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# **HIMALAYAN AND CENTRAL ASIAN STUDIES**

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Vol. 12 No. 2

April- June 2008

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**First Session of Human Rights Council: A Report**

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## HIMALAYAN AND CENTRAL ASIAN STUDIES

**Editor** : **K. Warikoo**  
**Assistant Editor** : **Sharad K. Soni**  
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## *Editor's Page*

With a geographic expanse covering an area of 17 million sq. kms., Russia, the successor state to the former Soviet Union, occupies a unique position in the Eurasian continent making it both a major European and Asian power. The Russian Federation retains nearly three-fourths of the territory of the erstwhile USSR and more than half of its population. Constrained by a series of political and economic crises in the 1990s, Russia remained dependent on the support from the United States and Europe. Russian government followed the Atlanticist approach in its foreign policy. The Russian officialdom, which hoped to rejuvenate Russia's stagnation and declining economy with Western support and funds, put the Asia factor in backburner. With his declared objective of transforming Russia into a democracy and market economy, post-Soviet Russia's Foreign Minister Andrey Kozyrev accorded priority to secure Russian participation in the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, General Agreement on Tariff and Trade (GATT) (now WTO) and establishing close relations with Europe and the United States. Kozyrev's approach to Russia's foreign policy, which suited the United States and its NATO allies, symbolized Russia's decline and retreat from an active role in international affairs during that decade.

Whereas Russia during the Boris Yeltsin era was constrained by domestic problems and foreign debt burden, it emerged from the woes of transition under Vladimir Putin, who sought to secure Russia's prestige and power in the post-Soviet space. Russian economy grew at the rate of over 8 per cent in the year 2007. So much so, Russia's economic performance has been described by Goldman Sachs as remarkable. The economic development of Russia is a positive factor amongst the gloomy economic crises affecting the US and other Western countries.

Whereas Putin brought steady economic growth and expanded Russia's global influence, his confidant Dmitry Medvedev's election as Russia's President in May 2008 election, symbolizes continuity. Russia and Russians exude a new confidence while moving forward towards the resurgence of their country. Russia is standing up to the pressures from the West and to overcome the crises whether in Chechnya, Ukraine or Georgia. At the same time, Russia needs to look inwards to ensure that

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there is equitable distribution of resources among the rich and backward regions of Russia.

Russia's new foreign policy doctrine gives top priority to relations with India and China, describing these relations as "strategic" for Russia. As compared with the previous doctrine of 2000, the new foreign policy concept paper gives greater emphasis to political and economic cooperation between Moscow and Delhi. It calls for closer trilateral cooperation with India and China and assigns special importance to the further strengthening of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). Russia and India can play an important role in promoting the establishment of a multilateral global order.

Indian and Russian economies are complementary. Bilateral trade between India and Russia which stood at 3.1 billion US dollars in 2005, exceeded 7 billion US dollars in 2007 and it is targeted at 10 billion US dollars by 2010. India has taken delivery of 28 oil tankers or 2.5 million tons of crude under first stage of Sakhalin-I. Engineering and scientific products account for large part of bilateral trade. Russia-India Forum for Trade and Investment has already been set up. Indian prowess in software, Information Technology (IT), science and technology provides a sound base for Indian investment in Russia. India can be a potential player/investor in the regional development of Siberia and can help Russia in building a knowledge based economy. Apart from the complementarity of their economies, there is convergence of political and strategic interests between India and Russia on major issues: a) commitment to the principle of inviolability of state borders and respecting the territorial integrity of states; b) common stand on conflicts in Chechnya and Kashmir; c) opposition to separatism, ethno-national and religious extremism; d) meeting the challenges to regional security posed by deepening crisis in Afghanistan; e) common stand on multipolar global order; f) cooperation to deal with terrorism. (India-Russia Joint Working Group on combating international terrorism has already been established); and g) combating drugs trafficking. The year 2008 is being celebrated as the "Year of Russia" in India, which includes 150 events, cultural festivals, national exhibitions, book fairs, conferences and seminars etc., to promote people to people contact and give further impetus to multifaceted strategic partnership between Russia and India.

