Hindu dharma though he disapproved of its evil practices like untouchability.

Gandhi was a social reformer and not a social revolutionary as he failed to acknowledge that the Chaturvarna system is the root cause of birth-based social inequality and exploitation. Gandhi was the greatest of the social reformers against the practice of untouchability but like other reformers, he did



not acknowledge the need to destroy the Chaturvarna and jati system which are completely opposed to the modern industry and the concept of modern nation. Gandhi pleaded for equal treatment to all without destruction of religious-social order. The renowned academic V.P. Verma says that Ambedkar believed. "The Hindu scheme of social structure based on the four varnas breeds inequality and has been the parent of the caste system and untouchability which are merely forms of inequality. He felt that the problem of untouchables would not be solved by mere tinkering and palliatives."<sup>7</sup>

## **CONSTITUTIONAL SAFEGUARDS**

Dr. Ambedkar criticized Gandhi's role in the Second Round Table Conference (1931) and challenged his claims to represent the untouchables. Ambedkar pleaded with the British for a separate electorate for the Depressed Classes. In the views of Ambedkar, the significance of the Communal Award lay in that the political constitution must take note of the social organization. For the purposes of safeguards for the weaker sections, he was convinced that the country's constitution must reflect the problem emerging out of the prevailing social order.

Ambedkar had little hope in Gandhi's crusade against the practice of untouchability and his persuasive approach to social reforms without resort to the law of the state. Ambedkar wanted the removal of unjust social structure by state legislation. Ambedkar believed that as long as the Hindu social order remained in the grip of caste and varna-based stratification then the only safeguard for the Depressed classes could be a separate or communal electorate. In support of his demand for a separate electorate, he cited the constitution of Republican Rome which took account of the division between the Patricians and the Plebians.

Ambedkar was convinced that until caste is eradicated, it would not be possible to find the solution to the political problem of unity and solidarity of the national movement or the Indian nation. A separate electorate for the Depressed classes was to be only a political safeguard in the caste-divided society. Gandhi was thoroughly opposed to the separate electorate for Harijans as that would further cement the social divisions into permanent political divisions which will not only ruin the Indian nation but will also remove all chances for the efforts of integrating Hindu society.

Ambedkar was not prepared to compromise on the cause of untouchables either for the national movement or for the unity of the Hindu society. He put his faith in constitutional and political safeguards and not in the moral conscience, goodwill, and mercy of the caste Hindus after independence. With the signing of the Poona Pact (1932) between Gandhi and Ambedkar, the idea of the communal electorate gave way for the joint electorate which has been adopted in the Constitution of the Republic. Ambedkar's basic idea of constitutional safeguards has been incorporated in the present Indian constitution in the form of Reserved Constituencies and reservation of seats in the legislatures and government services. Constitutional safeguards for the Hindu depressed classes is the novel contribution of Dr. Ambedkar to the modern Indian political thought and politics.

## **DEMOCRACY, SOCIALISM, AND COMMUNISM DEMOCRACY**

Dr. Ambedkar had faith in constitutionalism and parliamentary democracy through which the goals of social and economic democracy could be realized. He said, "Democracy is a form and method of government whereby revolutionary changes in the economic and social life of the people are brought about without bloodshed".<sup>8</sup> Ambedkar rejected the bureaucratic authoritarian system of People's Democracy in China. "He had faith in the virtues of democracy such as freedom of thought and expression without which human life is not worth living".<sup>9</sup> Ambedkar was convinced that in the success and effective functioning of the parliamentary democracy lay the future of the country. He warned that if parliamentary democracy failed in this land, the result would be rebellion, anarchy, and communism. He said:

“if we should preserve our independence, if we cherish the inherent right of individual liberty, then it is your duty as students, as an intelligent community of our country, to strive your utmost to cherish this parliamentary system of government in its true spirit and work for it.”<sup>10</sup>

Ambedkar advocated constitutional safeguards for the minorities in a democracy. Though an ardent advocate of parliamentary democracy he was against the tyranny of the majority over the minority. To Ambedkar political parties are indispensable in parliamentary democracy, for democracy without a party system is inconceivable. At least two parties are necessary in democracy for its success. He said, “A party is necessary to run the government. But two parties are necessary to prevent the government from being a despotism. A democratic government can remain democratic only if it is worked by two parties—a party in power and an opposition party.”<sup>11</sup>

## **SOCIALISM**

Ambedkar was convinced of the necessity of indissoluble and sacramental marriage of political democracy with economic and social democracy. “To him, guild socialism, syndicalism, Christian socialism, and scientific / Marxian socialism were not convincing. He accepted the theory of state socialism with necessary modifications in its content and method in the light of Indian cultural tradition.”<sup>12</sup> To him, state intervention is essential for economic efficiency when and where the public interest is neglected. He believed in individual liberty and so he did not want to annihilate the capitalists. He proposed state socialism. He said: “State socialism is essential for the rapid industrialization of India, Private enterprise cannot do it and if it did it, would produce inequality of wealth.”<sup>13</sup>

Ambedkar rejected Marxian socialism based on the principle of Dictatorship of the Proletariat but at the same time, he did not agree with Nehruvian view of the ‘Socialistic pattern of society’ whose future lay on the sweet will of the executive and legislature. “Ambedkar did not wish to leave the establishment of state socialism to the will of the legislature. He wanted that the economic structure of the society should be prescribed by constitutional law.”<sup>14</sup> He said “The connection between the individual liberty and the shape and form of the economic structure of society may not be apparent to everyone. Nonetheless, the connection between the two is real.”<sup>15</sup>

Ambedkar had the farsightedness to anticipate the growth of capitalism in the future with its necessary concomitant of economic inequality. He was afraid that the parliamentary form of political democracy may not prevent the increasing disparity of income and wealth which would lead to the denial of liberty, equality, and fraternity among the countrymen. He wanted that the principle and method of state socialism should be armed with constitutional guarantees which may not be changed by the powerful elites by maneuvering the parliamentary majority. Unfortunately, he could not exert adequate political pressure and had to yield before the powerful body of Indian National Congress leaders who were interested only in piecemeal changes and not in any revolutionary change of either the economic or social structure of the country.

Directive principles of state policy as enshrined in the Indian constitution do not have any constitutional guarantee. In the present constitution, the economic structure of the country is a policy matter rather than a constitutional one. Ambedkar was in favor of the constitutional basis of economic structure based on the theory of state socialism. He wanted the finest synthesis of liberty, equality, and fraternity suited to Indian conditions and needs. He believed that political democracy in the absence of economic and social democracy is hollow and would not last long.

## **COMMUNISM**

Ambedkar was critical of the Communists for ignoring the problem arising out of the caste-based social order. The communists of India following their friends in Europe advocated applying

the economic interpretation of history and base-superstructure framework to the facts of India. Communists propounded that man is an economic creature, that his activities and aspirations are bound by the economic facts and property is the only source of power. In the stereo-type Marxian analysis, caste is regarded as a superstructure and a change in superstructure would follow the change in the forces of production and relations of production.

Hence the Marxists refused to launch any direct attack on caste rather they believed that the socialist proletarian revolution would itself solve the problems arising out of the social order. They, therefore, preached that political and social reforms are but gigantic illusions and that economic reform by equalization of property must have prudence over every kind of reform. Ambedkar refused to accept the Marxian analysis of India's social and political problems. He said;

“The fallacy of the Marxist socialists lies in supposing that because in the present stage of European society property as a source of power is predominant, that the same is true of India or that the same was true of Europe in the past. Religion, Social status, and property are all sources of power and authority by which one man has to control the liberty of another. One is predominant at one stage; the other is predominant at another stage.”<sup>16</sup>

Caste is the greatest obstacle in India in developing the class consciousness in a class of persons belonging to different castes. Caste divides a class into different hostile graded and closed social groups. Unless caste is annihilated, a consciousness of class will not come into being. Ambedkar regarded the problem of social reform as fundamental and only after the destruction of caste, can the socialists move towards bringing a socialist revolution. “Men will not join in a revolution for the equalization of property unless they know that after the revolution is achieved, they will be treated equally and that there will be no discrimination of caste and creed.”<sup>17</sup>

Dr. Ambedkar in his Presidential address at the meeting organized by the Railwaymen's Association at Manmad (Maharashtra) in 1938 said that “The untouchables must start their own trade union movement because not a single socialist or communist trade union organization had touched upon the real problem of untouchability... At the same time, we must fight against capitalism also.”<sup>18</sup>

It is a misfortune for the Indian communist movement that its leaders and comrades have failed to see a “class in itself” in the depressed classes or untouchables. The problem of untouchables is not only freedom from economic exploitation but from social exploitation as well and the latter is distinctly inhuman and cruel. The attitude of the communists was to ignore caste as something undesirable and they were totally reluctant to launch a frontal attack on caste without which class struggle cannot be accentuated. However, under the compulsions of democratic politics since V.P. Singh announced the implementation of the Mandal Commission in 1990, the communist parties have revised their understanding of the caste problem and now champion the ideas advocated by Dr. BR Ambedkar and Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia.

## **NATIONALISM, SELF DETERMINATION AND DEMAND FOR PAKISTAN**

To Ambedkar self-determination meant the right to obtain national independence from an alien race irrespective of the form of government. In a sense, the self-determination is the birthright of all freedom-loving peoples and countries. To him, the principle of self-determination has some limitations. First, the limitation is that self-determination must be done by the people. The second limitation is the degree of imperial character with which the principle of self-determination can be said to be invested. The third limitation is the issue of self-determination. Ambedkar had deep faith in India's cultural unity. He said: “Her unity is as ancient as Nature. This cultural unity has defied political and racial divisions.”<sup>19</sup>

Ambedkar believed in only one nationalism for India. He did not hold any religious view of nationalism like Hindu nationalism or Muslim nationalism. Ambedkar was thoroughly opposed to

religious nationalism and Hindutva politics of V.D.Savarkar and cautioned against the dangers of majoritarianism to freedom and democracy. He, however, was sympathetic to minorities and supported in principle the right of self-determination of a people if they are determined to have it. Acceptance of the demand for Pakistan was a tactical suggestion and it in no way reflects on his idea of opposition to religion as the basis of nationhood. "He supported the demand for Pakistan if they were bent upon having it. He felt that if there was no other alternative, Pakistan had to be accepted."<sup>20</sup>

Ambedkar argued that in independent democratic India "if the communal majority rather than secular majority capture the state power then it is imperative for the democratic state to develop a certain institutional mechanism to safeguard the rights of religious and social minorities." <sup>21</sup> Baba Saheb Ambedkar today has become the slogan for mobilizing votes of Dalits by all political parties and is being used by the vested interests for anti-Muslim propaganda by selectively quoting his speeches and writings. Today the political parties seem to be interested in only appropriating Ambedkar symbolically and on the ground, they betray his egalitarian approach and his plea for the annihilation of caste and a secular polity. "From his writings and speeches, one could argue that Ambedkar had always stood for social justice, irrespective of caste and communities."<sup>22</sup>

Ambedkar believed that the opinion of Muslims should be assessed regarding their demand for Pakistan. Though he disapproved religious nationalism yet he was inclined to accede to their demand if they are determined to have it. He said, "Once it becomes certain that the Muslims want Pakistan there can be no doubt that the wiser course would be to concede the principle of it."<sup>23</sup> Thus, he was in a mood to accept Pakistan as a compromise if united and integrated India was not at all possible in those circumstances. The India National Congress also echoed Ambedkar's views on Pakistan and safeguards for minorities in secular democratic India.

## CONCLUSION

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar was a champion of the cause of the downtrodden. The eradication of untouchability along with the varna and caste system root and branch acquired the highest priority and urgency in his political agenda. He recognized the need for political independence from the colonial rule and was aware of the dangers that capitalism posed to the goal of economic equality. He was an intellectual, a modernist, a democrat, a state-socialist, and above all a crusader against caste. He was fully aware of the inherent difficulties in the general mobilization of the Hindus against the deeply entrenched caste system. He said:

"Now this gradation, the scaling of castes, makes it impossible to organize a common front against the caste system... Castes form a graded system of sovereignties, high and low, which are jealous of their status and which know that if a general dissolution came, some of them stand to lose more of their prestige and power than others do."<sup>24</sup>

We find Ambedkar's prophecy very much true these days as there is no constituency in this country for the political and social program of the abolition of caste. Ambedkar wanted constitutional safeguards for the depressed classes and minorities to protect their rights in the parliamentary democracy but his first priority was the abolition of caste itself. Today because of the politics of identity and reservations, vested interests have developed among the elites of both privileged and the under-privileged castes leading to the electoral mobilization and perpetuation of the caste identities.

Ambedkar wanted political and constitutional safeguards in the prevailing caste-divided society but he was convinced that anything less than total abolition of caste will bring neither social justice nor fraternity nor develop nationalism. The annihilation of caste is his most innovative idea. Unfortunately, there are few takers of the socially revolutionary idea of Ambedkar.

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## THE ROLE OF THE UNITED NATIONS IN AFGHAN CONFLICT

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*The United Nations has played its due role in Afghanistan since the Soviet Union's military intervention there in 1980s. The UN condemned the Soviet intervention but supported whole heartedly the US' war efforts against the Taliban and its replacement by a constitutional government there as per the Bonn Agreement post 9/11, 2001. It has played an important role in supervising the US- led international efforts for resolution of Afghan civil and ethnic conflicts and its reconstruction. With remarkable international consensus the UN has acted as a facilitator, provided technical and expert guidance and a semblance of legitimacy to the international efforts in the political and economic reconstruction of Afghanistan.*

*Keywords: UNAMA, ISAF, Bonn, Loya Jirgah, Af-Pak, Failed state, Warlord, State-building.*

### Introduction

Ever Since the Soviet Union's invasion on December 27, 1979, the United Nations has been deeply involved in Afghanistan. The nature of UN involvement has evolved with the changing nature of the dynamics of the Afghan conflict and its linkages with the power politics of international players. The United Nations has faced the challenges of guiding the establishment of peace and security in Afghanistan, facilitate international agreement leading to the Soviet withdrawal, intra-Afghan political dialogue, a peace agreement, state-building, nation-building, humanitarian assistance as well as measures for relief and rehabilitation in the war-torn country. The faith and confidence of the international community in the effectiveness and relevance of the United Nations in the stabilization of situations and restoring social economic and political fabrics of conflict-ridden countries are very much linked to its outcomes in Afghanistan.

