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Thru' the Desk of the Editor

India as an ancient civilisation always believed in universal brotherhood, peaceful existence and harmony, keeping its heart open for people across the globe. The philosophy of mutual respect, tolerance and peaceful coexistence of all races, religions, faiths and community has been its primal policy of foreign relations. From time immemorial, India and countries of West Asia have been connected in terms of exchange of knowledge, goods, ideas, resources and cultures. The cultural roots between India and West Asia point towards similarities between them as no other country in Asia had sustained historical engagement with the West Asia as that of India..

Socio-economic Relations:

India's links with the West Asia by land as well as sea routes goes back to very ancient times. These ties between the two cultural zones consolidated gradually with fast spreading social, economic and cultural interactions between the two societies. The Arabs admired with keen interest many other aspects of Indian culture and civilization as well. They translated several Indian works on variety of subjects and went on to work out original compositions based on the treatises they translated. Other fields of Indian knowledge they studied included logic, philosophy, ethics, politics and science of war. About economic relations between them, there are accounts from mid-ninth century by travelers such as Sulaiman the merchant, Al-Masudi, Ibn-Hnqal, Al-Idrisi, etc., which indicate flourishing commercial exchange between both.

Customs and traditions:

Social rituals of both societies manifest many common features regarding common assembly for deliberations on social and political issues, marriage proceedings, birth and death ceremonies.

Religion:

Many religious rituals and religious symbols of both societies reflect several commonalities. The Aryan deity 'agni' occupies second important place among Vedic dev-mandal (group of gods), and that also figures prominently in Zoroastrianism as manifested in Zend-Avesta.

Trade relations:

India and West Asia had pre-historical ties since trade relations were established between civilizations of Mesopotamia and Indus Valley & Harrapa. One of mankind's oldest maritime trading routes ran from ancient Sumeria via Bahrain to the Indus Valley civilization and Harappa. The British imperial interests on Persian Gulf were preserved through India and at that time countries like Kuwait and Oman used rupee as genuine tender for exchanging commodities and goods in normal human chores.

Architecture:

One common feature between the two cultures lies in common architectural designs of both societies manifested in making of domes, roof arches, decorations on house walls, doors etc.

Medicines and Science & Technology:

Some Arab sources dating back to the tenth and thirteenth centuries inform us about Indian works on medicines and therapeutics that were rendered into Arabic at behest of Caliph-Harun-al-Rashid, the ruler of Baghdad from AD 286 to AD 809. Indian scholars were involved in these translations. *Sushruta Samhita* was translated into Arabic as *Kitab Shah Shun al-Hindi*, also known as *Kitab i-Susurud*, in Baghdad during the early 8th century. Yahya ibn Barmak facilitated a major effort at collecting and translating Sanskrit texts such as Vagbhata's *Astangahrdaya Samhita*, Ravigupta's *Siddhasara* and *Sushruta Samhita*

In the field of Astronomy, the *Brahama-Sphuta-Siddhant* better known to the Arab world as *Sindhuin* and *Khandakhadyak* (known as *Arkand*) were brought to Baghdad by embassies from Sindh with help of Indian Scholars. They were translated into Arabic by Alfarari. Aryabhata and Varahmihira's works also were studied and incorporated into scientific literature of the Arabs.

Another contribution of India to Arab civilization was mathematics. The Arabs acknowledged their debts to India by calling mathematics '*Hindisa*' (about India). They were quick to appreciate the decimal system with its concept of zero. These ancient historical sources testify that India did share long and profound historical relationship with West Asia.

In the new millennium there has been an extraordinary turnaround in relationship between the Gulf Cooperation Council (G.C.C.) countries and India. About 8.5 million Indians living in the region remit a huge amount of money to India. The amount of remittance coming from the region was estimated to be US \$ 40 billion. The Gulf region has always been significant to India because of geo-strategic location, availability of energy resources, home for Indian diaspora. India's trade and economic ties with the region which are around US \$ 160 billion and are growing. About 60 per cent of oil is imported from this region. India has a definite interest in balanced and peaceful strategic environment in the Gulf countries which are the source of two-third of India's crude oil requirements and form the largest trading regional block for India, accounting for 23.7 per cent of Indian trade. India believes strongly that it is not the business of foreign countries to impose forms of government on other countries. India believes that monarchies in G.C.C. countries are a factor of stability, fully in keeping with customs, ethos and traditions of the Arabian Peninsula. India's position remains guided by its long-cherished goals of non-interference in the internal affairs of other states, and it maintains friendly and constructive cordial relations with all the countries of the region. Excellent relations with the U.A.E., Saudi Arabia, and Qatar have developed even further since Shri Narendra Modi became India's Prime Minister in May 2014. There is strong multifaceted strategic partnership between India and these countries, sketched out in many agreements they have forged in variety of fields – energy, trade, to counterterrorism and defence cooperation.

Israel has become India's third-largest supplier of military equipment. As one of the most hi-tech and advanced economies in the Middle East, it potentially offered greater value-added trade and investment. In July 2017 Narendra Modi became the first Indian prime minister to travel to Israel. During the visit, Prime Minister Modi and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu signed agreements on international development, agriculture and space cooperation. The visit arguably reduced the status and influence of Palestinians in India's foreign policy, which was compounded by a growing rapprochement in late 2018 between Arab Gulf Arab states, reflected in the hosting of Israeli leaders by Oman and the UAE. The relationship with Israel has not damaged India's relations with other West Asian countries.

The Indo-Iranian economic relationship is also poised for a dramatic upsurge. India's relations with Iran contain both a national security and an economic dimension. Indian policy makers see relations with Iran not only as a key energy supplier but as a way to contribute to enhancing India's security in Central and South Asia, by containing India's main rival, Pakistan. For Iran and India alike, the path to constraining Pakistan lies through Afghanistan. India and Iran first agreed to cooperate on the development of trade and transport links through Central Asia and channel them towards Iran's Chabahar port on the Indian Ocean in 2003. But it would take another decade before the two sides were able to reach agreement with Afghanistan, in 2016. India's crude oil imports from Iran is the most important aspect of the economic dimension of the bilateral relationship. Since the implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in January 2016, India and Iran have renewed efforts to deepen the relationship. On May 24, 2016, Prime Minister Modi and Iranian President Hassan Rouhani signed a historic deal to develop the strategic port of Chabahar and thereby open transport-and-trade corridor to and through Afghanistan to Central Asia and Europe. The meeting between Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Iranian President Hassan Rouhani yielded nine agreements which also covered taxation, customs duties, visa requirements, along with cooperation in agricultural, health and medical sectors.

Against the backdrop of these developments, the various articles in this edition of the journal on West Asia – Changing Dynamics, Strategic Perspectives, examine the geopolitical dimensions, economic ties and other aspects of India's links with West Asia — a region that plays a vital role in India's economy and its future. The growth of India's power and its active diplomacy can be seen in its renewed focus on West Asia.

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India- UAE Economic and Bilateral Relations

Abstract

The visit of Crown Prince Sheik Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan to India as chief guest for Republic Day means India's developing engagement with the Gulf. As India tries to upgrade economic engagement and extend security collaboration with the Gulf, it finds a willing accomplice in the UAE. Then again, as the UAE “Look(s) East “to discover accomplices for its economic growth and wrestles with security concerns exuding from strife in West Asia and developing danger from fear based oppression and fanaticism, it finds a natural accomplice in India. The milestone visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in August 2015 and the arrival visit of the crown prince in February 2016 set the energy for improving the bilateral relations to a Strategic Partnership. Consent with that impact was marked on January 25, 2017, aside from 13 different MoUs.

The transition in West Asia ascent of radical and fanatic powers, changes in the regional request, combined with vulnerabilities over US strategy under President Donald Trump’s organization and India's developing enthusiasm for the Gulf area driven by its economic and exchange ties, vitality stakes, and nearness of somewhere in the range of 7 million Indians in the Gulf (and 2.6 million in UAE), are significant components pushing India and UAE to improve their engagement. The UAE has a special spot even among the Gulf nations because of its syncretism culture, business-accommodating environment, readiness to put resources into the Indian economy and its significant job in keeping up harmony and dependability in the area. Subsequently, the third significant level visit among India and the UAE in less than two years underlines the significance the two nations append to quickening economic growth and keeping up regional harmony.

This paper looks into various aspects of India-UAE economic and bilateral relations and also analyses the impact of visits of both the countries.

Key Words: MoU, Bilateral Relations, Strategic Partnership, Business-accommodating

Introduction

Since 3000 B.C, relations between India and the seven emirates which now make up the United Arab Emirates were customarily close. The UAE and India had delighted in close and benevolent ties dependent on notable and social ties. Individual’s to-individuals contacts and deal exchange for garments and flavors from India in return for dates and pearls from the area have existed for centuries. After the making of the Federation in 1971, India-UAE relations prospered. (Goldman, 2008) Today UAE and India share political, efficient and social connections. There are over a million Indians in the United Arab Emirates, being by a wide margin the biggest traveler bunch in the country. A huge Indian network dwells and takes part in the UAE in monetarily profitable exercises and has assumed a noteworthy job in the development of the UAE (Chatterjee, 1987)

UAE and India appreciate notable binds with the same number of as 2.5 million monetary transient specialists of Indian source living in the oil-rich bay state. Indians additionally make up the biggest ethnic gathering in the UAE making up generally 27% of the all out UAE's occupants. These Indian expatriates throughout the years have likewise made a noteworthy financial commitment to India as settlements worth billions of dollars.

On 18 August 2018, Prime Minister Modi depicted Sheik Mohammed's helpful help for those influenced by the 2018 Kerala floods as “[reflecting] the unique ties between governments and individuals of India and UAE”. On 6 August 2019, the UAE upheld the choice of the Indian government to seek after entry of the 2019 Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization Bill, with the UAE's Ambassador to India expressing: “We expect that the progressions would improve social equity and security and certainty of the individuals in the neighborhood administration and will energize further strength and peace”

Business and Economic Relations

The UAE has expressed its interest to invest in India's agriculture. Besides, the UAE, which is India's top exchanging accomplice in the whole West Asia North Africa (WANA) area, as only it represents 75 percent of India's fare to GCC nations, has seriously taken forward the relations with India. Indian exports to the UAE represent 6 percent of India's worldwide exports. The relations between the two countries started to flourish with the then Indian Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh's visit to Abu Dhabi in March, 2013. (Kelly & Stansfield, 2013)

In 2008-09, India rose as the largest trade accomplice of the UAE with bilateral trade between the two countries surpassing US\$44.5 billion. UAE and India is each other's fundamental exchanging partners. The trade totals over \$75 billion (AED275.25 billion). (Vora, 2011)

In spite of the fact that India and UAE are two fast developing economies from Asia bilateral trade between them has not stayed up with the economic development in the district, with trade tumbling to US\$49.3 billion out of 2016 from about US\$67 billion in 2013. During the Indian Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's visit to the UAE in February 2018, the two sides signed milestone consent to lead trade legitimately in their nearby currencies wiping out the requirement for US dollars which would significantly boost trade. The two leaders have also set an ambitious objective of US\$100 billion in bilateral trade constantly 2020.

The UAE occupies a key place in India's West Asia strategy. The political and discretionary engagements with the UAE have seen a substantial increase as of late. The elevated level visits¹ from the two sides have given a new impetus to this partnership. In May 2016, Late Manohar Parikkar turned out to be first Indian Defense Minister to visit UAE to draw in with his UAE partner and discuss possibilities of improving defense relations.² Moreover, the first Strategic Dialogue meeting between the two Foreign Offices was held in New Delhi on January 20, 2017.

A new force was given to the relationship in January 2017 when the different sides signed the concurrence on Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP). Previous Indian Ambassador to the UAE Talmiz Ahmed demonstrated that the CSP will 'encourage the shaping of a new Indian job in the Gulf region.'³ Nine agreements were signed during the visit of Crown Prince in February 2016 and 14 during the visit in 2017 for strengthening cooperation in the field of digital security, infrastructure investment, renewable vitality, space cooperation and different areas. Further discussions are on to finish the proposed \$75 billion investment subsidizes for India's infrastructure projects by the UAE.

The developing engagements among India and the UAE has to be seen inside the more extensive contexts of UAE's approach of drawing in with Asia to improve financial prospects and India's search for foreign investments to speed up monetary development and address the danger of extremism and terrorism. UAE's foreign exchange with China and India has increased exponentially in the course of the last decade, while its exchange with Europe has descended. Exchange between UAE-China was \$35 billion out of 2011 and developed to \$54 billion out of 2014. While it slightly decreased to \$48 billion out of 2015 attributable to low oil-prices, it is estimated to reach up to \$60 billion of every 2016 and cross \$80 billion in 2017.⁴ Similarly, its exchange with India has developed significantly in the last decade — from \$13 billion of every 2005-06 to \$49.7 billion of every 2015-16.⁵ Since the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government came to control in May 2014, New Delhi has invested amounts of energy on drawing in foreign investments and the Gulf countries can be a significant source.

