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Sajid Karim

UNDERSTANDING HIGH DISASTER RISK OF FLASH FLOOD IN HAOR REGION OF BANGLADESH

Abstract

The *haor* region, a wetland ecosystem situated in the north-eastern part of Bangladesh in the Meghna river basin, is one of the disaster hot-spots of the country. The area is geographically excluded and ecologically vulnerable. Furthermore, it is a part of Bangladesh where poverty is prevalent and natural disasters like floods and flash floods are very common. In 2017, the entire *haor* region of the country was inundated due to early flash flood, generated by relentless rain and onrush of flood water from the rivers upstream. Along with the destruction of huge crops, the flash flood caused havoc in the region by affecting livelihood opportunities including fisheries, duck farming, animal husbandry etc. Based on that, the study takes an attempt to identify the underlying factors responsible for high disaster risk of flash flood in the *haor* region. The study argues that high disaster risk in the region is attributed to multidimensional vulnerability factors which limit the coping capacity of the people living there and make them susceptible to disasters. Apart from the unique physical location and hydrological setting that makes the *haor* region severely exposed to flash floods, the study identifies socio-political, economic, environmental, institutional and governance related factors responsible for high disaster risk in the region.

1. Introduction

Haor region of Bangladesh, characterised as large bowl shaped floodplain depression, is located in the north-eastern part of the country and spread over seven districts namely, Sunamganj, Sylhet, Habiganj, Moulvibazar, Netrokona, Kishoreganj and Brahmanbaria. The *haors* are considered as one of the most productive wetland resources of Bangladesh contributing around 6-8 per cent to national GDP of the country.¹ The basin supports a large variety of wetland bio-diversity and works as natural reservoir as it plays a key role in basin water resources by regulating water flows of the Meghna river system.² It is the habitat of around 19.37 million people that makes 12 per cent of the country's total population. Out of 10.57 million hectare

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¹ Bangladesh Haor and Wetland Development Board, *Master Plan of Haor Area*, Volume I, Summary Report, April 2012, Ministry of Water Resources, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

² Mohd. Shamsul Alam and Md. Sazzad Hossain, "Haor", *Banglapedia*, available at <http://en.banglapedia.org/index.php?title=Haor>, accessed on 02 July 2017.

rice cultivation area of Bangladesh, *haor* region covers 1.74 million hectare which is 16 per cent of grand total. Besides, approximately 22 per cent of country's total cattle population and more than 24 per cent of country's total duck production come from that region.³ It plays a vital role in the country's rice production *vis-à-vis* food security and is a major source of livelihood for a huge number of people.

In spite of its vital contribution in country's economy and food production, the region is afflicted by multitude of challenges. Owing to its unique geo-physical location and hydro-ecological characteristics, the *haor* region is one of the disaster hot-spots of the country, among which floods and flash floods are the most common one. In addition, prevalence of extreme poverty and lack of education coupled with limited livelihood options make people living in that area "backward section of citizens" of the country.⁴ More than 28 per cent of the total *haor* population lives below the Lower Poverty Line (LPL).⁵ The region has been suffering from unemployment and food insecurity, attributed to over dependency on mono crop production, frequent flash flood disaster, lack of communication infrastructure and other basic services.⁶ Every year, the residents suffer from flash flood, which is a common and recurrent phenomenon of the region. The major threat of the flash flood is to crops, which are often destroyed by flood water just as they reach maturity. The flash flood also affects other livelihood options including fisheries, duck farming, animal husbandry, severely jeopardise the life and livelihood of the people living there.

Due to its recurrent nature, people, especially farmers living in *haor* are all familiar with flash floods. Nevertheless, the flash flood in 2017 caught everyone living there totally off-guard, which destroyed crops in over hundreds and thousands of hectares and killed huge number of livestock and damaged marine resources. Flash floods usually occur in the region in mid-April, but in case of 2017, crops went under water as early as 27 March due to incessant rain and onrush of flood water from the rivers of upstream. The flash flood caused havoc in the region by affecting every means of subsistence adversely. Due to its devastating impact, the flash flood in 2017 has been considered as one of the worst floods in the recent history of the region.

³ General Economics Division (GED) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Bangladesh, *Environment and Climate Change Policy Gap Analysis in Haor Area*, Workshop Outcome Report, September 2016, available at http://www.bd.undp.org/content/dam/bangladesh/docs/Projects/ssip/Haor%20Workshop%20Outcome%20Report_27.09.2016_optimized.pdf, accessed on 01 March 2018.

⁴ Development Wheel, *Essential Services of Haor Areas and Way Forward*, Final Report, available at http://dewbd.org/dew/images/stories/dew_report/Final%20Report%20on%20Essential%20Services%20of%20Haor%20Areas%20and%20Way%20For.pdf, accessed on 28 February 2018.

⁵ Bangladesh Haor and Wetland Development Board, *Master Plan of Haor Area*, Volume II, Main Report, April 2012, Ministry of Water Resources, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

⁶ M. M. H. Kazal, C. C. Villinueva, Md. J. Hossain and T. K. Das, *Food Security Strategies of the People Living in Haor Areas: Status and Prospects*, Final Report, National Food Policy Capacity Strengthening Programme (NFPCSP), October 2010; Bangladesh Haor and Wetland Development Board, Main Report, *op. cit.*

Under this backdrop, based on the disaster of 2017, the study is an attempt to identify the underlying factors responsible for high disaster risk of flash flood in *haor* region. Conceptually, disaster risk is the consequence of the interaction between a hazard event and the factors that make people and the community vulnerable and exposed to disaster. Therefore, an effective way to understand the disaster risk of a hazard is to identify the vulnerability factors of people and community exposed to that particular hazard. To discuss the disaster risk, the study will seek answer to the following research questions: What are the factors that make the *haor* region vulnerable to flash flood and how the factors are responsible for high disaster risk? The study is divided into five sections including introduction and conclusion. Followed by an introduction, section two discusses the conceptual issues. Section three presents an overview of the flash flood that affected the *haor* region of Bangladesh in 2017. Section four analyses the factors responsible for high disaster risk of flash flood. Finally, a conclusion has been drawn.

The study will follow qualitative research method which is exploratory and descriptive in nature. It will explore the vulnerability factors and describe how the factors are responsible for high disaster risk. It is based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data has been collected from expert interviews. Collection of secondary data has been conducted from reviewing official documents, reports, newspapers, and academic literature including books, journals, thesis papers and internet based articles.

2. Flash Flood Disaster Risk in the *Haor* Region: A Conceptual Framework

The *haor* region in north-eastern Bangladesh is a wetland ecosystem characterised by the presence of large bowl-shaped floodplain depressions which are seasonally inundated.⁷ It is also known as back swamp.⁸ *Haors* receive surface runoff water by rivers and khals and become large extensive water body in monsoon but dry up mostly in the post-monsoon period. Due to its location below hilly regions of the states of Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura of India, *haor* areas have some of the most severe hydrological conditions like extreme precipitation and rainfall.⁹ Therefore, they are vulnerable to multitude of natural hazards. Among all hazards, flash flood is the most common and recurrent one which often creates havoc in the *haor* region.

Though, among various natural hazards, flash floods rarely garner high level of attention, but according to the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), flash

⁷ Sarah Gillingham, *Care Bangladesh Programme Strategy: Haor Region 2015-2020*, Bangladesh: Care Bangladesh, February 2016.

⁸ A. W. Akonda, "Bangladesh", in *A Directory of Asian Wetlands*, available at <https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/1989-Scott-001.pdf>, accessed on 01 July 2017.

⁹ S. Nowreen, S. B. Murshed, A. K. M. Saiful Islam and B. Bhaskaran, "Change of Future Climate Extremes for the Haor Basin Area of Bangladesh", 4th International Conference on Water and Flood Management, 2013, pp. 545-556.

floods are the most lethal form of natural hazard (based upon the ratio of fatalities to people affected), and cause massive damage in property every year. Flash floods defined as flood events of short duration with a relatively high peak discharge tend to occur frequently but at a very small scale.¹⁰ Normally, flash flood begins within 3-6 hours of heavy rainfall. When rainfall within a catchment exceeds either the infiltration capacity or the storage capacity of the catchment, surface runoff occurs. When the surface runoff exceeds the discharge capacity of any point downstream of the catchment, flash flood will occur. The amount of rainfall that is required over a specified time frame to initiate a flash flood, *i.e.*, to exceed the infiltration (or storage) capacity of the catchment and cause more than bank full flow in the catchment outlet, depends on the catchment (slope, soil type, drainage capacity, shape and capacity of the discharge point).¹¹

Flash flood in the *haor* region of Bangladesh occurs due to region's location just beneath the hilly region of the states of Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura of India and the rainfall pattern of the catchment area of the Surma-Kushiyara basin that receives water from the trans-boundary catchments of the Meghalaya, the Barak and the Tripura. However, flash flood becomes disaster for the region due to the vulnerable condition of the people and community living there. Flash flood might be a hazard attributed to external natural shock, but the disaster that creates results from the complex interaction between the hazard, the vulnerable condition of people and community as well as their coping capacity. Therefore, understanding disaster risk of flash flood requires clarity of the concepts hazard, vulnerability and disaster and how these terms are interlinked.

Disasters have long been recognised as arising from the juxtaposition of hazard events, vulnerable natural and built environment and vulnerable population.¹² Disaster is defined as a serious disruption of life or functioning of individual, community or society involving widespread human, material, economic or environmental losses, breakdown of infrastructure and service network, destruction of eco-system, etc., that exceeds the ability of the affected to cope with the situation using their own resources thus, require external assistance.¹³ Disaster takes place when a hazard – which is defined as dangerous phenomenon, substance, human activity or condition that may cause harm¹⁴ – occurs and severely impacts on affected community overwhelming

¹⁰ World Meteorological Organization, cited in National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), *Flash Flood Early Warning System Reference Guide*, US Department of Commerce, 2010.

¹¹ J. C. B. Hoedjes *et al.*, "A Conceptual Flash Flood Early Warning System for Africa, Based on Terrestrial Microwave Links and Flash Flood Guidance", *ISPRS International Journal of Geo-Information*, 2014, p. 586.

¹² Kathleen Tierney, "Social Inequality, Hazards, and Disasters", in Ronald J. Daniels, Donald F. Kettl and Howard Kunreuther (eds.), *On Risk and Disaster: Lessons from Hurricane Katrina*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006.

¹³ United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), *2009 UNISDR Terminology on Disaster Risk Reduction*, United Nations, 2009.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

its capacity to cope. Disaster will happen only when the hazard meets the vulnerable population. There would not be any disaster without exposure to hazard as well as conditions of vulnerability that are present. Here, vulnerability implies some risk combined with a level of social and economic liability, and the ability to cope with the resulting event. It can be defined as the degree to which a system, part of a system, individual, community or society may react adversely during the occurrence of a hazardous event.¹⁵ It is the characteristics and circumstances of a community, system or asset that makes it susceptible to the damaging effects of a hazard.¹⁶ Vulnerability is context specific and varies significantly within a community and over time. It could be determined by physical, social, economic, environmental, institutional and governance related factors. It should be noted that vulnerability is one of the defining components of disaster risk.

The concept of vulnerability has been a powerful analytical tool for describing states of susceptibility to harm and guiding actions to deal disaster risk.¹⁷ Therefore, understanding different dimensions of vulnerability is crucial to understand disaster risk. Conceptually, disaster risk can be delineated as the potential disaster losses, in term of lives, health status, livelihoods, assets and services, which could occur to a particular community or a society over some specified future time period. It comprises different types of potential losses which are often difficult to quantify. Nevertheless, with knowledge of the prevailing hazards and the patterns of population and socio-economic development and their vulnerabilities, disaster risks can be understood.¹⁸ Here, the disaster risk faced by people is seen as a cross-cutting combination of vulnerability and hazard, which is a result of the interaction of both. There cannot be a disaster if there are hazards but vulnerability is (theoretically) nil, or if there is a vulnerable population but no hazard event.¹⁹ Therefore, the risk of disaster is presented as a compound function of the natural hazard and the number of people, characterised by their varying degrees of vulnerability to that specific hazard, who occupy the space and time of exposure to the hazard event. There are three basic elements here: risk (disaster), vulnerability, and hazard, whose relations can be presented as:

$$\text{Disaster Risk} = \text{Hazard} \times \text{Vulnerability}^{20}$$

From the aforementioned equation, it is clear that when vulnerable community is exposed to specific hazard, their disaster risk increases. The study will

¹⁵ Virendra Proag, "The Concept of Vulnerability and Resilience", *Procedia Economics and Finance*, Vol. 18, 2014, p. 370.

¹⁶ United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), *op. cit.*

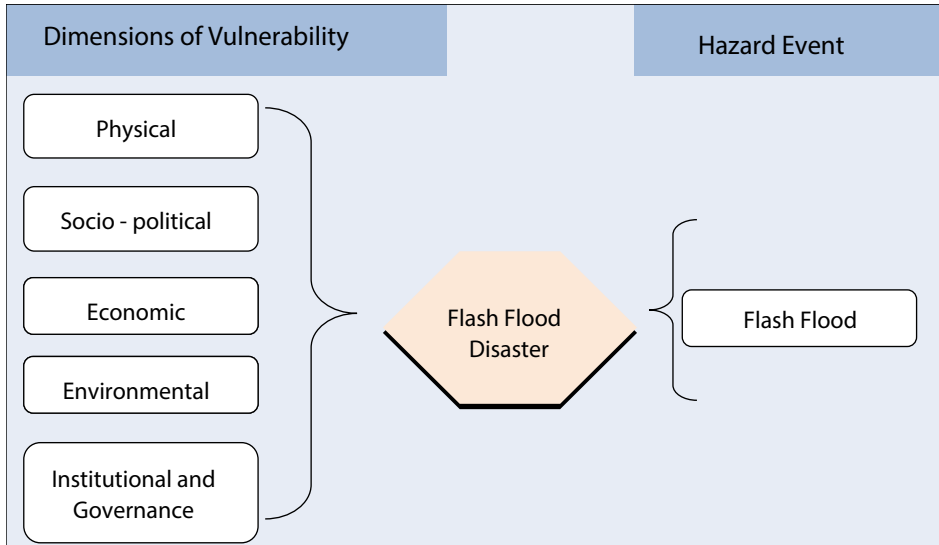
¹⁷ W. Neil Adger, "Vulnerability", *Global Environmental Change*, Vol.16, 2006, pp. 268-281.

¹⁸ United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), *op. cit.*

¹⁹ Ben Wisner, Piers Blaikie, Terry Cannon and Ian Davis, *At Risk: Natural Hazards, People's Vulnerability and Disasters*, Second Edition, London: Routledge, 2004, p. 49.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

analyse five dimensions of vulnerability of the *haor* region and people living there who are exposed to flash flood, and will try to imply how the vulnerability factors are responsible for high disaster risk. Following framework can be useful to represent the aforementioned equation of disaster risk.



The physical vulnerability depends on the physical infrastructure present in the exposed area as well as its physical or geographical proximity to the source and origin of the disasters. Physical vulnerability can be determined by factors such as population density levels, remoteness of settlement, the site, design and materials used for critical infrastructure and housing.²¹ Physical vulnerability can also be attributed to absence of physical infrastructure required for a specific hazard as well as weakness in their construction and design. Physical vulnerabilities are hazard specific.

Non-physical domain, spanning from social to governance related issues is also crucial in the parlance of vulnerability discussion. This domain involves but is not limited to various dimensions of vulnerability like socio-political, economic, environmental, institutional and governance. Socio-political vulnerability generally refers to the inability of people, communities or societies to withstand adverse impacts to hazards due to characteristics inherent in social interactions, institutions and systems of cultural values, and the political process and power structure. It is

²¹ United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), cited in "Vulnerability and Risk", Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management, Government of Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, available at <http://www.odpm.gov.tt/node/162>, accessed on 07 April 2018.

basically linked to the level of well-being and living standard of individuals as well as the availability of social and utility services. It includes aspects related to levels of literacy and education, the existence of peace and security, access to basic human rights, systems of good governance, social equity, positive traditional values, customs and ideological beliefs, access to decision making, quality of leadership, level of discrimination in forms of racial, ethnic, linguistic or religious basis and overall collective organisational systems.²² All these are factors crucial for an individual as well as for the community to prepare for any adverse situation, effectively respond when things go wrong, mitigate its impact and finally return to its normal situation.

The level of vulnerability is also highly dependent upon the economic condition. The poor are usually more vulnerable to disasters because they lack the resources to build sturdy structures and put other engineering measures in place to protect themselves from being negatively impacted by disasters.²³ Economic vulnerability of a community can be assessed by determining how varied its sources of income are, the ease of access and control over means of production (e.g., farmland, livestock, irrigation, capital etc.), adequacy of economic fall back mechanisms and the availability of natural resources in the area.

Vulnerability also concerns the wider environmental conditions that restrict people and communities to cope with the impact of hazard.²⁴ There is a strong causal relationship between degraded environment and higher disaster risk.²⁵ Environmental causes that are responsible for increasing disaster risk can be enumerated as poor environmental management and declining risk regulating ecosystem services, adverse impact of climate change, natural resource depletion, loss of natural defences and environmental degradation etc.

Governance, spanning, pre, during and post-disaster period, is another important factor that regulates the smooth functioning of management procedure and is also a major source of vulnerability if hindered. Poor risk management, absence of transparency and accountability, lack of monitoring, supervision and feedback, bureaucratic bottlenecks, ineffective policies and non-implementation of rules and regulation are few among many governance related vulnerabilities. In addition, anthropogenic factors in the form of institutional vulnerability can also impede good governance and jeopardise the entire gamut of disaster management.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ "Vulnerability", Prevention Web, 12 November 2015, available at <https://www.preventionweb.net/risk/vulnerability>, accessed on 12 March 2018.

²⁵ United Nations Environment Programme, *Environment and Vulnerability: Emerging Perspectives*, United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, United Nations Environment Programme, available at <https://www.gdrc.org/uem/disasters/disenvi/environment-vulnerability.pdf>, accessed on 12 March 2018.

3. Flash Flood Disaster in Haor Region in 2017: At a Glance

Flash floods are not new for the people living in the *haor* region rather it is an expected and recurrent phenomena. Generally, water levels of the Surma river cross the 6.5 metre mark during April, causing flash floods. People of the region, especially the farmers are usually prepared for such an occurrence every year as they harvest a major portion of the Boro crops before mid-April when the flood water usually hit the region. They cultivate two kinds of Boro crop that they are supposed to harvest in the last week of *Chaitra* and the first week of *Baishakh* (second and third week of April). However, in 2017, people of *haor* region, especially the farmers were completely taken by surprise by the early floods that inundated their farmlands and large portion of the *haor* region on 27 March. According to the Flood Forecasting Warning Centre (FFWC) of Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB), water from most of the rivers in the region crossed the 6.5 metre mark nearly two weeks before the estimated time and caused large scale flooding. Due to the early arrival of flash flood, farmer got no chance to harvest their crops which were totally submerged and destroyed by the flood water. The following table will show the number of farmland submerged due to the early arrival of the flash flood in 2017.

Table 1: Farmland Submerged Because of Flash Flood			
District	Cultivated (hectares)	Damaged (hectares)	% of Damage
Sunamganj	166,000	166,000	100
Sylhet	76,835	34,536	44.95
Habiganj	116,510	35,325	30.32
Moulvibazar	53,426	19,111	35.77
Kishoreganj	165,515	24,100	14.56
Netrokona	184,320	69,710	37.82

Source: Adapted from Pinaki Roy, Dwaha Chowdhury and Mintu Deshwara, "Havoc in Haor", *The Daily Star*, 14 April 2017; Haor Advocacy Platform, *Damaged by Flash Floods in North-eastern Haor Areas in Bangladesh 2017*, Situation Bulletin, 30 April 2017.

The flash flood killed 10 people and affected over 46 *lac* living in the *haor* region. Over 10 *lac* households were fully or partially affected due to this disaster.²⁶ According to Department of Agriculture Extension (DoAE), of 450 thousand hectares of farmland under Boro cultivation, more than 2 *lac* hectare completely destroyed due to flood water.²⁷ Crop loss has been estimated over 15.8 *lac* metric ton (MT), which is equivalent to 8.3 per cent of national average Boro production.²⁸ The flood

²⁶ Md. Zafar Sadique and Estiaque Bari, *Flood 2017: Assessing Damage and Post-flood Management*, Centre for Policy Dialogue, October 2017.

²⁷ "Onslaught of Flash Floods in Haors", *The Daily Star*, 28 April 2017.

²⁸ Md. Zafar Sadique and Estiaque Bari, *op. cit.*

affected approximately 250 thousand farmers.²⁹ The estimated loss in monetary term was in between BDT 3040 *crore* to 5300 *crore*.³⁰ It is very important to note that Boro crop makes up 55 per cent of the annual rice output and it is cultivated on 48 *lac* hectares of land. In 2016, the country saw production of 1 *crore* and 89 *lac* MT of Boro rice.³¹ Crop loss was not the only problem that the people of *haor* region faced, rather a huge number of fish and ducks died due to the rotting of crops in the flood water which decreases oxygen and increases the acidity of the water. Approximately 1,246 MT of fish died.³² In Netrokona district alone, 800 MT of fish died affecting more than 16,000 fishermen.³³ Moreover, the ducks also died because of cholera which spread due to consumption of dead fish floating in flood water. In addition, nearly 591 thousand MT fodder/straw was destroyed due to flood water. The Haor Advocacy Platform estimated that considering the destruction of crops, fishes and livestock, the loss due to flash flood was more than BDT 10,000 *crore*.³⁴

There was also allegation that the flood water was contaminated by the radioactive material. Some residents claimed that Uranium was coming from the drilling pits in the Khasi Hills in Meghalaya bordering the region in Sunamganj, causing the death of ducks, fish and other aquatic resources. However, Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission (BAEC) later confirmed that the radiation levels in the samples of water, dead fish and ducks collected from the flash flood-hit *haor* region were within the permissible limits and not alarming.

To mitigate the sufferings of the people affected by flash flood, the government distributed relief, introduced Open Market Sale (OMS) of rice and expanded social safety net programmes. However, success of these initiatives was severely questioned due to the allegation of corruption and nepotism. There was allegation that the affected farmers were deprived of the rice of the government's Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) programme and the VGF cards were being sold among the people. There was also allegation that some Union Parishad (UP) members were taking money to include names of affected people to the VGF list. There was also report that people were selling the rice allotted for OMS.³⁵ All these adversely impacted the disaster response and recovery of the flash flood disaster which ultimately affected the disaster risk of the community as a whole.

²⁹ Dwaha Chowdhury, "Embankments in Haors: Projects Turn Into Plights", *The Daily Star*, 19 April 2017.

³⁰ Shekh Farid, "Prioritising Haor Region for Inclusive Development", *The Financial Express*, 24 November 2017; Md. Zafar Sadique and Estiaque Bari, *op. cit.*

³¹ Reaz Ahmad, "Growers Now Buyers", *The Daily Star*, 18 April 2017.

³² "Onslaught of Flash Floods in Haors", *op. cit.*

³³ Reaz Ahmad and Pinaki Roy, "Havoc in Haors: Fish Dying Further Down", *The Daily Star*, 23 April 2017.

³⁴ Haor Advocacy Platform, cited in Shykh Seraj, "Nature Turns Her Back on Haor People", *The Daily Star*, 27 April 2017.

³⁵ Mintu Deshwara, "Rich Feasts on Rice for Poor", *The Daily Star*, 09 May 2017; Mintu Deshwara, "Flash Flood-Hit Sunamganj: OMS Programme Tainted by Graft", *The Daily Star*, 11 May 2017; Mintu Deshwara, "Many Denied VGF Cards, Nepotism Alleged", *The Daily Star*, 21 May 2017.

4. Explaining High Disaster Risk of Flash Flood

It has already been mentioned that a disaster happens only when a hazard affects vulnerable people. A disaster strikes when the two elements, *i.e.*, hazard and vulnerability come together. A natural phenomenon by itself is not a disaster; similarly, a population maybe vulnerable for many years, yet without the “trigger event”, *i.e.*, the specific hazard, there would not be any disaster.³⁶ A flood hazard is the potential for inundation that involves risk to life, property, livelihood, ecosystem, service network and natural floodplain resources and functions. *Haor* region of Bangladesh is a remote setting, where due to complex hydro and geo-morphological dynamics, water borne hazards like floods and flash floods are very common. In addition, due to the physical, socio-political, economic, environmental, institutional and governance related vulnerability, those hazards turn into disasters, regularly devastate life and livelihood in the region. In this section, an attempt has been made to discuss how the exposure to flash flood hazard event and various vulnerability factors are responsible for high disaster.

4.1 Flash Flood in the Haor Region: The Hazard Event

The dangers of flash flood are associated with a number of parameters. By analysing the parameters, inference can be made on how the flash flood hazard event transforms into disaster and inflicts damage to the community. Some important parameters to analyse a flash flood event are:

- depth of flood water
- rate of rise of flood water
- duration of flooding
- flow velocity of flood water
- frequency of occurrence of flood, and
- seasonality³⁷

The main triggering factor behind the flash flood disaster in *haor* region in 2017 can be attributed to the incessant rain at the beginning of March which was responsible for pouring down of massive amount of water from upstream. Prior to 29 March, Cherrapunji in Meghalaya of India received 1,100mm of rainfall in nine days, while Sylhet and Sunamganj each received about 450mm and 500mm of rainfall respectively. That excessive rain is one of the reasons for the untimely flood which increased the depth of water within a very short span of time. According to government report, when the water level of the Surma river at Sunamganj station of

³⁶ Vu Minh Hai and Ines Smyth, *The Disaster Crunch Model: Guidelines for a Gendered Approach*, Oxfam GB, May 2012.

³⁷ Office of the Disaster Relief Co-Ordinator (UNDRO), *Mitigating Natural Disasters: Phenomena, Effects and Options: A Manual for Policy Makers and Planners*, New York, UN: UNDRO, March 1991.

BWDB crosses the 6.5 metre-mark during the month of March/April, it is considered as the beginning of flash flood. Every event of flash flood since 2000 hit the *haor* was in mid-April. However, in case of 2017, the flash flood came on 27 March and caused severe damage in the region.

In addition, depth is a major characteristic of flood water on a standing crop that impacts the yield. It is generally considered a primary factor in crop losses due to flood during harvest periods. Crop losses are related to inundation depth of floodwater when the flood depth is beyond the tolerance limit of the crop occur.³⁸ Duration is also a critical parameter in the determination of flood damage to crops. The impact of duration of flood typically varies throughout the cultivation, growing and harvest periods. A few days of flooding in the initial phase of plant development may not result in damage (loss of production costs) while a few hours of inundation at crop maturity may result in total loss.³⁹ In case of 2017 flash flood, the depth and duration of flood water severely affected the crop production and caused massive damage. The rate of rise of flood water was also very high restricting the ability of the disaster management authority to issue flood warning. For flash flood disaster, flood water velocity is also important for the representation of crop and livelihood damage. It was also reported that the velocity of the flood water in 2017 was also very high compared to other years which resulted in breaching of flood protection embankments built to protect the life and livelihood of people living in *haor* region.

4.2 Flash Flood Vulnerabilities of the Haor Region

Vulnerability is understood as the conditions determined by many factors, such as physical, social, economic, environmental, institutional, governance etc., that increase the susceptibility of a person or community to the impact of hazards. The progression of vulnerability leads to a disaster from any hazards. People in *haor* basins are vulnerable due to their location, physical infrastructure, socio-political conditions, economic situation, poverty, unemployment, lack of education, agriculture practices, and health services etc. The region is also considered to be extremely vulnerable to climate change impacts due to its physical and hydrological setting.⁴⁰ Changing weather patterns in the region, including a rise in temperatures, reduction in rainfall and occurrence of untimely rainfall are having negative impacts on agricultural production and other livelihood options and thus, increasing the disaster risk. It is important to understand how different vulnerability factors are affecting the disaster

³⁸ Md. Sabbir Hossain, *Flood Damage and Risk Assessment Model in the Haor Basin of Bangladesh*, Thesis Paper, Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET), September 2013, available at <http://lib.buet.ac.bd:8080/xmlui/bitstream/handle/123456789/4165/Full%20Thesis.pdf?sequence=1>, accessed on 01 April 2018.

³⁹ Y. Hattori, K. Nagai and M. Ashikari, "Rice Growth Adapting to Deepwater", *Plant Biology*, Elsevier: Japan, 2011

⁴⁰ Sarah Gillingham, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

risk of the region as well as the coping capacity of the people living there. The vulnerability factors are discussed here under five board dimensions.

4.2.1 *Physical Vulnerability*

The physical location coupled with the hydrological characteristics of the *haor* region has made the inhabitants vulnerable to flash floods. Most of the rivers in these areas originated in from the nearby hilly area of neighbouring country India. These rivers are extremely flashy that is characterised by sudden and wide variation in flow as a result of excessive rainfall. The region receives water from the catchment slopes of the Shillong Plateau across the borders in India to the north and the Tripura Hills in India to the south-east. The region lies in the Meghna basin which is part of the Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna (GBM) basins. Flow from about 66,640 square km of the Meghna basin is drained ultimately into the Bay of Bengal through the Kalni-Kushiyara and Surma-Baulai river system. Of this area, only 35 per cent, that is 23,137 square km, lies in Bangladesh. The estimated outflow of water from this region into the Bay amounts on average is 162,619 million cubic metres per year. About 57 per cent of this flow is generated at the upstream of Bangladesh while 43 per cent is generated within the country. Trans-boundary flow from India is 70 per cent, 60 per cent, 37 per cent and 80 per cent of total flow in pre-monsoon, monsoon, post-monsoon and dry season respectively. This inflow (mainly pre-monsoon flow) from India into Bangladesh is highly responsible for flash flood in the *haor* area.⁴¹ In addition, India is planning to build a hydroelectric dam project in Tipaimukh, Manipur, just 100 km off the Bangladesh border. If implemented, this will have severe short and long term impact on Bangladesh, especially on the water flow of the Surma and Kushiyara river system.⁴² Along with reduced water flow in dry season, the project will result in an increase of water in the wet season which will in turn increase flood vulnerability.

The *haor* region requires special physical infrastructure due to its unique geo-physical location and hydro-morphological setting. Most of the critical infrastructure and housing in that area should be flood resilient, absence of which can severely increase flash flood disaster risk. But, in reality, most of the physical infrastructure and households are not flash flood proof and collapse easily during the time of disaster. In addition, communication system of *haor* region is itself a source of vulnerability. Road alignments transverse to the primary drainage path, lack of sluice gates, opening and waterways in the road network, blockage drainage channels due to siltation and lack of maintenance have severely increased disaster risk in the region.