Broadly speaking, Afghan conflict has passed through different phases which are indicated as follows;

- a) The Soviet Invasion, New Cold War and the United Nations, 1979-1991;
- b) Afghan civil war, Mujahideen factions and the victory of Taliban, 1992-96;
- c) The clerical dictatorship of the Taliban and its International Isolation, 1996-2001;

d) The war against terror, the Taliban and the establishment of a constitutional government, 2001-04;

e) Rebuilding Afghanistan, the Role of the US and the United Nations, The Current Phase

The present research article is an attempt to find out how the international community has availed of the forum and institutional effectiveness of the United Nations to realize their collective goals in Afghanistan. An attempt has been made to analyze the contradictions and convergence in the responses of concerned Powers in the United Nations to the Afghan Problem over four decades and the inadequacy of the UN-led international efforts for rebuilding Afghanistan's broken economic and political fabric.

### Soviet Invasion, New Cold War and the United Nations

Afghanistan emerged on the agenda of the international relations and the United Nations following the Soviet invasion on December 27, 1979. The Soviet Union had sent its troops into Afghanistan in which the then Afghan President Hafizullah Amin was killed and the new ruler Barbak Karmal justified the military action based on its invitation sent to the Soviet Union for military intervention as per Afghanistan -Soviet Union Treaty of friendship and cooperation of 1978. Barbak Karmal and Nazibullah ruled Afghanistan till 1992 on the sole basis of military and political support of the Soviet Union and against the will of the Afghan people, the international



community and UN resolutions.

The United States, the entire Western world and the overwhelming majority of the third world countries opposed the unwarranted Soviet military action and termed it as an invasion against a sovereign independent nonaligned country. In the United Nations Security Council a draft resolution calling upon the Security Council to deeply deplore the armed intervention in Afghanistan was put to vote which received 13 votes in favor to 2 against. Thus, due to the use of the Soviet veto, the draft resolution could not be passed. Subsequently, on January 8, 1980 Mexico and the Philippines moved a procedural resolution for the consideration of the Security Council which received 12 votes in favor, 2 against and one abstention and, thus, the resolution 462(1980) was adopted by the Council. The resolution stated that the Security Council has taken into consideration that the lack of unanimity of permanent members had prevented it from exercising its primary responsibility and thus it decided to call an emergency session of the General Assembly to examine the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security.

Consequently, in the General Assembly on 14 January 1980 Pakistan on behalf of 24 countries introduced a draft resolution which the UN Assembly adopted by a record vote of 104 to 18 with 18 abstention. The resolution called for an immediate, unconditional and total withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan to enable its people to determine their form of government. It also urged all parties concerned to assist in bringing about the speedy withdrawal of foreign forces and as per the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, creating conditions essential for the voluntary return of Afghan refugees to their home.

The General Assembly further in its resolution of 15 November 1984 called for an immediate withdrawal of all foreign troops from Afghanistan and reiterated that the preservation of sovereignty, territorial integrity, political independence and nonaligned character of Afghanistan was essential for a peaceful solution. A careful reading of the voting pattern in the UN General Assembly reveals that the draft resolution condemning the Soviet invasion was passed by an overwhelming majority which increased from 104 in January 1980 to 124 in November 1987.

The number of countries voting against the resolution fluctuated between 18 to 23 and the majority of these countries belonged to the Soviet bloc. However, the number of abstention decreased gradually from 18 in January 1980 to 10 in 1987. India remained a permanent absentee throughout. The voting behaviour of member countries served as a mirror of international politics during the new cold war.

The responses of various powers to the Soviet Invasion in Afghanistan were determined by their strategic and political interests in the context of the new cold war. The US response was expressed in the Carter Doctrine which read as:

“Any attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America and it will be repelled by use of any means necessary including military force.”<sup>1</sup>

#### **The US President spelled out five specific points of the doctrine**

- The Rapid Deployment Force was being quickly assembled;
- The enhanced naval presence in the Indian Ocean and acquisition of base facilities in the Gulf and northeast littoral;
- A commitment to the defence of Pakistan and transfer of significant quantities of arms and dollars to that country
- Strong political and military ties with other countries in the region
- A ‘collective security framework’ for the region under the US auspices”<sup>2</sup>

The Carter Doctrine and Ronald Reagan’s policies of a new arms race and cold war brought in an unprecedented global strategic rivalry which transformed Pakistan as a frontline state against the Soviet Union. For Pakistan’s military regime of Gen. Zia ul Haq, it provided a new opportunity to build Pakistan’s military infrastructure, acquisition of arms and economic assistance. Pakistan refused to recognize the communist regime of Barak Karmal and instead provided refugee status to Mujahideen rebels on its territory. Mujahids launched a jihad against communists with the support of Pakistan and



the US. The United Nations remained a mute spectator and turned into a playground of new cold war rivalry in which the USSR remained on the defensive and isolated.

India's response and dilemma were expressed by Brajesh Mishra, special envoy to the UN, as follow:

- Moscow sent its troops to Afghanistan at the request of the government in Kabul;
- India was opposed to the presence of foreign troops and bases in any country;
- But the Soviet Union had assured India that would withdraw its troops when asked to do so by the Afghan government and New Delhi had no reason to doubt the assurances, particularly from a friendly country like the Soviet Union with whom India had close ties;
- India hopes that the Soviet Union will not remain there a day longer than necessary;
- India disapproved of attempts by certain outside powers in encouraging disturbances and subversions inside Afghanistan;
- Construction of military bases and pumping of arms into the countries of the region posed a threat to India's security"<sup>3</sup>

Responses of various powers in the United Nations instead of finding a way out of the Afghan problem further exacerbated it leading to internationalization of its domestic conflict. Afghans would have to wait for a favourable international situation in order to take initiatives for settlement of their conflict. Mikhael Gorbachev's new foreign policy thinking, Geneva Accords and the end of the cold war provided a conducive atmosphere leading to the breaking of linkages of Afghan conflict with the cold war politics.

The success of the United Nations during the last phase of the Cold War lay in providing a forum and a framework for Afghanistan- Pakistan dialogue as well as the US-Soviet Union negotiations which ultimately paved the way for the conclusion of the Geneva Accords in April 1988. The mediation of the UN Secretary-General Perez de Ceullar bore fruits and the Geneva Accords provided a face-saving

exit to the Soviet leadership leading to the peaceful withdrawal from the decade-old Afghan conflict. The Accords could become a reality as a result of the impartial and constructive role of the United Nations as well as the Soviet leader Mikhael Gorbachev's new foreign policy and easing of cold war tensions between the two Super Powers.

### **Taliban and the War against Terror**

Pakistan's military and its ISI decided to convert the Taliban into a militia and subsequently, the Taliban militia became a contender for military and political power in Afghanistan. The Taliban with the military and logistical support of the Pakistani Army won the civil wars during 1994-96 and established its military and political supremacy over more than 90% of Afghan territory. Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates were the three countries which recognised the new Taliban government in Afghanistan. Quite Ironically the Taliban government received a warm welcome from the public at large as they hoped a sigh of relief from the insecurity of mujahideen fratricidal civil wars and torture on women.

From the beginning, the Taliban behaved like a foreign power within Afghanistan as its extremist Islamic ideology had no roots in Afghan traditions. The Taliban regime worked at the behest of Pakistan and became subservient to Pakistani design of converting Afghanistan into strategic depth in the event of any future conflict with India. The United Nations also showed no serious concern in the traumatic changes taking place within Afghanistan as no important foreign powers had any interest there. It is to be noted here that the United Nations Secretary-General appealed to the international community for help and the General Assembly passed resolutions expressing concern on the Afghanistan situation. However, as per the provisions of the UN Charter, the UN could play any constructive role in the domestic conflict and contribute to the maintenance of peace and security under Chapter VII of the UN Charter only if member countries of the Security Council were willing for it. In this case, it was not to be so.

Though the UN Security Council did not take any punitive action against Taliban regime under chapter VII of the Charter, yet the United Nations passed a number of resolutions against Taliban's treatment of women, its massive human rights violations



and its harbouring of terrorist safe havens, illegal economic activities like poppy cultivation, narcotics trade, and destruction of pre-Islamic heritage like Buddha's Bamiyan statues. A series of UN General Assembly resolutions condemned illegal activities and draconian policies of the Taliban regime but the Security Council remained a mute spectator.

The indifference of the UN Security Council was because the Clinton Administration of the US was not serious about the Taliban's excesses and the US oil companies like UNOCAL were still hopeful that the Taliban might succeed in providing political stability to Afghanistan. The US oil companies were looking for a business in oil and gas pipelines from Central Asian fields to Pakistan. Clinton Administration had virtually outsourced its Afghan policy to Pakistan whose governments were working with the Taliban for securing strategic depth against India and export terrorism to Kashmir valley. With these considerations in mind, the Clinton Administration turned a blind eye to excesses committed by the Taliban.

International terrorism was still not on the agenda of the United Nations or of the US Administration. The US viewed India's concerns on terrorism as a local issue in the framework of India-Pakistan relations, a matter of Kashmiris' national aspirations and a case of human rights violations by Indian security forces. It seemed in the decade after the end of the Cold War the United Nations had become a tool of the US policies as other permanent members were not willing to assert on issues of international concern. Apart from occasional statements of moral indignation, the international community and the UN did nothing. A dramatic change appeared in the Afghan situation with the declaration of war on terror by the US' Bush Administration following the massive terrorist attack on the US and the fall of the twin towers in New York on 9/11. The Bush Administration blamed the Al Qaeda and its leader Osama bin Laden for conspiring and organising the terror attack and demanded the Taliban leadership for surrender and hand over of Bin Laden to the US for judicial trial. This marked a sea change in the US attitude towards the Taliban regime and so also of the United Nations.

The UN Security Council fully supported the US case and it passed resolution 1373 and 1377 (2001) declaring the illegality of terrorist violence anywhere and in any form, irrespective of ideological

colour, and declared international terrorism as a threat to international peace and security. The resolution 1377 demanded actions to be taken by states to eliminate the scourge of terrorism by denying financial and other forms of support to terrorism from their soil. The resolutions demanded international punitive action against countries harbouring terrorism or found to be providing support to terrorism. Thus, for terrorist activities from their soil, no state could plead innocence and they were to be held responsible for such illegal activities from their soil. Thus, for the terror activities of non-state actors, the states were to be held responsible who provided support and sanctuaries to them. Henceforth no moral or ideological arguments were to be invoked in any defence or favour of terrorism.

In the event of refusal by the Taliban regime to hand over Osama bin Laden, the US declared war against the Taliban as the immediate theatre of the global war against terror. Backed by recent UN Security Council resolutions the US invoked Article 51 of the UN Charter and launched an attack on Taliban justifying its use of force in self defence. It was not a case of peace enforcement action under chapter VII rather a case of unilateral or collective use of force in self defence to which the UN Security Council willingly submitted. Due to the UN Security Council's recent resolutions, the international community sympathized with the US as the victim of terrorism.

#### **The Bonn process, Constitutional Government and the UN**

The war against the Taliban acquired overwhelming support of the international community as expressed in the UN General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. The aerial bombardment by the US along with the ground support from Northern Alliance compelled the Taliban to leave Kabul and subsequently, Northern Alliance headed by Hamid Karzai formed the transitional administration. However, the Taliban never accepted the defeat rather they only made a tactical retreat to southern Afghanistan.

With the removal of the Taliban from Kabul, an intra-Afghan dialogue among various non-Taliban groups took place at Bonn under the auspices of the UN. Bonn Agreement facilitated a



transitional administration headed by Hamid Karzai to be followed by a constitutional government as per the provisions of a new constitution. Afghans' representatives framed a new constitution that was approved by the traditional Afghan national Loya jirga. The US patronage and the UN supervision proved to be a boon for Afghanistan and facilitated its painful transition towards a constitutional government in the post-Taliban era. The active role of the United Nations henceforth could have been possible due to the new international consensus against terrorism and international commitment to reconstruction and state-building in Afghanistan. A new international consensus and commitment to not let Afghanistan again be a haven for international terrorism helped the UN in playing an active role in Afghanistan's reconstruction.

The Bonn Agreement could have been possible due to the role of an impartial peace broker and good offices of the United Nations. The formation of the new constitution and its approval by the Loya Jirga inaugurated a new era in Afghanistan's political history. The Agreement called for elections which were held under UN supervision in June 2004. The UN-supervised the conduct of the entire electoral process from voter registration to the final declaration of result which provided much-needed legitimacy to the new government. Hamid Karzai was declared elected and thus he formed the first constitutionally legitimate government since the coup against monarchy led by Mohammed Daoud in 1973. The establishment of a constitutional government marked the completion of the Bonn process. However, the gigantic task of state and nation-building remained unfinished. Internal security, humanitarian assistance, economic reconstruction, and recovery were the urgent challenges to be addressed. The establishment of a duly elected constitutional government marked the completion of the UN-supervised Bonn process.

The architects of Bonn recognised that historically, foreign interventions in Afghanistan have been unsuccessful. So they adopted an approach of minimum necessary force called as the idea of the light footprint model. The original mandate for the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) stressed that "UN bodies should use a minimal number of international staff and focus on a timely transfer of power to Afghan authority. Furthermore, the mandate laid out a detailed timeline for the

transfer of authority, from the initial Afghan Interim Authority to a Transitional Authority, and finally to the elected Government of Afghanistan. By attempting to implement a light footprint approach after 2001, they hoped that a minimised UN presence would lead to a strong and stable Afghanistan." <sup>4</sup> As the situation in Afghanistan unfolded, however, the role of the UN shifted in response to a multitude of factors. This shift is illustrated by the subtly changing language of the yearly Security Council Resolutions that renewed UNAMA's mandate.