*K. Warikoo*

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# ARMENIA-INDIA RELATIONS THROUGH HISTORY

ASHOT KOCHARIAN

One of the world's oldest civilizations, Armenia once included Mount Ararat, the biblical tradition of which identifies as the mountain where Noah's Ark rested on after the flood. In the 6th century BC, Armenians settled in the kingdom of Urartu (the Assyrian name for Ararat). Under Tigran the Great (95-55 BC), the Armenian empire reached its height and became one of the most powerful empires in Asia, stretching from the Caspian to the Mediterranean Sea. Throughout most of its history, Armenia has been ruled by a succession of rulers. Under constant threat of domination by foreign forces, Armenians became both cosmopolitan as well as fierce protectors of their culture and tradition. Armenia was the first country in the world to adopt Christianity as a state religion seventeen centuries ago (301 AD). The Armenian alphabet was invented some 1,603 years ago (405 AD) and the art of theatre in Armenia has a history of twenty centuries. The capital of Armenia – Yerevan was founded in 782 BC, some 2,790 years ago. Armenia was situated at the crossroads of civilizations, religions and empires – with all the related consequences - Armenia was many times invaded, devastated and deprived of independence.

Not all the nations that ever populated this region were able to meet those challenges. Many of the vanished nations are known only to the specialists. The entire history of Armenia has been a struggle for the preservation of its existence, language, religion and distinctive character. There were many periods throughout history when physical existence of Armenian nation was under threat and thousands of Armenians had to leave their homeland in search of peaceful location. The genocide of 1915 perpetrated against innocent Armenian people in the Ottoman



Empire, which resulted about 1.5 million victims, brought into existence the Armenian diaspora in many countries.

### ARMENIANS IN INDIA

Armenians had trading relations with several parts of India. By 7th century AD, a few Armenian settlements had appeared in Kerala, an Indian state located on the Malabar Coast. Armenians controlled a large part of Kerala's international trade, particularly precious stones and quality fabrics. The land of Holy Ganga was a second homeland for many Armenians.

An archive directory (published in 1956 in Delhi) states that an Armenian merchant-cum-diplomat, named Tomas Cana, had reached the Malabar Coast in 780 AD using the overland route. Seven hundred years thereafter, in the year 1498 AD, Vasco de Gama reached the Malabar Coast. Thomas Cana was an affluent merchant dealing chiefly in spices and muslin. He was also instrumental in obtaining a decree inscribed on a copper plate, from the rulers of Malabar, which conferred several commercial, social and religious privileges for the Christians of that region. In current local references, Thomas Cana is known as "Knayi Thomman" or "Kanaj Tomma", meaning *Thomas the Merchant*. The early Portuguese writers mentioned him as Thomas Cananeo and presented his nationality as an Armenian.

Some scholars opine that Armenians came to India and settled in Kashmir and Punjab. Several centuries of presence of Armenians, described as "The Merchant Princes of India", resulted in the emergence of a number of several large and small Armenian settlements in several places in India, including Agra, Surat, Bombay, Chinsurah, Candernagore, Calcutta, Saidabad, Chennai, Gwalior, Lucknow and Pondicherry. There were many Armenians in Lahore, Dhaka and Kabul and also in Myanmar and Southeast Asia.

Mughal Emperor Akbar (1556-1605 AD) had invited Armenians to settle in Agra in the 16th century and by the middle of 19th century, Agra had a sizeable Armenian population. By an imperial decree, Armenian merchants were exempted from paying taxes on the merchandise imported and exported by them, and they were also allowed to move around in the areas of the Mughal empire where entry of foreigners was otherwise prohibited. In 1562 AD, an Armenian Church was constructed in Agra.

From 16th century onwards, the Armenians (mostly from Persia)

formed an important trading community in Surat, the most active Indian port of that period, located on the western coast of India. The port city of Surat used to have regular sea borne traffic of merchant vessels from Basra and Bandar Abbas. Armenians of Surat built two Churches and a cemetery there, and a tombstone (1579 AD) in Surat which bears Armenian inscriptions. The second Church was built in 1778 AD and was dedicated to Virgin Mary. A manuscript written in Armenian language in 1678 AD (currently preserved in Saltikov-Shchedrin Library, St. Petersburg) has an account of a permanent colony of Armenians in Surat.

Armenians formed their first settlement in Bengal in 1665 A.D. They settled in Chinsurah near Calcutta and built a Church there in 1697 AD. This is the second oldest Church in West Bengal and is still well preserved on account of the care of the Calcutta Armenian Church Committee.