Without a doubt, exchange and trade forms the foundation of the respective relations. The UAE is not exclusively India's driving exchange accomplice West Asia yet additionally it is third largest after China and the United States while India is UAE's top foreign exchange accomplice. Strikingly, the UAE is the main nation in the Persian Gulf with which India has a great exchange balance despite it being a substantial source of crude oil for India. India-UAE exchange basket is very diversified and in 2015-16, Indian sent out goods worth \$30 billion to the UAE with substantial apparatus, oil based goods and food and dairy products being the primary fare commodities.⁶ During the visit of Prime Minister Modi in August 2015, the different sides

consented to additionally extend respective exchange by 60 percent in the following five years.⁷ It is critical to take note of that with the dispatch of India-UAE Business Council in September 2015,⁸ and normal meetings through various business and investment forums, this objective seems attainable. (Samuel & Rajiv, 2016)

The Emirates is also fundamental to India's pitch for improving foreign direct investments (FDIs) inflow to the nation with the enormous sovereign riches and business intuition. Discussions about the establishment of US\$75 billion reserve to be invested in infrastructure improvement in India, as concurred during Modi's August 2015 visit, are continuing. The UAE has been one of India's driving sources of FDIs. In the last two years, the general FDI inflow in India has developed by 36 percent to reach \$40 billion out of 2015-16 with the UAE's commitment being \$4.3 billion during the period April 2000 to September 2016.¹⁰ (Gupta, 2017)

Despite the fact that much beneath potential, an upward pattern can be seen with about three-crease increase from \$350 million to \$1 billion during 2014-16, thus turning into the fifth largest source of FDIs into India. Navdeep Singh Suri, India's Ambassador to the UAE hailed land and petro-chemicals as possible focus areas for additional investments by UAE companies.¹² Further, to offer impetus to India-UAE cooperation, the legislature has affirmed the MoU for cooperation in the street transport and highways sectors. The proposed understandings won't just assistance increase investment in infrastructure advancement and improve logistics proficiency yet in addition help the two countries in making institutional mechanisms for cooperation in the field.

Indian businesses have similarly established a strong impression in the UAE. For instance, the Jebel Ali Free Zone (JAFZA) is home to in excess of 800 driving Indian companies and Dubai and Abu Dhabi are home to a significant Indian business presence. Further, countries in the locale are estimated to spend more than \$4 trillion in creating financial infrastructure suitable for supporting non-oil business activities. All the more critically, Expo-2020, the world's third largest worldwide occasion after the Olympics will be held in Dubai, and will boost infrastructure related activities in the UAE, opening opportunities for Indian investors.

In the vitality sector, however UAE is just the fifth largest supplier of crude oil to India, there is significant shared synergy in using the unending possibilities offered in vitality cooperation. The UAE accounts for 8 percent of India's oil imports and was fifth largest supplier of crude oil to India in 2015-16,¹³ India-UAE vitality ties are probably going to see further force. In 2016-17, India plans to import 2.5 million tons more than what it purchased (16.11 million tons) in 2016.¹⁴ Significantly, the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC), in a first of its sort bargain, has consented to store crude oil in India's lady strategic storage office and give two-thirds of the oil for nothing to India. (Puri, 2020)

Counter Terrorism Relations

Over the last few years, India has also worked with UAE on various counter terrorism issues. The UAE has ousted many potential fear mongers and killed many cells having a place with Indians who needed to join the Islamic State since its development in 2014. Moreover, it has marked many MoU's with India also on Counter Terrorism co-activity to guarantee better controls of terror financing and expulsions. A portion of these progressions are due to expanded financial relations and the decreasing job of the US in the Gulf region bringing about Gulf countries checking out nations like India, Russia and China due to their potential to become security suppliers in the region. (Fink, 2014)

Visits between both the Countries

On 16 August 2015, Prime Minister Narendra Modi began a two-day visit to the UAE, the first state visit by an Indian Prime Minister to the nation in 34 years. Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi visited the United Arab Emirates from 16–17 August 2015 at the greeting of His Highness Crown Prince Mohamed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan. In a break from convention which would have seen just the UAE Foreign Minister, Sheik Abdullah, get dignitaries, Crown Prince Sheik Mohammed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, alongside his five brothers, was also present to greet

PM Modi. The point of the visit was to increase two-sided collaboration in vitality and exchange, and market India as an appealing business destination (Spiegeleire, Jans, & Verhagen, 2017).

India-UAE: Cabinet approves MoU on Technical Cooperation in the Rail Sector

The Union Cabinet has approved a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed among India and United Arab Emirates (UAE) on Technical Cooperation in the Rail Sector. The MoU was signed in February 2018 with Federal Transport Authority – Land and Maritime of UAE. The MoU will give stage to Indian Railways to collaborate and share most recent turns of events and information in the railway sector. It will encourage trade of data, master gatherings, technical visits and usage of together concurred cooperation ventures between the two nations. The MoU will empower technical cooperation in the regions (Baruah, 2018)

Conclusion

As India and UAE look forward to enhance their bilateral relations, there are areas that provide further opportunities and should be tapped to further the ties. There are untapped possibilities to the extent Indian wellbeing industry and clinical segment is concerned. India is home to one of the best HR and its private clinics have the essential foundation, offices and skill to provide world class clinical consideration within a small amount of the cost spent in created nations. The travel industry can be a significant zone where India can pull in Emiratis. There are further untapped possibilities in the field of sustainable power source. The cost for creation and transmission of solar energy in the UAE are less to that of India and this is a need for the UAE government. Indian organizations with mastery around there can put resources into the sustainable power source division in UAE. India can also gain from UAE's understanding as it has had the option to make a noteworthy foundation there with limited capacity and with lesser cost (Roy & Quamar, 2017),

There is scope for improving speculation atmosphere in India to draw in UAE organizations. India has a colossal market and there is critical extension for development in vehicle industry, farming and partnered ventures. In the event that business guidelines are facilitated and the time spent on getting clearances can be reduced, it can prompt significant ventures from Gulf and Emirati speculators. There is also critical potential in the education sector. India has probably the best higher education organizations in designing and the board fields and given their cost-compelling and world-class education, they can be a significant fascination for Gulf and Emirati understudies who are looking for securing higher education and better aptitudes. Further, there is a requirement for improving the individual to individuals contact for acquaintance and expanding communications between think tanks, analysts and through scholastic trades (Dodh, 2016). There is a need to further enhance collaboration through joint preparing programs for Indian and UAE officials. The visit of Crown Prince Al Nahyan is a significant advance towards building another key organization. (Rajiv & Samuel, 2016)

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Dynamics of Gulf Security

The Gulf is area of utmost security concern. The hydrocarbon resources of the region have increased the strategic significance of the region. There has been a constant competition among the world powers to position their interest in the region to ensure their energy security. Growing importance of oil in the world economy and other issues like the disputes over continental shelf rights and conflicting territorial claims over Bahrain, Kuwait and many islands gives it a separate sub-region identity. The defeat of Egypt in 1967 war eventually separated the issue of Arab-Israeli conflict as well as the influence of Egypt receded. The British withdrawal and the US decision to relay on Iran and Saudi Arabia under Nixon Doctrine (1969) decisively separated the Gulf from the extended region of West Asia.

In the 20th century, the Gulf resembled a bipolar system with the two competing contemporary powers- the Ottomans and the British. Iran under the Shah played the role of a guarantor of political stability in the region and its Arab Sheikhs which suddenly collapsed with the Iranian Revolution. The alarming threat perception of the Arab Gulf States led to the formation of GCC in May, 1981, based on excessive reliance on US military commitment which has been justified by an exaggerated threat from Iraq and Iran. Their regional ambition and its threats has been the basis of their exclusion from the Gulf security.

The decade of 1990s witnessed significant changes in domestic politics of states of the region which had immense impact on the security perception of all the states in the region with calculated neutrality of Iran in the wake of Kuwait crisis. OIC summit in Tehran and the diplomatic exchanges during the period were showing the shared concerns of all. Before these syndromes could have taken some practical shape, the Iraq war in 2003 pushed the region into a state of security flux.

Over almost three and half decade later, the very context of *threat perceptions* and *the security* concerns of these states have undergone considerable change which needs serious appreciation in the light of Qatar blockade crisis, US 'Maximum Pressure Strategy' towards Iran, changing political coalition in Iraq, Iran-Saudi rivalry and the COVID 19 pandemic underway for a genuine security. This paper is a pursuit of understanding of the dynamics of the threat perceptions of Gulf States, their security concerns, regional rivalry, interests and responses of the powers and the regional players like Iran, Turkey and Israel. The paper is also trying to evaluate the security threats, their implications and ramifications in the light of following broad current realities in the region.

Iraq is down and a house in disorder, terrorism and civil war in the whole region of West Asia with inevitable impact in the Gulf and security, the *Qatar blockade* of quartet Saudi rupturing the traditional dynamics of threat perception of GCC, Qatar, Kuwait and Oman are inclusive in their approach to security including Iraq and Iran, The US strategic policy and presence, increased Turkish military presence in its Doha base under Qatar-Turkish joint military agreement and its implications and interests of Israel in the region are important factor of security perceptions in the Gulf.

The major argument of the paper is based on the regionalist perspective in the post-Cold war international system as domestic dynamics of great powers pull them away from military engagement and strategic competition in the troubled spots of the world. The Gulf fits into a sub-region in security perspective which Barry Buzan explains as a group of states in a relatively small area whose primary security concerns linked together sufficiently closely that their national security cannot realistically be considered apart from one another. This concept also stresses that the security problems of a certain sub-region like the Gulf only involve the nations in this region and it needs all the nations in this region to join together to solve them.

GCC Crisis and Saudi rivalry with Qatar

The Qatar crisis has suddenly disturbed the tenuous security balance maintained by US with military presence (CENTCOM and US 5th Fleet) and GCC mechanism in the region. Both Saudi Arabia and Qatar follows Wahhabism and Saudi Arabia has been the hegemonic leader of the GCC and has viewed Qatar traditionally an extended sphere of its influence. The crux of the 13 demands on Qatar is the severance of its relations with Iran whose regional power ambitions have been at loggerheads with the policies and regional ambitions of Saudi Arabia. But the 9th article of the Charter says that, “Resolutions of the Supreme Council in substantive matters shall be carried by unanimous approval of the member states participating in the voting, while resolutions on procedural matters shall be carried by majority vote. In response to these conditions Qatar instead restored its relation with Iran by sending its ambassador to Tehran with the specific instructions to strengthen the relations in every arena. Iran opened all its land, air and sea connectivity to the beleaguered nation so that it can tide over its economic hardship in the wake of the blockade. The crisis has tilted the balance of perception in Iran’s favour in the Gulf.

The creation of ‘Joint Operation Room’ to coordinate regional response is a welcome cooperative sign for the crisis ridden group. There has been increasing contacts the GCC states with Iran in the wake of the Iran-US confrontation through Qatar and Oman. The region is witnessing a new sense of cooperation during the pandemic. The GCC states of Qatar, UAE and Kuwait have provided assistance to Iran- medical and other materials to help the worst COVID-19 hit country in the region. Such a trend, though in an extraordinary health emergency, is a symbol of pragmatic realisation of the fact that Gulf as a region needs an inclusive security system. The head of the WHO praised the UAE and the Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed, for a second humanitarian airlift to Iran.

GCC Crisis and the US interests and responses

The US interests and policies have been of paramount importance for the security of this strategic and fragile region in the recent past. The Arab spring produced a new geopolitical scenario and all the regional powers pursued their goals in their own interests and perspectives without visualising the possible outcome. This dangerous scenario and conflictual position among US allies in the region is the cause of the incoherent responses of the Washington which entails dangerous consequences for the security of the region. US policy of ambivalence in Arab Spring and Qatar crisis provided opportunity to the regional players like Iran and Turkey with regional ambitions to play their role and pursue their policies.

Turkish pursuit and its Implications

The crisis pushed Qatar to take unprecedented steps to boost its relations with Turkey and upgrading its military base in Qatar set up in 2014, from 100 to 3000 soldiers, first Turkish military base in the Arab world. This has the potential to change the traditional power balance in favour of the emerging Qatar-Iran-Turkish alliance. Turkey and Qatar’s foreign policies also bore similarities with respect to their independent stances during this period.

US Iran Policy and its Implications

The withdrawal US from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and the policy of ‘Maximum Pressure’ has dramatically increased the vulnerability of the region. The subsequent escalation between Iran and US led the region to the brink of war when the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) shot down an intruding US drone into the Iranian air space near Kouh-e Mobarak as per their claims while the US officials contradicted the claim that it occurred in international airspace. In response President Trump approved a military strike against Iran on certain targets like radar and missile batteries. The operation was underway with war planes and ships attack ready but it was called off before the strike could begin...

ARAMCO Attack and the Threat Perception

The Houthi missile attack on the Saudi ARAMCO sites allegedly in connivance with Iranian strategic and logistical support pushed the region once again towards a possible hot conflict. Iran's Foreign Minister refuted the claim and called it a strategy of 'Maximum Deceit' with the failure of the policy of 'Maximum Pressure' and instead suggested for talk putting aside futile blame game. Saudi Arabia alleged the Iranian hand as their investigation indicated that weapon used in the attack were Iranian and a demanded an investigation by the United Nation experts. The Saudi Foreign Ministry hailed the UN Report on the attack and claimed that it "leaves no doubt for the international community about Iran's hostile intentions towards the Kingdom in particular, the Arab region and the wider world in general. Thus Saudi-Iran rivalry has assumed very dangerous pattern in the recent years and months and the security of the Gulf needs a wholesome approach.