### **Security Challenge and the International Security Assistance Force**

Besides helping in political transition, the United Nations assumed a vital role in providing security, economic recovery and humanitarian assistance. Concerning the most essential security need, the UN did not engage itself in any peacekeeping activities by sending an impartial contingent of multi-national force. Instead, the Security Council passed a resolution, which authorised the NATO-led multi-national International Security Force to undertake the task of providing security in Afghanistan. "United Nations Security Council resolution 1386, adopted unanimously on 20 December 2001, after reaffirming all resolutions on the situation in Afghanistan, particularly resolutions 1378 (2001) and 1383 (2001), the Council authorised the establishment of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to assist the Afghan interim authority in the maintenance of security in Kabul and surrounding areas." <sup>5</sup>

Top of Form Bottom of Form The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) was a security mission established by NATO and led by the US as per provisions of the UN Security Council resolution to assist Afghanistan in rebuilding key government institutions. The ISAF was also engaged in the war with the Taliban insurgents and the Al Qaeda. ISAF was initially charged with providing security in Kabul and its surrounding areas from insurgents and warlords and to allow for the establishment of the transitional administration headed by Hamid Karzai. In October 2003, the UN Security Council authorized the expansion of the ISAF mission throughout Afghanistan, and ISAF subsequently expanded the mission over the whole of the country." From 2006 to 2011, ISAF had become increasingly involved in more intensive combat operations in southern and



eastern Afghanistan. The intensity of the combat faced by contributing nations varied greatly, with the United States sustaining the most casualties overall. In early 2010, there were at least 700 military bases inside Afghanistan. About 400 of these were used by the US-led NATO forces and 300 by ANSF. Thus, NATO forces constituted the backbone of the ISAF".<sup>6</sup>

Following the US President Barack Obama's new Af-Pak strategy and his announcement of the withdrawal of the US troops, the ISAF ceased combat operations and was disbanded in December 2014. However, the US has retained some troops behind in an advisory role and support to Afghan national security forces. The mission of ISAF was to enable Afghan security forces ultimately to take care of their security by themselves. In July 2014 after a disputed election for the President, UN mediation with the US assistance helped in forming a national unity government headed by Ashraf Ghani and his CEO Abdullah Abdullah. The ISAF thus helped in maintaining security under difficult circumstances. International Security Assistance Force has thus completed its job with modest results and Afghan security forces are in command since January 2015.

#### **UN Sanctions against International Terrorist Organisations and individuals**

Concerning holding the states responsible for sponsoring and supporting terrorist activities from their soil in pursuant with the Security Council resolution 1373 and 1377, the UN took actions by declaring specified individuals and organisations involved in terrorist activities as global terrorists and thus demanding upon the states concerned to take appropriate actions against them. After such a declaration, it becomes incumbent upon the concerned states to freeze financial assets and put the terrorists under detention and thus prevent them from doing any terrorist activity. This type of steps by the United Nations has compelled Pakistan to take some steps against terrorist activities from its territory directed against India and Afghanistan. Pakistan had to detain Hafeez Saeed, the chief of *Jamat-ud-Dawa* and do something to placate the international opinion. Of course, the UN Security Council resolutions are not free from politics. e.g. the proposal for declaring Pakistan based, *Jaish e - Mohammad* chief Azhar Masood as an international terrorist, was vetoed by China.

The UN Security Council contributed to the Government of Afghanistan's reconciliation efforts through passing resolution 1988, "which paved the way for separating the Taliban and Al Qaeda sanctions lists and to de-listing fourteen former Taliban members who have joined the peace process. Going forward, the continued support of the United Nations for the Afghan-led process will be crucial to the success of Afghanistan's Peace and Reintegration Programme (APRP). The UN, with its extensive experience in political negotiations and conflict resolution, can be a valuable support for the peace and reconciliation process in Afghanistan. The UN role can also be envisaged as supporting the Afghan Government's efforts and providing facilities for the APRP, while simultaneously supporting the framework of regional diplomacy".<sup>7</sup>

Thus, the UN Security Council has prepared a list of individuals and Organisations as global terrorists who are a threat to international peace and security. This has acted as pressure on the countries and to make them desist from being a haven for terrorism. The US also made a distinction between good Taliban and bad Taliban. Those Taliban members who agreed to disarm and take part in the peace process were encouraged and their names have been dropped from the list of sanctioned terrorists. Thus, the UN by various means of carrot and stick has encouraged the Taliban to engage in a dialogue with the Government of Afghanistan. The UN has also been trying to facilitate dialogue among various stakeholders. However, the Taliban has not shown much interest in the peace process, which remains the main stumbling block to peace and stability there. Taliban has demanded the complete withdrawal of all US forces as the precondition for taking part in the talks. The UN is ever willing for facilitating dialogue among all stakeholders in Afghanistan but the initiative lies with the Government of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the Taliban.

#### **Reconstruction and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA)**

After the overthrow of the Taliban, the UN took the initiative to develop a highly ambitious state-building process in Afghanistan, aiming to reform and rebuild one of the world's poorest and most conflict-ridden countries. The approach was different from previous peace operations. Instead of running a



civilian transitional administration as in East Timor and Kosovo, the UN decided on a 'light footprint' approach which meant that Afghanistan should be built by Afghans themselves and the international community would provide only a helping hand. Different countries would take the lead role in different sectors in building Afghans' capability. The idea was that Afghanistan should develop itself by taking charge from the beginning. That would ensure that a more sustainable and independent governance structure would be established.

Concerning providing assistance in humanitarian crises and facilitating economic recovery and rehabilitation, the UN has provided a nodal agency namely the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). UNAMA was established in part to facilitate the implementation of the 2001 Bonn Agreement. In addition to this landmark document, two subsequent agreements between the Afghan government and the international community outline the overall Afghanistan reconstruction strategy; the 2006 Afghanistan Compact and the 2008 Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS). The Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board (JCMB), of which UNAMA is co-chair, serves as a coordinating and monitoring mechanism for the implementation of these agreements. Besides, several international conferences have provided guidance and built international support for the way forward in Afghanistan.

The role and activities of the UNAMA have been following the mandate provided by the UN Security Council resolutions. Every year by fresh UN resolutions the mandate of UNAMA is renewed which authorise all such international assistance for security, reconstruction, prevention of drug trafficking, assistance in humanitarian crisis, etc. 'The role of UNAMA is to promote peace and stability in Afghanistan and to lead the international community in this effort. In support of the government of Afghanistan, UNAMA is tasked to coordinate efforts to rebuild the country and strengthen governance, development, and stability and security'.<sup>8</sup>

However, in practice, in light of the number of donors and their national priorities, the coordination role has been difficult for UNAMA to implement. The UN relief workers have worked tirelessly in very difficult circumstances and some of them have

been killed by the Taliban who are opposed to any reconstruction activities there. The donor countries have provided funding and international support and the United Nations Assistance Mission has provided coordination and technical guidance with ground-level implementation.

UNAMA continues to play the role of lead international coordinator as outlined in UN Security Council Resolution no. 1974, 17 March 2011, which stresses that the "UNAMA and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General will continue to lead the international civilian efforts following the London and Kabul Conference Communiqué. Such a role, as laid out in the resolution, involves co-chairing the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board (JCMB), in cooperation with the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), as well as leading international civilian efforts. The activities of the UNAMA are within their mandate and guided by the principle of reinforcing Afghan sovereignty, ownership, and leadership. The lead coordinating role has been central to the mandate of the UN from the outset of the Bonn Process."<sup>9</sup>

The UN has played the role as the coordinator in implementing the international assistance providing a semblance of legitimacy to the international efforts in Afghanistan. The humanitarian role of the UN has become crucial, particularly during emergencies, which require urgent assistance and relief aid. The UN has helped to make basic humanitarian services available to the Afghan people, such as food, drinking water, and healthcare, especially for rural populations who are out of the reach of the central government. UNAMA's responsibility as the lead coordinator of all UN relief, recovery and reconstruction efforts has also ensured that its activities are linked with the Government of Afghanistan's work.

The UN Security Council resolutions provided that UNAMA would strive for peace and development which has to be Afghan-led and Afghan-owned. This made the UN role in Afghanistan's reconstruction qualitatively different from the UN roles in other conflict zones. The task of the UN became more complicated as the US and Pakistan have divergent interests and objectives. The work of the UN will be largely futile if individual states are working at cross-purposes with the UN's peacebuilding efforts.



Short-term military gains may have devastating long term political consequences, as was the case with supporting local militias and warlords on the part of the US Administrations.

### Obama's Af-Pak Strategy and the United Nations

The role of the United Nations in the resolution of international conflicts has very much depended upon the US Administration's attitude towards the UN. While the Bush Administration had adopted a unilateralism foreign policy approach, the Obama Administration followed a policy of building international cooperation on Afghanistan's question. While Bush adopted a militarist strategy, Obama announced his Af-Pak strategy on March 27, 2009, which combined a surge in military strategy with diplomatic, political and development strategy. While Bush had an Afghanistan centric strategy, Obama followed a strategy that treated Afghanistan and Pakistan as a single region suggesting that the roots of terrorism from Afghanistan cannot be eliminated unless terror infrastructure from Pakistan is uprooted. To defeat and dismantle terrorism from Afghanistan, Obama adopted a policy of building a partnership with Pakistan and pressuring it to desist from using terror as a foreign policy strategy against its neighbours mainly India.

Obama's new strategy helped in ensuring greater international cooperation and donors' contributions to Afghanistan's reconstruction. International community-supported Obama's initiatives in the United Nations with hope and determination to save Afghanistan from the menace of terrorism and prevent the resurgence of the Taliban. Obama's strategy succeeded in ensuring a peaceful transfer of power to Ashraf Ghani as new President after a disputed election in June 2014 with complaints of rigging and electoral fraud. The US Secretary of State John Kerry succeeded in persuading Ashraf Ghani and his rival Abdullah Abdullah to agree to a power-sharing deal in the interest of peace and stability in Afghanistan. Obama's strategy of taking the United Nations along helped in ensuring international goodwill for the success of his Af-Pak strategy. An Afghan-owned and Afghan-led security and reconstruction strategy has been the objective of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan to which Obama declared its support. Obama as per his promises withdrew US troops and the ISAF handed over the job of

maintaining security to the Afghan National Army. Despite challenges and growing insurgency and violence by Taliban and ISIS Afghan forces are in charge of maintaining security in their country and it testifies to the positive contribution of the United Nations to strife-torn Afghanistan.

Underscoring the importance of continued international support for Afghanistan, the Security Council "welcomed the agreement between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Afghan Government to establish a post-2014 non-combat mission in that country to aid national defence and security forces. Through the unanimous adoption of resolution 2189 (2014), the 15-nation body looked forward to the new mission's leadership in working with the Afghan Government and cooperating with the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General."<sup>10</sup> The text noted that the bilateral Status of Forces Agreement between NATO and Afghanistan, signed on 30 September and ratified by the Afghan Parliament on 27 November 2014, provided a sound legal basis for the Resolute Support Mission, which would train, advise and assist national forces after the withdrawal of the International Security Assistance Force on 31 December, 2014.

Extending the annual practice of renewed mandate of the UNAMA the UN Security Council on September 17, 2019, in its resolution adopted;

"Provide outreach as well as good offices to support, if requested by and in close consultation with the Government of Afghanistan, the Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process, proposing and supporting confidence-building measures within the framework of the Afghan Constitution and with full respect for the implementation of measures and application of the procedures introduced by the Security Council in resolutions 1267 (1999), 1988 (2011) and its other relevant resolutions"<sup>11</sup>

The security Council called on UNAMA and the Special Representative to "further increase efforts to achieve greater coherence, coordination and efficiency among relevant United Nations Agencies, Funds and Programmes in Afghanistan with a view to maximizing their collective effectiveness in full alignment with the reform agenda of the Government of Afghanistan, and to continuing to lead international



civilian efforts aimed at reinforcing the role of Afghan institutions to perform their responsibilities with a view, in all UN programmes and activities to move towards a national implementation model.”<sup>12</sup>

However, under the Trump Administration, there are signals for the aggressive American nationalism with unilateralism orientation in its foreign policy. Whenever unilateralism has triumphed in the US foreign policy, the role and credibility of the United Nations have suffered. With the ascendancy of militarism in the United States, its donations to the UN are likely to suffer. Consequently, it will lead to shrinking in the relief, rehabilitation and developmental activities in Afghanistan and the rest of the failed - state societies which are badly dependent on the help of the United Nations and the international community. The Afghan stalemate and the failure in the resolution of the Afghan conflict are not to be viewed as the failure of the UN rather than the shortcomings of the policy and strategy of the Powers concerned and the US in particular.

### Conclusion

In late 2001, the Security Council authorized the United States “to overthrow the Taliban government, as an offensive against the terrorist al-Qaeda organization, said to be based in the country. The Council also authorized the US and its NATO allies to set up the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to provide military support for a newly established pro-Western government. In March 2002 the Council established the United Nations Assistance Mission for Afghanistan (UNAMA) to manage all UN humanitarian, relief, recovery and reconstruction activities. Despite (or perhaps because of) these military-centered initiatives, Afghanistan has remained a failed state”<sup>13</sup>

However, the continued threat of the Taliban, Islamic State (ISIS) and the disappointing situation in Afghanistan do raise questions on the effectiveness of the UN's role and its credibility in reconstructing post-conflict countries. This was largely due to the divergent strategic approaches of the US and Pakistan. Even, the commitments and policies of the US towards Afghanistan's state-building and reconstruction were based on short term considerations. The US policies strengthened the warlordism and illegal economy of poppy cultivation by non-Taliban warlords

and intense process weakened the foundations of centralised state. The US policies suffered from many self-contradictions. Despite the tremendous international goodwill and overwhelming support of important international power players in the Security Council and generous aid by foreign donors, the Afghan situation remains disappointing and the threat of terrorism remains ever more serious.