During the period of Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb, a decree was issued which allowed Armenians to form a settlement in Saidabad, a suburb of Murshidabad, then the capital of Mughal *suba* (province) of Bengal. Among notable merchants in Saidabad in the days of Nawab Ali Verdi Khan were Agah Petros and Khojah Petrus Arathoon. The imperial decree had also reduced the tax from 5 per cent to 3.5 per cent on two major items traded by them, namely piece goods and raw silk. The decree further stipulated that the estates of deceased Armenians would pass on to the Armenian community. By the middle of the 18th century, Armenians had become a very active merchant community in Bengal.

There were many Armenians in Madras who settled down under the patronage of the British. They were pioneers in advancement of the Armenian language, literature, art and architecture in India. Armenians formed a settlement in madras in 1666 AD and conducted trade there. When the King of Golconda seized Santhome of Mylapore from the Portuguese in 1662 AD, he had appointed an Armenian named Markur Erezad as the Governor. Among the Armenian traders Khwajah Petrus Voskan was one of the rich merchants. Since the Armenians were Christians, they often visited the church at St. Thomas Mount. Khwaja Petrus Voskan had arranged for a painting to be made on the martyrdom of St. Thomas. The finest building in Madras is the old cathedral, Armenian street, built in 1772 AD. That was the year when the first Armenian publication titled *Exhortation* by Movses Baghramyan was printed. A unique effort in the post-medieval era was the Constitution, inspired by the European Enlightenment, written by Shahamir

Shahamiryan, an Armenian public figure living in India. The work called *Vorogayt Paratz* (Snare of Glory), a collection of laws consisting of 521 articles, was published at the end of the 18th century, under the influence of the American and French revolutions, and it presents the blueprint for a new Armenian state. It envisioned a national liberation movement resulting in the re-establishment of Armenian statehood and independence from Turkish and Persian domination. This work combines traditional Armenian law with the principles of the Enlightenment. It contains provisions dealing with the structure of the government, civil and criminal law, and citizens' rights, freedoms and obligations, based on equality before the law. Another document from the Armenian community of India, was *Nshavak*, which aimed to be the Charter of the Armenian community of Madras. In 1789 AD, Rev. Shmavon (Arathoon Shmavonyan) initiated publication of books in Armenian language. He was the father of Armenian journalism, who on 16 October 1794 published the first ever Armenian journal named *Azdarar*.

Eighteenth century was remarkable for the development of printing press for the Armenian community. The Armenians in Calcutta set up a printing press in 1797 AD. By the 19th century, Calcutta had truly become a centre of intellectual, educational, economic, religious and national-patriotic activities of Armenians in India. The second Armenian magazine under the name of *Mirror* was published in Calcutta in 1820 AD.

While most Armenians in India came for trade, some did for other pursuits. Given their fluency in Persian and familiarity with Islamic culture, many became interpreters, emissaries and informers for various European trading companies. A handful of Armenian clerics catered to the religious needs of the community. Delhi is among a late seventeenth century list of Indian cities where there were either Armenian settlements or where Armenians had commercial transactions. Costand (1702 AD) was the compiler of this list. Delhi went through major devastations in 1739 AD during the invasion of the Persian invader Nadir Shah and the uprising of 1857 AD, during which many buildings and monuments were destroyed. However, one cemetery known as the D'Eremao cemetery located outside the walled city in North Delhi escaped the devastation. The first modern writer to notice this cemetery was H. C. Fanshawe, the Commissioner of Delhi in the late nineteenth century. He wrote, "across the canal and reached by the road which runs from the front of this [Kashmiri] gate is an interesting Armenian graveyard, containing a number of tombs which are much older than

the Christian graves in Delhi. It is known by the name of the family of D'Eremao, which was once connected with the Imperial Court." A priest Crecour or Krikor, who died in 1807 AD, was buried in the D'Eremao cemetery. An Armenian inscription was discovered in late 19th century pertaining to a house built by a Joseph Diphanos in 1781 AD, thus providing further evidence of Armenian presence in the imperial capital.

## ARMENIAN CHURCHES AND SCHOOLS IN INDIA

Armenians always had their patriotic mission to build churches and educational institutions for their compatriots to preserve their national identity, language, literature and religion. Nowadays there are a total of seven Armenian churches and two schools in India: three in greater Kolkata (Calcutta), and one each in Chinsurah, Saidabad, Chennai (Madras) and Mumbai (Bombay).