Physical isolation is another reason for high disaster risk. The *haor* area has one of the poorest road communication networks in terms of connectivity with the

⁴¹ Bangladesh Haor and Wetland Development Board, Main Report, *op. cit.*

⁴² M. Asaduzzaman and Md. Moshir Rahman, "Impacts of Tipaimukh Dam on the Down-stream Region in Bangladesh: A Study on Probable EIA", *Journal of Science Foundation*, Vol. 13, No.1, January 2015.

main land, 11 *haor* upazillas are totally not connected with roads network.⁴³ The region remains under water for 4-7 months during the pre-monsoon and monsoon seasons. The roads are submerged during this period making it impossible to move from one place to another without boats. Therefore, waterway is the main route of transportation of the people in *haor* region. The situation gets worse when *afal* – a type of high wave – takes place during monsoon flooding making the boat transportation a risky communication option. In the lean period, boats waterways cannot be availed for communication making it extremely difficult for the people living there to move from one place to another. The poor transportation network limits the incentives for increasing production, discourages rural growth, limits access to markets and off-farm employment opportunities and limits access to existing social services particularly health and education.

High disaster risk is also attributed to inadequate number of flood shelter and *killas*, absence of which caused death of people as well as large number of animals during the flash flood in 2017. In addition, unplanned development work and increasing growth of industries in fertile land near rivers and wetlands is also taking a toll in the region in term of increased casualty and damage during flash floods which is at the same time affecting the ecosystem of the area. It is clear from the aforementioned discussion how physical vulnerability is responsible for high disaster risk. However, there are other vulnerability factors that work as catalyst for high disaster risk in the region.

4.2.2 Socio-political Vulnerability

Despite having diverse resource systems that support the livelihoods of local communities, *haor* is lagging far behind in many development indicators and ranks high in case of exposure to multiple natural hazards due to various socio-political factors.⁴⁴ The people in the *haor* areas have no or little access to the basic services compared to those of the people in other parts of the country.⁴⁵ Living standard of majority of areas is one of the lowest in Bangladesh. Population density is also high in the region which limits the livelihood options of people living there. It should be noted that poorest are the most vulnerable to disasters and people living in the *haor* region are considered as one of the most backward citizens of the country. Five *haor* districts are considered the worst performers in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) composite index while two other *haor* districts present below average performance. According to *Master Plan of Haor Area*, 29.56 per cent of population in the area lives below lower poverty line and around 28.5 per cent of haor population are completely unemployed. Therefore, in most of the social indicators, the living standard and other facilities are extremely

⁴³ Bangladesh Haor and Wetland Development Board, Summary Report, *op. cit.*

⁴⁴ General Economics Division (GED) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Bangladesh, *op. cit.*

⁴⁵ Development Wheel, *op. cit.*

low in the *haor* region, which implies high level of social vulnerability that results in high disaster risk.

The state of education, which is a very important indicator of coping capacity of a community, is also very disappointing in *haor* area. Sylhet district, which has the largest concentration of *haors*, has low proportion of people attending primary and secondary education compared to other divisions. The problems of education in *haor* areas are: lack of schools, poor physical condition of the existing schools, high tutor-pupil ratio, lack of teaching instruments and hygienic latrines, absence of playgrounds, inadequate textbooks, and other necessary conditions which are very important for ensuring quality education. School dropout rate is also higher in Sylhet division compared to the national average.⁴⁶ The illiteracy level is 38 per cent on average. The rate of primary school enrolment is 71 per cent but the school dropout rate is very high, which is around 44 per cent.⁴⁷ These numbers indicate the dire state of education in the *haor* region. In addition, most of the educational institutions and their connecting roads have not taken into consideration the regular inundation due to flash flood. There are no alternative places where children can continue their education during the time of flash flood. As a result, the education totally halts at the time of flood inundation. Due to lack of education, people living in the area are not fully aware of flash flood disaster risk and necessary mechanism to cope with it. They are also unaware of issues such as climate change which is now responsible for increasing disaster risk in the area. Due to lack of education and training, they also miss out on local developments and do not know about the programmes or projects that have been implemented by the government within the area. Therefore, due to lack of local knowledge, most of the projects fail to take into consideration the local dynamics and compulsion as well as the need of the community people. As such, many of the projects, including those taken for flash flood disaster preparedness and mitigation, fall short to produce expected result and, in many cases, increases disaster risk.

Haor region also stands at the bottom compared to other areas of Bangladesh as far as various social services are concerned. *Haor* districts have a very low coverage of safe drinking water sources. In the remote areas, the sources of safe drinking water are the tube wells. Unfortunately, the government sponsored tube wells are not enough in numbers and due to proper maintenance and monitoring, most of the tube wells are out of order. In addition, most of the tube wells go under water either in rainy season or during the time of flood and flash flood. Therefore, people in the region are vulnerable to many water-borne diseases due to their patterns of the use of water. Most of the people have limited knowledge about health risk associated with the use of unsafe and unclean

⁴⁶ Monitoring and Evaluation Division and Directorate of Primary Education, *Annual Primary School Census – 2015*, Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, December 2015, p. 80.

⁴⁷ General Economics Division (GED) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Bangladesh, *op. cit.*

water.⁴⁸ Moreover, most of the households do not have sanitary latrines. They only use hanging latrines. These latrines pose serious threat to public health and safety, especially during the time of flood. The government's initiatives in this regard are very minimal. The entire *haor* region has less than 50 per cent sanitation coverage. On an average, 44.25 per cent people use sanitary latrines, having the poorest coverage in Netrokona (35 per cent). In addition to that flooding, high water table, excessive rainfall and loose soil formation are the causes of overflow and collapse of the latrines. Every year most of the areas remain under water for about 4 to 7 months and it wipes out all existing sanitation system. Therefore, it becomes almost impossible for ultra-poor people to reconstruct toilets on a regular basis which in turn increases the water borne diseases risk in the area.

The health services in *haor* areas are another concern and a major source of social vulnerability. The status of health service is believed to be lower than other parts of Bangladesh. An overwhelming majority in *haor* areas depends on traditional healers. There exists extreme shortage of modern medical facilities which becomes acute during the time of flash flood. Government hospitals are inadequate and are in dire conditions. In the health policy of the government, *haor* and *char* do not get any special policy consideration, which they require desperately.⁴⁹ Therefore, in absence of that, the central health policy seems to be ineffective due to its special geographical location and socio-economic compulsions which is another prime reason for high disaster risk. Outbreak of disease is very common in the region. The paucity of human resources in health facilities is also responsible for that. In the *haor* region, population coverage per doctor is 23,304, which is nearly ten times higher than the national average of 2,785. The lowest coverage is observed in Habiganj (44,000 per doctor) followed by Sunamganj (37,000 per cent) district. The number of population per nurse is 11,729 compared to that of 5,782 at national level. The nurse-doctor ratio in the *haor* districts is 1.83:1 on average compared to the national ratio of 2.07:1.⁵⁰ This dire health situation restricts the ability of the inhabitants of the region to effectively cope with any adverse situation and respond to any flash flood disaster event, which increases their flash flood disaster risk. Outbreak of water-borne diseases and skin diseases is very common in the region after any flash flood incident.

The existing political structure is also a major impediment for people living in *haor* area to cope with disasters. They have very limited access to power structure and resources. Local elites control the key formal and informal institutions that determine poor people's access to resources and services, including local forums for dispute arbitration (*salish*), employment opportunities, water bodies and agricultural land, and moneylender loans. They tend to exercise control of these resources to ensure their political advantage, sometimes by use of violence, which severely undermines local people's ability to utilise natural resources thus, affecting their disaster preparedness

⁴⁸ Development Wheel, *op. cit.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Bangladesh Haor and Wetland Development Board, Main Report, *op. cit.*

and risk reduction ability for any adverse situation. This absence of enabling customs, rules, regulations, and others institutions and their enforcement coupled with limited and declining access, control, ownership and use of natural resources by majority of vulnerable *haor* population increase the disaster risk manifold. Furthermore, the inequitable management of the valuable in the *haor* area is a key constraint for people living there. Women and girls in *haor* communities experience multiple forms of gender inequity and discrimination. In particular, they face higher rates of malnutrition and maternal mortality, have limited mobility, lack of engagement in economic activities and participation in groups and networks. Women and girls also have limited access to basic services of healthcare and education due to the difficulties of transport during the flood season.⁵¹ In addition to that, women, including Union Parishad female members, are particularly marginalised from decision-making processes at the community level and beyond. The weakness of citizen participation in local decision-making processes and the limited transparency and accountability of local governance processes undermines the effective and equitable delivery of services, including social safety nets, to assist poor and marginalised groups which increase their vulnerability to disasters, especially flash flood.

4.2.3 *Economic Vulnerability*

Poverty is considered as a crucial driver of disaster risk in the *haor* region. A number of studies with their findings identifies *haor* basin as 'hot-spots' of poverty of Bangladesh.⁵² Around 29.56 per cent of the population in the area lives below the Lower Poverty Level (LPL), that is slightly higher than the national average of 29.26 per cent. Out of the seven *haor* districts, poverty incidence is the worst in Netrokona (39.5 per cent) and Kishoreganj (34 per cent). The region has long been lagging behind mainstream national development due to its physical exclusion and special hydrological dynamics. Geographical isolation, exposure to various natural shocks and socio-political dynamics are to be blamed for the underdevelopment which limits the economic capacity of the people of the region to cope with adverse situation, especially with flash flood. Economic marginalisation is also the outcome of limited livelihood opportunities in the region, which is highly seasonal, as they are focussed predominantly on agricultural labour associated with the single annual rice cropping cycle. Therefore, crop failure, due to flash flood has serious implication on livelihood of poor and extreme poor. Fishing, which was traditionally an important occupation for the region, has declined in recent years due to various faulty structural interventions and leasing arrangements which are often controlled by local elites that restricted the access of poor to open water fisheries. The incidence of livestock husbandry as a livelihood activity has also declined, due to a combination of factors including the

⁵¹ Sarah Gillingham, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

⁵² Shekh Farid, "In Search of a Development Model for Haor Dwellers", *The Daily Observer*, 10 November 2017.

conversion of grazing land to paddy cultivation, increasing population density, and increasing disease burden on animals due to rising temperatures associated with climate change. The extended lean season associated with the annual cycle of flooding and flash flood resulted in widespread and severe food insecurity and striking levels of indebtedness.⁵³ It is evident that when economic capacities are absent, individuals and communities are more vulnerable to disasters.

Furthermore, people living in the *haor* region possess very little homestead land. They are considered as resource poor in terms of agricultural resources.⁵⁴ Their earning capacity is very low which shrink further during wet season. In addition, high transaction costs, resulting from the remoteness of many *haor* communities, especially during the flood season, is a significant constraint on the effectiveness of both supply and demand side governance processes. Absence of economic instruments, incentive structures and enabling community institutions increase economic vulnerability *vis-à-vis* disaster risk, especially for flash flood in the region.

In addition, the level of industrial development is also very low in the *haor* region compared to other parts of the country. Industrialisation has not taken place to a great extent and consequently the number of industries and people engaged in this sector has been low (1.33 per cent of the total population only). Lack of energy resources and logistic support is mainly responsible for the little progress. Out of total number of 15,374 villages in the *haor* area, 6,740 villages have been brought under electrification which is only about 44 per cent compared to the nationwide coverage of about 72 per cent. Compared to the nationwide average consumption of about 200 kWh per capita, the *haor* area has consumed only 47 kWh per capita in 2010.⁵⁵ Sunamganj has the lowest use of electricity utility with only 17 kWh per capita followed by Kishoreganj and Netrokona.⁵⁶ Lack of energy resources has hampered the progress of industrialisation in the area, which in turn restricted the ability of the people to become economically solvent. Their limited capacity coupled with inadequate economic resources is therefore can be blamed for high disaster risk in the region.

4.2.4 Environmental Vulnerability

Environmental factors, which include, poor environmental management, destruction of natural defence as well as environmental degradation is also responsible

⁵³ Sarah Gillingham, *op. cit.*, p. 62

⁵⁴ S. M. K. Sarif, M. H. Kabir, S. Sultana, M. Showkat Mahmud and S. Mahjabun, "Socioeconomic Conditions, Agricultural Practices and Communication Status of the Vulnerable Haor People in Bangladesh", *American Journal of Rural Development*, Vol. 4, No. 5, 2016, p. 102.

⁵⁵ Bangladesh Haor and Wetland Development Board, Summary Report, *op. cit.*

⁵⁶ General Economics Division (GED) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Bangladesh, *op. cit.*

for flash flood vulnerability. It should be noted that the floodwater during flash flood not only carries water but also a huge amount of sediment originate mainly from the hill. Over the time this sediment has deposited on the rivers and canal bed and has reduced the conveyance capacity more or less all of the water resources system within the *haor* area. Internal canals have lost their carrying capacity due to deposition of sediment on the bed of rivers and in some cases created drainage problem. Without proper river management and dredging, flash flood due to sudden heavy rainfall creates extreme pressure on the water resources system, and water easily overtopped and creates breaching at several locations on the submersible embankment. Therefore, water quickly enters into the *haor* and wreaks havoc in the entire region. In addition, reducing vegetation coverage and increasing establishment of new settlement in hilly region is also responsible for increasing siltation during flooding. Moreover, sand carpeting of fertile crop land due to flash floods is another environmental hazard, which makes land unsuitable for crop production, thus increasing disaster risk in term of crop failure *vis-à-vis* food insecurity.

Haor basin is anticipated to be under additional stress that climate change will certainly bring to its temperature and rainfall pattern. Variability in both rainfall and temperature during the pre-monsoon season when flash floods normally occur is now evident in the region. Though, there is no specific or comprehensive study on climate change impact on the *haor* area but projections made by the IPCC (4th Assessment Report) for South Asia as well as other projections could be considered for the *haor* region for insight into climate change impact, adaptation and mitigation.⁵⁷ According to Kamruzzaman and Shaw, who have referred the PRECIS ensemble model outputs, the rainfall volume and runoff in the region and its upstream catchment will be increased by at least 40mm, 90mm and 150mm during peak monsoons of 2020s, 2050s and 2080s respectively. Cloud cover is more likely to concentrate over the Meghna catchment, especially over Meghalaya, indicating perhaps higher levels of rainfall and runoff in the *haor* influence region. The additional water in the eastern Himalayan rivers is likely to create drainage congestion, which in turn will aggravate flooding. According to the same model outputs, there will be a shift in peak rainfall towards May (away from mid-July to mid-August), with a decrease in rainfall in August. As a consequence, there will be sharp and short-duration high intensity rainfall events in the neighbourhood of *haors*, especially during pre-monsoon (*i.e.*, March-April-May period).⁵⁸ That will result in increasing and ill-timed flash flood in the area. Variability of climatic elements has already started affecting the agricultural productivity, land use practices, life styles and livelihoods in the *haor* area.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Bangladesh Haor and Wetland Development Board, Summary Report, *op. cit.*

⁵⁸ Md. Kamruzzaman and Rajib Shaw, "Flood and Sustainable Agriculture in the Haor Basin of Bangladesh: A Review Paper", *Universal Journal of Agricultural Research*, Vol. 6, No.1, 2018, pp. 40-49.

⁵⁹ P. K. Sarma, "Scenario of Haor Vulnerabilities and Other Obstacles for Sustainable Livelihood Development in Nikli Upazila", *Journal of Bangladesh Agricultural University*, Vol. 8, No. 2, 2010, pp. 283-290; Shekh Farid, "Empowering the Haor people", *The Daily Star*, 02 February 2018.

Environmental conditions not only modify the frequency and magnitude of hazard events, but also affect natural barriers that can moderate the impacts of a disaster and protect communities. Deforestation is often blamed for worsening the effects of flooding.⁶⁰ The *haor* basin is under threat of deforestation which is responsible for declining of risk regulating ecosystem services as well as loss of natural defense from disasters. *Haor* was previously full of numerous natural bushes and water tolerant trees which served as fence to protect the homestead from huge flash flood wave and erosion. Forest plays crucial role in the flooding equation as trees prevent sediment runoffs and forests hold more water than farms or grasslands. Therefore, the impact of deforestation on flash flood disaster risk is enormous. The release of sediment due to deforestation has also an impact on floods. The eroded sediment not only chokes rivers but also cause mudflow that is much more destructive than normal flood water.

In most of the cases, flash flood is associated with river bank erosion. Without proper river bank protection, the erosion caused by the flash flood results in massive damage and hampers the life and livelihood of the community. Faulty structural intervention, inadequate river bank management and absence of flood plain management are responsible for river bank erosion which in turn increases disaster risk by manifold.

4.2.5 Institutional and Governance Related Vulnerability

Governance always remains a priority but a daunting task, as governance regulates all other activities. Flash flood in *haor* region is not only a matter of natural hazard but also a governance issue. The area is subject to various institutional and governance related challenges which are important factors for high disaster risk. Various flood control and mitigation projects taken in the region have been severely criticised for not being able to produce expected result due to faulty construction procedure, lack of transparency and accountability in the maintenance process and presence of wide spread anomalies. Lack of good governance can be blamed for increasing disaster risk and was responsible for extensive damage in the flash flood incident of 2017. In spite of government's initiative to implement several projects of re-sectioning submersible embankments and repairing the damaged ones through the BWDB, the contractors who got the work allegedly did not deliver. For instance, 76 projects had been taken up for re-sectioning of submersible embankments in different *haors* of Sunamganj, while another 238 projects were approved for Project Implementation Committees (PICs). Both types of projects were supposed to be completed by February 2017.⁶¹ But none of the projects were completed on time. Locals of *haor* areas allege that the embankments, which were supposed to protect

⁶⁰ United Nations Environment Programme, *op. cit.*

⁶¹ Dwaha Chowdhury, "Embankments in Haors: Projects Turn into Plights", *The Daily Star*, 19 April 2017.

the area from flash flood disasters, were faulty.⁶² Therefore, much of the 2017 flash flood catastrophe has been blamed on negligence and corruption by the BWDB, its contractors and the PIC responsible for the construction and maintenance of embankments. Due to that allegation, 61 individuals associated with BWDB were sued by the Anti-corruption Commission of Bangladesh for corruption and mismanagement in the construction of dams in the *haor* area.⁶³ It is believed that the disaster of 2017 could be avoided or, the disaster risk could be at least minimised by manifolds if the repair and construction of the embankments in the *haor* areas were completed in time.

Corruption and irregularities were evident in the recovery phase of the flash flood disaster in 2017. There were several reports that OMS dealers were appointed based on political consideration that caused the food assistance programme to be less effective in alleviating the misery of flood victims. There were also serious allegations of nepotism and irregularities in relief distribution.⁶⁴ Corruption and lack of good governance aggravated the disaster situation in the flash flood affected areas and makes various government responses less effective.

Lack of monitoring and maintenance in the *haor* region also increases disaster risk. There is no Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) strategy for flash flood management in the region that might mitigate the disaster risk. There are allegations that people cut embankments in many places to facilitate cross *haor* navigation and fishing which destabilises the entire embankment and results in breaching of embankment during flash flood. The crop protection submersible embankments are made of mud and go under water every year and have suffered a lot due to wave erosion. So, those embankments need regular maintenance, absence of which severely increases the vulnerability of flash flood, thus increasing the flash flood disaster risk. In addition, government rules stipulate that no soil should be excavated from within 50 metres of an embankment under construction. After construction, the earth of each embankment is supposed to be compacted and planted with grass. But it has been reported that construction is going on with sourcing earth from as close as 10 metres, which is a clear violation of the rules.⁶⁵ There are serious allegations that most embankments are being constructed in such a fashion. Therefore, in time of any flash flood, most of the embankments give up miserably failing to provide any protection.

Limited and inadequate public investment in flood and water resources management in *haor* area is another administrative drawback that restricts the

⁶² Upashana Salam, "Prelude to a Spreading Nightmare", *The Daily Star*, 22 April 2017.

⁶³ Badiuzzaman Bay, "Of Rats and Rains", *The Daily Star*, 07 July 2017.

⁶⁴ Zyma Islam, "Lost to Corruption: Flash Floods in Haor", *The Daily Star*, 05 May 2017; Mintu Deshwara, "Many Denied VGF Cards, Nepotism Alleged", *The Daily Star*, 21 May 2017.

⁶⁵ Dwaha Chowdhury and Andrew Eagle, "Embankment Woes in Haor", *The Daily Star*, 03 April 2018.

capacity of the local community to cope with disasters like flash flood. *Haor* needs large investment to restore, sustain and manage water resources for food production, navigation and natural resources including biodiversity, which is currently absent. In addition, the *haor* area needs long term and integrated planning. Although the government has formulated *Master Plan of Haor Area* in 2012, comprising a set of development activities for specific areas and issues for the next 20 years (up to FY 2031-32) and in the final stage of developing Delta Plan of Bangladesh 2100; slow progress in the implementation of the long term plans and policies are increasing vulnerability *vis-à-vis* disaster risk in the region. Furthermore, lack of up to date information of *haor* and wetland is a major stumbling block for effective policy making. It is observed that literature on the development issues of *haor* areas is inadequate and so is the availability of quality data.⁶⁶ Due to non-involvement of local level disaster management committees in the national decision making process, there exist paucity of credible data and robust analysis which hampers the formulation of effective policy for *haor* region, lack of which place the disaster management process of the region in deep peril that ultimately increases disaster risk.

5. Conclusion

The life and livelihood of people living in Bangladesh largely depend on the wetlands. They are the source of fisheries, aquatic vegetation and other biodiversity, irrigation, navigation as well as provide natural barriers against floods and other hydrological disasters. The *haor*, *baors* and *beels* play an important role in the ecology, economy and livelihood of the country.⁶⁷ Among wetlands, *haors* are one of the most productive resources supporting a large variety of wetland bio-diversity and playing a key role in basin water management. The food security of the country also largely depends on the protection of the *haor* ecosystem. Therefore, any disruption of that ecosystem or any disaster in the area severely hinders every means of subsistence depending on it. Any slowdown of the economy of the *haor* region also adversely affects the national growth of the country as well.

In spite of having high prospects and resources as well as tremendous importance on country's economy and food security, *haor* region is country's one of the disaster hot-spots afflicted by multitude of natural as well as man-made disasters. The area is geographically isolated where floods and flash floods regularly disrupt the life and livelihood of people. The natural and physical settings of the area pose a serious threat to the development potentials of the region. In addition to that, a range of vulnerability factors like, socio-political, economic, environmental, institutional and

⁶⁶ General Economics Division (GED) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Bangladesh, *op. cit.*

⁶⁷ Tapas Ranjan Chakraborty, "Management of Haors, Baors, and Beels in Bangladesh: Lessons for Lake Basin Management", International Lake Environment Committee Foundation, available at <http://www.ilec.or.jp/ILBMTrainingMaterials/resources/Bangladesh.pdf>, accessed on 18 March 2018.

governance related challenges work as catalyst for high disaster risk in the region. Apart from region's geographical location, the foremost reasons behind other vulnerability factors, especially, the physical and socio-political factors are its poor communication networks and limited livelihood opportunities in comparison to the other parts of Bangladesh. The area severely lacks flood proof sustainable physical infrastructure and has inadequate number of flood shelter and *killas* which are crucial for protecting life of people and livestock during the time of disaster. The area also stands at the bottom compared to other regions in respect to various social services and safety net coverage. The condition of basic services like health, education, safe drinking water, hygiene and sanitation is also in dire stage. The situation is deteriorating due to community people's limited access to the power structure and resources and their lack of participation in the decision making process. In addition, the vulnerable economic condition of people living in the region has severely curtailed their ability to cope with any adverse situation, especially with flash floods. Disaster risk of flash flood in the region also concerns the wider environmental conditions, and poor environmental management, declining of risk regulating ecosystem services, adverse impact of climate change, and depletion of natural resources are some of the vulnerability factors behind the high disaster risk. Not only that, there exist various institutional and governance related challenges like corruption, lack of transparency and accountability, lack of monitoring and maintenance, inadequate public investment, unplanned development work etc., which are also accountable for high disaster risk of flash flood. All these vulnerability factors discussed interact with each other in a complex ways and when these factors come together and collides with the hazard event, e.g., flash flood, disaster occurs in the *haor* region.

Considering the importance and contribution of *haor* region in national economy and food security, it is important for the government as well as other concerned stakeholders to address the vulnerability factors in order to reduce disaster risk. The flash flood in 2017 brought to fore the need for strong policy initiatives to ensure better management of *haor* region and wetland ecosystem. Formulating appropriate plans and policies taking into considerations the dynamics of *haor* region is crucial to make community people resilient. In spite of having *Master Plan for Haor Area* which was formulated by the government in 2012, there remains a big gap in its implementation. Therefore, proper emphasis is needed to reduce the gaps between policy formulation and implementation. Damage of flash flood can be reduced by manifold if flood forecast and early warning can be issued with adequate lead time. Wireless Sensor Network can be used to issue warning which will help the residents to respond to imminent flash floods. In this regard, Bangladesh needs to work with its regional partners by establishing catchment based river basin management and joint flood forecasting and early warning system. Floodplain management incorporating flood hazard mapping, flood zoning etc., is also important to reduce flash flood vulnerability. The *haor* region should get special attention in various development plans and special funding should be allotted for the region in order to improve the basic utility services.

Economic backwardness has been identified as a prime factor of flash flood vulnerability that severely curtails the coping capacity of community people to disasters. Economic vulnerability of the region can be attributed to geographic isolation, dilapidated communication, limited livelihood options, and dependency of mono-crop harvesting etc. Therefore, initiatives need to be taken for improving connectivity and creating alternative livelihood opportunities. To get rid of mono-crop dependency, climate-smart agriculture and conservative agriculture practices can be devised so that farmers can continue their farming during the time of inundation. In addition, scientific research for flood tolerant rice varieties needs to be prioritised. Efforts should be made to develop submergible rice varieties which can be harvested from the beginning of March instead of the end of the month, as the year 2017 witnessed arrival of flash flood as early as 27 March. Farmers need to be provided with a short-term variety of rice so that they can harvest the crops early.

The success of any flood management project largely depends on effective supervision, monitoring and maintenance. Transparency and accountability of the people concerned are also important in this regard. Therefore, appropriate mechanism need to be devised to ensure constant supervision and effective monitoring in every flood management project in *haor* area. Regular maintenance of flood control measures, like embankments, dykes etc., need to be ensured. Good governance need to be established to ensure transparency and accountability. There should be system of collecting feedback from the local community regarding flood management projects to identify any faults or loopholes. Local people's participation in every phase of disaster management, ranging from preparedness to rehabilitation need to be ensured. Locals need to know every details of construction of structural interventions, timing of implementation and the monitoring mechanism after the construction. The local level disaster management committees need to be equipped with adequate authority, resources and funding so that they can play an effective role in policy formulation as well as implementation process.

Onrush of water from upstream is a major concern for *haor* area. The region has to drain huge volume of water from upstream, especially during monsoon period due to location in the downstream. Therefore, extensive river management with preservation of natural flow of river is needed to cope with that situation. Regular excavating and dredging of rivers are needed to increase the water carrying capacity which will help to reduce intensity of floods. In addition, prioritising afforestation programme can be an effective way to ensure rivers' water carrying capacity by protecting top soil of floodplain, which is normally washed away by rain water and deposited on the river bed. Due to high infiltration capacity of forest soils and vegetation water use, they can also store, temporally retain precipitation and reduce runoff rates which in turn can reduce the velocity of flood water. Moreover, most of the rivers in the region have their origin in the outside of the country. As a result, bilateral and regional cooperation is very important to avert any sort of hydrological disasters

which include flash floods also. Bangladesh needs to pursue catchment-based river basin management to strengthen cooperation with co-riparian countries and ensure exchange of information regarding precipitation, rainfall and water flow in the rivers.

The flash flood in 2017 demonstrates the threat of climate change that looms large over Bangladesh. It also highlights people's lack of awareness of climate change and its adverse impact on *haors* and other disaster prone areas. Therefore, initiatives, which might include education and training, need to be taken to increase knowledge and awareness in this regard. Bangladesh needs to pursue climate diplomacy vigorously to ensure climate funding from developed countries for various climate change mitigation and adaptation projects. Without regional and international cooperation, it would not be possible for the country to cope with the adverse impact of climate change, which, if remain, unaddressed will have serious consequence for the country, especially for the *haor* region.

Shanjida Shahab Uddin

BRI AND BCIM-EC: OVERCOMING THE IMPEDIMENTS

Abstract

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is one of the largest development plans initiated by China which includes 65 countries covering Asia, Africa and Europe. While Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor (BCIM-EC) is a sub-regional cooperation that aims to introduce new impetus to economic and social development by linking the southwestern parts of China with northeastern region of India and the Bay of Bengal through Yangon and Mandalay in Myanmar, and Bangladesh. Although BCIM-EC was initiated long before the inception of BRI, China later incorporated it under BRI platform as one of the six economic corridors. Instead of analysing why BCIM-EC was incorporated within BRI, the paper attempts to focus on the impediments that BRI and BCIM-EC are facing during implementation phase. Therefore, the paper limits its scope to examine the impediments and investigate how China as a pioneer of BRI along with member countries of both BRI and BCIM-EC can overcome these emerging challenges. The paper attempts to formulate policy suggestions recommending strategies for China to overcome these impediments with the assistance and support of all the member countries of BRI and BCIM-EC.

1. Introduction

The Belt and Road initiative (BRI) is considered as the largest development plan in the modern history which includes 65 countries covering Asia, Africa and Europe. To many policy analysts, this connectivity plan is an attempt of Beijing to gain political leverage over the participating countries and might be a riposte against the United States' "pivot to Asia". However, as stated by the Chinese government, BRI will be a platform for 'common development' and 'common prosperity' of all the participating countries.¹ According to the official documents of BRI, this mega project aims to create an open, inclusive and balanced regional economic cooperation with benefits for all the countries involved.² Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor (BCIM-EC), another sub-regional initiative which was proposed in 1999 under Track II diplomacy, has been consolidated in BRI as one of the six important economic

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¹ Ravi Bhoothalingam, "The Silk Road as Global Brand", *China Report*, Vol. 52, No.1, 2016, pp. 45-52.

² Geetanjali Nataraj and Richa Sekhani, "China's One Belt One Road: An Indian Perspective", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 49, 05 December 2015, pp. 67-71.

corridors. It is expected that BCIM-EC initiative will strengthen economic and cultural ties among the member countries. The proposed BCIM-EC is supposed to connect southwestern parts of China with northeastern India and the Bay of Bengal through northern Myanmar, India's northeastern region and Bangladesh.