The four decades old Afghan conflict has been a test case for the United Nations. The UN has provided a much-needed legitimacy to the involvement of the international community in Afghan conflict after the events of September 9, 2001. The UN has not been completely successful. However, it can be reasonably said that the UN has at least helped in its conflict management and prevented its further deterioration into a serious international crisis that otherwise could have jeopardised international peace and security. Even today the country is not stabilised. It remains the theatre of Taliban insurgency and terrorism and now ISIS has established its tentacles there. AS long as the concerned Powers are not able to harmonise their strategic goals and policies, the potential of the UN in the resolution of the Afghan conflict and its reconstruction may not be fully realised. The concerns of the international community, particularly of the United States have been mainly to safeguard themselves from the threat of terrorism emanation from Afghan soil, and that has been the primary factor behind the role of the UN and that also has put limits on its success. A long term and sustained commitment of the international community to Afghanistan's reconstruction through the United Nations is badly needed.

There is widespread agreement in favour of the continuing role of the UN in the Afghan conflict situation. “As Afghanistan continues to transition full responsibility for security, governance, and development to the Government of Afghanistan, the UN will continue to play an important role in the coordination of international civilian activities and support of the Government in the years to come. The next decade of the UN's work in Afghanistan must be defined by effective support for Afghan leadership and ownership, which is central for building a peaceful, stable, and prosperous nation. For the transition process to succeed, the UN will be required to play a more enabling, facilitating and supporting role. The challenges of UN coherence and



the transition to Afghan leadership and ownership are the principal factors shaping the nature of the long-term engagement of the UN in the country. A thorough understanding of such challenges, as well as the UN's multifaceted, evolving role in Afghanistan, can be a starting point from which to draw lessons for enhancing the work of the United Nations in other regions as well."<sup>14</sup>

The United Nations thus has the potential to be an effective forum for facilitating international cooperation and it has the ability and expertise to provide guidance and institutional mechanisms necessary to bring order, peace, and development in post-conflict countries like Afghanistan. However, its effectiveness depends to a very large extent upon the strategic interests and coordination in objectives and policies of concerned foreign powers. The onus lies in the international community and the UN's role is limited to be a facilitator, a mediator, a mechanism with expertise and a forum for coordinated international action.

With the decrease in the interstate conflicts, the role and relevance of the UN is greater in intrastate civil conflicts. The international involvement in the resolution of civil conflicts in the failed state countries should be undertaken only under authorization and supervision of the United Nations. The success of the UN efforts in these matters depends upon a variety of factors and circumstances. The UN may be inadequate but there is no substitute for it. There is a need to strengthen the institutional effectiveness of the United Nations.

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## **Modi's Pakistan Policy: A Departure from the Past?**

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### **Abstract**

*Narendra Modi has skillfully adapted the policy towards Pakistan to further his domestic political agenda and promote Hindutva. He has pursued his foreign policy according to international norms and tried to marginalize Pakistan by highlighting its failure on the front of eliminating infrastructures of terrorism from its territory. Modi has made terrorism and security the center stage of his policy towards Pakistan. However, he has not succeeded in the international isolation of Pakistan rather Pakistan has become the fulcrum of the emerging regional hegemony of China and a vital pillar of the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative.*

**Keywords:** *Hindutva, Balakot, Surgical strike, CPEC, Pracharak, Pulwama, Shimla Agreement*

### **Introduction**

Narendra Modi has inaugurated a foreign policy towards Pakistan which has deep domestic and regional implications. Pakistan has become a domestic obsession for India's public opinion. Normally on foreign policy issues, there is a broad national consensus and ordinary citizens do not show much interest in it. But with regard to Pakistan, there is a different story altogether. Historically India's foreign policy towards Pakistan has remained under the shadow of two-nation theory and memories of the bitterness associated with the partition. All the regimes prior to Modi have tried to heal the bitterness and forge unity and peace between Hindus and Muslims and hence tried to promote peace and friendship with Pakistan.

Modi government has rekindled the memories of partition and tried to correct what the Hindu majoritarian view considers the historical wrongs committed by the previous secular establishments. However, in the contemporary world, no foreign policy can be conducted on ideological lines and the Modi government has found itself caught in the dilemma between ideological Hindutva view and realist view of

national interest. So far Modi government has followed the foreign policy keeping in view the national interest in which security and terrorism have taken a centre stage with regard to Pakistan. He has tried to blur the distinctions between Pakistan, Muslims, and terrorism in his election rallies for short-term political gains at home but has steered foreign policy according to international norms for the international audience with the primacy of national security interests.

### **Modi's Legacies**

The foreign policy of India since Narendra Modi assumed office on 26 May, 2014 has marked a remarkable continuity with the past along with a few fundamental changes. The continuity is owing to the persistence of the basic character of the democratic political system, political economy and geopolitical setting of India and the change is owing to the nature of the political regime and its ideological orientation. Since the inauguration of the new economic policy in the post-cold war era, India's foreign policy has witnessed basic continuity with the changing politics in India under the premiership of Narsimha Rao, United Front Governments, Atal Behari Vajpayee, and



Dr. Manmohan Singh. The economic growth and democratic political stability despite coalition governments have helped India to carve out its own strategic space in the changing global balance of powers as a result of globalization.

India has always regarded the Shimla Agreement as diplomatically advantageous and thus willing to discuss all outstanding issues including Kashmir in Composite Dialogue. In the Islamabad Declaration signed by the PM Vajpayee and Gen. Pervaiz Musharraf of January 2004, "Pakistan had accepted its commitment not to allow the territories under its control for terrorist activities against India."<sup>1</sup> Hurriyat leaders' meeting with anyone including Pakistan's ambassador has been a routine practice in the past and the previous governments had allowed it on the assumption that separatism could be tackled better by negotiation and people's participation in the democratic process

The rise of Narendra Modi has marked the emergence of the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) and its Hindutva ideology at the centre stage of Indian politics. In the current decade, there has been no major change in India's external environment. However, Modi Government has been able to galvanize India's public opinion and a degree of self-confidence is visible in the practice of foreign policy. Muscular nationalist rhetoric with regard to Pakistan can be noticed in Modi's foreign policy so much so that Pakistan has become an issue in India's democratic electoral politics. However, muscular nationalism is more of domestic rhetoric rather than a feature of foreign policy. The supremacy of national interest, preservation of strategic autonomy in relation with great powers, the primacy of neighbourhood, military preparedness, promotion of trade and investment, strategic partnership with all major powers, and deepening of multi-dimensional relations with the USA are the striking features of Modi's foreign policy.

Though the Modi government has claimed *SABKA SAATH, SABKA VIKAS, SABKA VISHWAS*, as the motto of his government, many Indians believe that *Hindutva* is the guiding principle for Narendra Modi's vision of

Pakistan. There seems to be an apparent contradiction between Modi's declared objectives and his ideological beliefs. Explaining the concept and significance of Hindutva in 2012, on the twentieth anniversary of the destruction of the *Babri masjid*, Swapan Dasgupta, the BJP ideologue, and current Rajya Sabha nominated Member of Indian Parliament wrote in *Outlook*:

"Ayodhya years coincided with the gravest crisis of the ideological consensus forged by Jawaharlal Nehru. The disintegration of the Soviet Union, the rise of radical Islamism in the neighbourhood, and the failure of the 'socialistic' way to deliver economic growth led to old shibboleths being questioned. Coming in the midst of this uncertainty, Ayodhya pushed the old order over the cliff. Later on, India moved tentatively towards market economics, material prosperity and a more pragmatic relationship with the world".<sup>2</sup>

### **Hindutva: Breakdown of National Consensus**

The rise of the Bhartiya Janata Party has brought Hindutva at the centre stage of Indian politics leading to dilution in its fragile secular fabric and a challenge to its pluralistic society. "The victory of the BJP led by Narendra Modi in 2014 was the next step in the march of the political Hindu. The Hindutva project – or political Hinduism – attempts to overcome so-called Hindu timidity in strategic and economic spheres. Hindutva emphasizes overcoming internal differences in Hindu society due to caste segregation and seeks to unify all under the flag of a consolidated Hindu political movement. It has visions of the self, the enemy, how to fight the enemy and ensure progress for itself".<sup>3</sup>

The Modi government has been trying to take these notions beyond with strategy and political acumen. Modi has skilfully tried to manage the contradictions between *Vikas* and *Hindutva* and so he seems to be politically succeeding. He talks of development and the Constitution of India as the guiding principle of his government but his actions indicate a slow and consistent movement towards the Hindutva project. "While many commentators argued in

2014 that Modi had put Hindutva on the back burner and fought the general elections on the agenda of development, there is no such demarcation in his own world view, there's no contradiction between the two. It's one and the same image".<sup>4</sup>

The hardcore ideological beliefs acquired by Narendra Modi as RSS *pracharak* was bound to surface in his policy initiatives soon after he earned international recognition and consolidated his political power. For the first time, the government of Narendra Modi has taken care to publicly display a departure from Nehruvian premises. New terms have been coined to underline the difference though there is a substantive continuity. Strategic autonomy in place of non-alignment is one such example. His vision of a New India talks of a militarily strong India ready to give a tough military response to any Pakistani misadventure or acts of terrorism.

Differences are emphasized for the purposes of domestic electoral politics and the slogan of Congress-*mukt Bharat*. Hindutva and majoritarian politics have led to the demonization of the 'Muslim other' and the political slogan of Pakistan as the enemy. This is a clear departure from the Gandhian vision of Hindu-Muslim unity, Nehruvian vision of a secular nation, friendship with Pakistan despite the issue of Kashmir dispute, and Vajpayee- Manmohan Singh's vision of talks with Pakistan despite terrorism. However, the differences are more in rhetoric and less in substance. In many respects still one can find the actual practice of foreign policy on the lines of his predecessors.

Narendra Modi invited all the heads of governments of South Asian nations to participate in his swearing-in ceremony in May 2014. It gave the impression of Modi's desire for friendship, peace, and cooperation with India's neighbours particularly Pakistan. Modi also paid an unscheduled private visit to Lahore to meet Pakistani Premier Nawaz Sharif. Personal bonhomie of Modi abruptly came to an end when in 2015 'India cancelled foreign secretary-level talks with Pakistan after Hurriyat Conference leaders insisted on meeting Pakistan's ambassador

in New Delhi before the Indo-Pak talks. Modi insisted that Pakistan has no business in meeting Hurriyat leaders on the Kashmir issue.'<sup>5</sup>

### **Departure from the Past?**

However, PM Modi departed from the previous practice of tackling terrorism and separatism by talks and started a policy of isolating and defeating terrorism and extremism not by negotiation but by militaristic posturing and hard power. Terror attacks on Pathankot airbase and Uri army headquarters marked a turning point and the Modi government declared that terror and talks could not go together. Consequently India refused to attend the SAARC summit which was to be held in Islamabad in 2016. Under the SAARC constitution, its summit meeting cannot be held if any one of its members is not present. Thus, owing to India's hard power posturing SAARC has become dysfunctional and has been in a coma since then.

India has refused to have any dialogue with Pakistan until Pakistan shows a verifiable elimination of all infrastructures of terror from its soil as promised in the Islamabad statement in January 2004. Relations with Pakistan have frozen and there are no indications of dialogue with Pakistan as it would be very difficult for Pakistan's political leadership to come up with Modi's expectations other than terror front. Within Pakistan civilian political leaderships have found themselves on a weak footing vis-a-vis religious extremist forces and the army. Whenever there are chances of the India-Pakistan peace process, the extremist forces have resorted to terrorist attacks on India in order to derail the peace process.

By not talking to the political leadership, India can only strengthen the religious extremist forces and the army in Pakistan. Democracy has very weak foundations in Pakistan. The previous governments in New Delhi have shown understanding of the dilemma of the civilian leadership in Pakistan. Dr. Manmohan Singh regarded peace with Pakistan as a prime objective of his foreign policy despite the charges of being weak on the terror front after the 26 November 2008 terror attack on Mumbai. However, Modi



Government does not seem to have patience for engaging with the Pakistani leadership. Surgical strikes by India's armed forces and airstrike on *Balakot* terror camps inside Pakistan occupied Kashmir by Indian Air Force on 26 February, 2019 before India's general elections have helped Modi to galvanize India's public opinion. As a result, Pakistan has become a domestic political issue. India's polity is fractured on the issue of Hindutva and it has its foreign policy underpinnings with regard to Pakistan.

The Indian Parliament's abrupt abrogation of Article 370 of the Indian Constitution, dilution of the status of Jammu and Kashmir to the status of a Union Territory, and the Citizenship Amendment Act have been said to be purely internal matters of India. However, these moves are bound to have an impact on India's attitude towards normalizing relations with Pakistan. Under Modi's government, it would be electorally compulsive for Hindutva - led political dispensation in India to pursue a policy of hostility towards Pakistan. The way Pakistan and Islamophobia has been used as an electoral strategy in India over the last five years. One tends to get the impression that in the foreseeable future there is hardly any prospect for India-Pakistan talks.

Earlier Pakistan did not figure much in India's global vision. All the previous governments in New Delhi had followed the policy of peace and friendship with Pakistan and viewed Pakistan as a foreign policy issue to be managed diplomatically. Atal Behari Vajpayee-led NDA government also followed the foreign policy based on national consensus and friendship with Pakistan. He regarded peace and cooperation with Pakistan as essential to the economic prosperity and rise of India in international relations. They all had successfully attempted for a national consensus on the issues of foreign policy including Pakistan. India has always felt self-confident to deal with any threat from Pakistan with calm and maturity without overt militaristic posturing.