US-Saudi Relations

In the recent month, the Saudi-US came under severe strain over their divergence of interests over oil price war which affected the US oil companies. President Trump asked the kingdom to fix the issue or he would be powerless to stop the US legislature from making the US troops withdraw from the Kingdom. Besides, Saudi Arabia also appeared in the April,2020 Special 301 Report of Intellectual Property challenges in specific trading partner markets. The United States Trade representative (USTR) planned to conduct an Out-of-Cycle Review of the Kingdom focusing on its protection against commercial use, as well as the unauthorised disclosure of undisclosed test or other data generated to obtain marketing approval for pharmaceutical products.

The drifting away of the trust and commitment between the two allies has come to public doubt with the US announcement of removing of Patriot anti-missile system and reduction in other military capabilities. This large-scale military build-up has been put in place in the aftermath of ARAMCO attack as an alliance of solidarity to counter Iranian threat. These developments are clear manifestations of limits of the strategic alliance and therefore it must have forced the kingdom to reassess its threat perceptions and durable security framework based on its own national interests and regional exigencies. Such evolving patterns have profound implications for the Gulf security.

Chinese Factor

The expansion of Chinese investment and influence has been adding a new factor in the security of the region. Announcement of the Iranian Foreign Minister, Javad Zarif of a comprehensive strategic partnership with China on 6th July, 2020 could create a new US-China competition and a potent challenge to the US position and dominance in the region for decades. The agreement seems to indicate a strategic military ties and \$400 billion investment in Iranian infrastructure- railroads, ports, 5G network and telecommunications. Iran can become a hub of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) project and China could establish free trade zones in such strategic location as Maku in the northwest, Abadan near Iraq and Qashem Island.

The impending agreement had its origin in the Joint Statement on Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between the Islamic Republic of Iran and People Republic of China during the visit of the President Xi Jinping in 2016 which proposed for a major agreement in all areas of bilateral relations and regional and international issue, . It also underscores and specifies the roadmap of developing and deepening ties between the two in "Political", "Executive Cooperation", "Human and Cultural", Judiciary, Security and Defence" and "Regional and International domain. Such Chinese engagement in eastern flank of the Gulf which could lead to dovetailing Pakistani port of Gwadar to Chabahar and Bander Jask overlooking the strategic strait of Hormuz has potential to change dramatically the security balance.

As the US-China rivalry is spiraling, it can assume extreme geopolitical contest in the Gulf and widen the fault line between the Saudi-Israel team with US support and the Russian-Iranian axis with Chinese backing. The tension in the Gulf is getting renewed with the US and allies pushing for extension of sanctions on Iran due to lapse on 18th October, 2020. The GCC Secretary General, Dr. Nayef F. M. Alhajraf, sent a letter to the UN Security Council asking for the extension of the sanctions under UNSC resolution 2231. He claimed that Iran has not desisted from support to the terrorist and sectarian organization in the region. Therefore, it is imperative to keep the sanctions in place for peace and security in the region.

Iraq Disorder and the Gulf Security

Iraq presents an inexorable security challenge to the region in last two decades in particular. Iran has gained a strong foothold in the country and US is in the withdrawal mode and extremist elements of different hues are keeping the dangerous disorder in an unabated pattern. On 11th June, 2020, Strategic Dialogue discussion was held between the Iraqi and US delegations led by Senior Under Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Iraq, Abdul-Karim Hashim Mostafa and Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, US, David Hale respectively in accordance with 2008 Strategic Dialogue Framework Agreement for a Relationship of Friendship and Cooperation between the United States of America and the Republic of Iraq. It emphasised the political commitment and security partnership. It recognized reduction in security threat and therefore gradual reduction of US forces from the country in a phased manner as per due consultations between the two based on their mutual interests. The US has agreed for reduction of troops in light of elimination of ISIS threat but seems to be not sure of the peace and stability in the country in near future. That perhaps is the reason that the dialogue has not been able to reach a timeframe to reduce the US troops in the country.

Israel Factor in Gulf Security

Israel and the GCC States have shared enmity against Iran. Israel views Iran as the most important problem for its security owing to its support to Hamas and Hezbollah. It recognises the nuclear programme of Iran as a threat to its security and therefore is strong critic of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action agreement, 2015 between Iran and the (US, UK, France, Russia, China +Germany) 5+1 powers. The GCC states share with Israel this Iranian factor for their own security in the Gulf.

The Saudi led quartet-blockade is basically based on Qatar relations with Iran, Hamas, Hezbollah and the Islamist active in the region. Israel shares a common front on all these issues. Tel Aviv is taking it as a positive development as this divide is not due to the traditional factor of Palestine rather because of their concern for radical Islam and related terrorism. The crisis and its broad pattern has been an opportunity for Israel to make cooperation with these countries in its fight against Islamic radicalism and terrorism said then Israeli Defence Minister, Avigdor Lieberman in the Israel parliament in the aftermath of the crisis. It will bring the US involvement back in the region which strengthens the Israeli position as the crisis delegitimizing the Islamist radicalism.

The pattern seems to be in the direction of Israeli cooperation with the Saudi group in the Gulf against Iran and its proxies in the different fronts in West Asia. The Palestine issue which has always been a uniting factor is being pushed to the back seat in this regional geopolitical competition and dynamic security perceptions. This Israel- Arab alliance (Saudi Arabia, UAE & Egypt) will surely spur the position of Israel. It will also be beneficial for Saudi Arabia to scuttle the growing spread of its rival Iran in the region. This may look promising for these countries for the time being but the security and stability of the region of Gulf will receive a severe jolt with increasing involvement of the extra-Gulf powers (Israel, Egypt and Turkey) in the region. This will have a detrimental impact in the security of this sub-region which needs only the littoral states and their cooperation for a genuine security of the region. The pandemic crisis has provided the opportunity to bring all the littoral states into the Gulf security including Iran. Because the GCC in the present form, fallen discredited and a divided house, has been 'half Gulf cooperation Council' without Iran which covers the entire eastern flank of the Gulf.

The “Abraham Accord” reached between Israel and UAE on 13th August, 2020 is a new dimension and can have numerous implications as Israel will suspend declaring sovereignty over areas of West Bank as envisioned in the Middle East Peace Plan. As per claims of the US and Israeli establishment other Arab countries in the region are on the way to reach a similar accord with Israel. It has huge potential to change the balance of threat perception and security imperative of Arab Gulf States vis a vis Iran.

The Gulf States of Kuwait, Qatar and Oman support an inclusive and sustainable security framework in the region. Constructive involvement of the powers like EU, India and China can develop a durable security mechanism. China can use its influence and relations with to help the mediate among countries in the region for their long term interests. All should work towards a coordination and adjustment of their national interests for the security and the stability of Gulf which would ease and calm the strife and conflicts in West Asia.

The Gulf represents a typical Sub-region where the national securities of all the states of the region are interdependent. Any realistic security framework of structure must include all the littoral states. The Qatari crisis have demonstrated the pursuit of security in the region since the Iranian revolution from GCC mechanism, CENTCOM, policy of Containment, Isolation of Iran, continued sanction regime and the policy of ‘Maximum Pressure’ has been untenable. In the wake of strategic shift of US from the region to Indo-pacific , other powers- EU, India and China along-with US need to bring the parties to the table with due consideration all the sovereign dignity and their genuine grievances in a pragmatic manner. The ongoing escalating tension between Iran and US is very dangerous for peace and security of one and all in the region.

Given the competing interests and pursuits of the regional powers and their alliances with the major world powers that have their own geopolitical and geo-strategic interests are making the security of the region extremely intractable. There is a need of pragmatic evaluation of interests of all stake holders and actors to build a prudent security framework with widest and densest possible consultations. A genuine multilateral approach with an energetic and coordinated regional and international effort is needed to calm the prolong crisis stage and establish a sustainable peace in the region. A Collective Multilateral Security for the region based on cooperation of all that includes all the Gulf States, USA, Russia, China, the EU and India and other stakeholders as observers or associated members hold the potential for a desired outcome.

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Status of Agriculture Trade between India and the UAE

Abstract

Today, India ranks second worldwide in farm output. The economic contribution of agriculture to India's GDP is steadily declining. India is the largest producer, consumer and exporter of spices and spice products. It ranks third in farm and agriculture outputs. Agricultural export constitutes 10 per cent of the country's exports and is the fourth-largest exported principal commodity (APEDA, India). The total agricultural exports to United Arab Emirates rose from US \$ 368 million in 2003 to US \$ 2,296 million in 2012, which is almost three times greater than the exports in 2003. There is a growth in India's exports to UAE around \$ 1,928 million in a decade that is from 2003 to 2012. This study highlights the major agriculture products of India to UAE. It has also shed light on the current status of agriculture bilateral trade between India and UAE. Agriculture policies of both countries are also being taken into account.

Keywords: GDP, Agriculture trade, bilateral trade, Output, APEDA.

Introduction

India is a major producer and consumer of agricultural or primary products but still insignificantly contributes in international trade. Moreover its share in world agriculture trade is declining due to self-sufficiency and food security policies of the government following the green revolution. Thus comparing India's domestic price with world price is of huge importance. Agriculture plays a very important role in India's economy. About 58 per cent of the rural households depend on agriculture as their principal means of livelihood. Agriculture, along with fisheries and forestry, is one of the largest contributors to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Today, India ranks second worldwide in farm output (Economic survey 2017-18). The economic contribution of agriculture to India's GDP is steadily declining. India is the largest producer, consumer and exporter of spices and spice products. It ranks third in farm and agriculture outputs. Agricultural export constitutes 10 per cent of the country's exports and is the fourth-largest exported principal commodity (APEDA, India). The agro industry in India is divided into several sub segments such as canned, dairy, processed, frozen food to fisheries, meat, poultry, and food grains. The Department of Agriculture and Cooperation under the Ministry of Agriculture is responsible for the development of the agriculture sector in India. It controls many other bodies, such as the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB), to develop other allied agricultural sectors. India exported \$39 billion worth of agricultural products in 2013, making it the seventh largest agricultural exporter worldwide and the sixth largest net exporter (APEDA, India).

India's arable land area of 159.7 million hectares (394.6 million acres) is the second largest in the world, after the United States. Moreover India's total irrigated crop area of 82.6 million hectares (215.6 million acres) is the largest in the world (world bank). India is among the top three global producers of many crops, including wheat, rice, pulses, cotton, peanuts, fruits and vegetables. Worldwide, as of 2011, India had the largest herds of buffalo and cattle, and the largest producer of milk and has one of the largest and fastest growing poultry industries (annual account report by APEDA, 2016-17).

Agriculture Sector of India at a glance

India is a country known for its agriculture sector. There was a time when more than 50% national income was generated from primary sector of India but as the pace development paved its way, other sector sectors over taken this traditional sector. And now the contribution of agriculture and allied sectors in GDP is 17.5%. Top five trading partners of India

Table -1 India's major trading partners (2017-2018)**(value US \$ million)**

s.no.	Country	Exports	Imports	Trade balance
1	China	13,335	76,380	-63047
2	USA	47,878	26611	21267
3	UAE	28146	21739	6407
4	Saudi Arab	5410	22069	-16659
5	Hong Kong	14690	10675	-4014
6	Total of top five countries	109459	157476	-48017

Source: Ministry commerce and industry, GOI.

The above table shows India's major trading partners .The table highlights India's total trade with China, UAE, USA, Saudi Arab and Hong Kong for the year 2017-2018.we have taken latest bilateral trade data from the source so that we can identify UAE's position which is second in terms of exports and its value is US\$ 28146 Million. While UAE has fourth position in terms of imports valued of around US\$ 21739 million. During 2017-18 India was having positive balance of trade with UAE and along with that with USA.Besides that with China, Saudi Arab and Hongkong, India has been experiencing negative balance of trade (APEDA report 2017-18).

Indian Agriculture products and its major importers

In this section we will be discussing about different categories of agriculture produce of India. It would help to know what products UAE imports from India and also provides information about other major importers of Indian primary goods. In order to simplify the study some significant commodities for the year 2017-2018 are taken.

Table-2 India's crucial agriculture exports UAE and other major trade partners.

Basmati Rice	India is the largest exporter of Basmati rice to Iran, Saudi Arab, UAE, Iraq and lastly Kuwait .UAE has imported 429324 million tons of Basmati Rice in 2017-2018, During this very year UAE was the third largest Basmati rice importer to India .
Cashew	UAE has remain the largest importer of Cashew from in the year 2017-2018, 17571 million tones of cashew has been exported by India to UAE .Other top countries were USA Japan Netherland Saudi Arab
Cereal preparations	USA, Nepal, Bangladesh, UAE and UK. UAE imports 20489 million tons of cereals from India. UAE is the fourth largest importer of India as far as cereal preparations are concerned.
Cocoa Products	UAE is last among top 5 importers of cocoa products from India, it has imported 1650.59 million tons during 2017-2018. USA, Turkey Indonesia, Germany are the four major importers of cocoa products from India.
Dairy products	Top five importers of Indian dairy products are USA, UAE, Egypt Bhutan and Nepal.UAE is the second largest importer of Dairy products from India.
Floriculture	Top five importer of floriculture from India are USA, Netherland, UK, Germany and UAE.USA imports 3489.01 million tons while UAE imports 1220.97 million tons from India. UAE is one of the largest importer of floriculture from India.