The BRI is an umbrella initiative under which BCIM-EC can be a platform for the member countries to access opportunities. As a member of both BRI and BCIM-EC, Bangladesh has the prospect to grasp the opportunities. Thus, Bangladesh needs to make the effort to achieve the aims and expectations of BRI and BCIM-EC which could make great impact in the country's economy.³ Instead of analysing why BCIM-EC was incorporated within BRI, the paper endeavours to look at the existing impediments that BRI and BCIM-EC are facing during implementation phase. It is increasingly evident that both BRI and BCIM-EC are facing some impediments, such as difficulties in financing infrastructural construction, security impediments in economic corridor, unwillingness of some member states in cooperating the project, economic challenges associated with tariff and non-tariff barriers, inadequate customs facilities, complex trade procedures and low-level trade facilitation, etc. The unyielding situation between China and India is another challenge. At the initial stage, India was enthusiastic in forwarding BCIM-EC further even after the inclusion of BCIM-EC within BRI. India was also ardent in making BRI successful. However, India became reticent about its stand on BRI after the inclusion of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).⁴ Additionally, the latest Doklam stand-off between India and China made the situation difficult. In fact, these are the results of long simmering tension between the two Asian powers over regional primacy. Such inflexible position might have a long-term undesirable impact on any regional or sub-regional initiative. Apart from that, BCIM-EC is facing institutional challenges. Likewise, BRI did not represent any concrete institutional framework so far for implementing its numerous development projects.

In this backdrop, the paper aims to examine the impediments of BRI and BCIM-EC and explore how China as a pioneer of BRI can overcome these challenges by involving all member states of these two initiatives. To address these challenges, relevant policy recommendations are also suggested in the paper. The research conducted for this paper is qualitative in nature. The paper uses both primary and secondary data and provides a brief review of literature. The second section succeeding the introduction begins with a brief discussion of the progress of BRI and BCIM-EC. Third section explores the prospects of BCIM-EC and BRI. Fourth section analyses the challenges of BRI and BCIM-EC. In the fifth section, the paper suggests possible policy recommendations. The paper ends with concluding remarks.

³ Interview with Professor Lailufar Yasmin, Department of International Relations, University of Dhaka, Dhaka.

⁴ Geetanjali Nataraj and Richa Sekhani, *op. cit.*

2. BRI and BCIM-EC: Progress So Far

BRI is an idea of the Chinese President Xi Jinping. He first shared his vision during his visit to Kazakhstan in the late 2013. At the initial stage, BRI was limited to the idea of New Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB) which spans from China to Europe, via Central Asia. Within a short period of time, this idea morphed into a major Chinese foreign policy and economic strategy and got the name “One Belt One Road (OBOR)”. Later, a maritime component known as the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road (MSR) was incorporated to it.⁵ Presently, the OBOR is known as BRI. The previous name “OBOR” has been a buzzword throughout Asia and Europe for the past three years since the Chinese President brought the idea forward. According to the Central Compilation and Translation Bureau of the Peoples’ Republic of China, and the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, the reason behind the name change was Chinese policy makers’ realisation that the name “OBOR” does not represent the initiative clearly. For example, the name “One Belt One Road” denotes one project, but the initiative consists of several land belts and maritime routes.⁶ The word “one” attracted the stakeholders’ attention. It gave an idea that there might be one maritime route and single land belt. Supposedly, this notion of a single belt and road can create competition among regional partners. Thus, to avoid much focus on the word “One”, the new name BRI has been adopted by the policy makers. Furthermore, the word “Initiative” has been adopted to emphasise the openness of this strategy and to avoid the criticisms over “China-centred institution building” since this criticism is gaining momentum as the project progresses.⁷

To support this ambitious project, several financial institutions have already been established. The Silk Road Infrastructure Fund was established in February 2014 followed by the New Development Bank (NDB) or the BRICS Bank in July 2014 and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) in October 2014. Georgia hosted the Tbilisi Silk Road Forum in 2015 which is now known as Tbilisi Belt and Road Forum. It was established to discuss issues related to trade facilitation.⁸

The 21st century MSR is another component of BRI. It was first outlined during Chinese President Xi Jinping’s speech in the Indonesian Parliament and Premier Li Keqiang’s speech at the 16th Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)-China

⁵ Manoj Joshi, “The Belt and Road Initiative aka One Belt One Road Scheme”, *Observer Research Foundation*, January 2018.

⁶ Wade Shepard, “Beijing to the World: Don’t Call the Belt and Road Initiative OBOR”, *Forbes*, 01 August 2017, available at <https://www.forbes.com/sites/wadeshepard/2017/08/01/beijing-to-the-world-please-stop-saying-obor/#11fe551717d4>, accessed on 01 August 2017.

⁷ Una Aleksandra and Bërziņa-Čerenkova, “BRI Instead of OBOR – China Edits the English Name of its Most Ambitious International Project”, available at <http://liia.lv/en/analyses/bri-instead-of-obor-china-edits-the-english-name-of-its-most-ambitious-international-project-532>, accessed on 28 July 2017.

⁸ Tbilisi Belt and Road Forum, available at <http://www.tbilisibrf.gov.ge/>, accessed on 28 July 2017.

Summit in Brunei in October 2013.⁹ In the initial map, the MSR began in Fujian province and passed Guangdong, Guanxi and Hainan before heading south to the Malacca Strait. From the Malacca Strait, the MSR heads to Kolkata and Colombo then crosses the rest of the Indian Ocean to Nairobi. From there, it heads toward north around the Horn of Africa and moves through the Red Sea into the Mediterranean with a stop in Athens before meeting the overland Silk Road in Venice.¹⁰ In the latest map, the South Pacific has been included. There are two directions of the MSR. One is from China through the South China Sea to the Indian Ocean ports, which is extended to Europe and the second one is through the South China Sea from the Chinese Coastal ports extending eastward to the South Pacific.¹¹ Under the latest two directions, three blue economic passages will be given priority for maritime cooperation. The China-Indian Ocean-Africa-Mediterranean Sea blue economic passage will connect the China-Indochina Peninsula Economic Corridor (CICPEC), CPEC, and BCIM-EC. The second passage is the China-Oceania-South Pacific passage which will run southward via the South China Sea into the Pacific Ocean. And the third passage is envisioned to link Europe via the Arctic Ocean.¹²

To accelerate the development of BRI project, the Chinese State Council authorised an Action Plan for BRI in 2015. The action plan was released on 28 March 2015 during the Boao Forum for Asia.¹³ The two major components of BRI – the SREB and the MSR were approved in that Action Plan. The principles, framework, cooperation priorities and mechanisms of the BRI were included in the action plan. The cooperation priorities would be policy coordination, infrastructure construction, cooperation in investment and trade, financial cooperation, and promoting exchange.¹⁴ It was stated that BRI would cover 65 countries with 4.4 billion people (63 per cent of the world population) and US\$ 23 trillion worth GDP (29 per cent of world's GDP).¹⁵ It was also planned that the first BRI summit would take place in 2017. According to the plan, the two-day first BRI summit was held in Beijing in 2017. A joint communiqué was signed by 30 heads of states which adopted around 270 deliverable goals of BRI to implement plans for cooperation in trade and infrastructure programmes across Asia, Europe and Africa. However, the forum ended with only promises of joint action by participating countries and did not result in establishment of an institutional

⁹ Rajeev Ranjan Chaturvedy, "The 21st Century Maritime Silk Road", in K. Yhome, and Rajeev Ranjan Chaturvedy (eds.), *Emerging Trans-Regional Corridors: South and Southeast Asia*, New Delhi: Observer Research Foundation, 2017, pp. 34-40.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² "China Unveiled Maritime Silk Road Plans", *The Economic Times*, 20 June 2017, available at <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/china-unveils-maritime-silk-road-plans/articleshow/59238384.cms>, accessed on 20 June 2017.

¹³ "China Maps out Belt and Road with Action Plan", *The Global Times*, 04 May 2017, available at <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1045361.shtml>, accessed on 21 July 2017.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

framework for implementing the planned construction programme. The signatories to the joint communiqué also pledged their support for promoting a rules-based, open and multilateral trading system with the World Trade Organization (WTO) at its core. To speed up this mega project, China has taken the first step to institutionalise the Belt and Road Forum (BRF) by announcing that the next edition of BRF would be held in Beijing in 2019.¹⁶

On the other hand, BCIM-EC is a sub-regional initiative for economic cooperation. It was founded in 1999 based on some proposals from China's Yunnan province which was then supported by the participating countries – Bangladesh, China, India and Myanmar. This was initially known as the Kunming Initiative. Though it was coordinated by the Track II diplomacy, the initiative received official acceptance in 2013 and morphed into Track I diplomacy. After that, the initiative received high-level endorsements. The big powers in the group – China and India signed a joint statement on establishing a joint study group to promote cooperation. Although, this sub-regional initiative has made some notable achievements breaking a long impasse after its inception, it is apparent that this has had faced dilemmas associated with challenges.¹⁷ Particularly, after being incorporated within BRI project as one of the six economic corridors, BCIM-EC might face new challenges and predicaments in coping with the new platform in future.

3. Prospects for BCIM-EC Region under BRI

The proposed BCIM-EC region has many untapped resources. Member countries of BCIM-EC have the opportunities to unlock economic potential. The geographical position of Bangladesh signifies its importance in BCIM-EC under BRI project. Once BCIM-EC is developed, Bangladesh can facilitate the access of the landlocked northeast Indian states and China's Yunnan province. Both the region can save time and enormous amount of transportation cost by availing the land and water corridor making good use of port facilities in Bangladesh.¹⁸ BCIM-EC will not only connect Kolkata and Kunming but also help to connect all principal routes, nodes, ports and growth centres along the hinterland. The primary plank of BCIM's engagement will be "people's development". Geographical proximity, similar income levels, huge internal markets, and comparative advantages among BCIM countries can create better conditions for the production network and generate huge potential for trade development within the region. BCIM-EC countries have similar

¹⁶ Shanon Tiezzi, "What did China Accomplish at the Belt and Road Forum?", *The Diplomat*, 16 May 2017, available at <https://thediplomat.com/2017/05/what-did-china-accomplish-at-the-belt-and-road-forum/>, accessed on 20 May 2017.

¹⁷ K. Yhome, "The BCIM Economic Corridor: Prospects and Challenges", in K. Yhome and Rajeev Ranjan Chaturvedy (eds.), *op. cit.*

¹⁸ Sayed Kamaluddin, "BCIM-EC in Hibernation while Gwadar Deep Sea-Port Nearing Completion", *The Financial Express*, Dhaka, 21 May 2017.

demand. For example, all the four countries have demand for infrastructure, home appliances, communications, automotive, textiles and clothing, and each has its own advantageous industrial sectors, which set a solid trading foundation. Once BCIM-EC project is operationalised under BRI, these regions will be benefited through BRI's projected overland and maritime transportation, energy and communication infrastructure.¹⁹ It is expected that through BRI, member countries will have a win-win cooperation and can have more fruitful projects under BCIM-EC.²⁰

Different endowment of the member countries is another important potential. The four member countries have comparative advantages due to endowment differences. China has capital and technological advantages over labour abundance. It focuses on capital and technology-intensive industries, such as metallurgy, petrochemical engineering, heavy equipment and infrastructure. Bangladesh is relatively superior in labour-intensive industries such as textiles and ready-made garments. India has advantages in the fields of software, finance and agricultural products, and Myanmar has the advantageous position in forestry, agriculture, animal husbandry, energy and minerals.

Trade opportunities mostly depend on strategic trade policy.²¹ According to the strategic trade policy, strategic industries can reap higher profits through economies of scale. An integrated BCIM-EC market will create larger market for the thriving industries in the member countries, such as Bangladesh's readymade garments (RMG), China's equipment manufacturing and India's software services, and in turn, the consolidated international competitiveness of these industries will create more trade opportunities. Geographical proximity is an important factor in the development of trade. Probability of trade between neighbouring countries is significantly higher than that between non-adjacent countries. Based on geographical proximity and long boundary lines, BCIM-EC can smoothen the transportation channels in the member countries, including highway, railway, waterway, energy pipelines, and thereby release the potential of BRI.

Production networks are important in making any connectivity initiative successful. Network-based trade within the industry is a major driving force for trade growth in East Asia. BCIM-EC may contribute in accelerating the establishment of regional production networks. Under this sub-regional initiative, proposed industrial belts will be nurtured. The planned industrial zones in Bangladesh, India and Myanmar

¹⁹ Helal Uddin Ahmed, "The Origin and Prospects of the New Silk Road", *The Financial Express*, Dhaka, 10 July 2017.

²⁰ Li Mengyan, *CIISS-BIISS Workshop*, held on 18 July 2017 in Beijing, China.

²¹ Strategic trade policy refers to trade policy that affects the outcome of strategic interactions between firms in an actual or potential international oligopoly. See Barbara J. Spencer and James A. Brander, "Strategic Trade Policy", *The New Palgrave Dictionary of Economics*, available at http://www.dictionaryofeconomics.com/article?id=pde2008_S000300, accessed on 10 January 2017.

may exploit potentials of new connectivity and attract intra-regional foreign direct investment (FDI), especially outward FDI from China and India. This region may also exploit the benefits of the planned trade facilitation by simplifying customs clearance system, improving market accesses, eliminating trade barriers, simplifying foreign investment procedures and creating more free trade zones under BRI.²²

By joining BRI, member countries are likely to improve their trade scenarios. For example, Bangladesh might expect to reduce the trade gap with China and get duty-free access of 22 major Bangladeshi products to the Chinese market.²³ Bangladesh will also get an opportunity to improve its infrastructure since China is expected to invest a cumulative US\$ 4 trillion in BRI countries. On top of that, China will contribute an additional about US\$ 14.5 billion to the Silk Road fund for the upgradation of infrastructure.²⁴ There will also be room for member countries to explore new avenues through trade, investment and greater people-to-people exchanges among the BRI countries. China pledged to provide food aid to developing countries along the BRI which is worth 2 billion Yuan. It also pledged to provide US\$ 1 billion to the assistance fund for South-South Cooperation, 100 'happy home' projects, 100 poverty alleviation projects and 100 health care and rehabilitation projects in countries along BRI. It has also promised to set up 50 joint laboratories with countries participating in BRI.²⁵

4. Impediments

Although BRI and BCIM-EC projects have many potentials, they are also facing some challenges, such as difficulties in financing infrastructural construction, security challenges in various economic corridors, unwillingness of some member states in cooperating the project, economic challenges associated with tariff and non-tariff barriers, improper customs facilities, complex trade procedures and low-level trade facilitation, etc. Furthermore, the trust deficit between China and India is another big obstacle. This section will look into the impediments that BRI and BCIM-EC need to address.

First, question arises as to whether BRI is a concept, a strategy or a slogan. It appears that BRI is more of a symbolic representation than a truthful interpretation. Since it is a mega project which includes many development projects, it looks like a large umbrella of initiative. It is a combination of existing and upcoming infrastructure projects, along with a number of bilateral and regional trade agreements. Although it is China's most ambitious foreign policy initiative, it is still difficult for member countries to understand. Organisational mechanism of BRI still gives on impression

²² Helal Uddin Ahmed, *op. cit.*

²³ Md. Shariful Islam, "China's One Belt One Road Initiative: How Bangladesh Can Be Benefitted", *The Daily Star*, Dhaka, 19 May 2017.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

of diffuseness. It is not even an organisation with defined rules but a political vision that is flexible by nature.²⁶ The first BRI summit in May 2017 identified some 270 deliverable goals and signed a joint communiqué.²⁷ Apart from the promises of joint action, the first summit did not produce any concrete institutional framework for implementation. Also, there is a lack of transparency. The only aspect of BRI being projected is that economically it will be a “win-win” opportunity for all. The projection of any unfavourable effect has not been studied or shared with the member states. Besides, BRI represents a loose framework that can still be modified by its participants. Therefore, the full scope of BRI initiative has not been identified yet.

BCIM-EC, which predates BRI and is now incorporated within BRI, is also facing dilemmas and institutional challenges. Although BCIM-EC sub-regional initiative received enough media attention, it is not institutionalised properly. During the initial years, the idea was accepted and discussed with a varying level of interest. The idea also involved a “multi-modal transport network” aimed at boosting the sub-region’s economic activities. With the establishment of a joint study group, the initiative experienced satisfactory progress till 2015 but there was a respite in the progress afterwards. The whole idea lacks an organised institutional setup. Above all, the four member countries do not demonstrate equal commitment to the proposed projects for institutionalising BCIM-EC.

Apart from institutional challenges, some new dilemmas are also emerging regarding how to take BCIM-EC initiative forward. The first dilemma is related to two views: one group advocates for an economy-centric approach, while another group is for a “more people-centric, inclusive approach that is mindful of local social realities”. The second dilemma is the tension between centralisation and decentralisation, questioning whether increasing centralisation of the initiative is in the right direction. The third dilemma is the tension between regionalism and sub-regionalism. Clarification on this issue becomes a necessary pre-requisite because it has policy implications in terms of framing the overall objectives and coordination policies of BCIM-EC. Fourth dilemma is whether BCIM-EC should be driven by economic logic.²⁸

Challenges related to BCIM corridor are also important. The proposed economic corridor is 2,800km long trade route which is supposed to connect Kolkata via Chittagong and Sylhet of Bangladesh and Mandalay of Myanmar to China’s Yunnan province. But reality is that the proposed route is still not ready to be used as economic corridor.²⁹ The two stretches (in Myanmar and northeastern region

²⁶ Nadine Godehardt, “No End of History: A Chinese Alternative Concept of International Order”, *German Institute for International and Security Affairs*, Vol. 2, January 2016, Berlin: Germany.

²⁷ Shannon Tiezzi, *op. cit.*

²⁸ K. Yhome, *op. cit.*

²⁹ Rowshan Iyer, “BCIM-Economic Corridor: Facilitating Sub-Regional Development”, *IPCS Special Report No. 187*, New Delhi, May 2017.

of India) require additional infrastructural development. The 250km long Imphal-Jiribam-Silchar highway experiences flooding in the monsoon. On the other hand, in Myanmar, the 200km Yargi road experiences landslide and a steep, hostile terrain.³⁰ There are also infrastructural challenges. The concept of the economic corridor is still not elucidated properly. Although some development initiatives through economic corridor have been taken up, there is no clear picture of how this economic corridor will aid the development of a specific region.³¹



Source: Rowshan Iyer, *op. cit.*

Furthermore, trust deficit between India and China is a major concern. It acts as a major obstacle in making any connectivity initiative operational. Traditionally from the beginning, India has a skeptical view that China is an unfavourable rival. India remains wary of China’s presence in South Asia. At present, the official Indian position on BRI is to maintain considerable caution due to its ambivalence towards China.³² India’s main objection is about the CPEC initiative. China and Pakistan are jointly building CPEC, which passes through the part of Kashmir controlled by Pakistan. This corridor is one of the six economic corridors under BRI plan. India considers the location of CPEC as a violation of its sovereignty.³³ After boycotting the first BRI summit in May 2017, India’s Ministry of External Affairs released a formal response stating that “BRI must be pursued in a manner that respects sovereignty and territorial

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Hans-Peter Brunner, “What is Economic Corridor Development and What Can it Achieve in Asia’s Sub Regions?”, *ADB Working Paper Series on Regional Economic Integration*, No. 117, Manila, Asian Development Bank, August 2013.

³² Liu Xiaoxue, “China-India Ties: Trust Deficit Fuels Trade Imbalance”, *China-India Dialogue*, available at <http://chinaindiadialogue.com/china-india-ties-trust-deficit-fuels-trade-imbalance>, accessed on 11 July 2017.

³³ Atul Bhardwaj, “India’s Opposition to China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is Flawed”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 52, No. 4, 2017.

integrity”³⁴ Therefore, on this ground, India is concerned about BRI. There is also a dispute between India and China over the Arunachal Pradesh. China claimed India's Arunachal Pradesh as South Tibet. India accused China for blocking international financial support to Arunachal Pradesh. Given the political synergy between China and Pakistan, CPEC will be a political annoyance for India. Its strategic significance may not be high, but may restrict India's maneuverability in the region.³⁵

Lack of operational detail of BRI is also a major concern for India. Experts from Indian strategic community hold the view that to get endorsement, China should show the operational detail to India which the former did not do so far. Therefore, a lack of operational detail becomes a major problem for Chinese policymakers who are interested to market this initiative. Due to the absence of operational detail, this mega project is often labelled as “more sweeping vision than an operational blueprint”. As such, India may not accept the present form of BRI.³⁶

India is also concerned about lack of proper consultation. In the past, proper consultation with member countries was made on the organisational rules of AIIB, the BRICS Development Bank and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). All consultations were led by China, and India was actively involved in shaping the architecture of these institutions. In the consultation process, all the member countries played active role in developing the operational policies of the SCO, BRICS and other big initiatives. But BRI did not follow this example. Since BRI is a bigger initiative than many multinational development programmes, a detail consultative process with all member states is very important.³⁷

Another concern for India is the potential debt burden. Though India is avoiding taking financial assistance from China, many of its neighbouring countries are signing deal with China. Pakistan signed deal with China worth nearly US\$ 500 million to construct airport, port and highway. Nepal joined BRI and is in talks with China to build a cross-border rail link worth US\$ 8 billion.³⁸ Reality is that this financial assistance for developing infrastructure supporting BRI is coming with a high-interest. For example, CPEC in Pakistan is a very expensive project with high-interest loan.

³⁴ Alyssa Ayres, “India Objects to China's One Belt One Road Initiative and It Has a Point”, *Forbes*, 15 May 2017, available at <https://www.forbes.com/sites/alyssaayres/2017/05/15/india-objects-to-chinas-one-belt-and-road-initiative-and-it-has-a-point/#1684ba5db262>, accessed on 11 July 2017.

³⁵ Suhasini Haider, “Why did India Boycott China's Road Summit?”, *The Hindu*, 20 May 2017, available at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/why-did-india-boycott-chinas-road-summit/article18516163.ece>, accessed on 25 May 2017.

³⁶ Peter Cai, “Why India Distrusts China's One Belt One Road”, The Lowy Institute for International Policy, available at <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpretor/why-india-distrusts-chinas-one-belt-one-road-initiative>, accessed on 21 September 2016.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Wang Jiamei, “India's Refusal to Join B&R Will Not Hamper Cooperation among Other Countries”, *The Global Times*, 14 May 2017, available at <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1046896.shtml>, accessed on 20 May 2017.

Security threats are important challenges for both BRI and BCIM-EC. The route of BCIM-EC under BRI has many obstacles. Of them, security challenge is an important one. The major security challenge is armed insurgencies in the participating countries. Myanmar's armed insurgent groups might hamper the interests of BCIM-EC and interrupt the movements of consignments from one place to another. There are a good number of armed insurgent groups across Myanmar. Among them, the notable ones are: the Kachin insurgents in the north, the Karenni insurgents in the east, the Karen insurgents in the south and the southeast and the Arakanese/Rohingya insurgents in the west of Myanmar. The Arakanese insurgents groups would perhaps be the biggest challenge for the part of the proposed BCIM-EC route passing through Myanmar. Another security challenge for BCIM-EC region comes from insurgency groups in northeast India, namely United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB), United People's Democratic Solidarity (UPDS), National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN), and so on. The ULFA made attempts to establish a sovereign state of Assam through armed struggle. Although the organisation became weaker due to the arrest of most of its leaders, it still poses threat to the peace and security of the region.³⁹ China is also facing problems with separatist Uyghurs. During the latest terrorist attacks in China's three major cities- Beijing, Kunming and Urumki between 2013 and 2014, around 72 people died and more than 300 people were injured. Chinese government claimed that the Uyghur separatists were responsible for these attacks.⁴⁰

Despite the presence of security threats from separatist and insurgent groups, regional and sub-regional development initiatives are functioning in many places across the world. But the threats coming from separatist and insurgent groups in BCIM-EC region are crucial. There are evidences that these threats are responsible for hampering important development projects in BCIM-EC region. For example, China's proposed Myitsone Dam in Myanmar was suspended due to frequent clashes of ethnic armed groups in 2011.⁴¹ It was an important development project under BRI in Myanmar. Under BRI platform, China's another important project – Kyaukphyu deep seaport is also facing challenges. The proposed deep seaport is supposed to be built in the conflict-ridden Rakhine state. Due to unrest in muslim populated Rakhine, the overall security and peace situations are in turmoil in the Rakhine state.⁴²

³⁹ Sushil Kumar Sharma, "Insurgency in Northeast India: External Dynamics", *Journal of Defense Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 4, 2014.

⁴⁰ Marc Julienne, Moritz Rudolf and Johannes Buckow, "The Terrorist Threat in China", *The Diplomat*, 26 May 2015, available at <https://thediplomat.com/2015/05/the-terrorist-threat-in-china/>, accessed on 26 May 2017.

⁴¹ Henrik Hallgren and Richard Ghiasy, "Security and Economy on the Belt and Road", SIPRI Insights on Peace and Security, No. 2017/4, December 2017, available at https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2017-12/sipriinsights1712_.pdf, accessed on 27 May 2017.

⁴² Gregory B. Poling, "Kyaukpyu: Connecting China to the Indian Ocean", CSIS Briefs, 02 April 2018, available at <https://www.csis.org/analysis/kyaukpyu-connecting-china-indian-ocean>, accessed on 27 April 2018.

Rohingya crisis is another obstacle which has already created a miserable situation for Bangladesh. Declaring them as illegal migrants, the Myanmar government, along with Buddhist extremists and Arakan nationalists, continue to brutalise Rohingyas. Bangladesh is the largest Myanmar Refugee receiving neighbouring country. The latest crisis resulted in over 500,000 Rohingya refugees' arrival into Bangladesh. Previously, Bangladesh had been sheltering over 500,000 Rohingyas. The recent persecution resulted in around one million Myanmar refugees into Bangladesh.⁴³ Large number of Rohingyas who entered Bangladesh becomes threat to local and national security of Bangladesh. This situation will be a long-term security concern for Bangladesh and it might create negative impact on BCIM-EC initiative.

Terrorism is a major challenge throughout BRI region. Experts argue that existing terrorist threats might hamper BRI's project. Some of the member countries of BRI have already started facing ISIS terrorist threats. In this situation, major projects of BRI might be targeted and affected badly.⁴⁴ Moreover, terrorist threats from the Taliban, Chechen and Uzbek radicals are also present. There are local rivalries also, for instance, in the Central Asia. Rivalries are there between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. Additionally, some key BRI countries, such as Pakistan are unstable. This situation poses security risks to Chinese companies as well as personnel working there. In case of Pakistan, to tackle the security impediment, its military promised to keep a special unit of 1200 soldiers to protect CPEC projects. This situation proves the vulnerable state of Pakistan. This is an important challenge for BRI.⁴⁵

One more challenge is the occasional border dispute between China and India. The two giant neighbours fought a war in 1962. The most recent border skirmish happened in Doklam in 2017. The standoff in Doklam emanated a possibility of war between these two nuclear-armed giants of the Asia-Pacific. This situation poses significant concerns among the global strategic community. Certainly, a war, which could cause thousands of casualties and decimate a substantial part of the global economy, is a pressing matter for the strategic community.⁴⁶ And this is a challenge for any development initiative such as BCIM-EC and BRI. Such relationship between China and India is a hindrance for BCIM-EC to become operational and, thereby, functional.

⁴³ "Take back Rohingyas", *The Daily Star*, Dhaka, 12 January 2017.

⁴⁴ Zhao Jun, *CISS-BIISS Workshop*, held on 18 July 2017 in Beijing, China.

⁴⁵ Peter Cai, "Understanding China's Belt and Road Initiative", Lowy Institute for International Policy, available at <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/understanding-belt-and-road-initiative>, accessed on 25 March 2017.

⁴⁶ Rajesh Kumar, "Will the Doklam Standoff Lead to a Second India-China War?", *The Diplomat*, 18 July 2017, available at <https://thediplomat.com/2017/07/will-the-doklam-standoff-lead-to-a-second-india-china-war/>, accessed on 20 July 2017.

Lack of infrastructural facilities is another hindrance to any kind of connectivity initiative. Given that free movement of goods and services requires sound transportation and logistics infrastructure, trade is apprehended to be seriously hindered in the world's less-connected BCIM region due to various factors such as low road density, lack of backbone channels, inappropriate land and sea transportation, lack of cross-border connections, and improper customs facilities. Use of Bangladesh's roads, railways and water transportation to meet the demand for BCIM-EC is an important issue. The situation of BCIM transit in Bangladesh part hinges upon two major aspects. First, use of Chittagong and Mongla ports by the northeastern part of India and the Yunnan province of China. Second, use of Bangladesh's road, railway and water transportation as a corridor from Kolkata through the northeastern India and Myanmar to China.

For the existing roads that are supposed to be used for BCIM-EC transport, traffic congestion is a major hindrance. Virtually, 70 per cent of road transportation between India and Bangladesh passes through Benapole/Petropole border. There is only one road connecting Benapole/Petropole border to Kolkata. This road is merely 5.5 metre wide. Thus, it creates highly congested traffic. Heavily loaded trucks cannot move across the border and all freight traffic needs to be transhipped at the border point. This creates congestion which causes delay. An improved connectivity, power plants and development of deep water port facilities closer to the sea lane and other infrastructure facilities are needed.

The debt burden and financial risks are assumed to be a serious economic challenge to make BRI and BCIM-EC successful. China pledged to invest US\$ 1 trillion. To implement all the development projects, it is supposed to pay the large share of the money to the member countries. But this payment is not free of cost. Member states have to repay the loan with high interest rate. Therefore, the question arises whether member countries, especially economically weaker countries, will be able to repay the money with high interest rate.⁴⁷ Sri Lanka has recently faced debt crisis for its Hambantota port. This could be an example of debt burden.⁴⁸ Financial risks are also associated with these initiatives. When China's President Xi Jinping announced BRI, Chinese state-owned financial institutions followed with a draft of policies to support this grand vision. China Development Bank played a key role in financing BRI. The Bank of China pledged to lend US\$ 20 billion in 2015 and US\$ 100 billion between 2016 and 2018. Commercial Bank of China has been dealing with 130 commercially feasible BRI-related projects worth about US\$ 159 billion and has financed five projects in Pakistan. But despite all these pledges, many Chinese bankers and listed

⁴⁷ Bhaskar Roy, "Examining the Strategy Behind China's OBOR", Paper No. 6252, South Asia Analysis Group, available at <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/node/2154>, accessed on 10 May 2017.