However, making a departure from the past, the Modi government has made India's

foreign policy Pakistan-focused, at least in political sloganeering. A nation with great power ambitions and potentialities will not be able to realize its due role if it remains fixated with a minor neighbour which is in a deep internal mess. Pakistan is struggling to preserve its democracy and national social fabric. Manmohan Singh's government can be given the credit to have helped in facilitating the first-ever peaceful democratic transition of power in Pakistan through its policy of dialogue, peace, and harmony.

The *Sharm ElSheikh* declaration signed in July 2009 between India and Pakistan on the outskirts of the Non-aligned summit in Egypt indicated India's understanding of the complexities of terrorism and militarism in Pakistan where the civilian political leadership struggled in combating religious extremism. The declaration enjoined India and Pakistan to continue the dialogue process amidst the threats from extremism and militarism. Dr. Manmohan Singh's government believed that dialogue and political process will have a check on extremism, terrorism, and militarism and will help in salvaging democracy within Pakistan. Dr. Singh called Yusuf Raza Gilani, the Prime Minister of Pakistan as the messenger of peace.

Terrorism is certainly a problem but India should think seriously that is it worth allowing it to dictate the entire gamut of relations with Pakistan for an indefinite time?. In the larger interests of its own people, India needs to keep engaged at least with civil society in Pakistan and allow people-to-people relations between the two countries to grow. A stable democratic and prosperous Pakistan free from extremism and terrorism would be beneficial for India as well. India as the largest democracy in the world and the most dominant power in South Asia has greater stakes and responsibilities for strengthening democracy, peace, and prosperity in the region.

Given that the 2019 general elections were preceded by hostilities with Pakistan, Modi 2.0 cannot backtrack on its hardline position of isolating Pakistan until the neighboring country addresses the problem of terrorist bases on its soil.

“However, this strategy of isolating Pakistan now poses a major obstacle to India’s Neighborhood First Policy, leading the Modi government to strategically re-draw the boundaries of its neighborhood and [build its relationship with BIMSTEC \(Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation\)](#), a regional grouping that excludes Pakistan. India’s [Act East Policy](#) also benefits from this reorientation since BIMSTEC members include Myanmar and Thailand.”<sup>6</sup>

### **India’s Dilemma and Modi’s Strategic Shifts**

Modi’s Pakistan policy does not seem to be succeeding. There was a serious intelligence failure to prevent the Pulwama terror attack on the CRPF convoy on the eve of general elections in May 2019. Pointing out the lacunae in Modi’s Pakistan policy Sumit Ganguly observes that “Modi’s government has also failed to formulate a military strategy that might significantly hinder if not altogether undermine Pakistan’s resort to an asymmetric war strategy that relies on the use of terrorist organizations. To that end, it has made only half-hearted attempts to secure the porous border with Pakistan through the use of fences, sensors, and drones. However, it has not made the necessary investments in perimeter security and has failed to ramp up both electronic and human intelligence-gathering efforts.”<sup>7</sup>

Despite the wide acknowledgment of Pakistan as a haven of terrorism and its economic difficulties, its geopolitical location, and strategic significance are in its favor, Pakistan has considerably succeeded in warding off India’s designs of its international isolation. Pakistan has further cultivated its relations with China, Russia, Afghanistan, and the US would not abandon Pakistan no matter how much India cries. Russia has started arms supply to Pakistan bringing the two countries closer. “PM Modi’s foreign policy has not been able to achieve its objectives whereas Pakistan has been able to maintain friendly relations with our neighbors, in fact, improved its relations with Afghanistan, China, Russia, and Iran.”<sup>8</sup>

### **Afghanistan Factor**

Besides Pakistan, Indian leadership has faced a serious dilemma in Afghanistan. India has maintained good friendly relations with all Afghan governments except the period of the Taliban rule during 1996-2001. In the post 9/11, 2001 era, India has made a substantial contribution to the peace and development of Afghanistan through its soft power investments there. Taliban never surrendered and re-emerged with substantial military control over the large parts of Afghanistan and the Government’s control confined to Kabul. Taliban has retained hostility towards India though the Afghan government and its people have shown overtly friendship towards India. Under these circumstances Dr. Ashraf Ghani took oath on March 9, 2014 and Narendra Modi took oath on May 26, 2014.

With the increasing Taliban insurgency, Indian leadership provided all possible assistance to the Afghan government in order to enable it to maintain peace and stability. However, despite the US pressure, on the lines of India’s policy since Vajpayee, the Modi government refused to send army boots on the Afghan territory. India has sought a say in US deliberations on peace talks with Taliban leadership but under Pakistan’s pressure, the Trump Administration refused to involve India. Taliban and the US signed a peace settlement in Doha on February 29, 2019, paving the way for the withdrawal of the US troops in a phased manner and intra-Afghan dialogue between the Taliban and Afghan side led by the government of Dr. Ashraf Ghani.

India found itself completely isolated in the entire process of a peace settlement. India was not an invitee to the peace signing ceremony in Doha though the Indian government sent its representative from the Ministry of External Affairs as an observer. Despite the tough posturing of Trump and Modi’s campaign against Pakistan for its sponsoring of terrorism from its soil, Pakistan retains a great deal of say in the shaping of the political future of Afghanistan. Despite its huge economic assistance and support and goodwill among the Afghan government and

its population, geopolitics favours Pakistan and goes against India. In the peace settlement the US has extracted a commitment from the Taliban for not allowing its territory for terrorist activities against the US but no such indication Taliban has given with regard to India. In fact, there is a genuine fear that after the completion of the US withdrawal by September 2021 and the impending Taliban rule again, Pakistan will have greater leverage on Kabul, and terrorist activities against India. India's External Affairs Minister Dr. Jai Shankar is engaged in renewed diplomatic initiatives for a say in peace and stability in Afghanistan.

Modi government has continued the Afghan policy of its predecessors. India's difficulties in Afghanistan are not due to any policy lacunae rather they are inherent in the geopolitics of the region. Unless India mends its relations with Pakistan it will not have much say in Afghanistan. Modi's government has made radical departures in India's policy towards talks with Pakistan on the issue of terrorism. Afghanistan has remained a field of proxy games of India and Pakistan in which the Taliban have been on the side of Pakistan. In fact, peace and stability in Afghanistan will have an echo of the India-Pakistan relations, particularly after the US withdrawal.

#### China Factor

China has a policy of 'pearl of strings' strategy whereby China intends to encircle India by cultivating strategic relations with India's neighbors. China has increased its investments and trade links with India's neighbors who are at odds with India for a variety of reasons. In this context, Pakistan is the strongest bet of China. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and its China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a new security challenge for India. China is making huge investments in building infrastructure and connectivity links passing through Karakoram highways in Pakistan- Occupied Kashmir territories. Modi government has decided to keep away from the BRI and is cultivating interests in the search for alternatives to the Chinese BRI. The US-led Indo- pacific strategy is a counter-

response to the Chinese challenge in which Pakistan is its integral link.

Previous governments in New Delhi had consciously pursued a policy of peace and for that followed the strategy of dialogue with Pakistan. They regarded the Chinese or any external challenge graver than Pakistan. On the contrary, Modi Government has followed the policy of 'No Dialogue' and made Pakistan an enemy with an eye on its domestic constituency. Modi government has overplayed the issue of terrorism making Islamophobia and Pakistan the centerpiece of its neighborhood policy.

The increasing disillusionment of the US has further strengthened China-Pakistan relations; India has become more isolated with Russia, Iran, and China getting closer to Pakistan. All these strategic changes have pushed India further into the US network which may put pressure on the strategic autonomy of India. Modi has deepened strategic ties with the US and taken decisive strategic shifts by inching closer to the Indo-Pacific strategy. C. Raja Mohan has underlined that Modi is taking bold strategic moves for which New Delhi has shown hesitations in the past and writes in *Foreign Policy* "In a deepening geopolitical shift, New Delhi is moving closer to the United States."<sup>9</sup>

It is this kind of sense of India's dependence on the US that prompted Donald Trump to virtually threaten India of retaliation in the wake of India's refusal to export Hydroxy Chloroquine malaria drugs for the purpose of Covid 19 afflicted persons. The new Joe Biden Democratic Administration broadly follows the lines of strengthening the US' Strategic ties with India but at the same time is likely to show greater sensitivity for human rights and concerns for the dignity and safety of minorities in India.

Only a broad national unity and political consensus on the issues of national interests and foreign policy can help India in countering growing international criticism of its domestic policy and human rights concerns and reducing strategic dependence on any foreign power. Highlighting the importance of national consensus and political unity on the issues of

foreign policy C. Raja Mohan writes, ‘The government’s ability to overcome the growing international criticism of its policies depends crucially on rebuilding the national consensus on key policies and healing the multiple social rifts. Without a visible and sincere political effort to promote unity at home, internal divisions will grow worse and make India more vulnerable to external meddling’<sup>10</sup>

## Conclusion

Opening of dialogue with Pakistan may not solve the persistent issues of terrorism and Kashmir but at least it may help in reducing international strategic pressures on India. Modi government may find it difficult to reverse the hardcore Hindutva rhetoric which it has unleashed. Hopefully, a change in India’s public opinion may create the groundwork for dialogue and peace with Pakistan which will ease tension and conflict in the region. In accordance with the message of the earlier Gujral Doctrine<sup>11-13</sup>, India with its resources and capability has to share its greater responsibility.

Secular pluralistic democracy has enhanced India’s international image in the past and will provide India strategic advantages in finding a solution to its challenges. No amount of hard power will be a substitute for a cohesive united nation with its liberal, secular and egalitarian foundations. The defeat of Modi’s BJP in assembly elections in West Bengal in April-May 2021 should lead to the realization that divisive politics has its own limitations and restores the faith in rebuilding national consensus.

A foreign policy based on national consensus will provide added diplomatic advantages. It will be India’s greatest soft power resource. Peace and stability in the South Asian region being a prerequisite for the realization of the dream of India’s emergence as a global power, India will have to undertake sustained initiatives for friendly relations with all its neighbors. India must preserve its cherished goal of strategic autonomy being pursued since the days of Nehru and for this laudable objective, national consensus and unity at home is of paramount importance.

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## **United Front Government's Foreign Policy: More Continuity than Change**

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### **Abstract**

*IK Gujral articulated the foreign policy of India as its External Affairs Minister and subsequently the Prime Minister of the 13 party coalition of United Front government during 1996-98. Gujral enunciated the neighbourhood policy in the spirit of accommodation and unilateral concessions to India's small neighbours without looking for reciprocity known as Gujral Doctrine. He viewed a role for India in world affairs with firm roots in the neighbourhood. Gujral viewed strategic rationale in his accommodative neighbourhood policy. He was a Nehruvian in his vision and philosophy and continued on the lines of foreign policy adopted by his predecessor Narsimha Rao. However, with the collapse of the coalition government his vision for neighbourhood also collapsed. Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh somehow tried to keep the spirit of Gujral doctrine alive but it has completely collapsed under Narendra Modi's majoritarian big brotherly government.*

**Keywords:** *Reciprocity, Doctrine, Coalition, Nehruvian, Post-Soviet, Deve Gowda*

### **Introduction**

The United Front was a coalition of thirteen parties who formed the government in New Delhi after the 1996 general elections. I.K Gujral was the External Affairs Minister under Deve Gowda Government (June 1, 1996-April 21, 1997) and subsequently, he became the Prime Minister (April 21, 1997- March 19, 1998). Gujral guided the foreign policy of India at a crucial juncture in the period of political instability at home. The present research article is an endeavor to discover the elements of continuity and change in Gujral's foreign policy under the compulsions of the coalition government amidst the tremors of changing economic and strategic relations in the post-cold war world.

India's Foreign Policy in the 1990s underwent a rapid transition in the post-cold war world. Narasimha Rao had succeeded in charting a course and direction for India's foreign policy in the uncertain terrain of post-cold war and the tremors of a globalizing economy. Gujral had the

advantages of the legacy of Nehruvian principles and stewardship of Rao. Continuity refers to the field of politics, diplomacy, and national security while change refers to economics. In the post-cold war international relations, India's elites tactfully combined the elements of assertiveness and capitulation, firmness, and compromise in foreign Policy. The firmness is on political and security interests while the compromise is on matters of economic policy.

### **Fundamentals of Foreign Policy**

Foreign policy is a set of responses of a country to its external challenges and opportunities. Foreign policy may be viewed as a synthesis of ends (national interests) and means (national capabilities) of a nation-state. A nation-state's objectives in the international system are both of short-term and long-term nature. A nation-state has to clearly define its long-term objectives and in that light define its short-term objectives subsequently. The policy-making elite of a nation-

state has to determine its responses to the immediate issues and events in the international system in a way that there is a balance and harmony in the realization of its both long-term and short-term objectives. The long-term objectives are defined in terms of ideals and principles which provide a guide to determine its immediate responses. It combines a rational synthesis of idealism and realism and is married to the national interests of the country. In the context of explaining Nehru's idealism in foreign policy, J. Bandyopadhyaya has called "idealism as the realism of tomorrow".<sup>1</sup>

The broad foreign policy objectives constituting the national interest are as follows;

- a. Preserving the territorial integrity of the country against external threats or attacks.
- b. Preservation and perpetuation of the constitutional and political order that a country has given to itself i.e democracy, secularism, theocracy, socialism, capitalism, etc.
- c. Maintenance and furtherance of the economic system in operation followed by the all-around development of its people.
- d. Promotion of the values and ideals of a world order that a country cherishes like disarmament, collective security, New International Economic Order, world peace, pollution control, etc."<sup>2</sup>

In the post-cold war world of age of globalization, the promotion of exports and attracting foreign investments have become the objectives of foreign policies of nations. Foreign investment, exports, foreign exchange reserves, and a place in the global ranking of ease of doing business have become the benchmark of the power of nations.

The foreign policy of a country is an interaction between its domestic politics and international relations. As long as there is no basic change in the class character of the regime and its domestic political situations there is a greater degree of continuity in the foreign policy goals of the country. However, in the immediate context, the determination of national interest and foreign policy response subsequently depends to a large

extent on the subjective perception of the decision-making elites of the country. With the rapid pace of change in the domestic and international system, foreign policy has to continually adjust itself accordingly. Hence foreign policy as a discipline and as an activity is highly dynamic and as a policy, it is a dependent variable.