### **Armenian Holy Church of Nazareth – Kolkata (Calcutta)**

Armenians settled in Kolkata during the 17th century. A relic of the early settlement is shown on a tombstone of Uzabibe Mukiasin (1630 AD), the oldest Christian tombstone in West Bengal. It is located in the Armenian cemetery adjacent to the Armenian Holy Church of Nazareth till now. The original Church was a wooden building and was built in 1707 AD. In 1724 AD, it was rebuilt and renamed after Aghah Nazar as the Armenian Holy Church of Nazareth; it is the oldest Christian church in Kolkata, built by Aghah Nazar. The belfry, which is also a clock tower, was built in 1734 AD.

### **St. Gregory the Illuminator Armenian Church - Kolkata (Calcutta)**

The tablet affixed over the west entrance of the church inscribed in two languages informs us that it was built in the year 1906 AD and was named after St. Gregory. The altar was constructed with funds donated by the members of the Armenian Holy Church of Nazareth and the Armenian community of Kolkata.

### **Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Tangra (Calcutta)**

Built in 1867 AD, the church was renovated by the Armenian Church Committee of the Armenian Holy Church of Nazareth in Kolkata and was reconsecrated by His Holiness Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians in February 2007.

### **St. John the Baptist Armenian Church - Chinsurah**

This is the second oldest Armenian Christian church in West Bengal. Khojah Johannes, the son of opulent Margar family laid the foundation of the church in 1695 AD, which was completed in 1697 AD. Khojah Johannes Margar died suddenly on 27 November 1697 and his mortal remains were interred inside the church he had built. His grave can be seen to this day with a long inscription in classical Armenian verse.

A descendant of one of the Armenian *Meliks* (Prince) of mountainous (Nagorno) Karabakh, David Freedone Melim Beglar who came to India in 1813 AD as a deacon and a chorister to the Armenian Archbishop Phillippos, an envoy from Etchmiadzin – Mother See of Armenian Church – has its last resting place at Chinsurah Armenian Church. His eldest son Joseph Beglar, the Executive Engineer and Archeological Surveyor in the Bengal Public Works Department, who died in 1907 AD, is also buried in Chinsurah. As an expert in Indian Archeology he was placed by Bengal Government on a special duty to superintend archeological excavations in the Buddhist temple at Bodhgaya. The *Meliks* played an outstanding role in the Armenian national liberation movement.

### **Holy Virgin Mary Armenian Church of Saidabad (Murshidabad)**

The then leader, Khoja Petros of the Armenian community in Kolkata, prominent merchant and benefactor built Holy Virgin Mary Armenian Church of Saidabad in 1758 AD, funded entirely at his own expense in the memory of his late parents. However, when Saidabad stopped being the centre of trade, Armenians left to settle in other cities of India. The church suffered from a number of natural disasters and no services were conducted for last 75 years. Today the church has been fully restored thanks to the efforts of the Armenian Church Committee and the blessing of His Holiness Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholics of All Armenians. The belfry cross of the reconstructed church was consecrated on 30 November 2006 and Archbishop Aghan Baliozian reconsecrated the church on 4 March 2007.

### **St. Mary Armenian Church of Chennai (Madras)**

Originally constructed in 1712 AD, it was one of the few magnificent edifices in the Esplanade of the city. The Armenians were forced to desert it after a time, as the British authorities would not permit so high an

edifice to stand in the immediate vicinity of the Fort. The present Armenian Church situated in Armenian Street was erected in 1772 AD, and dedicated it to the Holy Virgin Mary. It is one of the oldest churches of the Indian subcontinent. It is famous for its six belfry. Among other prominent Armenians, Haroutyun Shmavonian, the founder of Armenian journalism and editor of the first Armenian journal *Azdarar*, is buried here.

#### **St. Peter Armenian Church of Mumbai (Bombay)**

This Holy Church was erected in the name of the holy Apostle Peter. Mr. Jacob of Hamadan, better known as Hakob Hamadanchi built St. Peter Armenian Church of Mumbai on 12 October 1796 in the memory of his parents. Situated in the bylanes of the Fort, within a stone's throw from the Bombay Stock Exchange, stands St Peter's Church, the temple of prayer for the Malankara community.