⁴⁸ Wade Shepard, "Sri Lanka's Debt Crisis", *Forbes*, 30 September 2016, available at <https://www.forbes.com/sites/wadeshepard/2016/09/30/sri-lankas-debt-crisis-is-so-bad-the-government-doesnt-even-know-how-much-money-it-owes/#7377103b4608>, accessed on 12 July 2017.

commercial banks are concerned about the feasibility of BRI projects. They are worried about different types of risks associated with the overseas loan, including political instability and economic viability of many projects. Some economic policy makers of China are also concerned that the political impetus of BRI could drive China into investing in white elephant projects abroad. Thus, China, is likely to face financial risks in implementing this mega project.

5. Possible Strategies to Address the Challenges

Challenges that have been highlighted in the above discussion are crucial to address. They need to be appropriately addressed with due consideration to their impacts on the overall BRI plan. China, in this regard, needs to take a leading role in addressing such challenges. Since, BRI is China's most ambitious development plan, it needs to engage all member states to come forward with effective ideas to activate each and every development programme under BRI mega plan. Therefore, this section recommends some possible strategies for addressing these challenges.

Clarifying BRI concept could be the first step to avoid any kind of misunderstanding. Many believe that there are confusions in the concept of BRI. The project is supposed to cover 65 countries to make a common economic zone. But the problem lies in the understanding of the whole project. Although several projects under BRI plan has been specified which are mostly infrastructural development projects and several support institutions have been created, the whole BRI plan still remains unclear in many respects. Most of the participating countries are still unaware about how to proceed with this vast project. Therefore, China needs to take a large-scale and well-coordinated strategy to clarify BRI. It needs to develop an agreed framework through consultation with all the participating countries to settle the issue of how BRI plan will take shape in concrete terms.

Uniting member states can be another important step in implementing BRI and BCIM-EC. It is increasingly evident that there is a lack of unity in making BRI successful. There are assumptions that, by BRI, China's intent is to expand its influence throughout Asia and the world. Thus, some consider this initiative as a threat. Therefore, China needs to convince the participating countries that BRI is not a threat. With a skillful development of cultural diplomacy, as one aspect of China's public diplomacy-based strategy, it may develop a distinctive approach to unite all the member states of BRI. The development vision of BRI which can provide new opportunities for local, regional and international initiatives needs to be explained properly. For this, China might think of using its soft power and cultural diplomacy to promote an image of China as a responsible global power.

Development of existing infrastructural setup is imperative for making BCIM-EC and BRI successful. The main impulse driving BRI is physical connectivity. Efficient

infrastructure enhances productivity, fosters investment and lowers the costs of trade. Effective channels for the exchange of goods and well-connected information networks accelerate growth, economic opportunity and reduce inequality. Such infrastructure can be built in an efficient and cost-effective manner. For this, the key is cooperative efforts that exploit each country's respective comparative advantage, be it capital, technological know-how, logistical or construction capabilities, raw materials, or even industrial goods. Such an approach can help emerging economies bypass the dreaded middle-income trap. To do so, China as a leader of BRI, needs to engage all the member countries of both BRI and BCIM-EC to identify all the infrastructural hurdles including poor roads, lack of backbone channels, lack of cross-border connection and improper customs facilities in all the participating countries. At the outset, by air and sea connectivity, the process of BCIM-EC must go, if it is not possible by road and inland water transportation.⁴⁹ Additionally, the ancient "Cotton Road"⁵⁰ might be an issue which China may take into consideration so that the old route can be revived again which is related to the psyche of the BRI.⁵¹

Addressing trust deficit between China and India is one of the essential issues. Although both the countries need to come forward in resolving the trust deficit issue, China needs to play the leading role in this regard. First, increasing China-India interactions in multilateral forums will improve the bilateral ties and this should guide the future of their relationship. Second, just like China, India is extremely sensitive about its core issues and expects China to understand and respect them. And finally, India also made it clear that it remains determined to continue its efforts in addressing various issues in China-India relations. It is also important to underline the fact that India now represents the largest economy and society among China's immediate neighbours. It also has had impressive economic growth rates, facilitating rapid social transformation to ease India's access to the world market, even though its influence may not be as strong as China's in determining the post-US world order. To ameliorate this problem, both the countries need to work on exploring common grounds in addressing mutual trust deficit. India might involve itself in the China-led CPEC to ensure that New Delhi does not become a prisoner of its own policy. In this

⁴⁹ Interview with A K M Abdur Rahman, Director General, Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS).

⁵⁰ The concept of Cotton Road emerged after the concept of Silk Road. The Indo-Chinese textile commerce emerged prior to the sixteenth century. During that time, India and China were the most important producers of textiles in the world. India was famous for its fine cotton and China was famous for its fine silk. China started to sell fine silk to India from the early years of the Han Dynasty. On the other hand, Indian cotton goods are known to have reached the Indianised state in Xinxiang and a certain kind of Indian cotton continued to be sold in China well after the Chinese production of cotton that blossomed in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. The knowledge of silk and cotton cultivation was transmitted to India and China, respectively, both via the Silk routes of Central Asia as well as the southeast overland route that linked Szechwan and the Chinese heartland with Burma, Assam, Bengal and the Ganges valley. See Stephen F. Dale, "Silk Road, Cotton Road or... Indo-Chinese Trade in Pre-European Times", *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 43, No. 1, 2009, pp. 79-88.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

regard, China needs to come forward to resolve the problem.⁵² China also needs to understand India's reactions from the larger perspective of the unending Kashmir crisis and India's perception about the close friendship between Islamabad and Beijing.⁵³

Ensuring security of BCIM-EC sub-region is an important issue for the sustainability of BRI. As discussed in the previous section, several insurgent groups might be a threat for peaceful operation of BCIM-EC. As a leading initiator of BRI, China could take the lead to handle this issue. China might support all the four member countries to increase their surveillance capacity to counter insurgencies. Myanmar refugee issue is another aggravation which can hamper the security of BCIM sub-region. In this regard, China might come up with possible solutions to resolve the long-standing Myanmar refugee problem. On the other hand, there are some bilateral problems between India and China. Border dispute is the major one which is rooted in the disputed McMohan Line. To tackle this challenge, China might take initiatives to conduct regular flag meetings in the border. China could convince India to work together in establishing a conducive framework or making any treaty to resolve the border dispute. Additionally, China has its own problem with ethnic tensions. Therefore, the country needs to deal with this ethnic tension in a peaceful way. Furthermore, China needs to take confidence building measures to settle down disputes with India. Some steps are suggested below in this respect:

- Holding regular flag meetings between China and India
- Practicing conflict avoiding measures
- Demarcating Line of Actual Control (LAC) with security urgency
- Addressing key points of friction
- Collaborating on counter-terrorism by abandoning geopolitical and Cold War mentality⁵⁴

Additionally, China might not react harshly to the security issues, for example reacting to border dispute with India. Because China is supporting common development of the member states through executing the BRI. Now, if China reacts over any issue against any of the member countries of BRI, then it will be considered as 'against' BRI plan.⁵⁵

⁵² Interview with a senior diplomat in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bangladesh.

⁵³ Swaran Singh, "China and India Need to Work on Addressing Trust Deficit", *The Global Times*, 27 February 2017, available at <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1035115.shtml>, accessed on 11 July 2017.

⁵⁴ Zhao Jun, *CIISS-BIISS Workshop*, *op. cit.*

⁵⁵ Interview with A K M Abdur Rahman, Director General, Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS).

Treaty of good neighbourliness and friendly cooperation between China and India might bring stability into their relation. Ambassador Luo Zhaohui gave an idea that, to resolve China-India trust deficit, both countries may think about making the treaty of good neighbourliness and friendly cooperation. According to him, China could go for a four-step road map to implement a long-term vision for China-India relations to tackle the trust deficit between them. He proposed that the two Asian giants could “actively explore the feasibility of aligning China’s BRI and India’s “Act East Policy”. The other three points were to begin negotiation on a China-India treaty of good neighbourliness and friendly cooperation, restart talks on the China-India Free Trade Agreement and “strive for an early harvest on the border issue”. This type of friendship treaty between the two nations might bring stability into their relations.

Getting recognition from the UNESCO might bring firmness to BRI. The issue of BRI is considered as an important issue on the United Nations platform. The ideas of Trans-Atlantic Railway and BRI have been accepted by the member states of UNESCO. In this regard, China might take initiative to convince UNESCO to include BRI in its connectivity agenda. If it happens, it will be easier to implement the projects.⁵⁶ Additionally, the promotion of BRI will also help in eradicating poverty which will reduce terrorism.⁵⁷

More importantly, China needs to come forward in activating BCIM-EC operation. It is evident that India has some reservations regarding BRI. These reservations are creating tensions between India and China. The recent border skirmishes between these two powers are also accelerating the tension. Thus, it needs to take into consideration that tensions between two or more countries will sooner or later be resolved but development works should not be halted due to these tensions. Therefore, China needs to propel the necessary developmental work for functioning BCIM-EC. If India’s unwillingness continues in the operational phase, then China might play the leading role in association with Myanmar and Bangladesh to activate BCIM-EC. India as an important member of BCIM-EC can stick with it again whenever it wants to but the process should not be stalled.

Besides, China may convince India for BCIM-EC and BRI. China needs to come forward with effective idea to convince India to cooperate in activating BCIM-EC under BRI project. The stalled consultation process of BCIM-EC needs to be regularised with the participation of all member countries. Although the latest BCIM dialogue held in April 2017 in Kolkata is a progress, this consultation process needs to be regularised. Therefore, China needs to make it clear that BCIM-EC is a cooperation platform and does not involve itself in any sensitive issues that exist between China and India.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Zhao Jun, *CISS-BIIS Workshop, op. cit.*

6. Concluding Remarks

BRI and BCIM-EC are two important development initiatives for development of member countries. In the BCIM-EC region, there are many untapped potentials. Due to a lack of regional connectivity, this region is still lagging behind. Therefore, BCIM-EC under BRI could be a way for developing regional connectivity. A developed connectivity promotes foreign direct investment (FDI) which is important for economic development. For better regional connectivity, successful implementation of both BCIM-EC and BRI is important.

In the present paper, it is argued that both BRI and BCIM-EC are likely to face impediments such as lack of detail interpretation of BRI, absence of institutional mechanism of BCIM-EC, infrastructural challenges of BCIM's proposed economic corridor, absence of proper consultation with member countries on detailing BRI, risk of debt burden, security challenges, lack of infrastructural facilities in the member countries, occasional border dispute between two regional powers – India and China and lack of cooperation between these two regional powers. Rohingya crisis is another issue that creates miserable situation in Bangladesh which is one of the member states of BCIM-EC. Among these impediments, the distrust and border dispute between India and China are important hindrance. But this situation will not stay forever. Dispute between two or more countries will sooner or later be resolved but development works should not be stopped. Thus, China needs to engage all member states for functioning BCIM-EC. Alongside, China needs to convince India to cooperate in activating BCIM-EC under BRI project. China as a pioneer of both BRI and BCIM-EC needs to take the leadership role in making the issue clear that both BRI and the BCIM-EC are for the betterment of the member states.

ANNEX 1

New Silk Roads: China is Assembling New Trade Routes, Binding Other Regions Closer to it



Source: Anna Bruce-Lockhart, "Why Is China Building a New Silk Road?", *World Economic Forum*, 26 June 2016, available at <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/06/why-china-is-building-a-new-silk-road/>, accessed on 15 January 2017. This image also appeared in Xinhua News, US Department of Defense, Gazprom, Wall Street Journal etc. This is the provisional map of BRI which was shared in many notable sources.

ANNEX 2: Map of the BCIM-Economic Corridor



Source: Emanuel John, "Racing to a New Prosperity", *China Daily USA*, 04 June 2014, available at http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/epaper/2014-06/04/content_17562090.htm, accessed on 11 January 2017.

Samia Zaman

CHINA AND THE US IN SOUTH ASIA: COOPERATION OR CONFRONTATION?

Abstract

South Asia is experiencing a new kind of dynamism with impressive economic growth coupled with changing geopolitical landscape. It is undergoing geopolitical transformations primarily driven by China's growing political and diplomatic clout in the region and the US attempt to recalibrate its strategy in South Asia. These transforming dynamics are triggering new alliance system in the region between India and the US, on the one hand and Pakistan and China on the other. In this context, the central research question of the paper is, whether the increasing involvement and interest of China and the US in the region will lead to cooperation or confrontation. Therefore, the paper addresses several questions. It examines the significance of South Asia. It also explores the interests of both China and the US in South Asia with the focus on their existing level of involvement with the regional countries. Finally, the paper argues that China and the US, both are trying to maximise their share of world power in different regions in the world. In this process, they are competing in South Asia and the competition can have various vicissitudes, but there is always a threat that the competition could turn into a confrontation in the changing realities of South Asia.

1. Introduction

The politico-strategic conception of South Asia is changing. The region is experiencing a new kind of dynamism with one of the fastest economic growths, young nations and maritime transit route translating it as a geo-strategically important region in the world. Coupled with these developments, South Asia, of late, is wrought with shifting geopolitical dynamics driven by China's growing political and diplomatic footprint in the region and the US effort to manoeuvre its renewed strategic interest in the region. The changing geopolitics of South Asia has brought a new paradigm in regional power dynamics. China is vying to increase its role in South Asia. It is trying to project itself as a major power in the region. In this process, China is tightening its ties with Pakistan. The region is experiencing China's burgeoning relationship with Pakistan. China's flagship project in Pakistan, China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is expected to have a number of ramifications for the region. Growing influence of China over Pakistan has made the US to reassess its strategic calculations towards the region. Against this backdrop, the US has consolidated its relations with India. The

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new South Asia policy crafted by the US under Trump Administration has signalled a greater role and space for India in the region. Thus, a new kind of bipolar alliance system is emerging in South Asia with India and the US on the one hand, and Pakistan and China on the other.

Given this context, a number of pertinent questions arise. What is the significance of South Asia? What are the interests of China in South Asia? What are the interests of the US in South Asia? What are their levels of engagements with South Asia? Whether China and the US will cooperate or confront each other in South Asia?

In the post-Cold War global political scenario, there was a trend towards widening and deepening of the security studies. Therefore, the referent object of security became the individuals. Many in the western world believed that the end of rivalry between the two superpowers brought a sea change in states' security competition with each other. For some, the post-Cold War global politics was marked by "the end of history" thesis which predicted the triumph of western ideas of governance and an end of ideological evolution. Later, the deadly path-breaking incident of 9/11 happened which brought a paradigm shift. "The states" once again were considered as referent object of security. Yet, the most vocal group of skeptics argued that international politics has entered such a phase in which chances of major powers' engaging in intense confrontation are limited. There is no concrete evidence demonstrated by China's behaviour that suggests China as a revisionist power. The idea of a military rivalry between China and the US, thus the argument goes, is remote. But this perspective has some limitations. It cannot fully explain why and how China and the US are scaling up their involvements in South Asia and interacting with the South Asian countries to increase their footprints in the region. This article offers an alternative explanation which suggests that China and the US will confront with each other for power over the South Asian region. Their competition will wax and wane. Both China and the US will try to maximise their share of world power in this region. The confrontation will get intense with the focus on changing the existing global distribution of power. International system will influence them to look for opportunities to gain domination at the expense of others for security purpose.

Drawing on different documents, the paper has been organised as follows. Section two examines the significance of South Asia. Section three provides detailed engagement of China in South Asia with a focus on China's South Asia strategy. After detailing out China's engagements in South Asia, section four reviews the US engagements with South Asia with a focus on the US South Asia Strategy. Then the paper argues in section five that China and the US will engage in intense security competition in South Asia. After addressing the argument, the paper concludes by summarising the findings of the paper.

2. Significance of South Asia

The significance of South Asia has increased over decades. The great powers have assumed South Asia as a geo-strategically and geopolitically important region in the course of time. During the Cold War, great powers played a divisive role in South Asia. The region was brought into the limelight of international politics when the issue of 1962 China-India border conflict came into focus. Besides, the Cold War politics in South Asia revolved around India-Pakistan rivalry, China-Pakistan border skirmishes and others. With the end of the bipolar world, a new world order has emerged with lots of opportunities for the different regions of the world. In this process, South Asia took a new shape in the new global order which was reinforced with the 1998 nuclear tests done by India and Pakistan.¹ The nuclear issue added significance to the region of South Asia. The region transformed again with another development, namely the 9/11 which transformed the global political landscape.² In the aftermath of 9/11 event, there were many drastic political developments in the world as well as South Asia. The region's security arrangements have undergone a huge transformation through 9/11 tragic events. Immediately after the 9/11 attacks, the US Administration declared "War on Terror". They identified al-Qaeda network and its leader Osama Bin Laden responsible for the attack. The US demanded Taliban regime in Afghanistan which hosted Osama Bin Laden to hand him over to the US. When the Taliban refused to do so, the US launched "Operation Enduring Freedom" in which the US involved in Afghanistan militarily. The war in Afghanistan had a major repercussion in the region and beyond. There is an absence of any major success in countering terrorism and violent extremism in Afghanistan. Consequently, its effects spilled over the region. Despite this, the countries in the regions are confronting terrorism and violent extremism with varied level of success. However, there are two major developments which have drawn the major powers like China and the US increasing security and strategic engagements in the region. First, rising geopolitical and geostrategic importance of the region have made China and the US reassess their strategies in the region. South Asia consists of eight states: Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan. Approximately 1.4 billion people live in the region which is one-fifth of the world's population.³ Thus, it is home to more than 20 per cent of the world population.⁴ South Asia is geographically located as a midway between the Middle East and the South East Asian regions.⁵ It occupies a critical geo-strategic location in Asia. It serves as a strategic link between the Middle East, Central, Eastern and Southeastern Asia. It has links with vital sea lanes of communication in

¹ B. M. Jain, *India in the New South Asia*, New Delhi: Viva Books, 2011, p. 1.

² *Ibid.*

³ Delwar Hossain, "18th SAARC Summit: A Perspective from Bangladesh", Dhaka Discourse, Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, 15 December 2014, available at <http://www.ipcs.org/article/south-asia/18th-saarc-summit-a-perspective-from-bangladesh-4776.html>, accessed on 09 January 2017.

⁴ Anil Kumar P, "China's Involvement in South Asia and India's Concerns", in K. M. Sajad Ibrahim (ed.), *South Asia: Post Nehruvian Dynamics of Diplomacy*, New Delhi: New Century Publications, 2013, p. 150.

⁵ *Ibid.*

the Indian Ocean and easy access to the oil and gas reserves of the Persian Gulf and Caspian Basin.⁶ It is a region that lies between the sea routes of the Indian Ocean and the land routes of Central Asia connecting Europe to the East.⁷ Besides, it is a large reservoir of natural and human resources, a lucrative market for trade and a source of cheap raw materials.⁸

In this context, China is making inroads into South Asia. There is a surge of Chinese economic and diplomatic presence in the region. China is consolidating its relationship with the South Asian countries through bilateralism. At the same time, it is roping the regional countries into the China-led Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) which is expected to bring about a win-win situation for all. The mainstay of this initiative is regional transport connectivity which is a fundamental need for China. These arrangements would help China consolidate its sphere of influence in the Indian Ocean. Since China is heavily dependent on imported energy resources, these resources pass through the strategic channels of the Indian Ocean. In addition, China conducts a significant volume of its maritime trade through the Indian Ocean and most of it passes through the Malacca Strait over which China has little control.⁹ Thus, maintaining close ties with the regional countries are important for China. Similarly, the US is also eager to keep its influence in such a geo-strategically and geopolitically important region. Its overall posture towards South Asia has evolved over the course of time. At present, it is attempting to rebalance and recalibrate its strategy in the region. It is aiming at developing its strategic clout to stem Chinese growing influence in the region. In this process, the US has been maintaining close ties with India. Second, South Asia is one of the fastest growing regions in the world. The economies of South Asia are booming. They are experiencing positive economic momentum. According to Asian Development Bank, South Asia is driving Asia's economic growth and its economic growth is expected to rise to 7.2 per cent in 2018.¹⁰ Against this backdrop, both the powers want to reshape the economies of South Asia in line with their national interests. China is leveraging trade and investment to consolidate its relations with most of the South Asian countries. Almost all the countries in the region now trade more with China. China has become the largest trading partner of most of the South Asian countries. Besides, South Asia represents a lucrative market for finished products. Both China and the US want to capture the South Asian market. South Asia is also an important market for arms sale. Presently, China is the 3rd largest

⁶ Md. Shafiqur Rahman, "United States Interests in South Asia and Geo-strategic Options for Bangladesh", *NDC Journal*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 2007, p. 160.

⁷ Anil Kumar P, *op. cit.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Md. Safiqul Islam, "Sino-Bangladesh Relations: Geo-political and Geo-Strategic Implications", in Bhuiyan Md. Monoar Kabir (ed.), *Sino-South Asian Relations: Continuity and Change*, Chittagong: Dept. of Political Science, University of Chittagong, 2013, p. 202.

¹⁰ "Booming South Asia is Driving Economic Growth in Asia", Asian Development Bank, 27 April 2017, available at <https://www.adb.org/news/features/booming-south-asia-driving-economic-growth-asia>, accessed on 05 May 2017.

arms provider in the world. Between 2011 and 2015, 71 per cent of Chinese arms were exported to Pakistan, Bangladesh and Myanmar.¹¹ Thus, South Asia is also a lucrative market to invest and engage. These factors of South Asia have driven both China and the US which would play a key role in shaping the political, security and strategic landscape of the South Asian region in the coming decades.

3. China's Growing Stakes in South Asia

China shares borders with five South Asian countries: Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Nepal, and Bhutan. Over the years, China has built up a close relationship with South Asian countries. China's relations with South Asia took a tangible shape after the 21st century.¹² Prior to the 21st century, the region of South Asia was not included in China's priority list. The trajectory of their relationship took an interesting path in the course of time. During the Cold War period, the superpowers' rivalry was translated to the local level by regional and extra-regional powers: India, Pakistan, China and the Soviet Union. The former communist allies China and Soviet Union's interests came into conflict in the 1960s. As a part of the Cold War, Soviet Union provided military, economic and technical assistance to India to make it as a counterweight to China.¹³ This Cold War politics gave a push to Sino-Pakistan entente. With the end of the Cold War, a new window of opportunities and challenges came to the fore. The end of Cold War has brought an end to the bipolarity which induced the emergence of new political actors in different regions. In this context, China started to play a more leading role in new global political paradigm. In the post-Cold War period, China aimed to expand multi-dimensional cooperative relations with all the countries in the South Asia region.¹⁴ China's engagements in South Asia can be attributed to two different factors: domestic and external. At the domestic front, China wants to ensure the current pace of development by gaining sources of raw material across the globe. It is heavily dependent on imported energy resources. Most of its imports pass through the Strait of Malacca in the Indian Ocean. But the US and India can cut China's access to the Indian Ocean as they maintain a strong naval presence in the Ocean. Thus, China wants to cultivate friendly relations with the countries in the region of South Asia through bilateralism and multilateral initiative like the BRI. These can help China enhance its access to the Ocean. On the other hand, China wants to increase its strategic power projection. Growing presence of the US in Asia-Pacific has become a major external factor for China to consolidate its weight in the region.¹⁵ China's South Asia policy can be understood by closely monitoring President Xi's speech in New Delhi in 2014 when he said, "A peaceful, stable and prosperous South Asia conforms

¹¹ Avia Nahreen, "The Growing Strategic Importance of Bangladesh to China", *The Daily Star*, 21 April 2017.

¹² Joseph Antony, "China's South Asian Strategy in the 21st Century", in K. M. Sajad Ibrahim (ed.), *South Asia: Post Nehruvian Dynamics of Diplomacy*, New Delhi: New Century Publications, 2013, p. 53.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Anil Kumar P, *op. cit.*

¹⁵ Joseph Antony, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

to China's interests". He also stated that China led BRI initiative will work in the joint interests of China and South Asian nations in terms of connectivity. The cornerstone of China's foreign policy in South Asia is to create a long-term and favourable external environment. According to Dr. Li Li, in the past, it was said in China that *mulin, fulin, anlin* which means establishing an amicable, secure and prosperous neighbourhood.¹⁶

The paper examines China's expanding engagement with South Asia. With reference to India, it has a strategic hold over the South Asian region. It has borders with all South Asian countries except the Maldives. India has substantial regional influence in South Asia. India does not want any other extra-regional power to intervene in the regional affairs. On the other hand, China, an extra-regional power has been normalising and intensifying bilateral relations with South Asian countries. China's growing political influence in the region has a deep impact on India in terms of regional politics. It is because India is often considered a regional power but the growing intensity of the relationship between China and its South Asian partners is stimulating India to revitalise its role in the region. Compared to India, China will have an upper hand in terms of providing economic, military and technical assistance to these countries. India lacks the political, economic and military capacities to pursue their regional power ambitions in the neighbourhood in the long run. Initially, only Pakistan took the advantage by partnering with China to realise its goals. Presently, other South Asian countries are also trying to tighten their relations with China. China is trying to be a part of this regional politics maintaining all these relations with great political acumen. However, China has bilateral relations with India and is cooperating on different fronts like Indian infrastructure building such as two Chinese Industrial Parks in India; railways cooperation; civil nuclear energy cooperation and others.¹⁷ Thus, China is growing its stakes in India.

Another important actor of South Asia is Pakistan. Its location makes it a geo-strategically important country in South Asia. It is a country which connects South Asia, Central Asia and the Middle East. Thus, maintaining close ties with Pakistan would help China to create its own space in the region and beyond. China-Pakistan bilateral relations have strengthened over time and gained momentum after the end of 1962 Sino-Indian War. Over the course of time, China has become Pakistan's largest defence supplier. China had a major role to play in the development of Pakistan's nuclearisation programme. Besides, China and Pakistan have concluded a Free Trade Agreement (FTA). Consequently, around 11 per cent of Pakistan's imports come from China.¹⁸ China is investing heavily in the development of Pakistan's infrastructure including Pakistan's deep water port in Gwadar, located at the mouth of the Strait

¹⁶ Li Li, "China's Relations with South Asia", paper presented in Lecture on *China's Relations with South Asia*, organised by BIISS and BEI, Dhaka, 23 November 2015.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Harsh V. Pant, "China in South Asia", in Harsh V. Pant (ed.) *The Rise of China: Implications for India*, New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2012, p. 236.

of Hormuz. In this respect, India is closely monitoring Chinese presence in the Bay of Bengal via roads and ports in Burma and in the Arabian Sea via the Gwadar port in Pakistan.¹⁹ With access to crucial port facilities in Egypt, Iran and Pakistan, China is creating its sphere of influence in the region and beyond. Pakistan intends to cope up with the growing Indian might by gaining military resources from China while China wants to assist Pakistan to make it an instrument to counter India's clout in the region.²⁰ China and Pakistan are now more focused on CPEC. During Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to Pakistan in April 2015, China-Pakistan relationship has been elevated to an all-weather strategic partnership. Xi's visit produced 51 deals worth of US\$ 46 billion, among which 30 plus related to CPEC, covering infrastructure projects such as seaport, airport, highway, railway, power plants, etc. For Chinese President Xi Jinping, CPEC is a 1+4 cooperation structure. One is CPEC and another four is Gwadar port, communication infrastructure, energy and industrial cooperation. For Chinese Premier Li Keqiang, CPEC is a "flagship" project to strengthen China's connectivity with neighbouring countries.²¹ Thus, China-Pakistan relations are increasing China's growing role in the region.

China is also expanding its relations with Bangladesh. Bangladesh is located at the head of the Bay of Bengal. It is configured as a bridge between South Asia and Southeast Asia. It holds strategic significance not only in the South Asian regional context, but its importance extends to the geopolitical dynamics of Asia as a whole.²² Thus, Bangladesh holds an important position in China's South Asia strategy. Bilateral relationship between China and Bangladesh has grown steadily over time. In 2005, China, for the first time, surpassed India, as the largest import source of Bangladesh.²³ China has provided considerable monetary assistance on easy conditions in building infrastructure in Bangladesh. The six "China-Bangladesh Friendship" bridges, Bangabandhu International Conference Centre and other structures etc. are symbols of friendship and assistance of China to Bangladesh.²⁴ Regarding military and defence cooperation, China has remained the biggest partner of Bangladesh. Bangladesh and China signed a Defence Cooperation Agreement in 2002.²⁵ During the latest Chinese President's visit to Bangladesh in October 2016, both sides agreed to upgrade their relationship from 'Closer Comprehensive Partnership' to 'Strategic Partnership' and Bangladesh has formally joined BRI. During this visit, China has committed

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Bruce Vaughn, "Bangladesh: Political and Strategic Developments and U.S. Interests", Congressional Research Service, 2010, available at <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R41194.pdf>, accessed on 02 December 2016.

²³ Lailufar Yasmin, "Bangladesh and the Great Powers", in Ali Riaz and Muhammad Sajjadur Rahman (eds.) *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Bangladesh*, Norwich: Routledge, 2016, p. 393.

²⁴ Tareque Shamsur Rahman and Mohammad Jasim Uddin, "Bangladesh and China: A Review of 35-Year Relations", *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 15, Nos. 1 and 2, 2011, p. 50.

²⁵ Iftekhhar Ahmed Chowdhury, "Bangladesh-China: An Emerging Equation in Asian Diplomatic Calculations", *ISAS Working Paper*, Institute of South Asian Studies, No. 105, 2010, p. 4.

Bangladesh to provide US\$ 24.45 billion as financial assistance which is going to be the biggest assistance for Bangladesh from any country.²⁶ For China, the strategic partnership with Bangladesh is designed to protect Chinese interest that is getting transport connectivity with the inclusion of Bangladesh into its grand strategy, the BRI, thus creating a congenial environment for its continual rise. This new partnership will help to regulate China's important bilateral relations with Bangladesh and it will strengthen China's weight in South Asian regional context.

China is demonstrating signs of closer engagement with Afghanistan. It is clearly increasing its stakes in Afghanistan. Today's China-Afghanistan security relations have reached an unprecedented height. China's increasing engagements in Afghanistan's diplomatic and economic issues are also noticeable. It has been taking an active interest in Afghanistan's issues since 2001.²⁷ After the formation of Afghanistan's National Unity Government (NUG) in 2014, China announced military assistance to Afghanistan for the very first time. China's security interest in Afghanistan is directed at the completion of the Belt and Road Initiative and the extension of the CPEC to Afghanistan. China also wants to remove safe havens for Uyghur militants in the Af-Pak belt.²⁸ China is presently looking forward to creating a trilateral cooperation among China, Pakistan and Afghanistan. In December 2017, China hosted the first China-Afghanistan-Pakistan Foreign Ministers' Dialogue.²⁹ The establishment of this dialogue illustrates that China wants to incorporate both Pakistan and Afghanistan in its clout of influence through this dialogue mechanism. If this trilateral cooperation goes smooth, it will give a tough challenge to the US role in the region.