National interest, according to realist theory which dominates foreign policy decision-making of nations, is the guiding principle of the foreign policy of nations. However, in the ultimate analysis, the national interest of a country is what its ruling elites / class define it is. The national interest of a country is virtually the interests of its dominant classes. Foreign policy is a means through which the dominant classes pursue their interests both in domestic politics and international politics. However, the autonomy of the decision-making elites in the choice of foreign policy options is limited by the country's strategic location, level of technological and economic development, the strength of its political institutions, and public opinion, etc. The neo-liberal ideology of capitalist globalization has had a tremendous influence on the domestic and foreign policy of successive governments since 1991. Neo liberalism implies the ideology of global capitalism seeking for subservient role of the state in favour of globally integrated economy and sovereignty of market.

### **Nehruvian Framework**

Nationalist movements threw up the leaders like Nehru, Sukarno, Marshall Tito, and Nasser who despite the poverty and military weaknesses of their countries made no compromises on their ideals. Nehru had the legacy of a powerful anti-colonial nationalist movement under the leadership of Gandhi and thus refused to bow before the pressures of great powers rather he used the moral force and commitment to his ideals of a world order in a diplomatic manner to establish India's place in the comity of nations.

Jawaharlal Nehru, soon after assuming charge of the foreign affairs portfolio in the interim Government of India made a statement on



September 7, 1946 which is probably the first, the most authoritative, and comprehensive enumeration of the foreign policy of India. Nehru declared in his broadcast to the nation:

*“We shall take full part in international conferences as a free nation with our policy and not merely as a satellite of another nation. We hope to develop close direct contacts with other nations and to cooperate with them in the furtherance of world peace and freedom. We propose, as far as possible to keep away from the power politics of groups, aligned against one another, which have led in the past two world wars and which may again lead to disasters on an even vaster scale. We believe that peace and freedom are indivisible and the denial of freedom anywhere must endanger freedom elsewhere and lead to conflict and war.”<sup>3</sup>*

Nehru's declaration set the tenor of India's foreign policy. He articulated the spirit and philosophy of the nationalist movement and visualized a world order based on its ideals. He had the tremendous courage to defy world powers and chart out an independent course of action that lay in the interest of his countrymen. With his intellectual and philosophical background and perspective of world history, he was able to forge an organic link between economic and social development of his countrymen, national security, world peace, and a democratic world order based on equality and self-respect of nations.

The Nehruvian framework of foreign policy may be understood in two parts, idealism and realism. Idealism dealt with the transformation of the world order based on freedom, equality, and justice. Realism dealt with the policies and strategies required for national interest and security. He articulated principles and ideals which have relevance so long as the international system based on the sovereign nation-state as a primary unit lives on. These principles are equality, sovereignty, independence of choice of foreign policy, peaceful co-existence of small and big nations and rival ideological political systems, denuclearized world, collective security and peaceful settlement of disputes, etc.

Nehru's Foreign Policy was based on the needs of India's national security, peace, and development. Nehru's policy of opposition to the cold war bloc system, keeping away from power politics of blocs, and active role in world affairs in the interest of world peace, without fear or favor, led to the formulation of the concept of non-alignment. In the given circumstances non-alignment meant to save India from the threat of foreign domination that the cold war had created. Non-alignment was a diplomatically skillful strategy to save India from the pressures of a bipolar world, to seek cooperation from all but without undue dependence on any foreign power. Nehru's critics have, however, complained about his indulgence with international politics while overlooking security interests with immediate neighbouring countries Pakistan and China.

With the end of the cold war and the completion of the process of decolonization, Indian foreign policy has been in search of a new agenda. Rethinking about the relevance of the Nehruvian framework of foreign policy and search for an alternative framework has been haunting the Indian minds since the end of the cold war. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, there prevailed for a moment a sense of self-defeatism and skepticism and an utter confusion all around. It goes to the credit of the genius of India's political and economic elites that the NarsimhaRao Government quickly adapted itself to the changing international strategic and economic environment and set the groundwork of India's foreign policy in a unipolar world centered on the US hegemony and globalization.

### **Shimla Agreement: India's Diplomatic Ploy**

The Indo-Pak Shimla Agreement of 1972 has emphasized their commitment to maintaining peace and tranquility along the Line of Actual Control in Kashmir, non-use of force, and bilateral negotiations as a means to settle all disputes including Kashmir. By Shimla Agreement, India endeavored to disarm the U.N.O., other international organizations, and the international community from having any role in the Kashmir dispute. While Pakistan has made attempts to

discredit the Shimla Agreement, India has consistently endeavored and quite rightly to adhere to the framework of bilateralism and resisted all pressures for a third-party role in it.

The Shimla framework of bilateralism does not impose any solution on anyone but has surely and correctly diagnosed the dispute. It is a legacy of the past and can be resolved only by the political processes in the two countries. Hence there is no case for a third party role or international involvement or a military solution. India expects Pakistan to view the Kashmir dispute in the same manner as India views its territorial dispute with China over Aksai Chin. India's firm view has been that pending the resolution of territorial or other disputes through peaceful means, the process of normalization of relations and development of mutually beneficial cooperation be not derailed.

Kashmir dispute is a legacy of partition and it continues to be so as a result of communalization of politics in the two countries. The democratization and secularization of the polity in both countries will surely pave the way for their good neighborhood relations which ultimately would lead to the resolution of the dispute. For the promotion of good friendly relations with the neighboring countries of South Asia and resolution of all outstanding issues with Pakistan, I.K. Gujral further extended the Shimla spirit in his famous Gujral doctrine.

### **The Post -Soviet World**

For the international relations after 1991, the post-cold war era is a common characterization. The term post-cold war focuses on the radical change in the structure of international distribution of power of nation-states but it disguises the changes like ascendancy of global capitalism and dilution in the socialist ideals of equity and justice. In this paper, the term post-Soviet world has been used to highlight the changing nature of triumphant global capitalism and the ascendancy of its neo-liberal ideology in political discourses.

The need of a search for an alternative framework of foreign policy became imperative after the collapse of the Soviet Union and

consequently the end of cold war politics. The pattern of distribution of global power has changed with the USA as the only real global power. However "the end of the cold war does not ensure a peaceful future. Nor does it promise that the current configuration of power and influence will remain. On the contrary, the insights of a long-cycle theory promise that the last great power conflict of the twentieth century, which finds the United States again in the advantageous position as the world's unambiguous hegemonic power in politics as well as economics, will witness the emergence of a new challenger - and the threat of a new war."<sup>4</sup>

Thus, the sea changes caused by the end of the cold war again raise the questions as to what is new? and what is constant? as political scientist Robert Ervis explains:

*"Many of the basic generalizations of international politics remain unaltered; it is still anarchic in the sense that there is no international sovereign that can make and enforce laws and agreements. The security dilemma remains as well, with the problems it creates for states who would like to cooperate but whose security requirements do not mesh. Many specific causes of conflict also remain, including desires for greater prestige, economic rivalries, hostile nationalisms, divergent perceptions on and incompatible standards of legitimacy, religious animosities, and territorial ambitions. To put it more generally, both aggression and spirals of insecurity and tension can still disturb the peace."*<sup>5</sup>

The emergent configuration of power in the post-cold war era itself introduces greater uncertainty. However, the present era should be more aptly called the post-Soviet era, because the collapse of Socialism has not only changed the global configuration of power rather it has also changed the agenda of world politics diluting the urge for its transformation. In the absence of an ideological ally and political support from the socialist countries, the struggle against neo-colonialism has lost its vitality today.

Globalization and liberalization have replaced equity and justice from the agenda of international negotiations as well domestic politics. The demand for the New International Economic Order has receded into the background. 'The end of the cold war has paved the way for the resolution of regional conflicts and an era of economic cooperation has begun which is a new form of economic hegemony of the North.'<sup>6</sup>

### **Narasimha Rao's Foreign Policy in the Era of Uncertainty**

In the new international situation, the Indian foreign policy demonstrated tremendous resilience. Narasimha Rao Government (1991-96) took over the responsibility of guiding the foreign policy of India at a time when the domestic and international situation was characterized by fluidity and uncertainty. However, the domestic political uncertainty did not come in the way of foreign policy. India's foreign policy under Rao achieved a rare national consensus which he demonstrated by sending Atal Behari Vajpayee as the leader of the Indian delegation to the United Nations to present India's case on Kashmir. Keeping in view India's domestic difficulties and uncertain international situation, Rao Government pursued India's national interests in world affairs with firm politeness and the backing of national consensus.

Rao Government adopted a foreign policy for India free from the ideological baggage and rhetoric of socialism that had characterized before. Despite the expectations of public opinion, Rao did not define precisely his framework of foreign policy. The absence of conceptualization of foreign policy was compounded by the fluid and uncertain international situation. Rao responded to international events and challenges as and when they arose in an ad-hoc manner but it followed on the supreme principle of national interest based on national consensus. Rao's foreign policy did not pursue a chartered course rather it evolved with the unfolding of the new international order. Rao succeeded in the peaceful conduct of elections in Punjab and started the process of elections in Jammu and Kashmir. He defeated the attempt of

hostile powers in internationalizing India's domestic problems of territorial integrity and national unity at the United Human Rights Council meet.

Rao tried to forge better relations with Russia and China. The declarations made during his visit to Moscow and Beijing indicated the contours of India's foreign policy in the post-cold war period. He succeeded in getting agreements with China for peace and tranquility in the border areas and mechanism for maintenance of confidence building measures. During his visit to the White House, Rao made a declaration of the policy towards globalization and economic liberalization and India joined the World Trade Organization.

It was a recognition of the fact that in the post-cold war era, economic factors have replaced strategic considerations. A new era entered Indo-US relations based upon the twin pillars of globalization and liberalization. In the absence of the Soviet Union, a formidable friend of India, Rao government, endeavored to strengthen the foundations of Indo-US friendship and cooperation. However, the Rao government took care to diversify India's foreign relations and economic interactions.

The Congress Government led by Rao that was in power for the larger part of the preceding five years was primarily concerned with economic liberalization policies, which impinged upon the conduct of foreign policy in several ways. For the first three years, this preoccupation resulted in New Delhi being overly accommodative of Washington in the matter of a host of foreign policy issues. Rao's foreign policy was characterized by wait and watch, hesitancy, and ad-hoc responses. There were attempts to compromise India's position on strategic issues.

All signs were that India was in the process of staging a historical retreat from the activist foreign policy that won it the admiration of the developing world. He, however, shirked from giving it the shape of a defined framework of principles and doctrines in the form of a doctrine. It was I.K. Gujral who tried to present a well-defined principle with deep strategic insight to

present a doctrine for India's foreign policy concerning its immediate neighbors.

### **Foreign Policy of I.K. Gujral**

The United Front took the reins of government in New Delhi in June 1996 at a difficult time for Indian diplomacy. There was a realization in the United Front Government that in foreign policy terms the buzzword of "globalization" could mean hegemony in a different garb. Since I.K. Gujral took over as External Affairs Minister, attracting investments into India was no longer the lynchpin of foreign policy. I.K. Gujral as the External Affairs Minister adopted a foreign policy that did not look at India's national interests from the prism of globalization or the US hegemonic unipolar world. He formulated a foreign policy that gave due priority to India's immediate neighborhood. Gujral believed that India could realize her potential and improve the economic conditions of her people only with peace and cooperation with her neighbors.

### **Gujral Doctrine**

I.K. Gujral articulated India's neighbourhood policy which came to be known as Gujral Doctrine. According to Gujral, the principal objective of the U.F.'s foreign policy is to promote all-around economic and social development with justice and equity. The accelerated development of every country in the subcontinent is a key goal of the Gujral doctrine.

This neighborhood policy - the Gujral doctrine - was articulated by Gujral himself in a speech in London in August 1996. The five key elements of the Gujral doctrine as stated by him are:

- "With its neighbors like Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, and Nepal, India 'does not ask for reciprocity, but gives all that it can in good faith and trust.'
- No South Asian country 'will allow its territory to be used against the interests of another country of the region.'
- None 'will interfere in the internal affairs of another.'

- All South Asian countries 'must respect each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty.'
- All countries will settle all their disputes through peaceful bilateral negotiations."<sup>7</sup>

Gujral believed that scrupulous observance of these five principles would recast South Asia's regional relationships, including the tormented India-Pakistan relationship. Gujral initiated his diplomatic initiatives concerning Pakistan. The number of visas being issued for nationals of Pakistan to travel to India was substantially increased, an example of Gujral's eagerness to improve the relationship at a people-to-people level. Soon after assuming office Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda offered to talk to then Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto on the entire gamut of Indo-Pakistan relations, including issues on which the two countries held differing views, which meant Kashmir and nuclear and missile-related issues. This offer was reiterated to the Nawaz Sharif Government also. Trade and business relations between the two countries started expanding steadily.

One of the biggest achievements of I.K. Gujral as External Affairs Minister in the United Front government is the resolution of the contentious water dispute between India and Bangladesh. This landmark event, it was hoped, would help the development of backward northeastern India and the adjoining areas of Nepal, Bhutan, and Bangladesh. During the visit of Bangladesh's Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad to New Delhi in the second week of March 1997, Bangladesh agreed to give transit facilities to India. This would presumably help faster transit of goods between the northeastern part of the country and the rest of India.