#### **Armenian College and Philanthropic Academy- Kolkata (Calcutta)**

The Armenian College and Philanthropic Academy was founded on 2 April 1821 at 385, Old China Bazaar Street, Calcutta, in the vicinity of the Armenian Church. The Armenian College and Philanthropic Academy and Davidian Girl's School, which was founded by D. A. David in 1922, were educationally amalgamated and up to 1954, the girls appeared for the School final examinations of the Board of Secondary Education of West Bengal as private candidates. On 27 January 1953, permission for co-education was granted to the College by the Board and since then the girls along with the boys appeared for final School examinations as regular candidates. Astvazator Mooradkhan first conceived the idea of a National Academy in Calcutta. In his will dated 30 July 1797, he left Rs. 8000/- towards the establishment of an Armenian School for the education of Armenian youth, both rich and poor. Later on through the effort of Manatzakan Vardan, enough money was raised by subscription from the Armenian community to materialize the original idea conceived by Asvazator Mooradkhan a quarter of a century earlier. At the time of its foundation, the Academy had also a girls section that was abandoned in 1842 AD. In 1884 AD, the 56 Free School Street premise was purchased and the school transferred to its present location. Currently, the school has 80 students from Iran, Iraq, Armenia and India.

## PERSONALITIES AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION

Armenians in India share a history of more than 2,000 years with Indians. In India, they had remained involved basically with trade and commerce. They also contributed to the enrichment of Indian art, architecture, and culture. Several Armenians in India rose to prominence at different point of time and under different rulers. Armenians have also given to the country able governors and administrators like Mirza Zul-Qarnain and Markus Erizad, clever diplomats like Khojah Israel Sarhad, Margar Avag Sheenents and Khojah Petros Arathoon, distinguished military Commanders like Gorgin Khan, and Colonel Jacob Petrus, skilled artisans and manufacturers of huge pieces of ordinance Shah Nazar Khan. Mirza Zul Quarnain, adopted son of Akbar and his Armenian wife, were well versed in several languages, particularly Portuguese. Upon the death of his father in 1613 AD, he succeeded as a collector of salt tax in Sambhar (Rajputana). He held positions as the Governor of Sambhar, Mogor, Babraich (Oudh), Lahore and Bengal. Emperor Jahangir conferred on him the title of Amir. He maintained very cordial relations with Jesuits in India. Mirza, a poet, singer and playwright, composed verses in Urdu and Persian.

Another Indo-Armenian famous poet, scholar and mystic saint known as Sarmad (an Arabic word for "eternal"), was a prominent figure during Aurangzeb's rule. His grave is near Jama Masjid in Old Delhi. His poetic talents are often compared with gifted poets like Firdausi, Sayadi, Hafez and Khayam. Sarmad was executed by Aurangzeb in 1671 AD. Abdul Hai was the Chief Justice of Mughal Empire during the time of Emperor Akbar. Lady Juliana, believed to be sister of one of Akbar's Armenian wives, was a doctor in the royal harem of Akbar. Lady Juliana built the first Church in Agra. She was later married to Prince Jean Philippe de Boubon of Navarre, a royal house of France. Mariam Zamani Begum, one of the wives of Akbar and the princess of Amber, was believed to be an Armenian. Marium Zamani Begum's palace still stands in Fatehpur Sikri, near Agra (Uttar Pradesh). An Armenian lady, Nawab Sultan Mariam Begum Saheba, also known as Vilayati Begum (literal meaning English Queen) was married to King Ghaziuddin Hyder, on whom the British conferred title of King in 1814 AD.

Thackers Indian Directory (1864 AD-1960 AD) lists many Armenian names in business and government. The Indo-Armenian community in India had produced a number of leading barristers, solicitors and

advocates, including members of the Bengal Assembly and the Bengal Legislative Council. Joseph Melik Beglar, an archeologist in the Public Works Department of British India, was associated with significant archeological excavations, including the one in Mahabodhi Temple complex in Bodh Gaya, India.

Sir Gregory Charles Paul, an Armenian born in Calcutta, educated at Cambridge University, was the Advocate General of Bengal during British rule. He served as Advocate General for more than 30 years and was honoured with knighthood. His distinction can be measured by the fact, that for more than 30 years, British Government allowed itself to be represented by an Indian born Barrister. It was Sir Gregory and other eminent Armenian barristers of the day who brought the Calcutta Armenian Trust under the jurisdiction of Calcutta High Court in 1888 AD.