China's engagements with Nepal have assumed significance. Nepal is located in a pivotal position in South Asia. Nepal is landlocked by India on three sides and China's Tibet Autonomous Region to the north.³⁰ Paschimbanga's narrow *Siliguri Corridor* or Chicken's Neck separates Nepal and Bangladesh. For China, Nepal is significant since it is contiguous to autonomous region of Tibet.³¹ Interestingly, it shares the border with both China and India. Nepal is a crucial part of China's inner security ring.³² China's Nepal policy is founded on ensuring Nepal's neutrality on Tibet issue. China wants to secure full cooperation and support of Nepal government to prevent Tibet from conducting anti-China activities.³³ It is considered that Nepal

²⁶ Muhammad Azizul Haque, "Xi Jinping's Milestone Visit: Transforming Dynamics", *The Daily Star*, 19 October 2016.

²⁷ Ahmad Bilal Khalil, "The Rise of China-Afghanistan Security Relations", *The Diplomat*, 23 June 2016.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Charlotte Gao, "Why is China Holding the China-Pakistan-Afghanistan Dialogue Now?", *The Diplomat*, 27 December 2017.

³⁰ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Nepal, "Nepal's Foreign Policy", available at <https://www.mofa.gov.np/foreign-policy/foreign-policy/>, accessed on 20 January 2017.

³¹ Rama Kant, "Nepal's China Policy", *China Report*, Vol. 30, No. 2, pp. 164-166.

³² Harsh V. Pant, *China's Rising Global Profile: The Great Power Tradition*, Portland: Sussex Academic Press, 2012, p. 45.

³³ *Ibid.*

constitutes an important part in China's "inner security ring". On the other hand, India considers Nepal as a land barrier against China. Tibet's annexation to China in 1950 has increased India's concern. This is because, Tibet was considered as India's buffer with China.³⁴ Now, Nepal is considered as a buffer. In 1955, China and Nepal started their diplomatic relations. China is providing economic aid and supporting Kathmandu in its disputes with New Delhi. The trade volume between the two is also growing. China is the largest foreign investor in Nepal. It is investing in two large hydropower projects in Nepal. China perceives Nepal as a bridge toward South Asia.

China's relations with Sri Lanka occupy a special position in the regional architecture. Since Sri Lanka is strategically located in the Indian Ocean, Chinese growing political clout concerns India. It is because India considers the Indian Ocean as its exclusive area of influence.³⁵ China is building a deep port in Hambantota, Sri Lanka. This would help China to gain a strong foothold in the Indian Ocean. On the contrary, Sri Lanka also took China's assistance to evade Indian influence on it. However, China-Sri Lankan bilateral relations were established in the 1990s. China has emerged as the largest trading partner of Sri Lanka. It is the first foreign country to have an exclusive economic zone in Sri Lanka.³⁶ China is involved in a range of infrastructural development projects in Sri Lanka, namely constructing power plants, modernising railways, launching communication satellites etc.³⁷ China also provides military hardware and training to Sri Lanka. Thus, China's growing bilateral relations with Sri Lanka would help it gain a significant position in the regional architecture.

The Maldives, an Indian Ocean country, is considered as a pearl in the Indian Ocean by China.³⁸ China and the Maldives are taking the bilateral relations to the next level. Their engagements on different issues from political to economic are on the upswing. China is investing in infrastructure projects in the Maldives. It constructed a building to house the Maldives Ministry of Foreign Affairs. China also built a national museum. It was also involved in the 1000 Housing Units Project.³⁹ Furthermore, cooperation on several renewable energy projects, tourism and telecommunication sectors, defence sectors are ongoing.⁴⁰ The Maldives is actively participating in the Maritime Silk Road initiative of China. It has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) which brought it in the maritime component of the BRI.⁴¹ In this respect,

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ B. M. Jain, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Srikanth Kondapalli, "Maritime Silk Road: Increasing Chinese Inroads into the Maldives", Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, 13 November 2014, available at <http://www.ipcs.org/article/china/maritime-silk-road-increasing-chinese-inroads-into-the-maldives-4735.html>, accessed on 25 February 2016.

³⁹ B. M. Jain, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Sudha Ramachandran, "The China-Maldives Connection", *The Diplomat*, 25 January 2018, available at <https://thediplomat.com/2018/01/the-china-maldives-connection/>, accessed on 30 January 2018.

“Xinhua reported on 15 August 2014 that the link in this maritime route is via the Ihavandhippolhu Integrated Development Project, or iHavan, in the northern-most atoll of the Maldives. The project seeks to capitalise on the location of the atoll, which lies on the seven-degree channel through which the main East-West shipping routes connect Southeast Asia and China to the Middle East and Europe”.⁴² Recently, the Maldives has concluded a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with China.⁴³ In South Asia, it became the second country to sign an FTA with China after Pakistan.⁴⁴ The FTAs and the Belt and Road Initiative will improve China’s role in the region.

There are also some challenges China is facing to intensify its relations with South Asia. First of all, there is mistrust between China and India. Although the relation between China and India has improved to a great extent, it is not yet satisfactory. Regional tension and instability, territorial disputes, political transition in the individual country may affect the cooperation process.

4. The US Engagements in South Asia

The US’ South Asia policy has been shaped by its changing security concerns and geopolitical priorities over decades. The end of the Cold War embarked a new global political order in favour of the US. Different theses like Francis Fukuyama’s ‘End of History’ came up which promoted the idea that the end of Cold War has brought an end to the mankind’s ideological evolution.⁴⁵ He predicted that the idea of western liberal democracy has triumphed over other alternatives. Against this backdrop of a power vacuum in international relations after the collapse of Soviet Union, the US came forward to uphold a set of ideas like promotion of democracy, nuclear non-proliferation, economic liberalisation, prevention of drug trafficking and others. When South Asia was embroiled in a situation with these factors, the US took an interest in South Asia as a region. Prior to that period, the US lacked the rigour to actively engage in South Asia. The possession of nuclear weapons by the two key players in the region, India and Pakistan made the US take policies which can prevent both the nations to take any steps that would jeopardise the regional security and stability. Besides, the two nations should not transfer the nuclear technology to any third state or non-state actors. Prior to the attacks of 9/11, this was the principal aim of the US in the region specified in a report presented at the Congress in 2000, entitled ‘A National Security Strategy for a New Century’.⁴⁶

⁴² B. M. Jain, *op. cit.*

⁴³ Sudha Ramachandran, *op. cit.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Syed Ali Sarwar Naqvi, “The United States and South Asia”, Margalla Papers 2010, available at http://www.ndu.edu.pk/issra/issra_pub/articles/margalla-paper/Margalla-Papers-2010/01-The-United-States-and-South-Asia.pdf, accessed on 15 February 2017.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

The 9/11 incident brought a drastic change in this equation of the US. The strategic focus of the US interests shifted to South Asia. In this respect, the US embarked upon a fresh start with India and concluded strategic partnership with it.⁴⁷ Besides, the growing political clout of China in the region and increasing importance of the Indian Ocean region compelled the US to take up its Asia Pivot policy. The new South Asia policy of the US under Trump Administration also reinforced the idea of US-India strategic partnership as a critical cornerstone and focused on Indian economic assistance in the improvement of Afghanistan situation.⁴⁸ This section attempts to examine the US interests and thereby its policies in the region. The nature of the US engagements with different countries in the region has varied over time, as did the level of US interest. While India and Pakistan have received the most attention from the US, it has also been engaging with Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, the Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka.⁴⁹ The US approach to these countries is generally defined by circumstantial convenience.⁵⁰

The US and India have developed their relations significantly over decades. Their relations have evolved both in economic and security terms. The recent US strategy in the region of South Asia has marked a major departure from the past regarding India. India has been elevated to a more prominent position in the US' new South Asia policy. The Trump Administration made a great stride by calling the Asia Pacific region as Indo-Pacific.⁵¹ This has signalled a greater role and space for India in the region. The US has also termed India as a key actor in Afghanistan.⁵² In a recently released National Security Strategy of the US under President Trump, India is described as a 'leading global power'.⁵³ The US also reinforced the idea of deepening the existing strategic partnership with India to maintain the stability across the Indo-Pacific region.⁵⁴ Bilateral trade was only US\$ 45 billion in 2006 but it reached US\$ 114 billion in 2016. Thus, trade has more than doubled in the last decade.⁵⁵ The US is also supporting India's effort to get membership of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (APEC).⁵⁶ It is argued that India's joining of APEC would challenge the Chinese economic influence in the Asia-Pacific region. In terms of military cooperation, the US is selling military equipments to India. The amount of sale has piled significantly

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Alyssa Ayres, "The Not-So-New "New" South Asia Strategy", 22 August 2017, available at <https://www.cfr.org/blog/not-so-new-new-south-asia-strategy>, accessed on 25 August 2017.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Ramtanu Maitra, "US Policy towards South Asia: Nary a Vision nor a Spark of Insight", *AAKROSH: Asian Journal of Terrorism and Internal Conflicts*, Vol. 18, No. 66, January 2015, p. 25.

⁵¹ "India-US relationship makes great strides in 2017", *The Indian Express*, 25 December 2017.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Evan Moore, "Strengthen the U.S.-India Relationship", *National Review*, 01 February 2018, available at <https://www.nationalreview.com/2018/02/india-united-states-relations-trade-military-strategy-alliance/>, accessed on 02 February 2018.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

from “zero to US\$ 15 billion in ten years”.⁵⁷ This has made them close defence partners. Thus, the US-India partnership has the potential to reshape the regional architecture by increasing the US engagements in the region.

Pakistan became an ally of the US during the early days of the Cold War. Pakistan was associated with the US through mutual security arrangements like Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) and Central Treaty Organization (CENTO). Pakistan was the only Asian member of these security arrangements.⁵⁸ For decades, Pakistan was the centrepiece of any South Asia design of the US. In the post 9/11 security scenario, the US took Pakistan as a frontline strategic ally in its fight against international terrorism due to its strategic location and close geographical affinity with Afghanistan. After years of compliant partnership, the alliance started to fade when US Navy SEAL Operation killed Osama Bin Laden, the mastermind of the 9/11 incident, in Abbottabad, Pakistan. Its credibility as a frontline strategic partner in the Global War on Terror (GWoT) came into question after this raid. In addition to that, the US' extended relations with India are also making a political cost for Pakistan. It is clear that the US has chosen India as its most trustworthy partner in realising its strategic goals in the region. The years of India's efforts have finally succeeded. In recent years, Pakistan came in for bitter criticism from the US under Trump Administration for harbouring the terrorists and militants. Even the US has cancelled military aid to Pakistan in 2017. Thus, both the countries are facing a strained relationship. What Pakistan fears is that India will try to corner it with two following developments: India's good relations with Afghanistan and the US support for India. Afghanistan can offer a second base from which India can squeeze Pakistan.⁵⁹ Finally, the US pressure on Pakistan is likely to push Pakistan more towards China. Besides, the geopolitical realities suggest that the US cannot succeed in Afghanistan by only including India, excluding Pakistan.

The US has been engaged in Afghanistan since 2001. It has been fighting in Afghanistan for sixteen years. The initial focus of the US was to overthrow the Taliban regime and to eliminate the terrorists. Later, it shifted its focus to institution building and governance. Recently, Trump Administration has unveiled its path forward for Afghanistan and South Asia. Now, it has shifted its stance again from “nation-building to killing terrorists”. The Trump Administration has reversed the US' previous position under Obama Administration to withdraw troops from Afghanistan. Rather, it declared that US troops will remain in Afghanistan as long as necessary. After sixteen years of fighting in Afghanistan, the region of South Asia and the US has undergone a lot of changes. Given the changing geopolitical realities and alignments, the bilateral narrative of relations has become more complex.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Mohammed Ayub Khan, “The Pakistan American Alliance”, *Foreign Affairs*, January, 1964.

⁵⁹ Ayesha Tanzeem, “US-Pakistan Relations Worsen as Both Sides Dig in”, *Voice of America*, 06 February 2018, available at <https://www.voanews.com/a/us-pakistan-trying-to-figure-out-how-to-cooperate/4241418.html>, accessed on 10 February 2018.

The US has a long-standing supportive relation with Bangladesh. It has viewed Bangladesh as a moderate voice in the Islamic world. Bangladesh's strategic location neighbouring the two Asian giants China and India as well as a bridge between South Asia and Southeast Asia makes her a significant player in the long term geostrategic calculation of the US.⁶⁰ The diplomatic relations between Bangladesh and US were established on 18 May 1972.⁶¹ In the early 1990s, the relationship was based on aid and remittances. Later, the relationship was defined by trade and investment. Bangladesh is a growing market for American products and a significant destination for investment.⁶² The US is Bangladesh's largest export market. It is also one of the largest sources of FDI in Bangladesh.⁶³ For ensuring global security against terrorism and protecting the world trade process, the US has planned for extensive engagement with South Asian countries including Bangladesh.⁶⁴ The US and Bangladesh currently have three structured fora for dialogue including US-Bangladesh Dialogue on Security Issues, Bangladesh-US Partnership Dialogue, and US-Bangladesh Trade and Investment Cooperation Forum Agreement (TICFA).⁶⁵ The US recognises Bangladesh as an important partner to counter terrorism. That is why, security dialogue between Bangladesh and the US has started since 2012 which mainly focuses on traditional and non-traditional security, cyber security, counter-terrorism, disaster management, maritime security, regional security, and peacekeeping.⁶⁶ These mechanisms will increase the role of US in Bangladesh and beyond.

Sri Lanka has emerged as a country of strategic relevance to the great powers interested in the dynamics of South Asia. Small powers around the Indian Ocean like Sri Lanka have the leverage to switch sides between the great powers. Domestic politics also plays a key role in this respect. Taking regional geopolitics into consideration, Sri Lanka has an Indo-Lanka Accord of 1987 by which Sri Lanka agreed that it would not allow any foreign militaries using its ports in a way that would be detrimental to Indian interests.⁶⁷ Traditionally, Sri Lanka's geopolitical realities demands that it cooperates with India. Sri Lanka also has a trilateral maritime security agreement with India and the

⁶⁰ Author's Interview with Ambassador Munshi Faiz Ahmed, Chairman, BIIS, 28 January 2017.

⁶¹ Jayasree Biswas, *US-Bangladesh Relations: A Study of the Political and Economic Development during 1971-81*, Calcutta: Cyma Printers, 1984, p. 6.

⁶² United States Chamber of Commerce, "The United States And Bangladesh: Toward The Future Policy Recommendations to Strengthen the U.S.-Bangladesh Commercial Relationship", United States, 2013.

⁶³ Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, US Department of State, *U.S. Relations with Bangladesh*, The United States, 10 February 2016.

⁶⁴ "Security Talks: Bangladesh, US Officials Sit in Dhaka", *The Daily Star*, 02 October 2016.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ Delwar Hossain, "Bangladesh-US: Towards New Engagements?", Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, 19 May 2014, available at <http://www.ipcs.org/article/south-asia/bangladesh-us-towards-new-engagements-4446.html>, accessed on 19 January 2017.

⁶⁷ Barana Waidyatilake and Dinusha Panditaratne, "President Trump: Implications for Sri Lanka", 15 February 2017, available at <https://thediomat.com/2017/02/president-trump-implications-for-sri-lanka/>, accessed on 30 March 2017.

Maldives.⁶⁸ In the recent scenario with the change of Rajapaksa government, all the big projects funded by China in Sri Lanka are being reviewed. Besides, the US administration under President Trump considers India a 'Major Defence Partner'.⁶⁹ According to a report the President stated that he would not tolerate a "dual role from India's neighbours".⁷⁰ Given this context, Sri Lanka can increase its stake in the security dynamics of Indian Ocean Region by nurturing its relations with both India and the US.

The Maldives and the US are cooperating to promote and enhance maritime security, counterterrorism, law enforcement, and counternarcotics. Both the countries are also cooperating on the US efforts to combat terrorism and terrorist financing. The US naval vessels have frequently called at the Maldives in recent years. In the economic arena, the Maldives and the US signed a trade and investment framework agreement and held its first meeting in October 2014. The agreement provides a forum to examine ways to enhance bilateral trade and investment. The Maldives is also a beneficiary country under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) programme. GSP provides an incentive to export selected items duty-free to the US market.⁷¹ Thus, engaged in different level of cooperation, the US and Maldives are cementing their bilateral ties.

The US engagement with Nepal and Bhutan is defined by its circumstantial convenience. The US established official relations with Nepal in 1947. Relations between the two countries have always been friendly.⁷² Bhutan and the US also maintain warm and informal relations.⁷³

5. China and the US in South Asia: Cooperation or Confrontation?

South Asia is standing at the critical juncture of a rising Asia. The new vitality of South Asia is due to its rapid but steady economic growth, its usage as a maritime transit route, its young nations, the opening of more and more markets to FDI etc. The region has become a hotbed of competition for the major powers in the global political context. The US and China have their own levels of engagements with South Asia based on their politico-strategic perceptions about the region. Now the question is whether the interests of China and the US in South Asia will lead to cooperation or confrontation. This question is generating considerable debate. Contrary views have

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, US Department of State, *U.S. Relations with Maldives*, The United States, 06 April 2016.

⁷² Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, US Department of State, *U.S. Relations with Bhutan*, The United States, 07 July 2016.

⁷³ Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, US Department of State, *U.S. Relations with Nepal*, The United States, 10 April 2016.

been heard. Some see the engagements of the US and China with South Asia as a potential source of confrontation; others see this as a source of cooperation.

Some scholars argue that China and the US will cooperate in terms of engagements with South Asia. Some arguments can be put forth: First, China's behaviour pattern does not fit into its so-called revisionist nature. China's South Asia policy does not demonstrate that China wants to reshape the South Asian regional setting. Its regional actions and policy do not suggest directly that it has the ambition to achieve regional hegemony by thwarting the Indo-US dominance in the region. Besides, China has always been refuting the idea that it will pose a security threat to its neighbourhood. The general perception is that a rising power will try to alter the status quo. It is not important that all the rising powers will behave in the same way. There can be different options for expressing disappointment with the existing mechanism. It is true that China appeared as a country with the aim of changing the global political landscape in the 1950s and the 1960s, but that cannot be the basis of believing China as a revolutionary power which will disregard the present world order. In fact, China can be considered a power which is interested to get its share of world power and recognition by making important changes in the present system. Second, China's actions are being portrayed by some scholars as its development needs. China has built convenient relationships with countries both its near and distant ones to secure energy, metals and strategic minerals.⁷⁴ China has built and very well maintained its relations with Africa "throughout the Indian Ocean and South China Sea which connect the hydro-carbon rich Arab-Persian world to the Chinese seaboard".⁷⁵ China's attempts to secure its economic needs have engendered China's expanding influence from Central Asia to the South China Sea, from the Russian Far East to the Indian Ocean.⁷⁶ In this process, Robert D. Kaplan termed China as an 'uber-realist power'.⁷⁷ Thus, China has been reinforcing its relations with various South Asian countries like Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Afghanistan and the Maldives by incorporating them into BRI with the focus of increasing transport connectivity. The initiative aims at building trade and infrastructure network and ensuring access to trade and energy passage. Thus, actions driven by development needs are real in this context. Third, China and the US have shared interests which will engage them constructively. The realist optimist school argues that there may be a variety of other factors ranging from nuclear deterrence to climate issue and others which will help keep the mutual relations involved with each other in a constructive way. The possession of nuclear weapons by both superpowers acted as the strongest deterrent. Similarly, the mutual possession of nuclear weapons by both China and the US will act as a buffer against an all-out war. It will also put a bar on limited war and crisis situation. They will try

⁷⁴ Robert D. Kaplan, "The Geography of Chinese Power", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 89, No. 3, 2010.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

to lie low and avoid tension or confrontations with each other. In a China-US joint statement issued in 2009, the two countries said,

“The two sides welcomed all efforts conducive to peace, stability and development in South Asia. They support the efforts of Afghanistan and Pakistan to fight terrorism, maintain domestic stability and achieve sustainable economic and social development, and support the improvement and growth of relations between India and Pakistan. The two sides are ready to strengthen communication, dialogue and cooperation on issues related to South Asia and work together to promote peace, stability and development in that region.”⁷⁸

Fourth, high level of economic interdependence exists between China and the US. In terms of economic engagements, the two countries share a common interest in avoiding conflict so that trade and investment flow without any abrupt event. The market reform in China in the 1970s has opened up a new vista of economic exchanges between the two countries. Later, with China’s membership in WTO in 2001, trade volume increased between China and the US.⁷⁹ At present, trade between China and the US crosses more than US\$ 200 billion annually.⁸⁰ Although the practices of the balance of power and strategic hedging exist between them, it is also undeniable that their economies are intertwined. This can mitigate the future likelihood of any conflict.⁸¹ International relations scholars have long portrayed the economic engagements between these two countries in different ways. Economist Moritz Schularick and Niall Ferguson coined the word Chimerica in 2007. Chimerica is the combination of “China’s export led development with US over consumption”. In this way, they attempted to describe the symbiotic relationship between China and the US.⁸² Prominent Chinese scholar, Niu Jun characterises this US-China relation as “competitive interdependence”. According to him, although the two countries have competition, they are constrained by their economically interdependent relationship.⁸³ Thus, China has earned such a status in the world economy that it cannot be overlooked. Its dynamic economic trait has made it one of the principal trading partners of many countries ranging from China’s neighbours to many western countries. Therefore, a real tension between China and the US can bring a catastrophe to the world economy with dire consequence for all.⁸⁴ Thus, interdependent economic relations between China and the US can serve as a powerful deterrent to conflict in South Asia as well as in other regions. Finally, international institutions can help to improve communication between states. They usually bind the

⁷⁸ Brian Montopoli, “In Full: US–China Joint Statement”, 17 November 2009, CBS News, available at <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/in-full-us-china-joint-statement/>, accessed on 09 May 2007.

⁷⁹ Aaron L. Friedberg, “The Future of U.S.-China Relations”, *International Security*, Vol. 30, No. 2, 2005, p. 18.

⁸⁰ Henry A. Kissinger, “The Future of U.S.-Chinese Relations”, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 91, No. 2, 2012.

⁸¹ Minxin Pei, “How America and China See Each Other And Why They Are on a Collision Course”, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 93, No. 2, 2014, p. 143.

⁸² Niall Ferguson, ‘Chimerica’ and the Rule of Central Bankers, *The Wall Street Journal*, 27 August 2015.

⁸³ Dingding Chen, “Cooperation is the Only Way Ahead for US-China Relations”, *The Diplomat*, 10 March 2016.

⁸⁴ Henry A. Kissinger, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

states to commitments to each other. A state commits to partnership with other states in these international fora. These fora usually help a state to reduce uncertainty about other states and create right perceptions. In this chaotic and anarchic world, international institutions can act as a source of order.⁸⁵ In terms of regional organisations of South Asia, the US and China are two observer states of SAARC.⁸⁶ Here, these two observers can engage in mutually beneficial cooperation. Emerging challenges to South Asian regional order require cooperation from both China and the US. South Asian countries can recline towards either China or the US based on their individual national interests, it is in the best interest of all that South Asia offers a stable environment for China-US cooperation.⁸⁷

On the contrary, some argue that China and the US will confront each other in coming decades. First, history shows that rising powers have tended to become troublemakers with regard to their established counterparts.⁸⁸ Often rising powers express their dissatisfaction with the existing order and try to alter it. In the process of getting their due share of world power, they often involve in clashes with the dominant powers. According to a prominent realist scholar John J. Mearsheimer, the mightiest states intend to create hegemony in their region. They also try to make sure that no rival power grows dominance in another region.⁸⁹ Based on this argument, it can be said that China will try to dominate Asia as a whole as its region of influence. In this process, China will also try to establish its dominance in South Asia. China is already making inroads in South Asia by enhancing engagements with the regional countries. Most of the countries in South Asia have joined China's BRI. This Chinese attempt is being observed by the US with caution. In this respect, Mearsheimer predicted that a powerful China will not accept the presence of the US on its doorsteps. On the other hand, the US "does not tolerate peer competitors". It will try to weaken China so that China could not become a regional hegemon. Condoleezza Rice wrote in a Foreign Affairs article that China was not a status quo power and as it rises it will try to "alter Asia's strategic balance in its own favour."⁹⁰ Similarly, Henry A. Kissinger wrote that when the present world order cannot serve China's interest and suit its increasing status, China will likely set up alternative arrangements. China's Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) is worth mentioning here. The establishment of AIIB to finance infrastructure project in Asia is seen by many as a rival to the West-led World Bank.

⁸⁵ Niall Ferguson, *op. cit.*

⁸⁶ SAARC, "Cooperation with Observers", Kathmandu, Nepal, 2009, available at <http://saarc-sec.org/Cooperation-with-Observers/13/>, accessed on 01 March 2017.

⁸⁷ David Shambaugh, "Asia in Transition: The Evolving Regional Order", *Current History*, Vol. 105, No. 690, April 2006.

⁸⁸ Aaron L. Friedberg, *op. cit.*

⁸⁹ John J. Mearsheimer, "China's Unpeaceful Rise", *Current History*, Vol. 105, No. 690, 2006.

⁹⁰ Shehzad H. Qazi, "United States attempt to Balance the Rise of China in Asia", *IPRI Journal*, Vol. 9, No. 2, 2009, p. 32.

Second, once the rising powers achieve economic supremacy, their ambition to thwart the existing order come to fore. Political ambition comes after getting significant economic development. Economic might engines rising powers' political will to lead the world. In the past, nations who experienced remarkable economic development led adventures to expand their kingdom. As Samuel P. Huntington argued, "The external expansion of the UK and France, Germany and Japan, the Soviet Union and the United States coincided with phases of intense industrialisation and economic development."⁹¹ He predicts that China too will "undoubtedly be moving into such a phase in the coming decades."⁹² Since China has become the largest trading partner of most of the South Asian countries, this can raise China's political ambition in the region. In order to tackle these rising concerns, China has developed a catchphrase "Peaceful Rise". China has assured the international community again and again that China is having peaceful rise with no politico-strategic goal to overthrow the international system. It has been touting the concept that it does not seek hegemony. Still, the scholars differ in their opinions. According to John J. Mearsheimer, China's rise cannot be peaceful.⁹³ For him, China's economic might will propel its security competition with the US.⁹⁴

Third, western perceptions of China play a role in potential China-US rivalry. The western literature has long portrayed China with skepticism. The English geographer Sir Halford Mackinder in his *Democratic Ideals and Reality* feared that China would guide the world by "building for a quarter of humanity a new civilisation neither quite Eastern nor quite Western."⁹⁵ China's national objective has been reduced by the former US Secretary of State and National Security Adviser Henry A. Kissinger to merely replacing the US as the preeminent power. For him, China wants to consolidate Asia as an exclusionary block subject to its economic and foreign policy interests.⁹⁶ He further predicted that a China-centric Asian bloc can dominate the world. These assessments can facilitate China-US rivalry anywhere in world.

Finally, a growing clash of interest between China and the US will make the relationship more competitive and tense. The conflicting interests of the US and China in South Asia will likely build strategic formation in the region.⁹⁷ It appears that India and the US have teamed up on the one hand, on the other hand there remains China-Pakistan alliance. The US has security arrangements with India. It sees India as its South Asian partner which will play a key role in maintaining the region stable. In other words, the US wants to have a grip on growing Chinese clout in the region which has an important repercussion on Pakistan too. In this context, the strategic environment of

⁹¹ Samuel P. Huntington, "America's Changing Strategic Interests", *Survival*, Vol. 33, No. 1, 1991, p. 12.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ John J. Mearsheimer, *op. cit.*

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ Robert D. Kaplan, *op. cit.*

⁹⁶ Henry A. Kissinger, *op. cit.*

⁹⁷ Shamil Shams, "Why US-China Rivalry is Unsettling South Asia", available at <http://www.dw.com/en/why-us-china-rivalry-is-unsettling-south-asia/a-19516733>, accessed on 17 February 2017.

South Asia demands another important power relation to reinvigorate. Thus, Pakistan is also fostering its relations with its long-time ally China. China-Pakistan cooperation is expanding in all possible arenas keeping the Indo-US security cooperation in mind. China is building CPEC in Pakistan to get access to the Arabian Sea bypassing the Strait of Malacca. The US is also heavily investing in India as a natural counterweight to Pakistan. India-Pakistan relations are also standing at their worst, given the great powers' sponsorship. Afghanistan is the worst victim of India-Pakistan rivalry. Other regional countries will only adjust to the changing geopolitics. These formations can plunge the region into conflicting situation.

In brief, it can be said in line with the above discussion that both China and the US are important actors in global politics. Like other great powers, their interests are bound to conflict with each other. They are not likely to converge. It is concerning for the US as the once lone superpower that a rising power like China is increasing its weight in its neighbourhood and beyond, including South Asia. The US is applying both the policy of engagement and balancing. It is engaging with China through trade and diplomacy, on the one hand while on the other hand, it is attempting in every possible means to counter China's weight in international politics. Similarly, China will continue to bolster its presence by partnering with different countries across the region to achieve its strategic interest. China will try to appear as a useful actor of the international system who obeys the general international rules and regulations like others. At the same time, it will quietly strengthen itself through economic development domestically and increase its politico-strategic clout externally. It is true indeed that "Great powers do not just mind their own business".⁹⁸ In conclusion, China and the US are experiencing such a phase which does not allow both of them to simply deny and ignore each other. They both will have to tolerate each other as enduring realities. In their attempts to maximise their shares of world power, they will compete with each other in different regions as well as in South Asia. Though a full-scale war is a remote possibility for China and the US, the level of cooperation between these two powers is also limited. Their competition will wax and wane. But once the competition gets intense, there is always a chance of confrontation.

6. Conclusion

South Asia is undergoing dramatic economic and geopolitical developments. Against this backdrop, all the major powers are interested to ensure their stakes in the region. The strongest contenders for creating a sphere of influence in the region are China and the US. China has gradually boosted its relations with the South Asian countries. The 20th century marked a major shift in China's relations with South Asia. Since then, South Asia and China have been experiencing unprecedented engagements in all sectors. Previously, South Asia did not loom large in China's foreign policy. The status of South Asia for China

⁹⁸ Condoleezza Rice, "Campaign 2000: Promoting the National Interest", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 79, No. 1, 2000.

was reduced to a mere ground of Cold War in which superpowers' rivalry was shifted to the regional level. For China, the significant events of South Asia during the Cold War were China-Pakistan entente and China-India rivalry.