The Gujral doctrine is confined to South Asia but provides a clue to the overall approach to foreign policy. He believed that every worthwhile foreign policy should focus first on neighboring regions. "India perceives these regions in terms of concentric circles. The inner circle consists of the SAARC countries. The outer circle consists of countries such as South Africa and Mozambique



on the one side and Australia and Indonesia on the other, and all members of the newly-formed 14-member Indian Ocean Rim grouping formalized in the second week of March 1997 in Mauritius. Besides being one of the members of the select grouping, India is one of the moving spirits behind its formation.<sup>8</sup>

In Gujral's foreign policy doctrine, the attitude of privileging the neighborhood is a recognition of the continental diversities that the United Front reflected. It was the reputation and credibility that I.K. Gujral earned as External Affairs Minister and the dividends coming from it that made him move to the office of the Prime Minister. It reaffirmed the national backing of the Doctrine. It raised a euphoria of hopes whose realization would depend on the vigorous pursuit of the doctrine by the successive Indian governments as well as on the domestic politics of the South Asian States. The Gujral Doctrine through its stress on people-to-people contact aimed at the social constituency of peace in the neighboring countries.

However, the great foreign policy doctrine did not last long. Prime Minister Gujral "green-lighted a foreign secretary-level meeting that sowed the seeds of the 'composite dialogue' The dialogue, however, did not bear fruit because Gujral rejected the creation of a separate working group on Kashmir. The composite dialogue began later, but eventually collapsed, demonstrating the limits of any doctrine of peaceful engagement with a Pakistan endemically hostile to India."<sup>9</sup>

### **India's Role in World Affairs**

For the past few years, India and many countries had emphasized the need to democratize the United Nations system. India has played an active role in the multifarious activities of the U.N., including peacekeeping since the U.N.'s inception. Indian soldiers have helped to keep the peace under the U.N. flag in such far-flung countries as Haiti, Liberia, Mozambique, and Angola. India has claimed a permanent Security Council seat, but the West, as is well known, was keen to accommodate Japan and Germany. Gujral vehemently campaigned for a permanent seat for

India but did not succeed. All the subsequent governments in New Delhi have pursued this goal but so far success has eluded India.

Regarding India's principled position on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation treaty (NPT) and Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), I.K. Gujral reiterated that it has been India's consistent policy not to sign unequal, discriminatory treaties, whether it is the NPT, the CTBT, or the proposed Fissile Materials Cut-off Treaty. He pointed out that India has studiously refrained from weaponization after undertaking a peaceful nuclear test in 1974. Gujral told Parliament that India will not sign the CTBT in its presence from - now or later. It has remained an article of faith for all governments not to sign such discriminatory treaties and thus maintain the strategic autonomy of India in matters of national security and nuclear weapons.

In his speech in London, Gujral described the strategic environment India finds itself in. He said that India was surrounded by nuclear weapons. The proximity of the U.S. naval base in Diego Garcia and the nuclearization of the Gulf region by the U.S. and its allies make it impossible for any government to remain indifferent to what Gujral described as a 'dangerous security environment'. In this context he said, "We have no desire to go nuclear unless and until we are forced to. But we cannot give up our nuclear option."<sup>10</sup>

Gujral's diplomatic initiatives aroused initial hopes for a recognition of India's emerging role in world affairs after the torturous period of uncertainty in post-cold war era. However, the political compulsions of the minority government did not allow Gujral to showcase his diplomatic skills and implement his vision of foreign policy. Gujral had to cancel many of his important foreign trips causing huge diplomatic embarrassment to Indian diplomacy. "For the short period that Gujral remained Prime Minister before the Congress party again pulled the rug from under the coalition government's feet, he remained so bogged down in political management that he found little time for foreign policy"<sup>11</sup>

## Conclusion

Barring the South Asian region, there was no noticeable change in Gujral's foreign policy. By and large, there has remained continuity. However, the neighborhood acquired a very high priority in Gujral's strategy. I.K. Gujral's regional initiatives may be regarded as footsteps into the future. While in the cold war era, India's policy had been to insulate the region from power rivalry and India used to view the region from the prism of her global role. Rao was focused on securing a place for India in the new unipolar world and for this, he made a radical turn in India's economic policy. In contrast, Gujral looked at India's global role with firm roots in the neighborhood with a larger heart for accommodation and help. He found strategic rationale in India's unilateral concessions to the small neighbours.

There are many examples in international politics when a leading power undertakes the responsibility for regional peace and prosperity even by compromise of its short-term interests to achieve its larger economic, strategic, and other vital interests. The US aid and assistance to the countries of Western Europe in 1947 under the Marshall plan helped it in firmly establishing its leadership over the leadership of the region based on understanding and accommodation. The success of ASEAN in promoting economic development in the Southeast Asian region also inspired Gujral for undertaking bold foreign policy initiatives aimed at the neighborhood. He wanted to move on the lines of Rao's Look East Policy and for this peace with South Asian immediate neighbours was vital. However, the Gujral government despite the support of the left did not make any worthwhile efforts to put brakes on the moves towards globalization. Thus, there was a paradox in India's foreign Policy. While India's elites have stood like a rock against nuclear hegemony but they cautiously moved towards globalization.

Gujral should be given the credit for his diplomatic initiatives towards the immediate South Asian neighbors. The spirit of Gujral doctrine about India's approach towards immediate neighborhood has remained alive

during the premiership of Atal Behari Vajpayee and Dr. Manmohan Singh till Narendra Modi became the Prime Minister in May 2014. After a brief show of overtures of friendship at his swearing-in ceremony, Narendra Modi has made a U-turn in his policy towards Pakistan. India has canceled all bilateral engagements with Pakistan on the issue of terrorism and talks with Hurriyat Conference leaders in August 2014 and since then relations with Pakistan have only worsened and as a result, SAARC is in a coma.

With the changed political context of nationalist majoritarian government led by Narendra Modi, the Gujral Doctrine has become today discredited. The nationalist Modi government has made terrorism the sole plank of its policy towards Pakistan and it does not see political and strategic dividends in following the spirit of broad heart of accommodation, good and friendly relations with the immediate Islamic neighborhood.

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## **The Challenges of International Peacebuilding**

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### **Abstract**

*Peacebuilding is an international project for rebuilding state and society in the countries where the state has failed primarily owing to internecine civil conflicts. Post-conflict rebuilding needs international assistance and guidance but it is more than technical and security assistance. Peacebuilding is necessary to prevent relapse into conflicts even after political accords. However, its success remains highly uncertain and full of challenges owing to divergent strategic objectives of international power players and a deeper divide among domestic factions.*

**Keywords:** Johan Galtung, Boutros Ghali, Post-conflict, Agenda for peace, Liberal institutionalism, Fiasco, Real politique

### **Introduction**

International peacebuilding deals with the rebuilding of post-conflict political and socio-economic order in failed State countries. State fails in many underdeveloped countries as a result of social chaos emerging from forced modernization from above, foreign interventions, internecine civil wars, illegal drugs, economic dependence on foreign powers, linkages of domestic warring groups with foreign powers, etc. The power vacuum in strategically important regions may pose a serious threat to international peace and security. State-less territories also provide a safe haven to international terrorist organizations. Rebuilding torn social fabrics and political-economic reconstruction is imperative and it cannot be realized without international assistance.

International peacebuilding has acquired importance in the agenda of the United Nations since Secretary-General Boutros Boutros Ghali proposed the *Agenda for Peace* in 1992. Peacebuilding under the supervision and guidance of the United Nations however depends upon the convergence in strategic objectives of the important powers and a generous international

assistance. Peacebuilding is essentially a political project of recasting State and Nation in the failed state countries. The success of peacebuilding is highly uncertain and it depends upon a variety of domestic and international factors.

### **The Concept of Peacebuilding**

International peacebuilding refers to the rebuilding of broken social and political fabrics in the war-torn/conflict-ridden societies in the failed states with international assistance. Economic, social, and political reconstruction is to be undertaken by the international community under the supervision and authorization of the United Nations. International peacebuilding has gained much importance as it is vital to the maintenance of peace and stability within states and maintenance of international peace and security as well. International consensus and commitment are vital to its success and there has been a boom of international peacebuilding missions after the cold war. But it is very much different from peace enforcement under chapter vii of the UN Charter. While peace enforcement is negative and punitive, peacebuilding is a positive and preventive one as it creates the structures of peace.



The peacebuilding aims at restoration of the state and its infrastructures/institutions in the failed /dissolved states. Peace and stability in international relations in the Westphalian international state system depend upon the premise of the existence and functioning of sovereign state entities. Stateless (absence of sovereign power) countries are an anachronism in the Westphalian state system. International peacebuilding thus becomes vital in the interest of maintenance of international peace and security.

It is different from peace enforcement which deals with the maintenance of international peace and security under chapter vii of the UN Charter and it deals with external threats. Peacebuilding deals with restoration and preservation of state from the internal threats e.g. civil war, insurgency, terrorism, drugs, etc. Peacebuilding has enlarged the role and functions of the United Nations much beyond envisaged in the UN Charter. It has led to deeper international involvements in the domestic affairs of states and it amounts to an attempt to recast society, politics, and economy of nations broken from within.

Peacebuilding is different from peacekeeping and peace making. Peacekeeping activities are undertaken under the authority of the United Nations Security Council. Peacekeeping is the maintenance of peace and security by the international troops under the command of the United Nations in which the peacekeeper forces are to maintain their neutrality and to act as a buffer and to ensure ceasefire between the warring parties/nation-states. The objective of peacekeeping is to prevent the escalation of conflict and to build confidence between state parties and prepare them for reconciliation.

Peace-making is an activity to persuade the warring parties for reconciliation and agreement. Under the mediation and good offices of the UN diplomats, the warring parties are encouraged for negotiated peace settlements. Peace-making facilitates the parties in a civil conflict within nations for a negotiated settlement of power-sharing formulae. But a lasting peace can be possible by reconstruction of political, economic, and social order to restore its State as a

responsible member of the international community. Peace-building activities come after the success in peacekeeping and peace-making efforts.

Peacebuilding will help in preventing their relapse into conflict and civil war. Peacebuilding involves the building of economic, political, administrative, police, and military institutions and trust among various parties and communities of the war-torn country. Peacebuilding thus involves the transformation of conflict into coexistence among communities/groups. Rebuilding of the state is, thus, at the center of peacebuilding. State building itself is a multidimensional process of reconstruction, rehabilitation, and recovery in post-conflict broken nations.

## **The Origin and Development of Peacebuilding**

### **The Idea of Liberal Institutionalism**

The democratic peace theory propounded by Immanuel Kant emphasizes the establishment of republican democracy based on the values of constitutionalism, rule of law, and liberty as essential for world peace. The international approach to peacebuilding and conflict prevention is grounded in the concept of “liberal peace” which derives from a long tradition of Western liberal theory and practice. “The liberal peace thesis views political and economic liberalization as effective antidotes to violent conflicts. Thus, promotion of human rights, democracy, elections, constitutionalism, rule of law, property rights, good governance, and neo-liberal economics has become part and parcel of the international peacebuilding strategy”<sup>1</sup>.

Liberal internationalism is thus, interventionist in nature. Peacebuilding follows the concept of international responsibility for the protection of people from human rights violations. Humanitarian intervention is viewed as legitimate overriding the principle of sovereignty of states. Going beyond assisting individual countries emerging from war, it promotes a normative agenda. This, of course, stands in stark contrast with the widely declared principle that peacebuilding ultimately requires the

establishment of a non-violent political authority which can legitimately guide a country's post-conflict reconstruction on its own. Nonetheless, it needs to be recognized that this normative framework has firmly underpinned peacebuilding practice since the 1990s. Unfortunately, humanitarian intervention and peacebuilding are not free from the strategic rivalry of nations.

The term "peacebuilding" originated in the field of peace studies more than forty-six years ago. In 1975 Johan Galtung coined the term in his pioneering work "Three Approaches to Peace: Peacekeeping, Peace-making, and Peacebuilding." In this article, he posited that "More specifically, structures must be found that remove causes of wars and offer alternatives to war in situations where wars might occur."<sup>2</sup> Galtung emphasized the necessity to remove causes of conflict and violence by removing their causes which he called positive peace. The structural transformation is necessary for conflict prevention and durable peace in conflict-ridden societies. Galtung's observations constitute the intellectual antecedents of today's notion of peacebuilding which the United Nations adopted in its *Agenda for Peace* in 1992.

John Paul Lederach, another key scholar in the field of peace studies, has called for expanding our understanding of peacebuilding. Peacebuilding, according to him, "is more than post-agreement reconstruction" and "is understood as a comprehensive concept that encompasses, generates, and sustains the full array of processes, approaches, and stages needed to transform conflict toward more sustainable, peaceful relationships..."<sup>3</sup> Lederach speaks of "conflict transformation as a holistic and multi-faceted approach to managing violent conflict in all its phases. The term signifies an ongoing process of change from negative to positive relations, behavior, attitudes, and structures."<sup>4</sup> The term thus involves a wide range of activities that both precede and follow formal peace accords.

The Agenda for Peace

The UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros Ghali in his report to the UN General

Assembly on 17 June 1992 presented an *Agenda for Peace* in which he underlined the responsibility of the international community towards peacebuilding. "The Agenda for Peace was explicit in its definition of peacebuilding, considering it as one of several tools at the service of the international community to deal with the threat or reality of war. It defined peacebuilding as a post-conflict activity involving action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace to avoid a relapse into conflict"<sup>5</sup>

The Agenda for Peace further stressed that peacebuilding is different from preventive diplomacy. Preventive diplomacy seeks to avoid the breakdown of peaceful conditions. But peacebuilding is holistic and it seeks rebuilding of structures and institutions which will prevent recurrence of conflict after the establishment of peace through accord. It said that when conflict breaks out, mutually reinforcing efforts at peace making and peace-keeping come into play. Once these have achieved their objectives, peacebuilding becomes imperative. It involves sustained cooperative work to deal with underlying economic, social, cultural, and humanitarian concerns which can achieve peace on a durable foundation. "Preventive diplomacy is to avoid a crisis; post-conflict peacebuilding is to prevent a recurrence."<sup>6</sup>

The Agenda for Peace emphasized that peacebuilding envisages the role and assistance of the international community in post-conflict recovery and reconstruction in war-torn societies in the underdeveloped and developing world. In the absence of successful peacebuilding, achievements made in peacekeeping and peace making will ultimately fail and will lead to relapse into the cycle of conflict and violence. In the post-cold war era, the intrastate conflicts and threats to peace and security have increased and the approach to peacebuilding developed as a response to the security challenges emerging from the failed state -societies. The Agenda for Peace favours international action against the traditional notion of state sovereignty. Thus, "Peacebuilding seeks to address the underlying causes of conflict,

helping people to resolve their differences peacefully and lay the foundations to prevent future violence”<sup>7</sup>. Peacebuilding is the mix of security and development by rebuilding trust among communities/groups. In this gigantic task of peacebuilding, the focus is on benign international assistance and guidance.