Fresh Fruits	Top five importers of fresh fruits from India are UAE at the top, Netherland UK, Russia and Saudi Arabia are remaining four countries. UAE imports 136860.01 million tons of fresh fruits from India.
Fresh Vegetables	UAE is the major importer of fresh vegetables from India, it has imported 314810 million tons of fresh vegetables. Followed by Srilanka, Malaysia Bangladesh and Nepal.
Fruits and Vegetables Seeds	UAE is major importer of fresh vegetables from India, it has imported 314810 million tons of fresh vegetables. Followed by Srilanka, Malaysia Bangladesh and Nepal.
Processed Meat	Top five importers of processed meat from India are UAE, Vietnam, Qatar, Bangladesh, Bhutan UAE Imports 152 million tons of processed meat from India and Bhutan imports 8 million tons.

Source: Agriculture and processed food products exports development authority (APEDA), GOI.

India's status as an importer country with UAE during the year 2017.

Pattern of trade of both countries that is India and UAE is quite different as exports of UAE dominates in oil sector and exports of India dominates in agriculture sector .Here we have some data from UN Comrade, it reveals that India imports very little (agriculture products) from UAE. This table shows imports of India from UAE for the 2017, it is because we have tried to study recent trade pattern between the two countries.

Table-3 India's imports from UAE (value US \$ million)

Serial. no.	Items	Imports(in US\$mil)
1	Dates-fresh ,dried	19.16
2	Vinegar and its substitutes	0.25
3	Sugar cane	3.58
4	Whiskies	3.41
5	Other juices	0.24
6	Protein cons.	3.42
7	Juice of citrus fruits	3.09
8	Bread pastry cake biscuits.	0.13
9	Waffles & wafers	1.06
10	Natural honey	0.3
11	Flaked grains of oats	2.84
12	Total value	37.48

Source: UN COMTRADE.

India has recently imported dates from UAE equivalent US\$ 19.16 million. Then sugarcane products accounts for US\$3.58 million .Whiskey and protein supplement accounts for US\$3.41 and US\$3.42 million respectively. Flaked oats contribute very little that is US\$2.84 million. India has import juices of citrus fruits of valued US\$ 3.09 million and other juices accounts for US\$0.24million.Natural honey imported by India equal to the value of US\$ 0.3 million. Hence it is clearly noticed that India dominates in agriculture production and it imports very little in comparison to UAE which relies on India for many commodities like basmati rice, non basmati rice, fruits pulp, cocoa products, floriculture, fruits etc.

Status of UAE in India's Agriculture Trade

On the basis of recent data available (source, APEDA) on agriculture exports of India to different countries we have find out that UAE is one of the major trading partner of India. For UAE India is a major source of Agriculture products. India has recently exported Basmati rice, Cashew, Cereal preparations, Cocoa products, Dairy Products, Floriculture, fresh vegetables, fresh fruits and fruit and vegetable seeds and processed meat to UAE. Among these primary products UAE is the top major importer of processed meat ,fresh vegetables and fresh fruits.

The total agricultural exports to United Arab Emirates rose from US \$ 368 million in 2003 to US \$ 2,296 million in 2012, which is almost three times greater than the exports in 2003. There is a growth in India's exports to UAE around \$ 1,928 million in a decade that is from 2003 to 2012. From 2003 to 2004 there is considerable increase in agriculture exports of India to UAE. In 2008 India exported to UAE equivalent to 1702 million dollar, there was a slight decline in exports in 2009, it was of the value 1586 million dollars then in 2012 India's exports to UAE were of 2296 million dollars (world trade atlas data base) .There is a great potential for Indian exports to UAE due to same consumption pattern as in India. It is because considerable numbers of Indian migrants are living in UAE, and they are demanding for fresh vegetables, fruits, meats and processed food items. On the other hand UAE is an oil based economy with higher level of gross per capita income this is another reason for high demand for agriculture commodities.

UAE's total exports to India were of the value of 19622.81 million dollars in 2012 - 2013.UAE's exports of Fish and Aquatic vertebrates to India in the year 2002-2003 was 0.28 Million dollars and in 2003-04 it was 0.09 UAE exported dairy products to India accounts for 0.3 million dollars and for 2003-04 it was also 0.3.Then we come to certain roots and tubers which accounts for 0.55 million dollar in the year 2002-03 and 0.06 in the next consecutive year. Fruits, Nuts, Melons accounts for 1.71 million dollars and for 2003-2004 it was 0.77 million dollars .Oil seeds and Grains for 2002-03 and 2003-04 has remain same that is 0.04 million dollars , coffee, tea, spices accounts for 0.38 million dollars and for 2003-04 it accounts for 0.16 million dollars. As we can observe very clearly that UAE's imports to India in agriculture or primary products is not so much impressive in fact it is very little in quantity .UAE's exports to India in agriculture products are more or less remain same over the years .As the above mention data has also suggested that there is almost same pattern in agriculture products imported by India from UAE(UAE, central bank,2014).

Agriculture exports of India to UAE have considerable share in UAE's market .Data extracted from DGCIS at HS code four, says that among all cereals, the most demanding export commodity of India to UAE is Rice it accounted as \$292.9 million in 2017 and for the next consecutive year it is accounted as \$278 million. Other important cereals are wheat and maize. As far as coffee tea mates and spices are concerned, India exports heavily tea to UAE in 2017, the amount was \$1611 million and for 2018 it has accounted as \$1785 million, coffee is the other most important export commodity to UAE out of this category. Among vegetables, dried leguminous vegetables are observed to be most demanding, in 2017 leguminous vegetables accounted as \$269million and in 2018 \$228 million to UAE from India. Ground nuts and sunflower seeds are also important exports of India to UAE. In 2017 the exports of sunflower seeds was equivalent to \$1.3 million and in 2018 it reached to \$7.2 million. As far as ground nuts export is concerned it was \$5.2 million in 2017 and in 2018 it is found to be \$4.9 million.

Agriculture Trade Policy of India

India is a labor intensive country whose back bone is agriculture sector. India is one of largest producer of sugar tea spices seafood vegetables fruits rice etc. India's share in global exports has been increasing which is satisfactory indicator of its growth. A few years back Share of agriculture products in global exports was 1% that has increased to 2.2% which is a substantial figure.

Ministry of Commerce desires to frame such agriculture export policy which also helps farmers get benefit of their hard work. Agriculture export policy of India launched by Ministry of Commerce, Government of India in 2018 with a view to double farmers' income by 2020. But due to corona crisis policy could not work. Farmer's condition has become more vulnerable. Government is working on it to overcome this crisis.

India's Agriculture Export Policy

Objectives

- To double agricultural exports from present US\$ 30+ Billion to US\$ 60+ Billion by 2022 and reach US\$ 100 Billion in next few years thereafter, with a stable trade policy regime.
- To diversify our export basket, destinations and boost high value and value added agriculture exports including focus on perishables
- To promote novel, indigenous, organic, ethnic, traditional and non-traditional agri products exports.
- To provide an institutional mechanism for pursuing market access, tackling barriers and deal with sanitary and phyto sanitary issues.
- To strive to double India's share in world agri exports by integrating with global value chain at the earliest.
- To enable farmers to get benefit of export opportunities in overseas market.

A Brief Study of Agriculture sector of UAE

UAE is a federation made up of seven Emirates: Abu Dhabi, Ajman, Al Fujairah, Dubai, Ras al Khaimah, Sharjah, and Umm al Qaiwain .In the recent times the largest emirate is Abu Dhabi and Abu Dhabi City is the capital of both the emirate and the whole country. In 2005, the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the United Arab Emirates was US\$180.617 billion. Then became US\$ 358.135 in 2015 and it was US\$65.744 billion (Economist intelligence unit, Emirates NBD research).The main source of income is the revenue from oil exports. In 2005 economically active population was 2.7 million (59 percent of the total population), of which 86 percent was male and 14 percent female. Agriculture employed an estimated 4 percent of the labor force and accounted for 2 percent of the country's GDP. The entire labor force working in agriculture is male. UAE's economy is oil based but there is a little scope for agriculture especially for organic farming. UAE has 34 organic farms (Dubai customs, NBD research, 2014). UAE from last few years focusing on organic farming and successful in producing broccoli, tomatoes, kale strawberries, cucumbers, chilies, potatoes, peas, carrots etc. One significant produce of UAE's economy is organic palm dates.

From the last decade UAE experienced some relative improvement in its non-oil sectors, achieving the goal of being the second largest Arab economy and, very recently, the country has been ranked as the 7th strongest Asian economy. The UAE's economy, like other oil exporting countries, faced considerable oil price volatility in the 1990s. However, during that period UAE registered a real average GDP growth about 7 percent.

Agriculture Policy of UAE

Agriculture sector of UAE is quite limited; it is confined to few products only. Existing agriculture sector of UAE going through transformation. Farmers are moving towards organic farming. Agriculture mainly practiced in Ras Al Khaimah, Fujairah, Al ain and in some other areas in Dubai and Abu Dhabi. In UAE agriculture is highly dependent on use of latest technology due to lack of fertile land and lack of water resources. Agriculture hydroponics is a significant technology in UAE. Hydroponics is basically a subset of hydro culture in which plants are grown in water instead of soil, plants are kept in mineral nutrients solution .It is a creative and useful way of farm production. It is worthy to mention that the use of sprinkler, drip and fountain irrigation systems rose to 91 per cent in 2011 from 32 per cent in 1999.

UAE – India agriculture deals

The then Union minister (GOI) Mr. Suresh Prabhu announced that UAE and Saudi Arabia are going to invest in India's agriculture sector for the sake of food security in their respective countries. India will provide them primary product which is a great deal for UAE and Saudi Arabia. This deal is closely related to the concept of special economic zone. According to the sources, UAE wants to invest in food processing industries and in Organic farming. In an effort to improve food security, the UAE government has invested in sustainable food security projects in the region and abroad especially in Vietnam, Egypt, Pakistan, Romania, Sudan to safeguard supply against market price fluctuations. The UAE re-exports nearly 50% of imported food products to other GCC countries as well as Russia, India, Pakistan and East Africa. According to Economist Intelligence Unit, in 2010, the UAE's imports accounted for US\$3.6 billion. This is estimated to rise to US\$8.4 billion in 2020.

Conclusion

India is a nation blessed with fertile land as compared to UAE which is still struggling for quality land availability. About 90% of the Gulf's food demand is met with imports as agriculture is restricted due to climatic conditions and land use restrictions. The report highlights that agriculture contributes only 0.9% of the UAE's GDP and only 1% of the UAE land is available for agriculture in comparison to the UK which uses 24% of its land for agriculture. UAE re-exports nearly 50% of imported food products to other GCC countries as well as Russia, India, Pakistan and East Africa. According to the Economist Intelligence Unit, in 2010, the UAE's imports accounted for US\$3.6 billion. This figure is estimated to rise to US\$8.4 billion in 2020. The UAE is one of the biggest re-exporters of rice. In 2010, the UAE re-exported a total of US\$520.8 million, which accounted for approximately 90% of the world's re-exports (Dubai multi commodity centre report, 2011). According to Dubai Exports, 85.7% of the UAE's re-exported rice goes to Western Asia. The other markets include Oman, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, US, Mozambique, Madagascar, Sri Lanka, South Africa, Zambia, Uganda, Rwanda, Mauritania and Ethiopia. Not only UAE but the whole MENA region is an essential export destination of Indian agriculture exports (Business Standard.com, 2019). Major export destination of the UAE of vegetables are Iran, Saudi Arabia, Oman Kuwait, Iraq (2018). India, USA, Canada, Australia and Spain were major vegetable exporters to UAE for the year 2018 (Trade statistics, WITS). India is a significant market for UAE, and UAE is also equally economically important for India. There is much more scope of agriculture trade between these two countries as UAE is the known re-exporter of agriculture goods. India is a prominent producer of agriculture base products so the agriculture deals may go high and pave way for further bilateral trade in various sectors and areas.

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The “Aden” policy - Why India cannot ignore the Yemen war

The ongoing conflict in Yemen has been infrequently reported in our local media and finds little to no mention in the government’s foreign policy briefings. Yet, this region near East Africa that is considered to be technically a part of Asia, its long-standing internal strife and the latest on-going international conflict should be of primary concern to us.

Let us briefly look at the history of Yemen to understand the historical background of the current conflict.

For more than 2,000 years prior to the arrival of Islam on its soil, Yemen was home to rich city-states and wealthy empires whose prosperity was based on their control over the production of *Frankincense* (an aromatic gum resin containing volatile oils used in incense and perfumes) and *Myrrh* (a bitter tasting, aromatic oleoresinous gum); two of the most highly prized commodities of the ancient world, and Yemen’s then exclusive access to spices and condiments from southern Asia and Ivory from East Africa. Of the three most known and largest empires spanning from 1200 BCE to 525 CE; the empire of Saba (*also known as Sheba*), finds a prominent mention in the Bible.

The Roman Empire began expanding its power and influence to the Red Sea in 1st century CE and soon learned how to utilize the monsoon winds to enable traffic between Red Sea ports and ports of Asia and East Africa. Unable to compete with the Romans, it was only a matter of time before Yemen went into an economic decline and also into a vortex of political and social instability. In 6th century CE, the last king of the Himyarite empire Dhu Nuwas (a convert to Judaism) massacred the majority of Christian population of Yemen. In retaliation, the Byzantine emperor arranged to have an army from the Christian kingdom of Aksum (in what is today’s Ethiopia) to invade Yemen and aid the Christian survivors. The Aksumite campaign was led by Abraha, who won this war and stayed on to rule Yemen. He attempted to expand his newly acquired kingdom farther north into the Hejaz (currently the western region of Saudi Arabia), and while his effort to besiege Mecca was a failure, it achieved him a mention in the Koran. The defeated Himyarites sought the support of the Persian Sasanian dynasty to overthrow the Aksumites, and after obliging them, the Persians added Yemen to their domain. In 628 CE, the Persian Governor of Yemen converted to Islam.