The end of Cold War brought a fundamental change in global politics. As the bipolar competition ended, a new beginning of a new world order came up with different facets of politics and security. China took the opportunity to increase its stake in the new international setting. It aimed to improve its room for manoeuvre in bilateral engagements with different countries across the world. Similarly, China built up multi-lateral cooperative exchanges with the South Asian countries. Broadly, Chinese activities in South Asian regional dimension suggest that China wants to increase its strategic footprint in the region by using the tool of transport connectivity throughout the region. At present, China imports energy resources which are a fundamental element for China's development. Majority of its imports are carried via the Strait of Malacca in the Indian Ocean. The US or India can cut China's access to the Indian Ocean any time as they better control the Ocean with their naval presence. Thus, China wants to enhance its strategic presence in the Indian Ocean. Cultivating relations with South Asian countries through different mechanisms will give China a chance to secure its development needs as well as increase its strategic presence in South Asia. Therefore, China is upgrading its ties with the regional countries. On the other hand, the importance of South Asia has increased over time to the US. The issue of nuclear non-proliferation, drug trafficking, promotion of democracy diverted the US attention towards South Asia after the end of Cold War.

The event of 9/11 shook the foundation of the US policy in South Asia as the perpetrators of the event took shelter in the region. The tragic event of 9/11 triggered the GWoT which was mainly waged in Afghanistan and it also helped concluding the US strategic partnership with India. In addition, China's growing political and diplomatic clout in Asia, as well as South Asia, has driven the US attention toward the region. The US wants to curb the Chinese influence in the region. Since China and the US have their respective interests in the region, their actions and involvements in the region can bring about either cooperation or confrontation. It is expected that both will compete with each other in the region. Although the chance of an all-out war is slim in the foreseeable future, there is always an option on the table that they will confront with each other in the regional dimension once their competition gets intense.

Md. Jahan Shoieb

RESTRICTIVE IMMIGRATION POLICIES AND IRREGULAR MIGRATION: SECURITY THREATS

Abstract

Irregular migration has become a subject of debate among policymakers in major migrant-receiving countries in recent years. Political leaders in those countries are facing enormous pressure to reduce the influx of irregular immigrants. There are some negative impacts of irregular migration on a host country, including deterioration of the rule of law, competition in the job market and added pressure on social security and public services. Major receiving countries are applying restrictive policies to reduce the number of immigrants. This article takes an endeavour at finding the effectiveness of restrictive immigration policies on curbing the flow of irregular immigrants. Besides, it attempts to identify major security threats emanating from irregular migration.

1. Introduction

In the contemporary world, irregular migration has become one of the major issues of contention among scholars and policymakers, particularly in the migrant-receiving countries. Although irregular migration is not a recent phenomenon, it is a new concept in migration studies. A person may become an irregular immigrant in various ways: by staying in a foreign country after permission has expired or application to stay has been refused (refused asylum seeker), by entering the country through an illegal process or by any means of deception and by not complying with the conditions attached to staying or leaving the country.¹

States first attempted to differentiate legal and illegal immigration in the twentieth century.² History of irregular migration reveals that over the past few years, the extent, nature, number and determinants of irregular migration have changed a lot. The term irregular migration is closely connected to immigration policy, border

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¹ Sue Lukes *et al.*, *Irregular Migrants: The Urgent Need for a New Approach*, Migration Work and Migrants' Rights Network, May 2009, p. 4, available at https://www.migrantsrights.org.uk/downloads/policy_reports/irregularmigrants_fullbooklet.pdf, accessed on 16 January 2018.

² Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004, p. 55.

control and the definition of citizenship.³ Currently, the debate on irregular migration has become more intense, diverse and visible primarily due to the increasing flow of migrants. In the last couple of years, irregular migrants are heading towards major European receiving countries from countries like Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan which were previously not counted as major migrant-senders.⁴ In 2015, the European Union (EU) member states reported that more than 1.82 million people illegally crossed the external European borders. The number reported in 2015 was more than six times than published in 2014.⁵

Irregular migration is a political and legal construct which exists amidst state policies. There are some specific reasons for this which includes economic demand, competing political pressure and inability to control borders.⁶ In recent times irregular migration has evolved as a crucial non-traditional security issue connected to globalisation.⁷ The concept of immigration as a security threat has developed along with the global increase in the number of immigrants; while the number of people living outside their home country was approximately 191 million in 2005, by 2010, the number increased to 214 million.⁸ However, unlike the globalisation of trade, finance, and production, migrants face more restrictive policies and border control in major destinations.⁹

Currently, some states use “illegal migrants” instead of “irregular migrants” to address the undocumented migrants. They do so to demonise them as violators of the domestic law since they have no endorsement of their entry, residence and employment in a particular host country.¹⁰ There are two other terms often used in this context: “unauthorised” and “undocumented”. In this paper, the term “irregular migrants” has been used. Receiving proper data on irregular migration is difficult. Often there is a lack of consistency but almost all available estimates point to a

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Catherine Lejeune and Manuela Martini, “The Fabric of Irregular Labor Migration in Twentieth-Century Western Europe and North America: A Comparative Approach”, *Labor History*, Vol. 56, No. 5, 2015, pp. 614-642.

⁵ European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union, *Risk Analysis for 2016*, Warsaw: Poland, March 2016, p. 6, available at http://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/Risk_Analysis/Annula_Risk_Analysis_2016.pdf, accessed on 04 January 2018.

⁶ Catherine Lejeune and Manuela Martini, *op. cit.*, p. 616.

⁷ Yasemin Oezel, “Providing Security? Border Control and the Politics of Migration in the EU”, 2015, available at <http://www.e-ir.info/2015/06/08/providing-security-border-control-and-the-politics-of-migration-in-the-eu/>, accessed on 27 October 2017.

⁸ *World Migration Report 2010*, International Organization for Migration (IOM), p. 1, available at http://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/wmr2010_summary.pdf, accessed on 11 January 2018.

⁹ Nikola Mirilovic, “Regime Type, Security, and the Politics of Migration”, An unpublished dissertation, The University of Chicago, March 2009, available at <https://search.proquest.com/openview/c97ef2781f48dfb94b73b1a9b4f9361b/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&diss=y>, accessed on 03 November 2017.

¹⁰ Barbara Bogusz, Ryszard Cholewinski, Adam Cygan and Erika Szyszczak (eds.), *Irregular Migration and Human Rights: Theoretical, European and International Perspective*, Leiden and Boston, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2004.

significant number of irregular immigrants.¹¹ As mentioned before, irregular migration flow to European countries increased to a great extent in recent years. Most of the migrants entered Europe through the Eastern Mediterranean route (people coming from Turkey to the EU via Cyprus, Greece, or Bulgaria). The main entry point for the irregular migrants was Greece. In 2015, the number of refugees arriving at the Syrian border surpassed 900,000, and the number of refugees was eleven times higher than in 2014 (77,163). However, it is worth noting that the current irregular migrants residing in European countries are mainly visa over stayers who previously entered through regular channels.

De Haas opines that restrictive migration policies in major receiving countries significantly affect the immigration pattern to those countries.¹² Although restrictive policies of receiving countries may deter potential migrants, this approach has an unintended effect of turning an asylum seeker into an irregular migrant.¹³ Another important aspect is that irregular migrants are often accused of creating security threats to the host countries. Human security or the security of irregular immigrants is also a very crucial issue.

Against this backdrop, this paper aims to identify whether there is any linkage between contemporary restrictive immigration policies and increased volume of irregular migration flow and whether irregular migration is creating security challenges. The paper tries to answer the following questions: Who are the irregular immigrants? Is there any linkage between restrictive immigration policies and increasing number of irregular migrants? What types of security threats can be created from irregular migration? To answer these questions, the paper is divided into five sections including introduction and conclusion. After introduction, section two briefly conceptualises irregular migration. Section three describes contemporary practices of migration restriction and irregular migration. Section four focuses on irregular migration and security threats. Finally, section five concludes the paper.

The paper is a qualitative research work based on secondary data sources, including books, journal articles, news clippings, seminar and thesis papers, etc.

2. Conceptualising Irregular Migration

There is no universally accepted definition of irregular migration. However, defining irregular migration is required for a better understanding of the issue. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), when migration

¹¹ Catherine Lejeune and Manuela Martini, *op. cit.*, p. 617.

¹² Hein de Haas, "The Determinants of International Migration: Conceptualising Policies, Origin and Destination Effects", *DEMIG Project Paper 2*, 2011, pp. 1-35.

¹³ Douglas S. Massey and Karen A. Pren, "Unintended Consequences of US Immigration Policy: Explaining the Post-1965 Surge from Latin America", *Population and Development Review*, Vol. 38, No. 1, 2012, pp. 1-29.

takes place beyond the existing regulatory norms of the sending, transit and receiving countries, it is called irregular migration.¹⁴ The United Nations (UN) in its 1998 Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration defines irregular migrants as, "...foreigners who violate the rules of admission of the receiving country and are deportable, as well as foreign persons attempting to seek asylum but who are not allowed to file an application and are not permitted to stay in the receiving country on any other grounds".¹⁵ Kahler and Vogel define irregular migration as "migration of someone who at some point in his migration has contravened the rules of entry or residence".¹⁶

As irregular migration is a complex and diverse issue, a proper understanding of the same is important. Irregular migration is a broader concept than undocumented or illegal migration. Some aspects of irregular migration should be made clear. First, it is important to distinguish irregular migrant 'flows' from 'stocks'. Both of them pose separate challenges and require separate policy responses to regularise or send them back to the country of origin. Irregular flows create challenges on management and control as well as on the safety and dignity of migrants who are on the move. On the contrary, irregular stocks require political responses. Second, there are multiple ways and routes into the irregularity. And third, it is important to exclude the asylum seekers from the broader debate on irregular migration. Koser argued both asylum seekers and migrants may resort to smugglers or can undertake secondary moves. Similarly, people who do not need special protection may also resort to asylum channels to gain temporary or permanent stay in a receiving country. As a consequence of these convergences, the boundary line between asylum seekers, irregular migrants, and refugees has become blurred to a great extent.¹⁷

Rapid rise and expansion of global terrorism have also affected the migration policies of receiving states. The terrorist attacks of 9/11 (September 11, 2001) in the United States (US) and the 7/7 (July 7, 2005) in the United Kingdom (UK) have a major influence on the immigration policies of the US, Canada, the UK, Sweden, Australia, and Germany.¹⁸ Through empirical studies, Schüller and Okahi have shown

¹⁴ International Organization for Migration (IOM), *Key Migration Terms*, available at <https://www.iom.int/key-migration-terms>, accessed on 04 February 2018.

¹⁵ United Nations (UN), "Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration, Revision 1", *Statistical Papers Series M*, No. 58, Rev. 1, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Statistics Division of the UN, 1998, p. 15.

¹⁶ Frank Van Kesteren, "Migration: Definitions and Debates in Terminology", available at <http://www.thebrokeronline.eu/Articles/The-Migration-Trail/Migration-definitions-and-debates-in-terminology>, accessed on 22 March 2018.

¹⁷ Khalid Koser, "Irregular Migration, State Security and Human Security", Paper prepared for the Policy Analysis and Research Programme of the Global Commission on International Migration, September 2005, available at <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.565.570&rep=rep1&type=pdf>, accessed on 16 January 2018.

¹⁸ Simone Schüller, "The Effects of 9/11 on Attitudes Toward Immigration and the Moderating Role of Education", *IZA Discussion Paper no. 7052*, November 2012, available at <http://ftp.iza.org/dp7052.pdf>, accessed on 27 October 2017; Ratna Okhai, "Assessing the Correlation between Terrorist Attacks and the

that the terrorist attacks have tremendous effects on individual's perception, which contributes to discriminatory immigration policies.¹⁹ Furthermore, the unprecedented terrorist attacks have generated negative sentiment towards a particular ethnic or religious group which simultaneously created an international spill over effect in other countries. For example, Muslim immigrants became targets of discrimination and anti-immigration movements in those countries.²⁰

In some cases, receiving countries show racial preferences; examples include the White Australia Policy, the US policy of blocking Asians, and favourable immigration policies of Germany and some other European countries to Gypsies and Muslims, etc. Anti-Muslim and anti-Mexican immigration policy of the US President Donald Trump is the latest example in this regard. Some scholars argue that a particular receiving country has the authority to articulate the admission requirements, while liberals feel uncomfortable when a receiving state sets its preferences based on religion, ethnic origin, or race.²¹ Throughout the west, voices in favour of restricting migration nowadays are becoming stronger and liberal voices for open borders are being sidelined day-by-day.²² Thus, a new policy perspective is evolving which illustrates that policymakers in major receiving countries are heading towards tightening visa regulations and asylum system to decrease the number of migrants as well as asylum seekers.²³

Social integration or inclusion is also very crucial in determining migration policies of a country. Sometimes cultural erosion, threats to national identity and "us" vs. "them" figure directly or indirectly in the discourse of opponents to immigration. It is important for immigrants to accept and act according to the values and norms of the host country and simultaneously build up a social capital which is necessary for the host country's population. In this regard, role of the local community is very crucial. Social integration is only possible when immigrants are accepted as members of the society.²⁴ Contemporary migration discourse is facing the problem of social integration which ultimately leads to restrictive migration policies.

Limiting of Muslim Immigration Due to Anti-Islamic Sentiments", Thesis paper submitted to the University of Central Florida, 2013, available at <http://stars.library.ucf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2504&context=honorstheses1990-2015>, accessed on 27 October 2017.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Ratna Okhai, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Barbara Bogusz, Ryszard Cholewinski, Adam Cygan and Erika Szyszczak (eds.), *op. cit.*

²³ Timothy J. Hatton, "Seeking Asylum Trends and Policies in the OECD", Centre for Economic Policy Research (CEPR), 14 July 2011, available at <https://voxeu.org/article/seeking-asylum-trends-and-policies-oecd>, accessed on 28 January 2018.

²⁴ Nadzeya Laurentsyeva and Alessandra Venturini, "The Social Integration of Immigrants and the Role of Policy- A Literature Review", *Intereconomics*, Vol. 52, Issue 5, 2017, p. 285, available at https://www.ceps.eu/system/files/IEForum52017_5.pdf, accessed on 09 April 2018.

3. Contemporary Practices of Migration Restriction and Irregular Migration

In recent years, major migrant receiving countries are adopting tightened immigration policies. States primarily do these to curb migration flow. Hence questions arise: what are the contemporary state practices of migration restriction? And, did the states succeed in curbing migration flow through these practices? This section tries to find out answers of these questions.

3.1 Contemporary Practices of Migration Restriction

Before outlining contemporary practices of migration restriction and the resultant flow of increased irregular migration, it is worth discussing a brief history of migration restriction. This paper mainly focuses on the restrictive migration policies in Europe. Although migration control started primarily from the twentieth century, in Europe it started a couple of centuries earlier. In 1662, 'Act of Elizabeth 1' was enacted in Great Britain which was used to restrain movement even inside the country. The situation changed later with the 1800 'Act of Union'. The latter helped to create common citizenship and allowed the Irish people to migrate to the UK.²⁵ The restrictive migration policy was also seen in Germany since 1548, and in 1807, the peasantry of Prussia was freed of servitude and other controls, which paved the way for free labour migration in the country. The trend of globalisation and modernisation could not prove their universality, and from 1870 major migrant-receiving countries started taking more restrictive immigration approaches. Interestingly, since 1974, most of the regular channels of migration have been 'frozen' or 'halted'.²⁶

Tightening of migration policies started in Europe after the 1970s oil crisis. Until then, various kinds of low-skilled labour migration took place in Europe either through Germany's guest worker programme or through the migration channels from former colonies to France and Britain. In Europe, the tightened migration policies of the 1970s did not immediately lead to the rise of massive irregular migration. The Schengen agreement of the 1990s resulted in more restrictive migration policy in Europe. Moreover, the Schengen could not include a common labour migration or asylum system and thus produced an ad hoc mechanism.²⁷

Between 2007 and 2013, the EU spent 60 per cent of its budget for Home Affairs (which stands about €4 billion) for the purpose of "solidarity and management of migratory flows" including a large amount (€1.8 billion) for the European external border fund (EBF).²⁸ Major portion of the border security and management spending

²⁵ Ronaldo Munck, *Globalisation and Migration*, London: Routledge, 2013, p. 218.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Ruben Andersson, "Europe's Failed 'Fight' Against Irregular Migration: Ethnographic Notes on a Counterproductive Industry", *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 7, 2016, pp. 1055-1075.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 1059.

was used at the member state level. Spain, one of the major entry points to Europe, diagnosed fight against irregular migration as one of its primary policy agenda. In recent years, the country has built new reception, call centres, detention centres, and has increased the number of migration security forces to 16,000 by 2010.

Other EU member states have also introduced expensive systems and technologies to monitor and control the influx of irregular migration. Their initiatives include vigilance mechanism and fences at Spanish, Greek, Hungarian, and Bulgarian borders. Moreover, EU member states introduced advanced coastal radar systems such as the Spanish Sistema Integrado de Vigilancia Exterior (SIVE). The EU also undertook ambitious border security measure named European external border surveillance system (EUROSUR) and developed new technologies. In the current phase (2014-2020), the EU allocated €3.8 billion as Internal Security Fund to bolster the security-focused funding stream.²⁹

In June 2002, the Seville European Council gave further impetus in restricting the number of migrants. The then Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen proposed a roadmap to monitor the progress of the Seville European Council's proposal on asylum and migration which was primarily formulated to prevent irregular migration to Europe.³⁰ Major migrant-receiving countries are nowadays worried about the huge influx of irregular immigrants. Specially, the 'boat people' are generating heated political debate in the 'gated community' of Europe, or the coastal countries of Europe, namely: Greece, Spain, Italy, and Malta.³¹ In January 2014, the Italian coastguard 'rescued' more than 1000 intruders within a 24-hour period who were 'saved' and taken to Sicily.³² This kind of intentional 'rescue' programme is a way to construct a climate of fear which works to 'conceal' the real 'structural' dynamics of migration movement and limit the prospect of an equitable solution to the global irregular migration crisis.³³

In recent years, immigration policies and mechanisms are gradually becoming sophisticated in Europe.³⁴ Similarly, those countries also increased their efforts to identify irregular migrants.³⁵ The richer northern European countries often urge the southern

²⁹ Ruben Andersson, *op. cit.*

³⁰ Barbara Bogusz, Ryszard Cholewinski, Adam Cygan and Erika Szyszczak (eds.), *op. cit.*

³¹ Maria Giannacopoulos, Marinella Marmo and Willem de Lint, "Irregular Migration", *Griffith Law Review*, Vol. 22, No. 3, 2013, pp. 559-570.

³² "Italy Rescues 1,000 Migrants off Lampedusa Inside 24 Hours", *BBC News*, 03 January 2014, available at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-25582933>, accessed on 05 October 2017.

³³ Maria Giannacopoulos, Marinella Marmo and Willem de Lint, *op. cit.*

³⁴ Saskia Bonjour, "The Power and Morals of Policy Makers: Reassessing the Control Gap Debate", *International Migration Review*, Vol. 45, Issue 1, 2011, pp. 89-122; Andrew Geddes and Peter Scholten, *The Politics of Migration and Immigration in Europe*, London: SAGE, 2003.

³⁵ Dennis Broeders and Godfried Engbersen, "The Fight against Illegal Migration: Identification Policies and Immigrants' Counterstrategies", *American Behavioral Scientist*, Vol. 50, Issue 12, 2007, pp. 1592-1609.

European governments to strengthen border controls to halt the flow of refugees, while the latter request for more financial and other support to manage their borders and for a better system to distribute the migrants more evenly to all EU countries.³⁶ In recent years, due to strict policies and sophisticated border management, entering the Western European countries through regular channels has become more difficult for people.³⁷ German Chancellor Angela Merkel has been facing protests due to her policy which has allowed more than a million people, forced to leave by wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria, to enter Germany since 2015.³⁸ Such a scenario is quite common in almost all European countries. Therefore, demand for more regulated migration policies is a key feature of the contemporary 'European Refugee Crisis'.³⁹

3.2 Increasing Trend of Irregular Migration

Scholars are divided on the effectiveness of restrictive immigration policies in curbing the migration flows. For example, Castles views that due to immigration control by major receiving countries, poor people are increasingly migrating through irregular channels.⁴⁰ Another group of scholars by and large believe that strict immigration policies are effective in curbing migration flows.

After signing of the Schengen Agreement on free movement, implementation of border security mechanisms started in Europe in 1990s. One of the prime objectives of this agreement was to secure the external borders of Europe from irregular migrants. However, this policy resulted in increased irregular migration through European land and sea borders. The EU introduced visa requirements for North African countries and since then boats full of irregular migrants started to appear along the European shores. This demonstrates that strict migration regulatory policies are causing the influx of irregular migration.⁴¹

Another important aspect of the Schengen agreement is that it could not introduce a common asylum system or labour migration policy. This situation led to the fragmented responses by the EU member states, and European leaders thus 'opted' for a 'default' border management or border security model.⁴² Thus, in spite of the efforts

³⁶ Stevis Matina, "Europe News: Illegal Migration to Europe Surges Toward New High", *Wall Street Journal*, 2014, pp. 1-5.

³⁷ Jorgen Carling, "Migration in the Age of Involuntary Immobility: Theoretical Reflections and Cape Verdean Experiences", *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 1, 2002, pp. 5-42.

³⁸ Katie Mansfield, "Merkel Must Go! Germans Turn against Chancellor as Thousands Protest at Open-door Policy", *Express*, 31 July 2016, available at <http://www.express.co.uk/news/world/694960/Angela-Merkel-must-go-thousands-protest-in-Berlin-Germany-open-door-refugee-policy>, accessed on 05 October 2017.

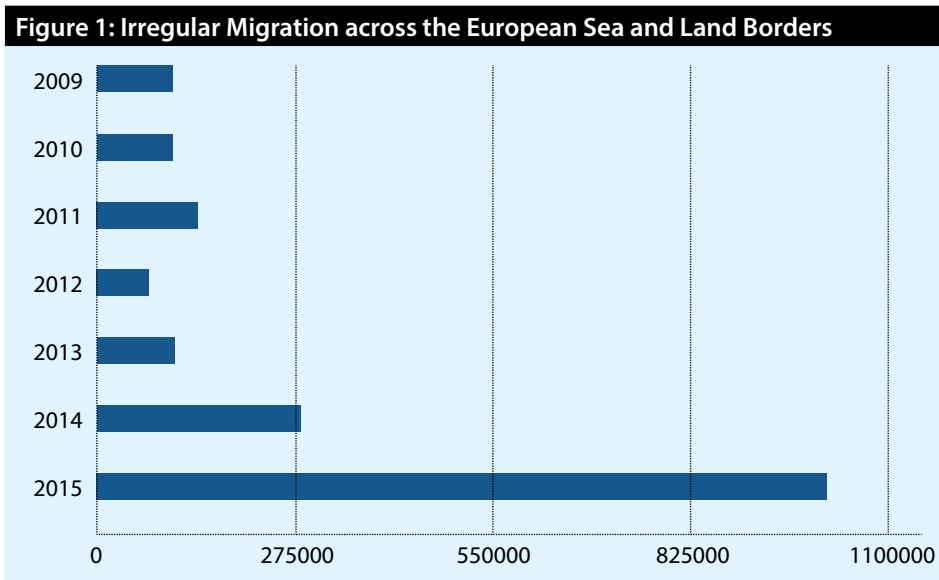
³⁹ Timothy J. Hatton, *op. cit.*

⁴⁰ Stephen Castles, "International Migration at the Beginning of the Twenty-First Century: Global Trends and Issues", *International Social Science Journal*, Vol. 52, Issue 165, September 2000, pp. 269-281.

⁴¹ Ruben Andersson, *op. cit.*, p. 1057.

⁴² *Ibid.*

to contain, control, and combat unauthorised entrance in European countries, the crisis emanating from irregular migration is worsening day by day.⁴³



Source: Ruben Andersson, "Europe's Failed 'Fight' Against Irregular Migration: Ethnographic Notes on a Counterproductive Industry", *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 4, 2016, p. 1058.

The graph shows that the volume of migration in Europe has increased to a great extent in recent years. Specially, in the aftermath of the Syrian civil war, many European countries are experiencing a high volume of refugees from Syria. Hence, since 2015, a dramatic shift in the number of irregular migration is visible in the graph. Irregular migration has become not merely a European problem, but an international crisis with the increasing flow of refugees and asylum seekers. The number of global refugees reached 59.5 million by 2014, the highest number since the Second World War. The world also experienced an approximately 40 per cent increase in the number of refugees since 2011. Among the total 59.5 million global migrants, about 19.5 million people were refugees, 1.8 million were asylum-seekers and the rest were mainly internally displaced persons (IDPs).⁴⁴

Migration regulations or restrictive immigration policies have the potential to decrease the number of immigrants. Obstructing the legal or regular channels of

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 1055.

⁴⁴ "Worldwide Displacement Hits All-time High as War and Persecution Increase", *UNHCR*, 18 June 2015, available at <http://www.unhcr.org/en-au/news/latest/2015/6/558193896/worldwide-displacement-hits-all-time-high-war-persecution-increase.html>, accessed on 11 October 2017.

migration along with rigid border security mechanisms can increase the number of irregular migrants.⁴⁵ In an age of free flow of information, it is easy for an individual to obtain information about immigration policy changes in prospective destination countries. The information spreads through multiple sources, including family members and friends living abroad and different types of media.

Existing researches suggest that restrictive immigration policies end in increased irregular migration. Based on analysis of visa and asylum policies in 29 European countries in the 2000s, Czaika and Hobolth found the testimony of the above-mentioned proposition. They found that a 10 per cent increase in asylum rejections contributed to the rise of irregular migrants at an average rate of 2 per cent to 4 per cent. Similarly, they found that a 10 per cent increase in visa rejections leads to the increase in irregular border entries by a 4 per cent to 7 per cent rate.⁴⁶

Massey and Pren presented the irregularity in US-Mexican context and showed how irregular Mexican migration worked in the dismantling of the 'Bracero' guest-worker programme in 1965. Through this recruitment process, a large number of labour migration networks had formed and the Mexicans started working in response to the seasonal demand of the Californian labour market. As suddenly this legal programme was brought to an end, migration flows continued, workers continued arriving and staying illegally. Later, the US enhanced patrolling in the US-Mexican border, which disrupted the seasonal cycle and those who had managed to cross the border put even more effort into establishing their irregular and mostly-permanent like stay.⁴⁷

There are some 'substitution effects' which might limit the effectiveness of the migration restrictions which include: a) spatial substitution which leads to migration to different countries; b) categorical substitution by shifting towards other legal or illegal routes of migration and c) inter-temporal substitution, resorting to 'now or never migration' by expecting the more tightening policies in future.⁴⁸

The global community saw surge in the number of asylum seekers in the 1980s, due to various reasons, including persecution, natural disasters, armed conflicts and human rights violations. However, in recent years, the number of asylum seekers is declining gradually. For example, asylum applications in fifty developed countries fell sharply for four consecutive years in a row reaching their lowest in two decades in 2005. The main reason behind this trend is because of restrictive immigration policies people nowadays are heading towards irregular channels of migration avoiding the

⁴⁵ Ruben Andersson, *op. cit.*

⁴⁶ Mathias Czaika and Mogens Hobolth, "Do Restrictive Asylum and Visa Policies Increase Irregular Migration into Europe?", *European Union Politics*, Vol. 17, No. 3, 2016, p. 347.

⁴⁷ Douglas S. Massey and Karen A. Pren, *op. cit.*

⁴⁸ Hein de Haas, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

formal channels. As Crepeau, Nakache and Atak noted,

“The decline in the number of asylum seekers can be attributed to a large extent to the introduction of more restrictive asylum policies in destination countries. Since 9/11, growing security concerns have fundamentally changed the playing field of immigration regulation. States have developed an arsenal of measures designed to directly or indirectly prevent migrants from setting foot on their territories. They have reemphasized the role of the border as the traditional symbol of national sovereignty. As a result, the scale of irregular migration has reached unprecedented levels.”⁴⁹

Asylum policy of a receiving country may also create irregular migration. Once a person manages to cross the border, he needs to think of different scenarios: first, whether to apply for asylum or not and, second, in case of a negative outcome whether to stay or return. If asylum policy of a receiving state is restrictive, applying for asylum would have little chance of successes. In this circumstance, some might instead choose to stay clandestine. Similarly, in case of refusal of an asylum application, the decision of staying irregularly might be an option.⁵⁰

Although restrictive immigration policies or lack of legal migration opportunities is one of the key factors for the increased irregular migration, Wohlfeld has identified some other reasons behind irregular migration. Those include, overall increased mobility as an outcome of globalisation and lack of proper data on the supply and demand sides for the global labour market.⁵¹ Poor economic condition and lack of opportunities as well as political and governance situation in the sending country also influence irregular migration.

4. Irregular Migration and Security Threats

International migration, more specifically irregular migration is one of the most discussed areas of new security agenda in the post-Cold War era. The migration-security nexus is viewed from both traditional strategic perspectives focusing on state security and from a human security perspective focusing on the security of individual migrants. Existing literature reveals the duality of threats posed by irregular migration to both national security and human security (security of immigrants).

⁴⁹ Francois Crépeau, Delphine Nakache and Idil Atak, “International Migration: Security Concerns and Human Rights Standards”, *Transcultural Psychiatry*, Vol. 44, No. 3, September 2007, pp. 311-337.

⁵⁰ Mathias Czaika and Mogens Hobolth, *op. cit.*, p. 350.

⁵¹ Monika Wohlfeld, “Is Migration a Security Issue?”, in Omar Grech and Monika Wohlfeld (eds.), *Migration in the Mediterranean: Human Rights, Security and Development Perspectives*, Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies, Malta: Gutenberg Press, 2014, pp. 61-77.

4.1 Security of State

Citizens and governments of migrant-receiving countries often perceive that irregular migration is a security threat to those states.⁵² Identifying and analysing the linkage between irregular migration and security is a complex issue. Mainly in two ways, irregular migration may become a security threat to a host country. Firstly, irregular migration affects the international border control and border crossing policies. Secondly, it has the potential to create unrest in a particular host country by putting pressure on jobs, social services and law and order situation. Thus, migration is often portrayed as a challenge to the welfare state and 'danger' to the society.⁵³

There are some important aspects of migration-state security nexus. Kicinger claimed that overall migration can be linked to three types of national and international security situation: a) migration itself can be an outcome of other types of security threats like intra and inter-state war, ethnic conflict and human rights violation; b) international migration can pose threat to international security and stability when it is of uncontrolled and massive character and c) there is another possibility that migration can end in other security threats like racial violence or xenophobia.⁵⁴ He also identified some other security aspects that could result from migration. First, international migration can pose a demographic threat to a receiving country if a high volume of immigrants enters a particular society where there is a declining and aging population group. Second, social stability may be threatened due to xenophobia and racial discrimination. Third, immigration can pose a threat to cultural identity which in turn can contribute to the rise of right-wing extremism. And finally, immigration can be a national security threat if the immigrants become associated with different terrorist activities.