Recently Human Security has come to be associated with the peacebuilding project. Though a relatively new concept, human security is now widely used to describe the complex interrelated threats associated with civil war, genocide, and the displacement of populations. All proponents of human security agree that its primary goal is the protection of individuals and for this a political and economic reconstruction in the civil war-ravaged country is essential. “The Human Security Report 1994 focuses on violent threats to individuals while recognizing that these threats are strongly associated with poverty, lack of state capacity and various forms of socio-economic and political inequity.”<sup>8</sup> Peacebuilding is an essential prerequisite to realize the goals of human security and to prevent a major humanitarian crisis in post-conflict regions and countries. However, human security is still a normative concern for the international community, and strategic and real politique factors take precedence over human security concerns in the foreign policy of nations engaged in peacebuilding missions.

Since 1990 the “UN forces have supervised elections in many parts of the world, including Nicaragua, Eritrea, and Cambodia; encouraged peace negotiations in El Salvador, Angola, and Western Sahara; and distributed food in Somalia.”<sup>9</sup> The UN Peacekeeping and peace making activities also helped in bringing results in Rwanda, Siera Leone, Peru Georgia, Cote d’Ivoire, and the Gambia. This UN supervision helped in bringing peace to these countries. The success of the UN efforts is primarily owed to the fact that in these conflicts there was not much external interference. However, in some conflict zones, like Afghanistan, with deeper international involvements, the domestic parties did not have much compulsion for settlement.

As a result, the establishment of Peace is an arduous challenge in countries with torn social fabrics compounded by deeper linkage of domestic factions with international power players. Post-conflict Peacebuilding becomes essential to prevent recurrence of violence and relapse of old conflicts. Successful peacebuilding requires sustained multi-dimensional efforts and improvements in many areas at once. “Peacebuilding includes early warning and response efforts, violence prevention, advocacy work, civilian and military peacekeeping, military intervention, humanitarian assistance, ceasefire agreements, and the establishment of peace zones”<sup>10</sup> Peacebuilding is a stage of international assistance after the success of peacekeeping and peace making so that to consolidate these gains and to assure durable peace. Peacebuilding measures thus aim to prevent the re-emergence of conflict. It can be accomplished by structural transformation paving the way from negative to positive peace.

### **Peacebuilding and War against Terror**

The war against terror led by the United States followed regime change in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and there are threats of regime change in Iran and Syria. The foreign interventions have caused the collapse of the state system in these countries and they are now in the grip of terrorist organizations. The war against terror became the justification for the US-led military interventions with designs for regime change. Foreign interventions have resulted in an increase in terrorism badly affecting peace and security all around. Had the US Administration post 9/11 decided to tackle terrorism by non-military and diplomatic means, the conditions in these countries would not have deteriorated and terrorism could have been contained if not altogether eliminated. Further, peacebuilding in these countries lost the domestic support of significant sections as different rival groups are divided in their international allegiances. Peacebuilding can succeed only if it has overwhelming domestic support from within the war-torn societies and international actors have



convergence in their views and objectives. The war against terror has further worsened the prospects of peace and security and the spectre of terrorism continues.

#### Afghan Fiasco

Afghanistan is a test case of failure of international peacebuilding where after two decades of international efforts for UN-supervised reconstruction and the US-led coalition's war failed to prevent the capture of political power by Taliban. Taliban militia has claimed control over the whole of Afghanistan. Taliban is not a very cohesive militant Islamic group and different commanders exercise control in different areas. It is mainly Pashtun dominated guided by extremist militant Islam whose interpretation of Islam is not backed by most Afghans. The memories of brutal torture and treatment of women and ethnic minorities under the previous Taliban rule still haunt the Afghan people. The horrible scenes of Afghans trying to leave the country at Kabul airport after the Taliban's takeover of Kabul on the 15<sup>th</sup> August 2021 are a testimony of the Taliban's unpopularity among Afghans.

Twenty years of US-led war against terror and military campaign against Taliban failed to defeat their morale and the insurgency of Taliban remained alive and continued to grow. The Bonn Agreement had facilitated intra-Afghan dialogue leading to an experiment in elected constitutional government. However, the US-led internationally sponsored Bonn process and the constitutional government of Hamid Karzai and Ashraf Ghani never obtained legitimacy from the Taliban. Taliban regrouped itself and went on increasing its control over territories beyond Kabul.

UNAMA (United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan)-led economic development strategy, international liberal economic aid and assistance partly revived its economy. However, they failed in eradication of Poppy cultivation and international channel of drug smuggling emanating from Afghanistan. Taliban maintained its illegal economy and a financial support system to maintain a militia with greater recruitment and commitment than the

Afghan National Army. Taliban insurgency not only survived rather continued to grow with the covert support of Pakistan who could play hide and seek double game with the United States quite successfully despite being a major non-NATO ally of the US in the war against terror.

A lot of developments in the field of infrastructures, internet connectivity, roads, dams, and education of Afghan youth have taken place which has created a constituency of peace, freedom, and constitutionalism. Afghans are scared but also showing resistance to the Taliban's repression and obscurantism. A class of Afghan youth, boys and girls are willing to struggle to retain the gains of twenty years of international peacebuilding. The reinstallation of the Taliban to the seat of power in Afghanistan without a fight and abject surrender of its Armed Forces has given rise to the impression of the failure of international peacebuilding and the US strategy. The Taliban government is far from an inclusive one and instead, the composition of the ministries indicates the growing control of the deadly Haqqani network, marginalization of moderate voices like Mullah Baradar, and increasing say of Pakistan in internal affairs of Afghanistan. The spectre of international terrorism emanating from the soil of Afghanistan is again haunting the international community.

The failure of international peacebuilding in Afghanistan is largely due to the faulty US strategy. The US could not develop a suitable diplomatic strategy to get rid of the doublespeak of Pakistan vis a vis Taliban. The US throughout depended on Pakistan for its military operations against the Taliban and yet failed to create enough pressure on Pakistan to secure its full cooperation. The peacebuilding was bound to fail in the circumstances of divergent goals of the US and Pakistan.

The international peacebuilding strategy in Afghanistan was also under the shadow of the military campaign and thus could not win the participation of the Taliban in the Bonn negotiations. In the event of the absence of a diplomatic strategy to secure Pakistan's full cooperation and a political plan to secure the

Taliban's participation, the chances of success of international peacebuilding were doomed. What is tragic is that the Taliban had an easy and swift walkover and billions of US expenditures in building its Afghan National Army and weaponry proved to be in vain. The left over American weapons have fallen in the hands of the Taliban.

### **The Challenges and Limitations of Peacebuilding**

While analysing peacebuilding in contexts like Burundi or South Sudan, Cedric De Coning argues, "In the last few years, it has become clearer that peacebuilding is essentially a political project. This was not the case when peacebuilding architecture was established a decade ago. Then peacebuilding was seen as something essentially technical, e.g. building institutions according to international best practice without being influenced by local politics. Now, UN's member states unequivocally acknowledge the imperative of political solutions in the recent peacebuilding resolutions"<sup>11</sup>

Ultimately, "the new peacebuilding agenda is a recognition, on the one hand, of the complexity of the developmental and security challenges confronting the international community in the post-Cold War environment, and on the other hand, of the inadequacy of current instruments and institutions of international assistance in dealing with the range of complex emergencies and crises that have emerged".<sup>12</sup> Necla Tschirgi argues that "the post-cold war peacebuilding relies on a wide array of international actors with diverse interests and mandates which are not necessarily aligned with local realities or needs."<sup>13</sup>

The success of peacebuilding missions depends upon the complexities and nature of domestic conflict as well as the role and interests of international actors. Real politique influences override liberal idealism which guides the concept of peacebuilding. Peacebuilding missions will have a greater chance of success in those countries where there is not much divergence of interests of international actors and nation-states. International actors and foreign policies of affected nations

approach the peacebuilding projects with a narrow focus and the peacebuilding turns into a tool of their foreign policy. Realism weighs heavily on liberal idealism and hence the success of peacebuilding projects often remains hanging like the Sword of Damocles.

International peacebuilding operations seek to stabilize countries that have recently experienced civil wars. In pursuing this goal, however, international peacebuilders have promulgated a particular vision of how states should organize themselves internally, based on the principles of liberal democracy and a market-oriented economy. By reconstructing war-shattered states under this vision, peacebuilders have effectively tried to recast the society and state in war-ravaged countries in the image of the western liberal project which at times faces wide resistance from local populations.

Recalling the imperial era's doctrine of white man's burden, Paris Ronald critiques that "From this perspective, peacebuilding resembles an updated (and more benign) version of the mission civilisatrice, or the colonial-era belief that the European imperial powers had a duty to 'civilize' dependent populations and territories."<sup>14</sup> However, the US seems to have a bitter pill after the Taliban takeover of Kabul and the re-emergence of the spectre of terrorism. The new US administration led by Joe Biden has announced that 'the US would no longer resort to military interventions to recast state and society or rebuilding nation in foreign lands.'<sup>15</sup>

### **Conclusion**

International peacebuilding as a panacea to post-conflict challenges in broken nations has its own limitations. It can work and bring results provided there is complementarity in strategic objectives of relevant international power players. International peacebuilding also demands willingness for political compromises and reconciliation among competing parties in the domestic conflict. Peacebuilding is essentially a political project to be accomplished by the domestic actors in which the international community under the supervision of the United Nations can provide a helping hand.

International actors would do good to the victims of conflict-ridden and torn nations by keeping away from their domestic politics and they should avoid meddling in a partisan manner by taking sides of one or the other groups. Economic and financial assistance should be free from any design for the narrow strategic and geopolitical gains of the donors.

The liberal interventionist project should shun imposing universal and homogenizing liberal reformist agenda which may not be acceptable to the masses in deeply traditional societies. It is the imposition of radical reforms from above and the foreign interventions in strategically located pre-modern societies that have caused the collapse of their rudimentary state institutions and resultant civil wars. International sensitivities towards domestic cultural and historical legacies will help in reconciliation, recovery, and rebuilding of state in post-conflict societies. Hopefully, the US and the international power players would learn lessons from the fiasco of foreign military interventions in an attempt at peacebuilding under the shadow of military power.

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# सुरक्षात्मक नीतियाँ, सशक्तिकरण की प्रक्रिया और समकालीन भारत में राज्य-पुत्रित्व सम्बन्ध: बेटी बचाओ बेटी पढ़ाओ कार्यक्रम के संदर्भ में

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रवि रंजन, मनीषा रॉय और सन्नी

## सार

इस आलेख का उद्देश्य लैंगिक असमानताओं के कारण उत्पन्न सामाजिक समस्याओं को समझते हुए, एक "लैंगिक संवेदनशील" और "लैंगिक भेदभावविहीन" समाज बनाने हेतु राज्य द्वारा निर्धारित सुरक्षात्मक नीतियों का विश्लेषण करना है। राज्य-पुत्रित्व संबंध को समझने हेतु, यह आलेख एक विषयगत प्रवास है, जो "संरक्षणात्मक नीतियों" और "महिला सशक्तिकरण" की प्रक्रिया से जुड़ी राज्य की योजनाओं के समीक्षात्मक अध्ययन पर आधारित है। "पुत्रीत्व" (Daughterhood) के प्रति अपने दायित्वों को समझते हुए, भारत के सभी राज्य और उनकी संस्थाएँ बेटीवों की स्थिति को बेटी के समतुल्य बनाने के लिए अनेक नीतिगत कार्यक्रमों के माध्यम से लोकतांत्रिक पहल करती रही हैं, परंतु, बेटीवों की सामाजिक स्थिति सुधारने के लिए और अधिक प्रयास करने की आवश्यकता है। शिशु लिंगानुपात एवं जनसंख्या में लिंग-अनुपात की समस्या को ध्यान में रखकर वर्तमान सरकार ने 2015 में इसके समाधान हेतु 'बेटी बचाओ बेटी पढ़ाओ' योजना आरंभ की थी, और शिशु लिंगानुपात की समस्या के समाधान के लिए विभिन्न राज्यों के 161 जिलों में इस योजना को संचालित किया गया है। बाद में, इसमें वृद्धि करके भारत के लगभग सभी 640 जिलों में इस कार्यक्रम को लागू कर दिया गया। क्या केवल नीतियों के स्तर पर बदलाव करके और अभियान चलाकर लैंगिक विषमता को खत्म किया जा सकता है? राज्य अपनी सुरक्षात्मक नीति एवं सशक्तिकरण की योजना के माध्यम से समाज को प्रेरित करने में कितना सफल रहा है? वह लेख ऐसे ही जटिल प्रश्नों को समझने का एक प्रयास है। बेटीवों की शिक्षा, स्वास्थ्य, और सुरक्षा सम्बन्धी नीतियों के माध्यम से, हमें, राज्य, पुत्रित्व और कल्याणकारी राज्य के त्रिकोणीय संबंधों को समझते हुए, राज्य-पुत्रीत्व संबंधों के सैद्धांतिक पक्ष को भी बेहतर तरीके से जानने का अवसर मिलेगा। इसीलिए, सुरक्षात्मक नीतियों और सशक्तिकरण के वाद-विवाद के विश्लेषण, और राज्य और नागरिक के संबंधों को पुत्रीत्व के दृष्टिकोण से समझना आवश्यक है।

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