Islam spread quickly in Yemen, perhaps due to consistent economic decline and atrocious behaviour of both the Jewish and Christian rulers during those times. Early in the 9th century Muhammad ibn Ziyad established the Ziyadid dynasty. This was also the time for the introduction of the Zaydi sect from Iraq - a group of Shia who accepted Zayd ibn Ali (*Ali ibn Ali Talib*), who was the cousin and son-in-law of Prophet Muhammad; as the last legitimate successor to the Prophet. Ali was the first imam or leader of Shia’ism in all its forms. It was on the question of his right to rule the Caliphate as the fourth rashidun (rightly guided caliphs) that led to a major split in Islam, into the Sunni and Shia branches.

In the 15th century, Yemen was again in the centre of a new storm with their discovery of coffee as a stimulating beverage. As a result this, most of the 16th and 17th centuries saw the Yemen region transformed into a conflict zone with the Egyptians, the Ottomans, and various European powers seeking control of the emerging markets for *Coffea arabica*, as well as control over trade of condiments and spices from the East. The world lost interest in Yemen in the beginning of the 18th century when the preferred sea-route between Europe and Asia was around Africa, and the coffee plant had been taken out of Yemen to be transplanted to new, profitable locations from Asia to Americas.

In the 19th century, the determination of various European powers to establish a presence in the Middle-East, resulted in the British takeover of Aden in 1839, while the Ottoman empire occupied North Yemen, from where it had been driven out by the Yemenis two hundred years earlier. The interests of these two powers intensified in the region by the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 and the re-emergence of the Red Sea route as the preferred passage between Asia

and Europe. As the Ottomans expanded inland to establish themselves in Sanaa (the current capital of Yemen) and Ta'izz; the British expanded towards the North and East of Aden. The growing clashes between the British and the Ottomans along the non-demarcated border lead to the 1904 treaty that established the frontier between the Ottoman ruled North Yemen and the British possession of South Yemen.

With the departure of the Ottoman forces at the end of World War I in 1918, North Yemen became an independent country with Yahya Mahmud al-Mutawakil (the Imam of the Zaydis) as the defacto ruler. He resuscitated the Zaydi claim to a 'Historic Yemen' which included Aden and other protectorates under British rule; as well as areas of the north that were being occupied by the expanding Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The areas of Asir province, Jizan and Najran oasis became the point of conflict between the Zaydi and the house of Saud (rulers of Saudi Arabia); while the British retained control of the south, which they considered as strategically and economically important to their own empire. Aden was of particular importance since the British officials of the 1830s thought that a military base was necessary to prevent the French advance through Egypt and or the Russian expansion through Persia. The then governor of Bombay, Sir Robert Grant (1834-1838) believed that India could only be protected by 'preemptively seizing places of strength to protect the Indian Ocean'.

On 19 January 1839, the British Royal Marines landed in Aden to secure the territory, and by 1850 it was declared as a free trade port. The port of Eden lies equidistant from the Suez canal, Bombay (Mumbai) and Zanzibar (today a semi-autonomous region of Tanzania); all important British territories for trade. Thus Aden became a crucial coal and water replenishment center for ships travelling from Europe to Asia, and remained under British control until November 1967.

By the end of World War II in 1945, a wide segment of the Yemeni society was up against Yahya Mahmud and in 1948 he was assassinated by a coalition of dissident; who in turn were overthrown by Yahya's son Ahmad, who installed himself as the new imam. Politically, the British continued to rule Aden and the protectorates in the north; and by 1965, seventeen of the 21 protectorate states had joined Saudi Arabia. The British announcement that independence of Yemen would ensue by 1968 unleashed violent political conflict as various parties fought for control of South Yemen.

Earlier, in September 1962, Imam Ahmed who was ruling the North part of Yemen died of natural causes, and his son Imam Muhammad al-Badr became the new ruler. Within weeks; elements of the military, supported by a variety of political parties, staged a coup and declared the foundation of the Yemen Arab Republic (North Yemen). The new republic and its leader Abd Allah al-Sallal called upon Egypt for assistance and Egyptian troops and equipment arrived almost immediately to defend this regime. At the same time Saudi Arabia provided sanctuary and aid to the deposed imam al-Badr and his largely tribal loyalist forces. This can be considered the watershed instance in which Saudi Arabia got involved in the internal affairs of Yemen.

The establishment of a republic in North Yemen provided incentive to Yemenis in the south to free themselves from the British. The Egyptians agreed to provide support to organizations campaigning for southern independence. However, with many organizations being suspicious of the dominant role that Egypt had begun to play in that region; a new and radical alternative, the Marxist oriented National Liberation Front (NLF) which drew its supporters from indigenous people of the south, came into existence. By the time of independence in late 1967, the NLF was the predominant political party and the British arranged for transfer of sovereignty to the NLF on 30 November 1967; and the 'People's Republic of South Yemen' was formed.

Seeking financial and technical aid, this new nation sought help from the then Soviet Union; since neither the Western countries nor the Arab world showed any interest in its development. By the early 1970s South Yemen was firmly a Marxist state with communist thought process of society and economy. Ironically, it was renamed the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen.

During this time the conflict in North Yemen; between imam al-Badr, supported by Saudi Arabia, Iran and Jordan, and the republicans; supported by Egypt, and Soviet Union had escalated into a civil war that continued till 1970. Britain, USA and the United Nations were also involved, even though only at the diplomatic level. Al- Sallal's Egyptian backed regime was ousted in 1968 and replaced by a nominally civilian one of Abd al Rahman al Iryani; leading to the 'Compromise of 1970' - an agreement brokered by Egypt and Saudi Arabia. This government lasted till 1974 and replaced by a military- led Council headed by Ibrahim al-Hamdi that began an era national development. The assassinations of al-Hamdi in 1977 and his successor al-Ghashmi in 1978, were an indication of the ever existing power turmoil in the region. The successor to al-Ghashmi was Colonel Ali Abdullah Saleh who managed to reconcile most of the factions and resume the development programs. He founded the General People's Congress (GPC) party and consolidated his political career as President of North Yemen (1978-1990), and then as President of re-unified Yemen (1990-2012).

With both Yemen nations achieving independence, there were expectations for unification. This was not easily forth-coming due to the drastic differences in the political and economic policies of the two regimes. While North Yemen pursued market economy and trade ties with the West and Saudi Arabia; the south moved in a socialist direction under the NLF. These ideological and political differences lead to the border wars of 1972 and another in 1979. During this time the NLF evolved into the Yemen Socialist Party (YSP). After internal power struggles that lasted till 1986, the YSP leadership was headed by moderate politicians led by Ali Salim al-Bayd and Haydar abu Bakr al-Attas; who undertook the task of the unification of two Yemens. Sanaa was declared as the political capital of Unified Yemen and Aden was to be the economic capital; though the new government inherited a country with a severe economic collapse and deprivation, especially since these conditions followed a short period of improved economic conditions that led to soaring expectations of the people.

The indirect cause of the economic collapse of Yemen was the Persian Gulf War of 1990-91. Even with the importance of oil revenues of Yemen itself; their economy was heavily dependent on workers remittances and economic aid from Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states. Yemen's refusal to join the U.S-Saudi military coalition against Iraq prompted Saudi Arabia to expel a bulk of Yemeni workers there and to cut-off financial aid to Yemen. Despite these setbacks, the April 1993 legislative elections were held with international monitoring and were judged to be relatively free and fair. Unfortunately, the conflict between northern and southern political leaders worsened in late 1993 leading to the 'War of Secession' of 1994, which resulted in the defeat of the southern forces and a rout of the YSP party, leaving control of the country in the hands of the GPC-Islah (Islamic Reform Grouping) coalition dominated by President Saleh.

By late 1994 the economy of Yemen was in constant recession and the country had ceased to be economically viable or sustainable. The Saleh government realized that its non-demarcated border with Saudi Arabia remained a source of regional conflict, and that the restoration of the border issues with Saudi Arabia would improve relations between the two countries, allowing the possibility of stabilizing the economy and restructuring it within a peaceful environment. Saudi pressure on Yemen's eastern border and the border clashes during 1994, led to the January 1995 'Memorandum of Understanding' to reaffirm the Taif treaty of 1934, which culminated into the June 2000 final border agreement between Saudi Arabia and Yemen.

On the economic front, from 1995 onwards till 2010 the sustainability and viability of Yemen's economy was dependent on multistage World Bank and IMF financial aid packages, which the Saleh government successfully implemented in the last years of the 20th century. However, by the turn of the century there was an increasing lack of willpower to adhere to the IMF & World Bank's demanding economic and governance measures linked to the aid packages. By 2005 the economy of Yemen was unable to create adequate jobs for the country's rapidly growing population. Unemployment, malnutrition and poverty levels grew drastically.

The bombing of the American naval ship, the USS Cole in Aden port, followed by the al-Qaeda's attack on the United States on 11 September 2001, dramatically changed Yemen's relations with many countries, especially with the United States. With the rise of Islamic Jihadi forces in nearby Somalia, compounded by the realities of domestic policies within Yemen that were influenced by local nationalism, Islamic history, growing anti-American sentiments and given the central role of Yemeni militant Islamic leaders in the local political balance of power; President Saleh was forced to navigate a difficult political path between these contradictory forces.

Yemen has a long and deep link to Islamic Jihad. The father of Osama bin Laden (founder of al-Qaeda) was originally from Wadi Hadramawt in Yemen and had migrated to Saudi Arabia. Many of the recruits for the Afghan War (the U.S and Saudi Arabia led efforts to fight the forces of the Soviet Union in its invasion of Afghanistan in the 1980s) were hard-core Islamic Yemenis; and Afghanistan, the crucible of global Islamic jihad. When the Soviets withdrew from their failed Afghan adventure in 1989, these battle-hardened and radicalized Islamic fighters went home; while many of them, Yemeni and non-Yemeni, came to Yemen, drawn to its porous borders and vast tribal areas outside the control of the states. Many of these 'Afghan-Arabs' fought on the side of the Saleh government in the War of Secession in 1994, developing close ties with Saleh's top leadership.

In 2003 and again in 2006, President Saleh decisively won the parliamentary elections with majority, while the Islah and YSP along with the Nasserites and smaller Zaydi parties formed an assertive opposition coalition; the Joint Meeting Parties (JMP). Conflicting demands by foreign governments of the war-on-terror and the continuous problems facing Yemen's society and economy, led to increasing dissatisfaction in the early 2000s. During this time, the al-Houthi rebellion launched in 2004 in the north by Zaydi sayyids resulted in large casualties. President Saleh's strong response resulted that the rebellion continued to re-erupt and defied efforts to reach a truce. In mid-2007, protests and demonstrations, broke out in many places across southern Yemen. Initiated by military officials protesting their forced retirements and paltry pensions, their actions were joined in by civil servants, lawyers, other professionals and unemployed youth, protesting what they considered was a systematic discrimination against the south.

The Houthi's are an armed Shia Muslim movement, and have their roots in a movement that started in northern Yemen in late 1980s to protect and revive Zaydi religious and cultural traditions. Zaydism is a branch of Shia Islam that's different from the Twelver Shiaism of Iran and Lebanon.

The rebellion in the north and violent protests in the south, brought the legitimacy of the Saleh government into question. Some protesters in the south began questioning the Yemeni unification itself, claiming that unification amounted to occupation. Crucially, supporters of the Houthi rebellion questioned the idea of a republic and called for the restoration of Islamic rule by the Zaydi sayyids. The Houthis were not the only ones creating instability in Yemen. The 17 September 2008 bombing of the U.S. Embassy that killed 16 people was the handiwork of al-Qaeda. The legitimacy and effective administration (or the lack of it) of the Saleh government was being challenged from every side.

When the 2011 Arab Spring, the wave of pro-democracy protests spread across the Arabic world, Yemen was one of the first to experience the uprising, with brutal consequences. Fueled by the already existing rebellion in all parts of country, the uprising evolved into a brutal civil war agitated by intervention of foreign powers. Throughout the first quarter of 2011 those opposing the rule of President Saleh clashed with the security forces. On March 18 Saleh's forces fired upon the protesters in Sana, killing around 50. On 20th March, General Al Mohsen al-Ahmar, commander of the 1st Armored Division, announced his support for the opposition and his intent to use troops to protect the protesters. The defection of al-Ahmar who was joined by several other senior officers, further increased the tensions in Sanaa; where military units of the defecting officers and those still loyal to Saleh; both deployed tanks and heavy weapons in key locations around the city.

As the unrest continued, security forces from the outlying provinces were brought into Sanaa to respond to the growing unrest; allowing militant groups in the provinces to regain their foothold. While the Houthi rebellion in the north gained strength, the Islamic terrorist group 'al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)' took control of several cities in the the province of Abyan. Despite intervention by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) to broker a peace agreement between President Saleh and the opposition forces, Saleh's habit of initially agreeing to the proposals and then rejecting them, caused the GCC to suspend its mediation efforts; and led to heavy fighting in Sanaa between pro-opposition tribal militias and troops loyal to Saleh, with dozens being killed. On 3rd June 2011, Saleh was injured in a bomb explosion meant to assassinate him. He was taken to Saudi Arabia for treatment and Vice-President Adb Rabbuh Mansur Hadi took over as acting president. After prolonged negotiations, Saleh signed an internationally mediated agreement that transferred power to Hadi, in exchange for immunity from prosecution.