The securitisation of migration is not a recent phenomenon. During the Second World War, German citizens residing in the UK were interned on the ground that they might act as 'fifth columnist' in the country.⁵⁵ In the 1980s and 1990s, most of the debates over immigration primarily focused on economic issues. Before the 9/11, immigration was not counted as a major national security issue. It is noteworthy that labelling any particular issue as a security threat has numerous implications regarding norms, laws, procedures, and policies. This type of labelling ends with more restrictive immigration policies, including surveillance, deportation and detention. Such policy responses from receiving countries, in turn, can affect migrants to a great extent. For

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ Gemma Pinyol-Jiménez, "The Migration-Security Nexus in Short: Instruments and Actions in the European Union", *Amsterdam Law Forum*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 2012, pp. 36-57.

⁵⁴ Anna Kicinger, "International Migration as a Non-traditional Security Threat and the EU Responses to This Phenomenon", *CEFMR Working Paper 2/2004*, available at http://www.cefmr.pan.pl/docs/cefmr_wp_2004-02.pdf, accessed on 04 January 2018.

⁵⁵ Khalid Koser, "When is Migration a Security Issue?", *Brookings*, 31 March 2011, available at <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/when-is-migration-a-security-issue/>, accessed on 31 December 2017.

example, when a country refuses asylum seekers' access to a safe country, there is a possibility that it will push them to human traffickers or smugglers. And this situation will ultimately lead to an increasing anti-immigrant sentiment among citizen of that country, gain huge media coverage, and generate severe political debate.⁵⁶

It is often claimed that international migration is responsible for importing criminals and terrorists.⁵⁷ Migrants are also often blamed for spreading infectious diseases in the host country. But Koser refuses these as dangerously misleading perceptions. First, the proposition that migration is responsible for bringing terrorists or criminals is not proven, and there is very little evidence to argue that there is a greater concentration of potential terrorists, terrorists, or criminals among the migrants than the local population. With the same token, in very rare circumstances migrants have been found to carry infectious diseases. Second, there is a possibility that such propaganda can create antagonising public attitude towards migrants. And third, the tendency of focusing more on extreme cases can divert attention from the circumstances where migration can actually pose security challenges to the host country.⁵⁸

The terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001 have resulted in strict immigration policies and increased border control mechanisms by major receiving states. Afterwards, immigrants often became a subject to political debate in the western countries. They are also portrayed as a societal and economic security threat by the media, which often generate hostile attitudes towards immigrants. Similarly, a conceived connection between the terrorist groups and immigrants also become prevalent in politics as well as media.⁵⁹

Soon after the 9/11 incident, the George W. Bush administration redefined the role of the country's immigration agencies and included them in a strategy to combat terrorism.⁶⁰ The current immigration bill of the country, 'Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act of 2013' or the 'S 744', urges to strengthen and upgrade its border security. The upgraded initiatives include doubling the size of border patrol agents to at least 38,000 personnel alongside the US-Mexico border and investing more in new types of security measures and technologies, like camera systems, surveillance towers, drones, ground sensors, and different type of vehicles.⁶¹ These steps demonstrate that the undocumented

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Julia Tallmeister, "Is Immigration a Threat to Security?", available at <http://www.e-ir.info/2013/08/24/is-immigration-a-threat-to-security/>, accessed on 24 December 2017.

⁶⁰ Albaro Tutasig, "Immigration: A National Security Threat?", *CUSLAR Newsletter*, Vol. XL, Issue 1, 08 September 2014, available at <https://cuslar.files.wordpress.com/2014/02/cuslar-newsletter-summer-fall-2014-1.pdf>, accessed on 24 December 2017.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

immigrants are perceived as a security threat to the US. Thus, US policymakers face challenges due to increasing number of irregular immigrants, particularly, the rising number of people crossing the US-Mexican border.

Arguably, irregular immigrants can jeopardise the security landscape of a receiving country. According to a statistic, currently more than 10 million irregular immigrants are residing in the US, and that population is growing at 700,000 every year. Pointing to the fact that three out of 100 people are undocumented, Johnson and Kane expressed their concern that this huge number of irregular immigrants can profoundly affect the security environment of the country.⁶² Irregular immigrants can easily become involved in criminal activities because of their illegal status in the host country. There are some offences which can be conducted only by the non-citizens. In addition to that immigrants often show a higher percentage of criminal activities than the natives. In a host country, irregular immigrants might try to influence the policies of receiving state in their favour or they might even launch terrorist attacks to fulfill their objectives.⁶³

Irregular migration also creates security threats for the poorer countries. From a national security point of view, migration management appears to be a bigger security challenge for the poor countries than developed states. In fact, the poorer countries have different types of concerns over irregular migration.

From the above discussion, it is evident that irregular migrants can cause security threats for the receiving countries. However, this does not preclude the possibility that irregular migrants themselves may primarily face security challenges. They can become victims by falling into the hands of human trafficking and smuggling groups and even in the hands of organised criminal groups. In a host country, they lack legal status for their stay and work and therefore, may resort to different kind of illegal activities, which also can create security threats for a state.

4.2 Human Security

Unlike strategic analysts who perceive that irregular migration is responsible for causing state insecurity, protagonists of human security tend to focus on the security of individual migrants rather than the security of states. The human security concept gained momentum at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) defines human security and holds the view

⁶² Kirk Johnson and Tim Kane, "The Real Problem with Immigration...and the Real Solution", The Heritage Foundation, 01 March 2006, available at <https://www.heritage.org/immigration/report/the-real-problem-immigration-and-the-real-solution>, accessed on 27 January 2018.

⁶³ Margit Fauser, *Transnational Migration – A National Security Risk? Securitization of Migration Policies in Germany, Spain and the United Kingdom*, Center for International Relations, Reports & Analysis 2/06, available at pdc.ceu.hu/archive/00004804/01/rap_i_an_0206a.pdf, accessed on 31 January 2018.

that human security is mainly a human-centred model focused on economic aspects of a person's life. The definition of UNDP emphasises the right-respecting political structure and culture that does not discriminate people, according to race, religion, gender, or any other ground. Moreover, this approach emphasises on sustainable global development which requires social and political institutions favourable to the promotion of human security. Migration, both results from and itself, can lead to human insecurity. Destabilisation of economic lives of individuals and their family members, dislocation due to natural disasters, religious and political persecution constitute the threats to human security which drive migration on a mass scale.⁶⁴

Irregular immigrants are particularly vulnerable to exploitation, discrimination and abuse. They are in a threat of being exploited by organised human traffickers and smugglers. When states try to increase control over their borders to prevent irregular migration, potential migrants move to organised crime groups to arrange border crossing for them. The smuggled migrants are unaware of probable risks associated with these transactions, and as a result, often become victims of various maltreatments by organised crime syndicates.

Research related to smuggling of asylum seekers reveal that smuggling and human trafficking also push the migrants to various sources of vulnerability: social, economic, and political.⁶⁵ In most of the circumstances, women and children become easy victims of human trafficking and are forcibly exploited in the sex industry or domestic work. Considering the level of abuse faced by trafficked people, scholars have compared the current practice of human trafficking with slave trade.⁶⁶ Irregular migration, human trafficking and smuggling are nested concepts. According to Väyrynen, irregular migration along with smuggling and human trafficking is connected to a larger problem of illicit global economy and organised crime.⁶⁷

The exact number of victims of human trafficking is not known. The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimated that in 2012 approximately 20.9 million people were victims of forced labour. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in its 2012 Global Report on Trafficking in Persons mentioned that between 2007-2010, people from 136 countries were trafficked and detected in 118 countries. Notably in this period, women account for 55-60 per cent and children 27 per cent of all global trafficking victims respectively. In 2001, around 120,000 people were trafficked into the EU. The victims become servants or are forced to work in

⁶⁴ Francesca Vietti and Todd Scribner, "Human Insecurity: Understanding International Migration from a Human Security Perspective", *Journal on Migration and Human Security*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2013, pp. 17-31.

⁶⁵ Khalid Koser, "Irregular Migration, State Security and Human Security", *op. cit.*, p. 12.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Raimo Väyrynen, "Illegal Immigration, Human Trafficking, and Organized Crime", *Discussion Paper No. 2003/72*, World Institute for Development Economics Research (WIDER), October 2003, pp. 1-25.

low paid and risky jobs. In some cases, they are either forced into begging and/or prostitution.⁶⁸

While anyone can become a victim of trafficking or smuggling, irregular immigrants are particularly vulnerable for some reasons, including lack of legal status and protections, limited employment options, limited language efficiency, poverty and immigration-related debts and social isolation. In most of the circumstances, they are victimised by traffickers from a similar ethnic, national or cultural background, on whom they become dependent for employment or other supports in a foreign country.⁶⁹ Human trafficking is initiated by the local elites or entrepreneurs who have connections with foreign employers or smugglers. The 'en route' phase of human trafficking or smuggling can differ significantly in terms of its mode of transportation, duration, the level of control and of responsibility that the smugglers can exercise over their customers. For these reasons, human trafficking or smuggling can be characterised as a 'network of locals' rather than an enterprise of 'international mafia'.⁷⁰

A receiving state should play a major role in resolving the problem and protecting the human rights of individuals residing within its own boundary. Although receiving states are in a position to play a key role in protecting human rights of migrants, often they fall short of fulfilling this responsibility. In a report on the human rights of migrants, Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights argued,

"In exercising their sovereign right to regulate the entry, stay and movement of migrants and their policy on immigration, asylum and refuge, States should bear in mind the international obligations they have assumed in the area of human rights. In other words, States party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child must guarantee to anyone who is in their territory and subject to their jurisdiction the rights recognised in those legal instruments."⁷¹

Beside the irregular process of movement, irregular status of the migrants also jeopardises the security of irregular migrants. They are often forced to work in dangerous and precarious jobs, are excluded from education, health and other social

⁶⁸ Sinikukka Saari, "Balancing between Inclusion and Exclusion: The EU's Fight against Irregular Migration and Human Trafficking from Ukraine, Moldova and Russia", *Working Paper: Challenge*, January 2006, available at <http://www.lse.ac.uk/internationalRelations/centresandunits/EFPU/EFPUpdfs/EFPUchallengewp3.pdf>, accessed on 05 February 2018.

⁶⁹ "Human Trafficking-Exploitation of Illegal Aliens", Federation for American Immigration Reform, August 2016, available at <https://fairus.org/issue/illegal-immigration/human-trafficking-exploitation-illegal-aliens>, accessed on 19 February 2018.

⁷⁰ Raimo Väyrynen, *op.cit.*, p. 5.

⁷¹ United Nations, *Report on the Human Rights of Migrants Submitted by the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights*, 2004, Geneva: UN.

welfare provisions and also face difficulties in arranging accommodation. Although they may have a valid asylum claim, their status usually makes them unwilling to communicate with concerned authorities.⁷² Overall, they become trapped in a situation where they face enormous difficulties in fulfilling their basic needs.

Ben Emmerson, the special rapporteur to the UN on counter-terrorism and human rights issue, noted, "While there is no evidence that migration leads to increased terrorist activity, migration policies that are restrictive or that violate human rights may in fact create conditions conducive to terrorism." He argued that restrictive immigration policies may lead to terrorism, as he noted, "Overly-restrictive migration policies introduced because of terrorism concerns are not justified and may, in fact, be damaging to state security."⁷³

5. Conclusion

Currently, the global community is experiencing a big challenge from irregular migration. The causes of irregular migration are economic, social, political, and environmental. Moreover, in recent years, conflicts, deprivation, different types of human rights abuses and other adversities as well as advancement in transport and communication technologies have given rise to a huge number of irregular or undocumented immigrants. Although the right to migrate is an inalienable right recognised by the global community, in current days, liberal democratic countries are opting to curb this right for the sake of national interest and state sovereignty. It is evident that the expansion of global terrorism is also playing a catalytic role in pushing states towards strict immigration policies.

Nowadays, the EU and other western receiving countries are concentrating more on border management and border control. But relevant literature could not demonstrate that those policies have been successful in decreasing the number of irregular migration. Instead, people from various parts of the world are risking their lives to go to safer countries and are becoming irregular immigrants in those countries. Therefore, without properly addressing the root causes of irregular migration, curbing the number of irregular migration will be a difficult task. Existing debates on the issue highlight that migration is a meta-narrative and intrinsically linked to the evolution of human civilisation. However, that should not mean that states cannot control, regulate, or stem migration. Developed countries and donors can formulate effective policies to pre-empt irregular migrants' movements from the conflict-prone and poor countries to the West.

⁷² Khalid Koser, "Irregular Migration, State Security and Human Security", *op. cit.*, p. 12.

⁷³ Lizzie Dearden, "UN Report Finds No Evidence Migration Causes Terror Attacks and Warns Anti-Refugee Laws Could Worsen Risk", *Independent*, 24 October 2016.

If the trade-off of non-irregular migration is not better, people will try to continue their journey to cross international borders to become irregular migrants in another country. It, therefore, can be argued that irregular migration will continue in future, although it may be possible for countries to reduce the scale of irregular migrants. The main reason is that the factors or forces which determine international migration are quite potent while the ability of states and international organisations to modify them is very limited.

M Ashique Rahman

UNDERSTANDING THE CHANGING NATURE OF GLOBAL TERRORISM: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Abstract

Terrorism and violent extremism surpassing every region and almost all the countries of the contemporary world are posing the most crucial threat to international security and stability. Terrorism as a 'tool, technique and method of achieving specific political objective' has a history that can be traced back to millennia. An analysis of the history of modern terrorism, however, shows that over the years there have been unprecedented changes in the nature of global terrorism in terms of organising ideologies of terrorist groups, the tactics and weapons they have made use of and the targets. The main objective of the paper is to explore and understand these changes through historical analysis. The paper uses David C. Rapoport's Four Waves Theory of the history of modern terrorism that provides a very useful framework in tracing and analysing the changes. Analysis in the paper reveals that changes in the nature of global terrorism in terms of transformations in tactics, weapons and targets have gone through an evolution buttressed by contemporary political factors, changes in sources of motivations *i. e.*, ideologies, changes in technology and the enabling environment. The paper also reflects on the contemporary discourse as to whether we are experiencing a 'new wave' or 'fifth wave' and upholds the view that any analytical construction that suggests a 'fifth wave' based on differences in tactics, weapons and targets will be flawed and misconstrued.

1. Introduction

The world is in turmoil and terrorism and/or violent extremism occurring worldwide can be held predominantly responsible for such intensified uncertainty and insecurity. If the Cold War is considered as the determining factor of international relations and politics since World War II till its end in the late 1980s, terrorism and violent extremism can easily be conceived as the determining feature since the ushering of the 21st century. The disastrous terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 and the consequent unleashing of the Global War on Terrorism (GWoT) by the United States (US) and its allies defined and dictated so far the directions of international politics and events in this new century.¹ New alliances are formed; relationships and institutions

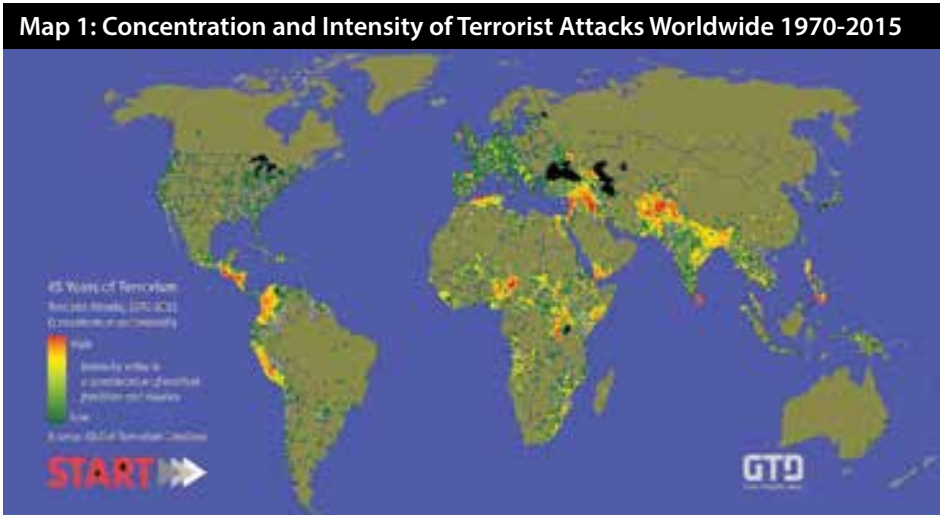
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¹ Doug Stokes writes, "Similar to the Cold War ideology of anti-communism, the new ideology of anti-terrorism serves to provide an optic through which international relations are viewed and Western

have been redefined and restructured; and countries have reconceptualised and reframed their national interests and priorities.

A defining characteristic of contemporary terrorism, however, is its global reach surpassing every region and almost all the countries of the world if not directly, then certainly indirectly (Map1). Thousands of people are killed each year and the lives of millions are affected. Occurrences of terrorist incidents in some countries are so pervasive, frequent and fatal that they even challenge the very structure and organisation of the state authority engendering state-failure and a potential for ultimate breakdown. Examples of such countries include but certainly are not limited to Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nigeria, Somalia etc. In 2016 alone, a total of 11,072 terrorist attacks occurred worldwide, resulting in more than 25,600 total deaths and 33,800 injuries.² These casualty figures also include more than 6,700 perpetrator deaths and 1,600 perpetrator injuries.³ In addition, more than 15,500 people were kidnapped or taken hostage. Table 1 in Annex 1, shows the total number of terrorist attacks, deaths and injuries in the ten most affected countries around the world in the year 2016.



Source: University of Maryland, *Global Terrorism Database (GTB)*, available at http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/images/START_GlobalTerrorismDatabase_TerroristAttacksConcentrationIntensityMap_45Years.png, accessed on 20 March 2017.

Following the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, which was no doubt, a watershed event in the history of humankind, al-Qaeda emerged as the dominant

intervention in the global South is justified." Doug Stokes, "Ideas and Avocados: Ontologising Critical Terrorism Studies", *International Relations*, Vol. 23, No. 1, 2009, p. 85.

² National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, University of Maryland, "Annex of Statistical Information", in the US Department of State, *Country Reports on Terrorism 2016*, July 2017, p. 4.

³ *Ibid.*

terrorist organisation and the front liner of international terrorism. As far as the structure is concerned, al-Qaeda emerged more as a terrorist network with branches and affiliates spreading across various countries and regions. In terms of tactics and weapons, suicide bombings and the use of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) have had been the hallmark of al-Qaeda and contemporary terrorist groups. Al-Qaeda, over the years, has also adopted some of the guerrilla tactics – hit and run – especially in Iraq and Afghanistan. Terrorist acts carried out by al-Qaeda mostly targeted armed forces and government installations although often with collateral civilian casualties. Moreover, assassination tactics for targeted killings of political leaders and high government officials, both civilian and defence forces, have also been practised. Following the death of its supreme leader Osama bin Laden, the network, however, exhibits considerable signs of weakness and impotency.

In 2013-2014, a new extremist group⁴ emerged namely Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS)⁵ that posed significant challenges to the conceptualisation of the nature of a terrorist group as for the first time in the history of terrorism a violent extremist group established its political authority over a territory, thereby, led some scholars⁶ to coin a new term Terrorist Semi-States (TSSs) and/or pseudo-state⁷. However, to establish and maintain that political authority, apart from frontal military combat with various opposing forces, ISIS has also employed excessive violence and brutality.⁸ Some of its tactics involve perpetrating ultra-violent acts in terms of indiscriminate killings, hostage taking and ransom seeking, beheading of the hostages, trading slaves, killing of civilians including women and children etc. In terms of weapons, ISIS has also made massive use of IEDs in addition to conventional military weapons. However, in terms of weapons, tactics and targets, ISIS has made some innovations.⁹ Organisationally, it has exceeded the al-Qaeda model of networked organisation,

⁴ I have avoided using the term 'terrorists' for ISIS as the group holds authority over a territory, possesses its own army, engages in frontal combat with government forces as well as devises financing mechanism to fund its governance system over that particular territory. The group, nevertheless, is imbued with many vestiges of a terrorist organisation carrying out acts of terrorism *i.e.*, suicide bombing, targeted killing, beheading, kidnapping, hostage taking etc., to terrorise the society.

⁵ The organisation has many names *viz.*, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), mostly used by the US; the Islamic State of Iraq and Al-Sham; Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS); a shorter version Islamic State (IS); and an Islamic nomenclature *Daesh*. Throughout the paper the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) is used.

⁶ Or Honig and Ido Yahel, "A Fifth Wave of Terrorism? The Emergence of Terrorist Semi-States", *Terrorism and Political Violence*, published online on 09 June 2017, available at <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09546553.2017.1330201> accessed on 15 July 2017.

⁷ Audrey Kurth Cronin, "ISIS Is Not a Terrorist Group: Why Counterterrorism Won't Stop the Latest Jihadist Threat", *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2015, available at <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/isis-not-terrorist-group>, accessed on 15 January 2017; Jessica Anderson, "ISIS: State or Terror Group?", *Small Wars Journal*, June 2016, available at <http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/isis-state-or-terror-group>, accessed on 15 January 2017.

⁸ For a recent account of the origin, organisation and strategies of ISIS, see, Fawaz A. Gerges, *ISIS: A History*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2016.

⁹ "No One Wants to See ISIS Defeated More Than Muslims", *The World Post*, available at https://www.huffingtonpost.com/dean-obeidallah/isis-defeat-muslims_b_10825028.html, accessed on 26 July 2017.

which inspired various extremist groups and individuals all around the world to carry out terrorist acts to achieve its objectives. Hence, we have witnessed innovative terrorist acts such as ramming heavy vehicles on the pedestrians and on crowds, shooting in concerts, theatres, pubs etc., carried out in the name of ISIS. Moreover, ISIS has also made tremendous use of modern information and communication technology (ICT), especially the internet and the social media. All these new tactics of ISIS and the ensuing brutality raised few questions about the changing nature of terrorism and violent extremism at the global level.

While the common element of terrorising in the society is the basic ingredient of all terrorist groups, various groups in different times used different means to achieve that objective. There are many factors that determined these choices, for example, local conditions and circumstances, the specific goals and objectives and obviously, the availability of weapons that they use. Nevertheless, there remain some questions as: are the tactics and weapons used by contemporary terrorist/extremist groups new? Why are there changes? Why are they adopting new tactics, weapons and targets? The paper intends to answer these questions through historical analysis of global terrorism.

If we look at the history of terrorism, we see using terrorism as a 'tool, technique and method' of achieving political objective, is nothing new. It has been there for centuries or even millennia. They have used different tactics and weapons while they have different objectives. Since, the history of terrorism is old, for convenience of analysis, the theoretical framework of David C. Rapoport, a renowned scholar of terrorism studies, is employed here to analyse the changing nature of modern terrorism. According to Rapoport, modern terrorism started in the latter half of the 19th century, with the advent of Anarchism in Russia. Therefore, employing Rapoport's theory also helps us to analyse a relatively shorter period – one and half a century – of history of terrorism rather than the millennia.

The main objective of the paper is to explore the changing nature of global terrorism. However, since Rapoport's four waves of modern terrorism is used as a theoretical framework, this paper intends to reflect briefly on the discourse whether the present spate of global terrorism ushered in a 'new wave' or, as noted by some scholars and observers, the 'fifth wave' of modern terrorism. The paper is expected to make threefold contribution to the voluminous literature of terrorism studies. Firstly, it will re-emphasise the fact that a neutral, value-free conceptualisation of terrorism must define it as a 'tool, technique and method of achieving political objective' no matter what the political objective is. As Alex P. Schmid mentioned, "few subjects are as plagued by normative questions and infested by politics as is terrorism."¹⁰ Hence, a value-free definition is required to bring in all the groups into a neutral and

¹⁰ Alex P. Schmid (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research*, London: Routledge, 2011, pp. 201-202.

comprehensive analysis of the history of terrorism, irrespective of their ideological inspiration and political objective. Secondly, the exercise will enable us to understand the changing nature of global terrorism as an evolution buttressed by contemporary political factors, changes in technology and enabling environments, thereby, to sketch out how and why we have reached at this point of apocalyptic terrorism¹¹ that seeks a worldwide transformation through violence and annihilation. And thirdly, the paper will hopefully put the discourse of 'fifth wave' towards a right direction by highlighting the fact that the required premises of the 'wave theory' need to be tested and satisfied with.

The paper has six sections including introduction and conclusion. Section two involves conceptual discussion of the term terrorism. Section three initiates the discussion on the history of terrorism and introduces David Rapoport's 'Four Waves Theory'. Section four elaborates the Four Waves Theory in detail and shows how the nature of global terrorism changes over time, in terms of tactics, weapons and targets. The discourse on whether we are experiencing a 'new wave' or 'a fifth wave' of terrorism is dealt with in section five. Section six is the conclusion of the paper.

2. Defining Terrorism amid Divergences and Discrepancies

Terrorism is perhaps, the most controversial and contested term in contemporary times and over the years there have been divergences and discrepancies among the scholars regarding its meaning and conceptualisation. Ironically, it seems that there is at least one universal consensus about the definition and meaning of terrorism, *i.e.*, there is no universally accepted definition of terrorism. Alex P. Schmid, a renowned scholar of terrorism studies, has compiled and analysed more than 250 definitions of terrorism and found out that there were more dissimilarities and divergences than coherence and consensus.¹² He however, mentioned a few reasons for such divergences and diversities *viz.*, political, legal, social and popular notions about terrorism are divergent; definition often involves legitimisation, de-legitimisation and/or criminalisation of certain group or groups; different types of terrorism assume different forms of manifestations; and the term itself has undergone changes in its meaning in the past 200 years of history.¹³

However, from the etymological point of view, the original historical meanings of both 'terror' and 'terrorism' are relatively straightforward. The word 'terror' is derived from the Latin verb *terrere*, which means 'bring someone to tremble through

¹¹ Frances L. Flannery, *Understanding Apocalyptic Terrorism: Countering the Radical Mindset*, London: Routledge, 2016. Another similar term is millenarian terrorism. See, James F. Rinehart, "The Rise of Millenarian Terror", in James F. Rinehart, *Apocalyptic Faith and Political Violence: Prophets of Terror*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006, pp. 33-78.

¹² See Alex P. Schmid (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 99-157.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

great fear'.¹⁴ A simple definition of terrorism is provided by Walter Laqueur, who considered terrorism as "the illegitimate use of force to achieve political objectives".¹⁵ This definition is too simple as it can involve too many types of activities. Moreover, it avoids a definitional problem by shifting the focus to a determination of what constitute legitimate or illegitimate thereby, adding new problem *i.e.*, who is going to define it. A very prolific definition is provided by Enders and Sandler that captures most of the elements of terrorism. According to them, "terrorism is the premeditated use or threat to use violence by individuals or subnational groups to obtain a political or social objective through the intimidation of a large audience beyond that of the immediate victims".¹⁶ This is one of the most appropriate definitions of terrorism as it emphasises the most important aspect of terrorism *viz.*, intimidating a large audience beyond that of the immediate victims. It is because of this aspect of instilling incisive fear that terrorism is also termed as a 'psychological warfare'.

However, if we look at some official definitions we will find that various agencies of the same country use different definitions of terrorism to suit their mission and agenda. In fact, almost all the agencies and federal organisations of the US have their own definitions of terrorism. For example, the US Department of Defence defines terrorism as "the calculated use of unlawful violence or threat of unlawful violence to inculcate fear; intended to coerce or to intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological".¹⁷ A similar definition is also used by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). On the other hand, the United States legal code defines terrorism as "premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agents; 'international terrorism' as terrorism involving citizens or the territory of more than one country; and 'terrorist group' as any group practicing, or which has significant subgroups which practice, international terrorism."¹⁸ This definition is used by the US Department of Justice (DoJ) and the US State Department.

According to Lutz and Lutz,¹⁹ a definition of terrorism needs to include six essential elements to become a value-free concept: (1) the use of violence or threat of violence with an intention of creating fear or terror; (2) by an organised group; (3) to achieve political objectives; (4) the violence is directed against a target audience that extends beyond the immediate victims, who are often innocent civilians; (5) a government can either be the perpetrator of violence or the target – at least one

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

¹⁵ Walter Laqueur, *The Age of Terrorism*, Boston: Little Brown 1987. Quoted in James M. Lutz and Brenda J. Lutz, *Global Terrorism*, 2nd Ed. Oxon: Routledge, 2008, p. 9.

¹⁶ Walter Enders and Todd Sandler, *The Political Economy of Terrorism*, 1st Edition, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006 (e-book), p. 3.

¹⁷ Joint Chiefs of Staff DOD, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, 2008.

¹⁸ Section 2656f (d) of Title 22 of the United States Code.

¹⁹ James M. Lutz and Brenda J. Lutz, *op. cit.*, pp. 10-14.

has to be a non-state actor; and (6) terrorism is a weapon of the weak. Lutz and Lutz mentioned that all six of the above elements are necessary for an action to be considered a terrorist act.²⁰ Some might contest this conceptual construction by referring to the contemporary 'lone-wolf phenomenon' which is an exception to the second element. However, the value-free aspect of the definition lies in the fact that it helps us apply terrorism to any group's acts that use violence to induce fear irrespective of its political objective.

2.1 *Typology of Terrorism and International Terrorism*

Conceptual understanding of terrorism is further complicated by the fact that various groups with diverse political objectives resort to the tools and tactics of terrorism. There are many groups that use religion as their organising ideology and pursue religious as well as political objectives. And there are many secular variations *viz.*, violent extremist groups pursuing national, ethnic and regional goals, left-wing vs. right-wing ideological goals, and even global issue based extremism like eco-terrorism. Moreover, we have renowned scholar like Noam Chomsky who also talks about western terrorism.²¹ And then we also have a completely different type of terrorism which, perhaps defy many characteristics of terrorism *i.e.*, state terrorism. As it is understood today and as mentioned by Gérard Chaliand and Arnaud Blin, state terrorism applies mainly to the support provided by certain governments to terrorist groups, but it takes many other forms as well. It can also be considered as a tool systematically employed by totalitarian regimes.²² They also noted, "A state's terrorism is also manifest in the military doctrine of its armed forces. The doctrine of 'strategic bombing', for example, developed in the West in the 1930s, was based entirely on the terror incited by the mass bombing of civilian populations to compel governments to surrender. This doctrine resulted in the bombing of Dresden and the atomic destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki."²³

However, for the purpose of our discussion of global terrorism, we need to differentiate between domestic and international terrorism. Not all terrorism is international, although, from an historical perspective, as noted by Albert J. Bergesen and Omar Lizardo, "both domestic and international terrorism seem endemic to organised social life, appearing and reappearing throughout history"²⁴. Nevertheless, international terrorism is "where the perpetrator, target group, or national locale of

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

²¹ Noam Chomsky and Andre Vltchek, *On Western Terrorism: From Hiroshima to Drone Warfare*, London: Pluto Press, 2013.