Armenians in India have also contributed to the medical profession and some prominent Indo-Armenian doctors include the following:

- Dr. Joseph Marcus Joseph, MD, an Armenian who joined the Indian Medical Service in 1852 AD, became Deputy Surgeon General by 1880 AD. The Indian Army, under the British, had several Armenians Lieutenant Colonels, Surgeon Captains and Surgeon Majors.
- Stephan Manouk, son of a prominent businessman, Hovsep Manouk, obtained a Diploma of Doctor Surgeon from the Royal Medical University, London in 1862. His services during a cholera epidemic of that time earned him a Certificate of Honours by the British Government.
- Dr. Sargis Avetoom of the Indian Army, participated in British Army's operations in Afghanistan, Egypt and Burma, and was honoured by the British Government, Medal and Clasp and Khedives star with Clasp from Egypt, and Medal and Clasp from Burma. He discovered a medicine for dysentery. He was fluent in many languages like Armenian, Russian, English, German, Hindi, Bengali, Belugi and Pashto.
- Dr. Arthur Zorab, an eye specialist, perfected an operating style for glaucoma, which was named after him as the "Zorab Operation".
- Dr. Stepen Owen Moses pioneered St. John's Ambulance Courses in Calcutta, and initiated the first Red Cross ambulance in Calcutta during World War I.



- Dr. Marie Catchatoor, an Armenian lady, was the first woman of India to be appointed as Presidency Surgeon of West Bengal. She retired in early 1980s as the superintendent of Lady Dufferin Hospital, Calcutta.

The first Indian classical singer and dancer from Calcutta recorded on the gramophone record was Gauhar Jaan or Gohar Jan (1873 AD-1930 AD) whose mother was an Armenian and father an Englishman. She was one of the famous and wealthiest female singers and dancers of her times. Gauhar Jan had a mellifluous voice and could sing in many dialects and languages. Her mother, Malika Jan, was also a classical singer/dancer and wrote poems in Urdu. In her lifetime, she popularised light Hindustani classical music, recorded more than 600 songs from 1902 to 1920, in more than ten languages including Bengali, Hindustani, Gujarati, Tamil, Marathi, Arabic, Persian, Pushtu, French and English.

There were also many famous scholars, historians among Armenians. Historian Hakob Simonian wrote the history of life and activities of brave Hyder Ali. A great Armenian scholar of 19th century, Mesrob David Thaliadian was a professor, a profound scholar, an eminent poet and author. One of the famous Armenians born in Calcutta was Sir Catchik Paul Chater (1846 AD-1926 AD), a wealthy Armenian trader, who bequeathed a considerable sum of money in his will to the Armenian Church in Calcutta, a legacy that continues to help maintain the upkeep of numerous Armenian institutions and facilities in India today. Sir Catchik Paul Chater's name is associated with Hong Kong and his legacy is well documented. For him, Chater Garden is named and his first name and last name both grace local streets. A major landowner, Chater was an early and successful advocate of harbour reclamation, a legislator and an executive councilor.

Armenians in India have established welfare organizations to help the needy, contributed for charitable organizations, built churches and chapels, bridges and hotels, hospitals and orphanages. They founded cultural societies, sports clubs etc. Prominent organizations were Armenian Association, Armenian Club, Haikazian Cultural Society, Armenian Sports Club (with its famous rugby team), and Armenian Ladies Benevolent Organization and others. An important factor in the overall approach of Armenia-India relations is of course connected with the historical presence of Armenians in India. Though at present the Armenian community residing mainly in Kolkata is small in numbers,

it continues to create an immense reservoir of goodwill between the two friendly countries.

#### ARMENIA-INDIA RELATIONS IN CONTEMPORARY TIMES

The year 2008 marks the 16th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between Armenia and India. Armenia's relations with India have been traditionally friendly throughout history. They are based on traditional and historical ties of friendship between the peoples of two ancient civilizations. This bilateral relation has matured into a partnership after the independence of Armenia. Armenia values and cherishes this partnership which is characterized by a spirit of mutual trust and mutual interest, shared values in important areas such as democracy, rule of law, good governance and peaceful resolution of conflicts.

Mutually beneficial cooperation on the official level between Independent Armenia and India do not just go back to the last sixteen years (on 21 September, 1991, the Armenian people overwhelmingly voted in favour of independence in a national referendum, and an independent Armenia came into being). During the Soviet era, the official visits of the then President of India Dr. S. Radhakrishnan in 1964, and the then Prime Minister of India, Smt. Indira Gandhi in 1976 to Armenia, enhanced ties of friendship between the people of both countries. Indian Minister of External Affairs, Y. B. Chavan, Indian Ambassador to the Soviet Union, I. K. Gujral accompanied Mrs. Gandhi during her three-day stay in Armenia. Soviet Armenia was exporting compressors, bulbs, generators, electronics, transformers etc. to India. After the visit of Indian Prime Minister, the first Soviet mainframe computer, designed and made in Armenia, was presented to the government of India as a gift from the Academy of Sciences of Armenia. An Armenian-Indian Society of Friendship was established in 1982.