Under the Hadi government Yemen remained deeply divided; facing challenges from Houthi rebels and al-Qaeda, with a dismal economy and soaring unemployment. Much of the country faced acute shortages of food, water and basic necessities. The 'National Dialogue Conference' that commenced in March 2013 and concluded in January 2014 failed to stop the recurring violence and instability continued. Hadi's government faced new public discontent in July, after its policy of deep cuts in subsidies of fuel, with protests being mobilized by Houthi rebels. In September 2014, Yemeni security forces killed many protesters in Sanaa, escalating the confrontations. In late September, the Houthis took control of Sanaa, seizing key government offices. The United Nation (UN) brokered a peace agreement between Hadi and the Houthis, but the latter refused to withdraw from Sanaa until a prime minister of their choice was appointed. The Houthi occupation of the capital of Yemen and their foray into territories far from their northern stronghold, put them into conflict with other Yemeni factions, including al-Qaeda.

The fighting between government forces and the Houthi militia occupying Sana increased in January 2015 and on 21 January the Houthis overran the presidential palace, forcing the resignations from power of President Hadi and Prime Minister Khaled Bahah. The Houthis dissolved the parliament and announced a 5-member presidential council to form a transitional government. On 15 February, the UN Security Council issued a resolution condemning the actions of the Houthis and calling on them to return to the process outlined in the National Dialogue Conference. In late February, Hadi escaped from Sanaa and re-emerged in Aden, which was outside Houthi control, retracted his earlier resignation as president and asserted his right as the legitimate leader of Yemen. With his position in Aden remaining precarious, he appealed for international military intervention against the rebels. This intervention came in late March, when a Saudi Arabia led coalition of nine countries from West Asia and North Africa; comprising Egypt, Morocco, Jordan, Sudan, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain and elements of the mercenary group Academi (formerly known as Blackwater) providing on-ground forces and aerial strike power; with Djibouti, Eritrea and Somalia allowing the use of their air-space, territorial waters and military bases; the United States providing intelligence, logistical support and accelerated sales of weapons to the coalition forces, and direct aerial strikes against AQAP. Britain and the U.S deployed their military personnel in the command-and-control center responsible for targeted Saudi-led airstrikes on Yemen.

The Houthis were supported by former president Ali Abdullah Saleh, who was still an important player in Yemen politics. The Saudi-led air-strikes succeeded in enabling pro-Hadi forces to retake control in July 2015. Coalition forces helped them to drive the Houthis out of most of southern Yemen. The coalition did find it very difficult to dislodge the Houthis from northern Yemen, including Sanaa. Saudi-led aerial bombing raids killed thousands of civilians and severely damaged Yemen's infrastructure, but failed to loosen the Houthi's grip on the capital. This 'war' was widely criticized and its effect was described as a humanitarian catastrophe. Many have described it as a genocide. Whether this intervention is in compliance with Article 2(4) of the UN Charter is still in dispute.

In late 2017, the Houthi- Saleh alliance ended when Saleh announced his intentions to hold peace talks with the Saudi coalition. Violence followed between Houthis and pro-Saleh troops for control of the capital. On 04 December, Saleh was killed by Houthi forces in Sanaa. In southern Yemen, secessionist forces allied to Hadi demanded that he sack his government. When Hadi refused, they took over Aden, followed by fighting between the secessionists and pro-Hadi forces; while both were part of the Saudi-led coalition. The coalition mediated to end this crisis and forced a stale-mate. In June 2018 the Saudi-led coalition advanced on Al-Hudaydah, a Houthi held port city, in an effort to leverage the Houthis for peace talks and to negotiate a deal to end the civil war. However, the port being a life-line for humanitarian aid, the United Nations intervened to negotiate a cease-fire agreement, which was reached on 13 December 2018. The cease-fire remained fragile, with different parties to this agreement accusing each other of breach of its terms. Intermittent fighting and theft of UN aid continued through till June 2019, when the United Arab Emirates began disengaging from Yemen as victory for the coalition looked unlikely.

Fighting between the Saudis and the Houthis continued till the Covid-19 pandemic spread globally. Faced with an economic uncertainty due to free-fall in oil prices and concerns over the inability of the warring factions in Yemen to handle the pandemic outbreak there, Saudi Arabia announced a unilateral cease-fire in April 2020.

However, the al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) remains a major player in war-torn Yemen and a regional threat, with the potential to being a global threat. New leadership, its core characteristics as a fighting force and its ongoing fighting experience in Yemen allow this terrorist organization the capability to strike on multiple fronts. In February 2020, AQAP's leader Qasim al-Rimi was killed in a U.S. drone strike. AQAP's new commander Khalid bin Umar Batarfi inherits a organization that has been depleted by U.S. counter-terrorism campaigns in collaboration with the United Arab Emirates (UAE). In 2016 the UAE led international efforts to expel AQAP from the city of al-Mukalla, the largest city controlled by the group in Yemen.

The new leader of AQAP, Batarfi; may have been appointed to lead AQAP's efforts because he is from the Arabian peninsula and also has extensive credentials in international jihad. Batarfi is a key player in AQAP plans to take advantage of the chaos in Yemen. Al-Qaeda's success is less related to its military strength and more in securing hospitality and endorsements from key tribal leaders and passive tolerance of the locals. Its efforts in brand-building, community development projects and engagement with the youth have played a role in AQAP's population integration strategy. To understand the importance of AQAP's strategy it is worth comparing it to that of Daesh (ISIS), which relied mostly on bold military operations to inspire fear and forced support from the locals, but did not produce anything substantial by way of culture-specific narratives or community engagement, thereby failed to displace the AQAP. Batarfi and the AQAP is likely to become a long-term and dangerous enemy in that region. Yemen's long and porous border with Saudi Arabia makes it a ideal launch-pad to attack a prime enemy, the House of Saud; the family that rules Saudi Arabia. Given the hostility of the Yemenis towards Saudi Arabia and its military intervention, AQAP will attempt to recruit more Yemenis to its cause while fine-tuning its mission against the al-Saud family. As regional and global powers re-focus on other priorities, Yemen continues to offer significant opportunities to AQAP to strengthen its presence on the ground in the coming future and also to use Yemen as a base to revive its jihadi operations in the Gulf region.

The other important player in the politics of Yemen is China. China and the Arab Republic of Yemen (northern part of Yemen) established ministerial level diplomatic relations from 24th September 1956. With the formation of the Democratic People's Republic of Yemen (southern part of Yemen), China established ambassadorial level diplomatic relationship from 31 January 1968. After the unification of Yemen, the date of establishment of bilateral diplomatic relationship was set as 24 September 1956.

China's position on Yemen is driven by its interest in maintaining strategic relationship with Saudi Arabia. While not taking a prominent leadership role in the Yemen conflict, China has supported international and regional initiatives to mitigate the conflict. As Yemen's major trade partner, China has a strong economic presence in Yemen and seeks a significant role in Yemen's post-war construction through its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Despite China's historical ties with both north and south Yemen, bi-lateral ties with Saudi Arabia have been given prominence by China, due to Saudi's role as a major oil supplier and a regional focal point for the BRI. The two countries have publicly emphasized mutual respect for each other; with Saudi firmly supporting China's stance on Taiwan, Xinjiang and South China sea, and China respecting and supporting Saudi political and security interests in Yemen.

China had a muted response to Saudi-led airstrikes in Yemen. While it did not support this military action, it did not wish to confront Saudi Arabia or its military supporters the U.S and Britain over Yemen, and supported all UN Security Council resolutions on the Yemen conflict. China has tried to bridge the trust deficit between the Houthis and the UN after communications between the two sides broke down over the control of Hodeidah port. Although, China's mediation efforts were unsuccessful, the Houthis thanked China for its objective and impartial stance on the Yemen issue and assured China of their willingness to maintain close communications in future. Apart from millions of dollars in humanitarian aid to Yemen during its years of conflict, China will likely to be a prominent player in its post-war reconstruction. In November 2019, China urged the international community to offer assistance to Yemen by focusing on easing Yemen's oil crisis and helping the livelihood of Yemenis by stabilizing their local currency; while supporting reconstruction and developmental projects that increase employment.

There is no doubt that China's ambitious BRI will gain advantage when Yemen achieves stability, since most of China's trade with Europe passes through the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, while Chinese import of oil from Middle-East and Africa transit through the Strait of Hormuz. While Yemen is not of direct importance to China, the country occupies a strategic position due to its close proximity to international shipping lanes. Peace and stability in Yemen would allow China to resume its pre-war investments in trade and construction and allow Yemen to play a 'economically active role' in China's belt and road initiative.

With this view-point China has developed a connection of trust with the Houthis, while its official position is to support the Hadi government as the legitimate government of Yemen. Chinese diplomats continue to have routine meetings with all parties in the war-zone of Yemen, given China's ambition to benefit long-term from Yemen's Geo-strategic location; and to use its ports to connect with the 'silk road' ports of Gwadar (Pakistan) and in Djibouti, where China has financed and built Africa's biggest port which is also its first overseas naval base. Since trade, investment, politics and military are all linked closely to China's foreign policy; the Chinese long-term plan in Yemen is based on the importance of the port of Aden which enjoys an ideal natural location and shortens the shipping distances by hundreds of miles. China also has a keen interest in the military base on the Yemeni island of Miyun, near the entrance to the Bab-al Mandeb strait as part of its strategy to boost its military-naval presence on the Red Sea. This island has the potential to support the Chinese naval presence in Djibouti, making Bab-el Mandeb a key maritime choke-point.

India has had diplomatic relationships with Yemen were established in November 1967, when the British departed that country. Since 2014, the Indian government of Shri Narendra Modi has been developing stronger relationships with all major players in the Middle-East; balancing its diplomacy between the Sunni majority GCC countries and Shia majority Iran, while ensuring stronger relationships with Israel; essentially bridging diplomatic relationships across the Sunni, Shia and Jewish nations. However India has taken a spectators role in the Yemen conflict, and apart from contributing food assistance in form of rice and wheat worth US\$ 2 million in August 2012 and March 2013 respectively and providing medical assistance in 2015 and December 2017 worth US\$ 1 million, respectively; its only other role is being a member of 'Friends of Yemen'

(FOY) Group; which was established in London UK, in January 2010 at a meeting co-chaired by United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia and Republic of Yemen. The FOY Group has 39 countries and international organizations that include IMF, World Bank and United Nations as members, among others. The last FOY meeting was in New York, USA in September 2014, on the sidelines of the 69th session of the UN General Assembly.

The last official communication by the Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs was on 10 April 2020 where; in response to queries on the ceasefire in Yemen, the official spokesperson Mr. Anurag Srivastava said: *"India welcomes the announcement of ceasefire and hopes that cessation of hostilities will lead to resumption of political dialogue leading to peace and stability in Yemen and the region. This will also help Yemen to join the global community to deal with Covid-19."*

About 'Sardar' Sanjay Matkar

'Sardar' Sanjay Matkar is an audacious adventurer, an avid student of history and global politics. Recently, he has authored 'Showdown at Dabiq – Islamic State Vs. Armies of Rome in the 21st century'. He is a mentor & investor in cutting edge technology with 34+ years' experience in project management, corporate sales, and financial control areas.

India-Egypt Relations: Paradigm Shift since Independence to Present

India and Egypt have both endured relatively similar trials and tribulations and underwent various social metamorphosis with plethora of issues like colonialism, post-colonial socialism, nationalism so on and so forth. It became a catalyst for the leaders of both the countries to develop a fresh start after Second World War. This has culminated into Non-Aligned Movement, which intended to protect the interest of undeveloped nations in international politics.

In this article, the major objective is to find out the importance of these bilateral relations keeping in mind the contemporary foreign policy trends. This article would be divided into two parts. In the first part, the multifold facets of the bilateral relations would be analysed as it ranges from economic to cultural aspect. In the next part, the relevance and evolution of the bilateral relations would be discussed where pattern of relationship has been much more issue based compared to the ideological disposition during Neheruvian era.

Multifold Facets of Bilateral Relations:

The bilateral relations between India and Egypt is based on multifold dimension. In the political front, India and Egypt share close political understanding based on long history of contacts and cooperation on bilateral, regional and global issues. Since the 1980s, there have been four Prime Ministerial visits from India to Egypt: Shri Rajiv Gandhi (1985); Shri P. V. Narasimha Rao (1995); Shri I. K. Gujral (1997); and Dr. Manmohan Singh (2009, NAM Summit). From the Egyptian side, President Hosni Mubarak visited India in 1982, in 1983 (NAM Summit) and again in 2008. High level exchanges with Egypt continued after the 2011 Egyptian Revolution and President Mohamed Morsy visited India in March 2013. The year 2015 has seen more intense political cooperation between two countries with regular interactions at leadership and Ministerial level. Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi met President Sisi on the sidelines of UNGA, New York in September 2015. Their talks focussed on counter terrorism, deepening economic engagement, and regional issues.

In the same year, five Ministerial level visits from India to Egypt; which included Shri Prakash Javadekar who participated in the 15th African Ministerial Conference on Environment (AMCEN) in March 2015; Special Envoy of PM, Shri Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi met President Sisi in July 2015; Shipping Minister Shri Nitin Gadkari, represented India at the opening of the new Suez Canal in August 2015 and met President Sisi; and then External Affairs Minister Late Smt. Sushma Swaraj visited Cairo and met President Sisi, Foreign Minister and Secretary General of League of Arab States in August 2015 (two MoUs on Tourism and Science and Technology cooperation were signed during the visit); Shri Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, Minister of State for Parliamentary and Minority Affairs participated in the 25th International Conference of Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs at Luxor, Egypt in November 2015.