²² Gérard Chaliand and Arnaud Blin (eds.), *The History of Terrorism: From Antiquity to Al Qaeda*, translated by Edward Schneider, Kathryn Pulver and Jesse Browner, California: University of California Press, 2007, p. 7.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Albert J. Bergesen and Omar Lizardo, "International Terrorism and the World-System", *Sociological Theory* (Theories of Terrorism: A Symposium), Vol. 22, No. 1, March 2004, p. 39.

the incident involves at least two different countries”²⁵ According to Lutz and Lutz, “international terrorism usually will include situations that involve a target in another country attacked by a group from another, thus creating a situation in which more than one government has an interest”²⁶ It is to be noted that in today’s interconnected world this distinction can often be a false one as ultimately all domestic terrorism has international implications and that all international terrorism one way or the other has domestic ramifications.²⁷ However, scholar like Fawaz A. Gerges upholds that although there were instances of international terrorism earlier, as far as religious variant of terrorism is concerned, it transformed into a genuine transnational character during the Afghanistan war of the 1980s and later, in the 1990s, al-Qaeda emerged as the vanguard of international terrorism, which was unprecedented before it.²⁸

3. History of Terrorism and the Four Waves Theory

History of terrorism dates back centuries or even millennia. As Louise Richardson noted, “terrorism is a tactic employed by many different groups in many different parts of the world in pursuit of many different objectives”²⁹ If we consider terrorism using religion as motivations, the earliest instance of such violent extremism can be traced back to the very first-century when the Jewish Zealots, also known as the *sicarii*, incited an uprising against the Roman occupation in the ancient city of Judea. The Islamic variant of such violent extremism can be dated back to the late 11th century when the *Ismaili* sect in the Middle East, also known as the Assassins, assassinated their opposing governors, political and military leaders. Some might refer to the fact that as the genealogy of the term ‘terrorism’ suggests, modern terrorism can be traced back to the French Revolution, although it was the state terrorism variant. However, the paper uses David Rapoport’s time frame of the history of modern terrorism for convenience of analysis.

David C. Rapoport, now a Professor Emeritus of Political Science at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) and “one of the founding figures of terrorism studies,”³⁰ propounded his famous ‘waves theory’ of history of terrorism in the late 20th century. He first narrated the argument in his small piece of entry entitled, “Terrorism”, in the First Edition of *Encyclopaedia of Violence, Peace and Conflict*, published in 1999.³¹ The discussion, however, drew little attention. It was after the 11 September 2001 attacks, David Rapoport published an article entitled, “The Fourth

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ James M. Lutz and Brenda J. Lutz, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

²⁸ Fawaz A. Gerges, *The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global*, 2nd Edition, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

²⁹ Louise Richardson *FRSE*, “Forward”, in Alex P. Schmid (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. xv.

³⁰ John Horgan and Kurt Braddock (eds.), *Terrorism Studies: A Reader*, London: Routledge, 2012, p. 1.

³¹ David C. Rapoport, “Terrorism”, in *Encyclopaedia of Violence, Peace and Conflict*, 1st Edition, Vol. 3, San Diego, CA: Academic Press, 1999, pp. 497-500.

Wave: September 11 and the History of Terrorism"³² and as noted by T. Parker and N. Sitter, it is "one of the most influential articles ever written in the field of terrorism studies."³³ However, he concretised his theory later in a book chapter titled, "The Four Waves of Modern Terrorism,"³⁴ published in 2004. And later he very comprehensively elaborated his theory in his massive four-volume book titled, *Terrorism: Critical Concepts in Political Science*, published in 2006.³⁵ Each wave of his four waves has been comprehensively elaborated in each volume of the book.

There are some critical reflections³⁶ on this Four Waves Theory of Rapoport as well as there are some very high acclamations as well. Jeffrey Kaplan noted, "Rapoport's work has shaped, defined and indeed invented the study of religious terrorism."³⁷ In 2009, Karen Rasler and William R. Thompson systematically tested the wave argument and commented that, "our findings...provide empirical support for the Rapoport model. Waves do indeed appear to characterise terrorist activity."³⁸ Critiques of the theory T. Parker and N. Sitter, before refuting some of its premises mentioned, "to this day, it provides the basic conceptual framework for many academic courses taught around the world on this subject."³⁹ Alex P. Schmid emphasised that it was "one of the greatest contributions to the study of terrorism in the past two decades"⁴⁰

However, it is beyond the scope of the paper to delve into a critical assessment of the theory itself, testing its various parameters and premises as well as revealing its shortcomings, rather, the paper uses the theory to trace the changing nature of terrorism over the last nearly one and half centuries, and especially to make use of an analytical framework to understand the changing nature of terrorism and violent extremism in this 21st century.

³² There were in fact, two versions of the article published concurrently viz., David C. Rapoport, "The Fourth Wave: September 11 and the History of Terrorism", *Current History*, Vol. 100, No. 650, Special Issue, December 2001, pp. 419-424, and "The Four Waves of Rebel Terror and September 11", *Anthropoetics*, Vol. 8, No. 1, Spring/Summer 2002, available at <http://anthropoetics.ucla.edu/ap0801/terror/>, accessed on 12 January 2017.

³³ Tom Parker and Nick Sitter, "The Four Horsemen of Terrorism: It's Not Waves, It's Strains", *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 28, No. 2, 2016, p. 198.

³⁴ David C. Rapoport, "The Four Waves of Modern Terrorism", in Audrey Kurth Cronin and James Ludes (eds.), *Attacking Terrorism: Elements of a Grand Strategy*, Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2004, pp. 46-73.

³⁵ David C. Rapoport, *Terrorism: Critical Concepts in Political Science*, Four Volumes, London: Routledge, 2006.

³⁶ Tom Parker and Nick Sitter, *op. cit.*, pp. 197-216; Lindsay Clutterbuck, "The Progenitors of Terrorism: Russian Revolutionaries or Extreme Irish Republicans?", *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 16, No. 1, 2004, pp. 154-181.

³⁷ Jeffrey Kaplan, "David Rapoport and the Study of Religiously Motivated Terrorism", in Jean E. Rosenfeld (ed.), *Terrorism, Identity and Legitimacy: The Four Waves Theory and Political Violence*, Oxon: Routledge, 2011, pp. 66-83.

³⁸ Karen Rasler and William R. Thompson, "Looking for Waves of Terrorism", in Jean E. Rosenfeld (ed.), *Ibid.*, pp. 13-29.

³⁹ Tom Parker and Nick Sitter, *op. cit.*, p. 198.

⁴⁰ Alex P. Schmid (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 228.

4. Rapoport's Four Waves of Modern Terrorism

Summarising the history of modern terrorism, Rapoport⁴¹ delineated four waves of modern terrorism. According to him, the Anarchist wave is the first wave, which began in Russia in the 1880s and spread to Europe, Asia, and the Americas. The second is the Anti-Colonial wave *i.e.*, the nationalist-separatist movements beginning in the 1920s, during which minority groups sought to be liberated from their colonial masters in their countries. The New Left wave which is social revolutionary is the third wave. And the Religious wave was punctuated by the Iran hostage crisis of 1979 and the simultaneous onset of the Afghanistan War. Rapoport defines a wave as "a cycle of activity in a given time period, with international character; with similar activities occurring in different regions, driven by a common predominant energy that shapes the participating groups".⁴² He refers to the groups' motivating ideology as the common predominant energy. Nevertheless, Rapoport distinguishes each of his waves with its own ingredients, different audiences, sympathisers and supporters, or *modus operandi*, meaning the way these groups operate. He also noted that each of these waves last for a few decades. Each wave lasts for three to four decades, after which they might still be there but attract less sympathisers and supporters. And finally, following a certain period of time, they gradually fade away. These four waves are elaborated in more detail in the next section to delineate the changing nature of global terrorism in terms of tactics, targets and weapons.

4.1 *Understanding the Changing Nature of Global Terrorism: Tactics, Weapons, and Targets*

Rapoport's first wave *i.e.*, the Anarchist Wave was inspired by a number of Russian writers namely Bakunin and Kropotkin who espoused their doctrine or strategy of terror. These anarchists used new technologies, new communication tools of their age, such as the telegraph and newspapers. One of the most notorious organisations of that era is the Russian organisation *Narodnaya Volya*, best translated as 'the people's will'. Members of that group assassinated, amongst others, a very high profile political leader, a Russian Tsar. According to David Rapoport, these people call themselves terrorists, and the 1890s has been described as the 'Golden Age of Assassination'.⁴³ This wave, however, lasted until the early twentieth century, and some other high profile victims were the Empress Elisabeth of Austria, *Umberto* the first, King of Italy and the US President William McKinley.

⁴¹ David C. Rapoport, "The Four Waves of Modern Terrorism", in Audrey Kurth Cronin and James Ludes (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 46-73.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 47.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

The second wave that started in the 1920s is described as a struggle for self-determination, for independence, and to liberate *i.e.*, liberating former colonies from their occupiers *e.g.*, French rule, British rule, etc. And the tactics these groups used were different from those in the previous wave. They used guerrilla tactics – hit and run – which was difficult for the colonial powers to deal with. And some of these groups were quite successful in managing to almost defeat their opposing forces. Also very important is that, according to David Rapoport, these rebels stopped calling themselves terrorists and were beginning to use the term ‘freedom fighters’ struggling against ‘government forces.’⁴⁴ Among the most well-known organisations of that wave was the Irish Republican Army (IRA). From the 1920s and a little earlier, they were fighting for independence, a free Irish state and a united one. Another similar group was the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) of Algeria that managed in the end to fight for an independent Algeria from French rule. And then the third organisation is Irgun, a militant Zionist group that was fighting against the British authorities who at that time were governing what we now call Israel and Palestine. They bombed the King David Hotel in Jerusalem, one of their most notorious attacks, which at that time was the headquarters of the British mandatory authorities over Palestine.

The third wave of terrorism is what David Rapoport calls the New Left Wave or extreme left terrorism. Groups like the Red Brigades, the *autonomi* faction, and other groups that started in the 1960s, fell in this category. The Vietnam War that raged from the late 1950s up until the 1970s was the predominant driver for these groups. David Rapoport observes that many groups during this wave in the developed world including the Weather Underground, a group of students from North America, and *autonomi* in Germany saw themselves as vanguards for the masses of the Third World. Other groups include groups in Latin America, who were revolutionary groups and who used urban guerrilla warfare to fight the authorities and governments being supported partly by the then Soviet Union and its allies. However, the context of this wave, of course, is the context of the Cold War. And at international level, according to Rapoport, international terrorism of those days was very much associated with Palestinians and in particular the Palestinian Liberation Organization, the PLO of Yasser Arafat. The *modus operandi*, the techniques, and the tactics during this wave also included hostage taking and hijacking specially, hijacking of the commercial airliner. More than 100 of such airliner hijackings occurred every year during the 1970s.⁴⁵ However, hijackings of the airliners were simply a tactic or tool to create or get attention or to press upon the governments to heed to their demands. And in most cases, the perpetrators of the hijacks managed to get out alive and the hostages were unharmed.

A very famous example of hostage takings during this wave was the hostage taking of Israeli athletes during the Olympic Games in Munich in 1972. That event was

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

⁴⁵ David C. Rapoport, “The Fourth Wave: September 11 and the History of Terrorism”, *op. cit.*, p. 421.

watched by millions around the globe. The organisation behind it was called Black September, and unfortunately, it ended with all the athletes being killed, partly in an attempt to emancipate them.

The fourth and the last wave distinguished by David Rapoport is what he calls the Religious wave that started in the year 1979, the year of the Islamic revolution in Iran and the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union. David Rapoport shows that there were many different religious groups that resorted to terrorism since 1979. He mentions not only the Islamic groups but also the Sikhs from Punjab who organised one of the vicious forms of violent extremism against the Indian authorities from their holy centre, the Golden Temple in Amritsar. He also mentioned about the Jewish religious terrorists, who murdered the former Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995 while giving a speech in Tel Aviv.

The religious wave also includes Christian groups for instance, the anti-abortion militants who have carried out nearly 300 extreme acts of violence including arson and bombings of abortion clinics in the US since mid-1970s.⁴⁶ It also includes religious sects. And the most well-known attack was the attack on the Tokyo subway by the Japanese *Aum Shinrikyo i.e.*, the *Aum* sect. Members of this group released the nerve gas Sarin in the Tokyo subway and attempted to kill hundreds of people. At the end, only 12 people died while thousands were injured. The *modus operandi* of these religious groups includes, like earlier waves, assassinations of key leaders, military representatives of the states, as well as hostage taking. However, they adopted a new tactic *i.e.*, the suicide bombings. The first such attacks were carried out by the Lebanese militant *Shi'ite* organisation Hezbollah on the US and French military forces in Lebanon, where they used trucks to commit suicide terrorism by blowing up the headquarters of the Americans and the French. Nevertheless, it should be highlighted that suicide bombings were not completely new with the religious extremist groups. Suicide bombings were also carried out by the non-religious groups as well. For instances, the Kurdish workers parties, a Maoist separatist group in Turkey and the Tamil Tigers of Sri Lanka who were trying to liberate or create autonomy for the Tamils on the island of Sri Lanka often used or commit suicide attacks against their opponents mostly the government. Table 2 provides a snapshot view of Rapoport's four waves of terrorism highlighting the differential targets and strategies.

⁴⁶ Kimberly Hutcherson, "A brief history of anti-abortion violence", *CNN*, 01 December 2015, available at <https://edition.cnn.com/2015/11/30/us/anti-abortion-violence/index.html>, accessed on 20 January 2017.

Table 2: A Snapshot of Rapoport’s Four Waves of Terrorism

Waves	Primary Strategy	Target Identity	Precipitant	Special Characteristics
Anarchists 1870–1910s	Elite assassinations/ Bank robberies	Primarily European States	Failure/ slowness of political reform	Developed basic terrorism strategies and rationales
Nationalist 1920s–1960s	Guerrilla attacks on police and military	European empires	Post-1919 delegitimisation of empire	Increased international support (UN and diasporas)
New Left/ Marxist 1960s–1980s	Hijackings, kidnappings, assassination	Governments in general; increasing focus on U.S.	Viet Cong successes	Increased international training/ cooperation/ sponsorship
Religious 1970s–2020s	Suicide bombings	U.S., Israel, and secular regimes with Muslim Populations	Iranian revolution, Soviet invasion of Afghanistan	Casualty escalation, decline in the number of terrorist groups

Source: Karen Rasler and William R. Thompson, “Looking for Waves of Terrorism”, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 21, No. 1, 2009, p. 31.

Therefore, an analysis of the history of modern terrorism since late 19th century reveals that as the sources or dominating energy as mentioned by Rapoport, of terrorists’ motivations changed over the periods, so did the tactics, weapons and strategies. Tactics are followed and strategies are devised to achieve the objectives in line with organising ideologies. Hence, during the first wave, assassinations dominated as the most favoured tactic by the terrorist groups of the time. Similarly, during the second wave, *i.e.*, during the anti-colonial movement, dominance of guerrilla tactics was witnessed. However, it does not mean the ineffectiveness of the earlier tactics, rather adaptation by the extremists and terrorist groups to newer challenges by adopting new tactics to be more effective in creating fear among the larger society.

During the third wave, we have seen the predominance of guerrilla tactics as well as hostage taking and airliner hijacking. And in the fourth wave, suicide bombings emerged as the dominant tactic and massive use of IEDs emerged as the dominant weapons. In fact, suicide bombing emerged as the hallmark of terrorism in the 21st century. However, it is to be noted that adopting new tactics and new weapons by terrorists groups in any point of history of terrorism does not mean complete rejection of terrorist tactics and weapons used by previous terrorist groups or in Rapoport’s terms in previous waves. Hence, we see while in the fourth wave, some tactics and weapons dominate *viz.*, suicide bombings and use of IEDs, terrorist tactics in this wave also include assassinations, kidnapping/hostage taking, guerrilla warfare,

indiscriminate killings, hijacking etc. And in the last one decade, online platform *i.e.*, the internet and the social media are used as a major source of radicalisation and recruitment for the terrorist groups as well as organising acts of terrorism. However, apparently, it may seem new, but throughout the history of terrorism, terrorist groups have always made use of the latest technology of their age or time. Particular use of tactics, weapons and targets by terrorist groups is an important phenomenon as these choices by the terrorists led to a group of scholars⁴⁷ analysing terrorists as rational actor against public perception of unscrupulous and often abnormal actor. Similarly, excessive use of beheadings by ISIS is not new in the history, and it has strategic logic benefitting them in achieving their objectives.⁴⁸ However, considering the contemporary terrorist groups' use of online technology and platform, and their use of unprecedented tactics, weapons and excessive brutality, some scholars are inclined to designate contemporary terrorism as 'a new wave' or the 'fifth wave'. The following section reflects on this particular postulation.

5. Islamic State in Iraq and Syria and Present-day Terrorism: Is It the Fifth Wave?

Building on Rapoport's four waves theory, some scholars⁴⁹ consider ushering of a fifth wave of terrorism and directed their efforts to specify the parameters of such wave. However, these kinds of efforts are not new. Following the suicide bombings in the US embassies in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar es Salam, Tanzania, and the emergence of al-Qaeda network in the mid-1990s, many scholars initiated a debate regarding the advent of a 'new terrorism' substantially different from the 'old or traditional terrorism'. Scholars like Hoffman⁵⁰, Laqueur⁵¹, Simon and Benjamin⁵², Neumann⁵³,

⁴⁷ D. E. Long, *The Anatomy of Terrorism*, New York: Free Press, 1990; C. J. M. Drake, "The Role of Ideology in Terrorists' Target Selection", *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 10, No. 2, 1998, pp. 53-85; A. Vinci, "The Strategic Use of Fear by the Lord's Resistance Army", *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 16, No. 3, 2005, pp. 361-81.

⁴⁸ For an interesting analysis of why ISIS beheads and its historical instances see, Robert Pape, Michael Rowly and Sarah Morell, "Why ISIL Beheads its Victims: The Islamic State's brutality has a strategic logic", *Politico Magazine*, 07 October 2014.

⁴⁹ To mention a few, Or Honig and Ido Yahel, *op. cit.*; Fawaz A. Gerges, "ISIS and the Third Wave of Jihadism", *Current History*, Vol. 113, No. 767, December 2014, pp. 339-343; Anthony N. Celso, "The Islamic State and Boko Haram: *Fifth Wave* Jihadist Terror Groups", *Orbis*, Vol. 59, No. 2, Spring 2015, pp. 249-268; although in a different context, Jeffery Kaplan, *Terrorist Groups and the New Tribalism: Terrorism's Fifth Wave*, London: Routledge, 2010; Emilio Sánchez de Rojas Díaz, "Are we facing the fifth international terrorist wave?", Analytical Document 02/2016, *Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos*, available at http://www.ieee.es/en/Galerias/fichero/docs_analisis/2016/DIEEEA02-2016_Oleada_Terrorismo_Internacional_ESRD_ENGLISH.pdf, accessed on 20 January 2017; and also a BlogSpot that promote the concept of fifth wave through hosting relevant blogs. Available at <https://thefifthwave.wordpress.com/> accessed on 25 January 2017.

⁵⁰ Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, London: Indigo, 1998.

⁵¹ Walter Laqueur, *The New Terrorism: Fanaticism and the Arms of Mass Destruction*, London: Oxford University Press, 1999.

⁵² S. Simon and D. Benjamin, "America and the New Terrorism", *Survival*, Vol. 42, No. 1, 2000, pp. 59-75.

⁵³ P. Neumann, *Old and New Terrorism*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009.

and Kurtulus⁵⁴ are of the opinion that 'old terrorism' in the form of, for example, the Irish Republican Army (IRA), Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA), or the Red Army Faction (RAF), is fundamentally different from the "new terrorism" predominantly perpetrated by radical Islamist groups such as al-Qaeda. However, the dichotomy of Old vs. New terrorism is created with differences in their motivations, behaviour pattern, and the nature of organisation.⁵⁵

This dichotomous construction has been met with scepticism by a number of more critical scholars. Copeland⁵⁶; Tucker⁵⁷; Crenshaw⁵⁸; Duyvesteyn⁵⁹; Spencer⁶⁰; and Field all have criticised the notion of "new terrorism". Most of them have questioned the truthfulness of the newness claims based on historical real world examples. Some of them have also questioned the accuracy of a new categorisation. According to them, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to objectively categorise the phenomenon of terrorism in one category rather than the other. They are particularly concerned that some of the attributed "new" characteristics, such as an emphasis on the fanatical religious motivations, would function politically and ideologically to dehumanise and often de-politicise the grievances of such groups. Sometimes, such grievances might have significant value and constitute part of their rightful claims. Moreover, too much emphasis on the fanaticism of the extremist groups would legitimise the use of excessive force and counter violence.

Similarly, scholars like Jeffrey Kaplan, Or Honig and Ido Yahel, Anthony Celso, and organisation such as *Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos* (Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies) initiated and carried forward a discourse identifying contemporary terrorism as the fifth wave. Or Honig and Ido Yahel are of the opinion that the emergence of terrorist semi-states (TSSs)⁶¹ mostly in the broader area of the Middle East and North Africa today (including Pakistan) should be considered as the beginning of a fifth wave.⁶² Violent extremist groups like al-Shabaab took control over large parts of south

⁵⁴ E. Kurtulus, "The 'New Terrorism' and its Critics", *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 34, No. 6, 2011, pp. 476-500.

⁵⁵ Alexander Spencer, "New Versus Old Terrorism", in Richard Jackson (ed.), *Routledge Handbook of Critical Terrorism Studies*, Oxon: Routledge 2016, p. 270.

⁵⁶ T. Copeland, "Is the New Terrorism Really New?: An Analysis of the New Paradigm for Terrorism", *Journal of Conflict Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 2, 2001, pp. 91-105.

⁵⁷ D. Tucker, "What is New about the New Terrorism and How Dangerous is It?", *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 15, No. 3, 2001, pp. 1-14.

⁵⁸ Martha Crenshaw, "New Versus 'Old' Terrorism", *Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics and Culture*, Vol. 10, No. 1, 2003, pp. 48-53.

⁵⁹ I. Duyvesteyn, "How New Is the New Terrorism?", *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 27, No. 5, 2004, pp. 439-454.

⁶⁰ Alexander Spencer, "Questioning the Concept of New Terrorism", *Peace, Conflict and Development*, Vol. 8, 2006, pp. 1-33.

⁶¹ Or Honig and Ido Yahel used the term Terrorist Semi-States (TSSs) for groups like al-Shabaab, Boko Haram, Hamas, al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), and obviously for the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

⁶² Or Honig and Ido Yahel, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

Somalia in 2009; the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) was established since Boko Haram took over north-east Nigeria in 2014; the Hamas has ruled over the Gaza Strip since 2007; al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) located in the province of Hadhramaut, South Yemen has controlled the area since 2015; and finally the Houthis since 2015. Anthony Celso, based on Jeffrey Kaplan's work, has categorically identified distinguishable traits of violent extremist groups such as the ISIS and Boko Haram and claimed the commencement of a fifth wave of terrorism. Some distinguishable components of this proposed fifth wave are highlighted in Table 3.

Rejection of Existing Social-Political Order	Muslim society is in a state of jahliyyah, or ignorance of divine truth, that is promoted by apostate regimes. This requires separation from society and rebellion against it.
Idealisation of a Mythic Past	Reconstituting the Prophet's Medina Community and the caliphate, developed by his four righteous successors are the desired end-states.
The Quest for Millenarian Justice	The destruction of apostasy and the return to the purity of Muhammad's Medina experience will generate universal happiness as a caliphate develops.
Youth Culture	Males between 18 and 39 form the bulk of jihadi groups.
Brutalisation of Women and Children	Women and children frequently kidnapped and sold into slavery.
Ethnic and Sectarian Cleansing	Campaign of targeted killing of religious minorities (Shi'ites, Alawites, Sufis), Yazidi and Christians. Destruction of Mosques, Shrines, Burial Sites and Churches associated with religious minorities or deemed polytheistic. Broad use of takfir (e.g., excommunication) of Muslim opponents justifying their killing.
Unrestrained Violence	Relentless military campaign of suicide bombings, IEDs and car bombs aimed at soldiers, police and civilians. Takfir facilitates killing of opponents including fellow Sunnis.
Charismatic Leadership	Islamist fifth wave groups typically led by powerful dynamic emir who combines religious and military authority.
Development of a New Society	Violent destruction of decadent apostate order and creation of modern version of Muhammad's Medina community and caliphate of his immediate successors.

Source: Anthony N. Celso, "The Islamic State and Boko Haram: *Fifth Wave Jihadist Terror Groups*", *Orbis*, Vol. 59, No. 2, Spring 2015, p. 257.

According to Jerrold M. Post,⁶³ existence of virtual community *i.e.*, use of social media and lone wolf terrorisms are the hallmarks of this changing face of terrorism.

⁶³ Jerrold M. Post, "Terrorism and Right-Wing Extremism: The Changing Face of Terrorism and Political Violence in the 21st Century: The Virtual Community of Hatred", *International Journal of Group Psychotherapy*, Vol. 65, No. 2, 2015, pp. 243-271.

Sebastian Jäckle and Marcel Baumann⁶⁴ have also identified excessive brutality and indiscriminate killing as the distinguishing characteristic of contemporary terrorism.

Therefore, it can be held that excessive brutality, indiscriminate killing, reliance on internet or social media for radicalisation and recruitment and 'lone wolf' phenomenon are the defining characteristics of the fifth wave. While such claims may have very strong grounds and seem appalling to some scholars, a critical analysis also has the potential of refuting such claims. The first and foremost problem with the fifth wave is that, the ideological motivations are still derived from religious interpretations. Rapoport's original four wave's theory is clearly based on the differences of dominant motivations or ideologies that ushered in a new wave. But as we can see, in present time, use of religion still remains the source of motivations for most of the extremists groups although they differ in their explanation of religious precepts and practices. Moreover, Rapoport's waves theory postulates fading out of the previous wave preceding the emergence of a new wave. Contemporary terrorism also does not satisfy this very important premise of wave theory.

And secondly, the audiences, supporters, and the objectives remained more or less the same. Rapoport's wave theory is based on differing motivations and then he showed how these groups in different waves have used different tactics, weapons and targets; not the other way around. We cannot assume ushering in a new wave on the basis of weapons, tactics and targets. Dominant energy or motivations has to be the deciding parameter. Any analytical construction that suggests a new wave or 'fifth wave' based on differences of tactics, weapons and targets, hence, will be flawed and misconstrued. Nevertheless, it should be noted that it remains an area of further research.

6. Conclusion

Terrorism and violent extremism in many regions and in many countries of the world wreak havoc in contemporary times. However, terrorism as a 'tool and technique' of achieving specific political objective is nothing new and has a long history of a millennium. History of modern terrorism is relatively new, and throughout terrorism's history we see different groups using different tactics, weapons and targets. Rapoport's four waves theory has been instrumental in providing a framework of analysis to explore the changes that have taken place in the selection of various tactics and strategies.

An analytical review of the history of terrorism reveals that terrorist groups' tactics and strategies have evolved over the centuries. However, numerous factors

⁶⁴ Sebastian Jäckle and Marcel Baumann, "New Terrorism" = Higher Brutality? An Empirical Test of the "Brutalization Thesis", *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 29, No. 5, 2017, pp. 875-901.

contribute in the determination of particular tactics, weapons and targets by a terrorist group *viz.*, local conditions, their goals and objectives, availability and effectiveness of the weapons etc. As exemplified by Rapoport's theory, in a particular time frame, certain tactics and strategies dominated, nevertheless, terrorist groups build on the previous history and experiences and, accordingly, make adaptation and innovation in their tactics, weapons and targets to achieve their objectives at present. Therefore, whatever tactics and weapons are used by contemporary terrorist groups, no matter how brutal and lethal they are, in essence, they are the culmination of long history and experiences of terrorism to be more effective and achieve their objectives.

Moreover, as some scholars try to attribute contemporary terrorism perpetrated mainly by the ISIS and its affiliated and cognate organisations as a new wave or 'fifth wave', such construction is flawed. Contemporary terrorism does not satisfy the premises and parameters of Rapoport's wave theory as a new wave, hence, any effort of distinguishing contemporary time as a 'fifth wave' would be misplaced and misconstrued.

ANNEX 1

Table 1: Ten Countries with the Most Terrorist Attacks, 2016.⁶⁵

	Total Attacks		Total Deaths		Deaths per Attack		Total Injured		Injured per Attack		Total Kidnapped/Hostages	
	2016	2015	2016	2015	2016	2015	2016	2015	2016	2015	2016	2015
Iraq	2965	2417	9764	6973	3.44	3.01	13314	11900	4.74	5.25	8586	4008
Afghanistan	1340	1716	4561	5312	3.58	3.24	5054	6250	4.03	3.99	1673	1134
India	927	798	337	289	0.38	0.38	636	500	0.73	0.66	317	866
Pakistan	734	1010	955	1087	1.34	1.11	1729	1338	2.43	1.37	450	279
Philippines	482	490	272	260	0.58	0.54	418	430	0.90	0.90	216	127
Nigeria	466	588	1832	4940	4.35	9.13	919	2786	2.66	7.70	265	858
Syria	363	387	2088	2767	6.42	7.91	2656	2830	9.16	9.63	1406	1476
Turkey	363	309	657	337	1.81	1.11	2282	828	6.37	2.78	18	141
Yemen	363	460	628	1517	1.89	3.90	793	2599	2.44	6.97	173	456
Somalia	359	241	740	659	2.18	3.05	943	463	3.91	2.28	3731	161
World-wide	11,072	12,121	25,621	29,424	2.44	2.56	33,814	37,419	3.32	3.40	15,543	12,264

⁶⁵ National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, University of Maryland, "Annex of Statistical Information", in the United States Department of State, *Country Reports on Terrorism 2016*, July 2017, p. 5.

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