Protocols on the establishment of diplomatic and consular relations between Armenia and India were signed on 31 August 1992. A resident Indian mission opened in Yerevan on 1 March 1999. The first resident Ambassador assumed charge in October 1999. An Armenian Honorary Consulate was opened in New Delhi in April 1994 and the Embassy in October 1999, with the first resident Ambassador arriving in May 2000. The Armenian-Indian Treaty on Friendship and Cooperation as well as Agreement on Trade and Economic Co-operation signed in 1995 during the visit of Armenia's first President to India provided a solid foundation

for further development of bilateral relations and cooperation on regional and international levels. First visit of Armenian Parliamentary delegation to India headed by the Chairman of National Assembly took place in December 1996.

Armenian Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian visited India in December 2000 (the first official visit by an Armenian Foreign Minister to India). India's Minister of State for External Affairs, Digvijay Singh visited Armenia in July 2003. President of Armenia, Robert Kocharian, accompanied by several ministers and a strong business delegation, visited India in October-November 2003. President Kocharian inaugurated Asia's first Centre for Caucasian Study in Chandigarh and a new building of the Embassy of the Republic of Armenia in New Delhi. The historic state visit of the President of Armenia provided much more openings to further expand political dialogue, strengthening multilateral collaboration and increase bilateral trade, which registered a considerable growth from 2003 to 2005. According to the National Statistical Service of Armenia, Indo-Armenian bilateral trade, in 2005 was 16.2 million US dollars. Indian exports to Armenia include foodstuffs, electrical equipment, optical equipment, plastics, pharmaceuticals and other chemical goods. Armenia's exports consisted of non-ferrous metals, raw rubber, books and textiles as well as chemicals. In 2006, trade between the two countries went up to reach at 23.3 million US dollars.

Former Vice President of India, Bhairon Singh Shekhawat visited Armenia from 6-8 October 2005. The Vice President handed over the shipping documents for the first gift consignment of 300 SONALIKA 4x4 tractors made by International Tractors Ltd of Hoshiarpur, Punjab. During his visit, a Memorandum of Understanding on Parliamentary Cooperation was signed and the Instruments of Ratification of the India-Armenia Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation were exchanged.

Several bilateral agreements have been signed between India and Armenia during the last sixteen years including a Protocol on Consultations between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, an Agreement on trade and economic cooperation, an agreement on cooperation in science and technology, a Treaty of friendship and cooperation, agreements on cooperation in culture, arts, tourism, sports and mass media and on economic and technical Cooperation, Air Services Agreement, agreement between the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) and Department for Standardization, Metrology and Certification of Armenia in standardization, certification and accreditation, exchange

programme in the field of education, MoU on cooperation in science and technology between Armenian National Academy of Science and Indian National Science Academy, agreement on bilateral investment promotion, cultural exchange programme, avoidance of double taxation agreement, Memorandum of Understanding on Information and Technology (IT) and services and agreement on exemption of visas for diplomatic passport holders etc.

The Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation reiterates the mutual desire to strengthen cooperation, respect for each other's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, and non-interference in internal affairs. It also provides for consultation in case of a threat to peace. Under the Friendship Treaty, an Indo-Armenian Inter-Governmental Commission (IGC) on Trade, Economic, Scientific and Technological, Cultural and Educational Cooperation was established in September 1997. Identified areas of cooperation include trade and economy, information technology, tourism, civil aviation, health, science and technology, finance, environment, education and culture.

In the recent past, as a reflection of this growing partnership, there is considerable increase in high level government to government as well as business level interactions. An Armenian Parliamentary delegation led by the Chairman of the National Assembly, Tigran Torossian visited India in December 2006. Foreign Office Consultations and the fourth meeting of the Indo-Armenian Inter-Governmental Commission (IGC) on Trade, Economic, Scientific and Technological, Cultural and Educational Cooperation were held in New Delhi in January 2007. Indian Minister of State for Agriculture visited Armenia in July 2007 to participate in the Armenian Apricot International Conference. Another important visit was in September 2007 when the Chief Minister of Delhi, Sheila Dikshit visited Armenia and had meetings with high level officials of the country including Prime Minister, Minister of Education and Science as well as the Mayor of Yerevan.