In the economic front, Egypt has traditionally been one of India's most important trading partners in the African continent. The India-Egypt Bilateral Trade Agreement has been in operation since March 1978 and is based on the Most Favoured Nation clause. The total bilateral trade increased almost 60% from US\$ 3 billion in 2009-10 to US\$ 4.89 billion in 2014-15. India is the sixth largest trading partner of Egypt – the third largest export destination and eleventh largest import source for Egypt. India exports to Egypt during FY 2017-18 recorded US\$ 2.39 billion. The top five Indian exports during this period were; Meat, light vessels & floating cranes, Petroleum Oil, Cotton Yarn and Motor Cars while the top five Indian imports were; Petroleum Oil, Petroleum gases and other gaseous hydrocarbon, Natural Calcium Phosphates, Raw Cotton and coke & semi-coke. Over 450 Indian companies are operating in Egypt of which around 50 are in manufacturing and construction. Major Indian investments in Egypt include TCI Sanmar, Alexandria Carbon Black, Kirloskar, Dabur India, EgyptIndia Polyester Company (EIPET), SCIB Paints, Godrej, Mahindra and Monginis. Indian companies also execute projects in railway signaling, pollution control, water treatment, irrigation, anti-collision devices etc.

Indian Pharmaceutical major Hetero Drugs Ltd launched a joint venture in May 2015 to produce a Hepatitis-C drug and Sun Pharma has recently commenced operations. Indian companies are present in almost every sector including apparel, agriculture, chemicals, energy, automobiles, retail and others. Overall, these companies provide direct and indirect employment to approximately 35,000 Egyptians.

In the cultural front, The Maulana Azad Centre for Indian Culture (MACIC) was set up in Cairo in 1992 to promote cultural cooperation between the two countries, through the implementation of the Cultural Exchange Programme (CEP). The Centre, in addition to popularizing Indian culture through Hindi, Urdu, Yoga classes, dance classes, seminars, film shows and exhibitions, also organizes cultural festivals. The 5th edition of India by the Nile, the annual Indian cultural festival, was held from 4 to 16 March 2018 for over two weeks in three cities in Egypt – Cairo, , Alexandria, and Port Said. The Festival is produced on public private partnership. The festival is billed as the ‘biggest foreign cultural festival’ in Egypt.

At present, the Indian community in Egypt numbers at around 3600, most of whom are concentrated in Cairo. There are also a small number of families in Alexandria, Port Said and Ismailia. A majority of the Indians are either employed with Indian companies or are professionals with various multinationals. Apart from that, Yoga has gained popularity in Egypt with more than 50 schools in Cairo, besides centers in other cities. The International Day of Yoga 2018 was celebrated with enthusiasm in Cairo, Ismailia and Alexandria.

Relevance and Evolution of Bilateral Relationship:

In the post-independence period, India's foreign policy has got a new dimension owing to Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) where Nasser also contributed in a positive fashion. In this context, it is also important to understand what are the situations that have channelised to initiate this alternative away from superpower politics.

Egypt's affinity with the NAM grew out of its close contacts with the newly independent states of the South. In April 1955, a few weeks after the Israeli attack on Gaza, and the Iraqi decision on joining the Western alliance system, Nasser made his first journey to the East- to Pakistan, India, Burma and to Bandung. Nasser's previous contacts with Asian leaders had been in Cairo where Prime Minister Nehru had made a habit of stopping off on many of his trips to London. There was evidence that Nehru's persuasion was required to get Nasser to accept the invitation to attend the first Afro-Asian Conference at Bandung. Egypt's interests increased when it became known that a large African delegation would attend. It seemed that the chief attraction for Nasser in the journey has led to the prospects of closer ties with India and also with other AfroAsian states. A treaty of friendship between Egypt and India was signed in Cairo on April 7, 1955. He hoped to convince Nehru regarding the justice of the Arab cause in Palestine and to win India's support for it in the United Nations. Thus, it will not be wrong to say that the Bandung Conference widened the Egyptian foreign policy horizon from the narrow Arab angle to a wider Afro-Asian environment.

In this context, it is very important to note that the base of India- Egypt bilateral relations used to depend on India's unrelentless support for the Palestinian cause. It is noteworthy to mention that in several summits of NAM, India reinforced Palestinian cause directly. In the second NAM Summit in Cairo in October 1964, NAM explicitly endorsed the principle of self-determination for the Palestinians and declared its full support to the Arab people of Palestine in their struggle for liberation from colonialism and racism. The third summit at Lusaka in 1970 maintained that Israel had occupied the territories of three non-aligned countries and added the full respect for the inalienable rights of the Arab people of Palestine as a prerequisite for peace in the Middle East and reaffirmed its support to them in their struggle for national liberation and against colonialism and racism. The Algiers declaration of NAM in 1973, at India's insistence emphasized that just and durable peace in the region could be obtained only on the basis of two indispensable fundamental pre-requisites; restoration of the Palestine people's national rights, the foremost among which is the right to return to self-determination along with ensuring global recognition of the PLO as the legitimate and the sole representative of the Palestinian people.

At the Colombo NAM Summit in 1976, India wholeheartedly supported a resolution that condemned Israel's racist, expansionist, terrorist policy and its attempt to Judaize Arab territories.

Following the period of Nasser, when Sadat came to power, the Egyptian polity has gained a different momentum altogether especially after the historic Camp David Accord in 1978. Following the Camp David Accord between Egypt and Israel, India's relations with Egypt also took a new course as the pattern has shifted from the ideological during Neheruvian era to issue based.

Rajiv Gandhi's visit to Egypt symbolised the renewal of friendship between India and Egypt. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and President Hosni Mubarak reviewed the explosive West Asian setting and considered the measures that NAM could take to defuse the Iran-Iraq war.

After the regime of Rajiv Gandhi, Indian Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao met Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in Cairo's Itihada Palace in October, 1995 and signed a seminar security accord designed to curb militant violence. Prime Minister Rao mainly concentrated on media, science and technology along with Middle East Peace process and United Nations Reform. Mubarak was against the rise of Islamic radicalism in Egypt, as it contradicts the democratic environment of the country. In this context, Muslim Brotherhood became the sole target of Mubarak. The difference between Mubarak and Muslim Brotherhood came to the limelight when Muslim Brotherhood became a force to be reckoned with in the political sphere of Egypt. Alongside its political achievements, Muslim Brotherhood delivered impressive services to the sectors of lower middle class. With the progression of economic liberalization in the mid 1970s, it was evident that Islamic activity was significantly expanding in economic matters. With the diminishing state role in the economic management and planning, Islamic groups were participating in the growth of banks, investment companies and personal business venture. In the 1980s, Infitah policies helped Islamic Banks and financial institutions to prosper. Mubarak's regime took a vigorous position against Islamic investment companies in the year following its agreement with the IMF in 1987.

Later, when I.K.Gujral became the Prime Minister of India, in his week long trip, he focused on Uganda, South Africa and Egypt. Africa is fertile ground for many reasons. A visit to these three countries where India has a legacy of relations was overdue. When Gujral set course for Africa, the imperatives were clear to him. As he told that "Our fathers had laid the foundations of our relations with African countries. They had even built the ground floor. But we neglected it. My job is not only to repair the house but build the first storey for the new generation to live in."

Subsequently, Manmohon Singh also visited Egypt in 15th NAM meeting in Sharm-al-Sheikh, Egypt. In this conference, India also focused on other countries like France and Pakistan in this platform. Although in 2008, President Hosni Mubarak was conferred the Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding. Mubarak was honoured for his unique role in providing stability and progress to his country, in upholding the Arab cause, in promoting peace and understanding in the region. The Award is being given away annually since 1965 for outstanding contribution to the promotion of international understanding, goodwill and friendship among peoples of the world.

Journalist Vinod Mehta opined that Mubarak was not much fond of India. In this context, he mentioned that in the early '80s, Indira Gandhi hosted a banquet for non-aligned leaders in New York. Whether by accident or by design, Mubarak was denied a seat at the high table. Later, When the BJP was in power, prime minister Atal Behari Vajpayee. refused to take a telephone call from Mubarak. Apparently, the president wanted to give some advice on Kashmir. In 1995, India gave Hosni Mubarak the Jawaharlal Nehru Award for promoting international understanding. He accepted the award but refused to come to Delhi personally, as all previous winners had done, to receive it. India dug its heels in and Mubarak could not receive it without physical presence. Thirteen years later, in 2008, Mubarak made the trip to India to be honoured by then President Pratibha Patil.

After the downfall of Hosni Mubarak in Egypt, The President of Egypt Mohamed Morsi visited India from 18th March, 2013 to 20th March, 2013 accompanying his senior ministers as well as business delegation. Both the sides discussed bilateral defence ties and measures to enhance cooperation, including through the forthcoming Joint Defence Committee meeting scheduled to take place in Delhi in April, 2013. They also exchanged views on a wide range of issues of bilateral, regional and international interest including those relating to the situation in the Middle East and North Africa region; the Non-Aligned Movement; and the reform of the United Nations. In this visit, MOU on cooperation in Information and Communication Technology, MOU on Cooperation in the area of Cyber Security, MOU for cooperation in the field of Micro and small enterprise, MOU for cooperation in the field of promotion, protection and Management of Cultural Heritage and agreement between Government of Egypt and the government of India for upgradation of vocation training centre in Cairo were some of the important outcomes.

Later, in 2015, the External Affairs Minister in India Sushma Swaraj visited Egypt to explore new vistas being opened in bilateral ties with particular focus on boosting trade and investment. The trade between India and Egypt during the financial year from April, 2014 to March, 2015 has been recorded at \$4.76 billion. Apart from this, there has been an upsurge in terror attacks in Egypt since the ouster of former President Mohammed Morsi and the subsequent crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood. India too announced a strategic partnership with the UAE, China and several Western nations to build a bulwark against terror. Cairo too faces threat from terror outfits that support the Islamic State (IS) and have a presence in neighbouring Libya. While External Affairs Ministry officials described the visit as an attempt to renew civilisational ties and in the absence of renewed engagement, old ties had stagnated over time.

In this context, especially after the COVID pandemic issue, both the leaders of Egypt and India highlighted the mutual relations in the field like investment and medical issues. In addition to this, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has assured the Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi that India would provide all possible support to ensure availability of pharmaceutical supplies to Egypt during these difficult times. The two leaders also discussed the evolving global situation in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and exchanged information about the steps being taken by their governments to protect their populations. They agreed on the utility of continuous exchange of experiences and best-practices, in order to learn from each other.

Conclusion:

The bilateral relations between India and Egypt had different shades over the period of time. After Indian independence, when NAM was initiated to provide an alternative platform for the third world countries, the bilateral relations have received an ideological dimension backed by national interest. After the demise of Nasser, when Sadat went for peace negotiation with Israel, the Middle East regional politics got a separate dimension, following which Egypt was excluded from Arab League. The regional power image of Egypt received a setback after this. Subsequently, when Mubarak came to power, he developed a fresh link in the Middle East but, the bilateral relations between India and Egypt remained much stagnated apart from some irregular visits by the leaders. Under the initiative of former Prime Minister of India, I.K.Gujral this bilateral relation got a different perspective. If the ties have been nurtured properly, Egypt could have been a gateway to Africa as well. In this context, the image of India in the world politics is significant.

It is noteworthy to mention that in the contemporary politics, the ideological disposition has taken a back seat and, the bilateral relations have been more issue based. Presently, India is maintaining a good relation with both Egypt and Israel. Mubarak eagerly sought India's help to contain radical Islam in the domestic front with special reference to Muslim Brotherhood. Surprisingly, when Morsi from Muslim Brotherhood came to power, even in his short span of time, he tried to revive ties with India.

The future of the bilateral relations has got a new dimension after COVID pandemic, where both the counterparts have stressed on the medical issues. In this context, the scope of pharmaceutical companies has a fair chance to get a wider economic opportunity.

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India - Gulf Relations: Ports, Energy and Other Trade

Abstract

Primarily originating as a trading community, the Arab Gulf (GCC) states have benefitted from the oil boom. As oil money flowed in, the Gulf became dependent that gave them the rentier status. The oil boom saw a big influx of Indian's going to the region for work. The number of Indian expatriates are in millions, that send enormous remittances. Similarly, the bilateral trade between the two also increased. The Gulf is one of the largest regional - bloc trading partner for India. The economic and political upheaval post 2011 has made the Gulf States more volatile. The Arab Uprisings (2010-11), Iranian nuclear deal, the Qatar crisis, Yemen war or the US Shale revolution has changed the regional geopolitics. The paper is an attempt to look into the increased level of engagement and enrichment of the bilateral ties between India and the Gulf. The dipping oil prices in 2014 has pressed the Gulf producers to pursue policies that will help them reduce their oil dependence and diversify their economy. India imports more than 80 per cent of its oil needs from West Asia. Consequently, it will be topical to probe into the geopolitical scenario that engages the India - Gulf relations. It looks at the energy dimension of the relations, especially when the Gulf is an important source of hydrocarbons for India. The conflicts in the region are borne by the fact that that there is a competitive geopolitics for acquiring strategic positions; and, ports is crucial component of this competition. The paper explains that the changing pattern of relations has become more calculated and strategic.

Keywords: hydrocarbons, expatriates, trade, geopolitics, ports, India, Gulf.

India – Gulf relation dates back in history. The two have civilizational linkage, as the Indian Trading community traded with the Gulf counterpart. Since then, millions of expatriate population live and work in the Gulf. This expatriate community also remits millions of dollars to India. India and the Gulf has been a favorable place for students as well as a tourist destination. The Cold War years saw India's non-alignment movement towards the region. Thus, non - interference in domestic politics was an important component of India's foreign policy. Eventually, looking at the progress of the relationship between the two, high level meetings are often. Prime Minister Modi visited UAE in 2018 and 2019; and, received the highest civilian award the 'Order of Zayed' in 2019.

The changing geopolitics of the region are complex, yet intricate and complicated that have altered the socio - economic fabric of these countries. The rentier nature of the Gulf economies has made high oil price essential to meet their finances. This is true and has been a doable practice due to the low cost of production in these countries. The transportation sector has also revamped itself. The increased significance of the sea lanes did bolster the vessel engineering. Today, hydrocarbons are transported through Very Large Crude Carriers (VLCC), Ultra Large Crude Carriers (ULCC) and other tankers such as the Panamax (large tankers that can fit through the Panama Canal) and the Suezmax (large tankers that can fit through the Suez Canal).

The magnitude at which piracy has grown, surfaced the insurance industry. Thereby, any episode in these shipping lanes is an attention seeking event for the extractive (oil and gas) sector and is immediately noticed by the insurance industry. It is well noticed by the people in power that oil in West Asia is a crucial factor in the running of global industries. Oil is an easily traded commodity, and the Gulf countries have been trusted suppliers of oil, especially for Asia. Between 2002 and 2012, China accounted for just under 50 per cent of world oil-consumption growth (or nearly 75 per cent in combination with India and Southeast Asian countries), compared with -30 per cent for the European Union and the US, taken together¹.

After the British withdrawal, the US interests were very profound and specific to West Asia's resource management. This did draw a new geopolitics and mapped the region according to Washington's design. Nevertheless, the 11 September 2001 incident ruptured the trust and created a gap that was attempted to be filled by Asia, making it important in West Asia's policy.

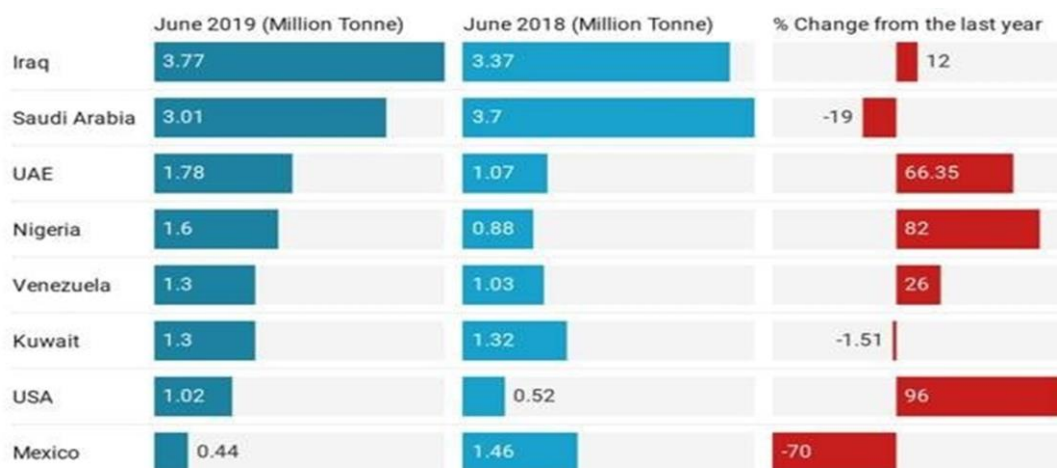
The rise of US shale oil / gas further created a rift, as US became a net producer and exporter; from net importer of oil due to enhanced fracking technology. Thereby, a complete change in the energy geopolitics with the market flooded with oil. Shale's emergence did leave OPEC in dilemma in a sense, how to keep the non - OPEC players off the market and re - gain its market share. OPEC as a bloc achieved a lot of respect and say in the market, which otherwise individually was not possible. In the last decade, West Asia has been an area of conflict of wider scale - the fall of dictators, Shia - Sunni conflict for supremacy and regional hegemony, the interference of external players among others. The changes of large magnitude have twisted relations and compromised many states of their sovereignty and dominated by bigger actors in the region. These changes will make a mark for a long time in the coming decades. The changes have affected the regions social fabric and economic characteristic.

Energy and Other Trade:

Since liberalization, India's performance has been tremendous in the external sector. Growth has also encouraged its global potential. At this juncture, India is seen as a significant partner all around the world and the Gulf is not left behind. Its volume of trade has expanded steadily. The Gulf countries have proved to be trusted partners, when it comes to trade and a steady flow of energy to Asia in general and India in particular. The Gulf economies are comparatively stable with substantial quantities of hydrocarbon reserves.

The payment for oil in dollars against the US on condition to give protection to the oil monarchies was duly accepted, making 'US dollars' a currency in which oil was sold and bought. Unlike the years of oil scarcity when control over the Middle Eastern (West Asian) energy resources was the dominant narrative of regional geopolitics, the new text is to contain the influence of the region, riddled with prolonged conflict¹. Aspiring for the BS VI standards, renewable sources, and lately the COVID - 19 pandemic restricted India's oil imports. India's oil imports from Saudi Arabia, traditionally the largest supplier of crude to India, dropped 8 per cent to 36 MT last financial year and rose 10 per cent to 9.17 MT in the quarter ended June 2018³.

Graph 1⁴: India's major crude suppliers.

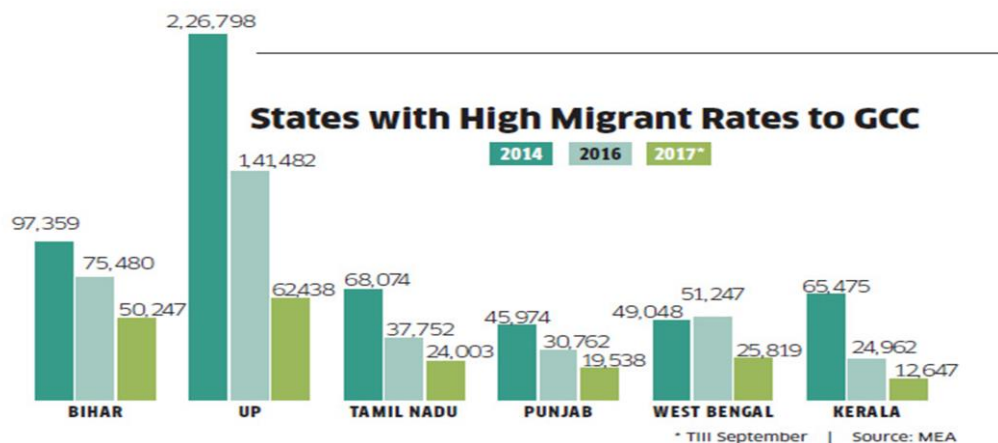


Source: Rai, Dipu (September 24, 2019), "How the US is realising India's oil concerns", *India Today*.

Apart from oil exports outside the Gulf, the domestic demand of these states is also mounting. UAE and Saudi Arabia border Oman by land; and, Iran and Pakistan by sea. This brings tremendous potential for Oman. The Dolphin Gas Pipeline Project is to facilitate the gas requirement for UAE and Oman from Qatar's offshore North Field. As of March 2020, India imported gas from Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Kuwait and Oman, worth 7941.38 mil. US\$, 2461.08 mil. US\$, 1958.4 mil. US\$, 855.23 mil. US\$ and 702.34 mil. US\$ respectively¹. Oman is an important oil exporter, particularly to Asian markets like India and China. And, with the region in turmoil and a comparative stability, Omani oil will be crucial in time to come. Also, Oman is a part

of the GCC inter-connected grid system, which allows electricity transfers between the six GCC states. This suffices the regional energy security.

Graph 2⁶: Migrant rate to GCC.



Source: Menon, Shailesh (5th November 2017), "How economic downturn in Gulf states has resulted in a drop in remittances into India", *The Economic Times*.

The GCC is India's largest trading partner, accounting for over US\$120 billion in trade flows in 2018-19, 17 per cent higher than the previous year¹. Abu Dhabi Investment Authority (ADIA) bought 1.16 per cent stake in Reliance Industries digital unit for Rs 5,683.50 crore, days after Abu Dhabi sovereign wealth fund Mubadala Investment Co picking up 1.85 per cent in Jio Platforms for Rs 9,093.60 crore on June 5¹. Apart from other trade, the oil boom in the region welcomed the Indian labour population. However, the Nitaqat policy implemented by the Gulf countries like Saudi Arabia guarantees jobs for the locals.

Geopolitics and Ports:

The significance of ports cannot be undermined as they are crucial connectivity points and therefore they become a part of larger geopolitics in West Asia, where the Gulf plays an important role. Ports play a significant role in any crisis, as they are the gateway for necessities of the people; as well as they make up a strategic asset for any country. Chabahar port in Iran is crucial as it connects Iran with other immediate neighbours. India is to build and operate two berths in Chabahar Port Phase-I with a total capital investment of \$85 million and annual revenue expenditure of \$23 million on a 10-year lease¹. Development of the Chabahar port also is an attempt to carefully handle the development of Gwadar port (in Pakistan) by Beijing. Even when the port doesn't come in the Gulf (GCC) sphere, the implications have a wider impact for the GCC, especially the UAE and Saudi Arabia. Gulf's relations with Islamabad are of brotherly nature; nonetheless, New Delhi holds an important place in the Gulf's investment pattern.

The post-Cold War era observes multipolarity, with the rise of China. Geopolitical competition for the access of ground and markets make the control of these ports vital. Port Duqm in the Sultanate of Oman is also seen as an important connectivity point. An MoU signed between PM Modi and Sultan Qaboos talks of the military cooperation between the two countries. The port is in close proximity with Chabahar and Gwadar. It comes under Special Economic Zone (SEZ) and therefore, there will be huge investment in the future. The peaceful nature of the Sultanate adds to the buoyant element of the port that will generate employment and investment.

In 2018, UAE and Saudi Arabia launched war on Yemen causing serious casualties. The port of Hodeidah at the Red Sea is important port and is the transit point for as much as 70 per cent of the country's critical food and humanitarian aid¹. The second biggest port after Aden, Hodeidah is lifeline of the Yemeni's. The Saudi's and UAE allege that the port is an entry point for arms and ammunition from Shia Iran. In fact, to some extent the war on Yemen by the Gulf heavyweights has been for the control of the strategic asset, the port of Hodeidah.

India's influence on the region is seen through its culture, movies and likewise many other components which act as its soft power in the Gulf. Prime Minister Modi's visit to the countries in the region is a clear evidence that New Delhi thinks more seriously about the Gulf than just being a trading bloc. The construction of the first Hindu temple in Abu Dhabi in April 2019, emphasizes the growth of engagement between India and GCC as a whole. Looking at the growing bilateral trade, the expatriate population and energy requirements, the high level meetings and economic commercial exchanges from India have also enhanced this cooperation.

In addition, the future vision of the Gulf countries and India is to look at alternative and renewable sources of energy like solar. The International Solar Alliance (ISA) is clear illustration of this move towards renewable energy. India being one of the 67 countries that have signed and ratified the ISA Framework Agreement, Saudi Arabia and UAE from the GCC. The US idea of reforms in West Asia has been artificial and manufactured to seek its own plan. The arrangement laid out by the US was to control the oil flows that were of strategic nature. Therefore, the reform agenda which is to pursue democracy in West Asia has actually pushed the region in disorder. It is well evident from the Iraqi experience, post Saddam. The 2010-11 Arab Uprising entails the downfall of the regional autocratic regimes. While, the monarchies have been successful in using money from oil sales to suppress the people's demands, the monarchy of Bahrain has survived the Uprisings.

The regional crisis can also be seen through the bigger players' outlook towards any dissent, for instance, the killings of Jamal al Khashoggi in 2018. The initiatives taken by the Gulf economies for transformation are through the Vision documents. These Vision documents have come in the light of drastic changes in the global oil markets with low oil prices towards a non - oil economy. With passing time, the oil boom in the Gulf changed the lifestyle and brought modern day lavishes at their door. Today, the region sees a multipolar system with external actors like China and Russia involved to exercise their strategic and geo-economic hold. It is no longer American centric, as other external players are engaged in the regional developments. For the GCC, oil boom has been a blessing that had led to a rapid economic growth, which has eventually led to a substantial stake in the development of global economy. And, energy has become the centre point of further ties between the Asian economies like India and the GCC.

Russia's role in West Asia multiplied, as the US role or pattern of interference took a back-step. This made Moscow strategically active in the region. Its role in the Syrian crisis is well - known. According to Perthes, Both Riyadh and Tehran tend to see each other as their main rival for regional leadership, and hence as a threat¹. Apparently, the regional powers (Saudi Arabia - Iran) and their rivalry for influence and supremacy further increases the risk of conflict and defragmenting of the weak and smaller states in the region. Thus, it can be seen that in these crisis times, New Delhi has been successful in engaging the Gulf states in a balanced manner, than involving itself in alliance formations.

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