In March 2006, a business delegation comprising representatives of pharmaceutical, gem and jewellery and Bollywood film Industry led by Harshad Mehta, Honorary Consul General of Armenia in Mumbai visited Armenia. In August 2006, a delegation from Gem and Jewellery Export Promotion Council of India visited Armenia and explored possibilities of trade in gems and jewellery with Armenian businessmen.

There were two visits of historical importance of Supreme Patriarchs of Armenian church to India. In 1963, the Supreme Patriarch and

Catholicos of all Armenians His Holiness Catholicos Vazgen I visited India and had official meetings with the President and the Prime Minister. The visit of His Holiness Karekin II, the Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, to India took place 44 years later in February-March 2007. He visited Rajghat, Akshardham Temple, Taj Mahal, Agra Fort and also Armenian Churches in India, blessed members of Armenian community and children studying in Armenian College, offered re-consecration service of the historic Armenian church of the Holy Trinity of Tangra. His Holiness had meetings with the President of India Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam and the Chief Minister of West Bengal, Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee. He visited Embassy of Armenia in New Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai and Chennai.

Exchange of high level visits, training of Armenian students in India within the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme, participation in international conferences and fairs organized in Armenia and India, study of more than 700 Indian students in Yerevan Medical University, cultural and business exchanges serve to strengthen the bilateral relations and to further explore new areas of cooperation. Education is one the traditional fields of efficient cooperation. Ministers of Education and Science of Armenia visited India in 2002 and 2005. Indian lecturers upon the invitation of Armenian side conducted their first lectures at the Yerevan State Medical University in May 2008.

There exist enormous opportunities in Information and Technology (IT), textiles, agriculture, tourism, culture, hotel industry, gem and jewellery, consultancy services and engineering. We are developing political dialogue not only in the area of bilateral relations but also on regional, multilateral and global issues. Armenia and India continue to work closely at the international fora on major issues for the promotion of peace and stability. I am confident that Armenia-India friendship and cooperation will expand and intensify further in the years ahead on the basis of existing strong and dynamic partnership.

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President of Armenia, Mr. Robert Kocharen greets Vice President of India, Bhairon Singh Shekhawat (October 2005)



Supreme Patriarch and Catholics of All Armenians Karegin II (in the centre) with President of India  
Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam at New Delhi, 4 March 2007





Chief Minister of Delhi and Mayor of Yerevan at Indian House

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# SCO AND RUSSIA-CHINA-INDIA TRIANGULAR RELATIONS

XU QINHUA

Six countries China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan founded the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in Shanghai on 15 June 2001. Its member states cover an area of over 30 million sq. kms.<sup>1</sup>, or almost three fifth of Eurasian landmass with a population of 1.455 billion, about a quarter of the world's total Population. With its security principles taking shape, organizational structure in its proper place and teamwork in various fields gradually on track, the SCO has evolved into a multilateral cooperative mechanism for promoting regional security and economic collaboration for enhancing dialogue between different civilizations. It has already taken a well-deserved position in current international order and has been playing a significant role.<sup>1</sup> But what will be SCO's future orientation and functions? How is it related to the Russia-China-India triangle? What kind of role does the SCO play in this triangle? Such questions remain to be studied.

## SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANISATION

SCO's predecessor, the Shanghai Five, originated and grew from the endeavour by Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to strengthen confidence building and disarmament in their border regions. As the first meeting of the five heads of state took place in Shanghai, the cooperation mechanism came to be known as the Shanghai Five.<sup>2</sup> In 1996 and 1997, heads of the five states met in Shanghai and Moscow respectively and signed the Treaty on Deepening Military Trust in Border Regions and the Treaty on Reduction of Military Forces in Border

Regions. Thereafter, this annual meeting became a regular practice and has been held alternately in the capital cities of five member states. The topics of the meeting gradually extended from building up trust in the border regions to mutually beneficial cooperation in the political, security, diplomatic, trade and other areas among the five states. The President of Uzbekistan was invited to the 2000 Dushanbe Summit as a guest of the host state. On the fifth anniversary of the Shanghai Five in June 2001, the heads of its member states and the President of Uzbekistan met in Shanghai. First, they signed a joint declaration admitting Uzbekistan as a member of the "Shanghai Five" and then jointly issued the Declaration on the Establishment of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. The document announced that for the purpose of upgrading the level of cooperation to more effectively seize opportunities and deal with new challenges and threats, the six member states had decided to rechristen Shanghai Five as Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

In a meeting held in July 2002 in St. Petersburg, the leaders of SCO signed the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Charter, which clearly defines SCO's goals, organizational structure, cooperation and its foreign relations. This symbolizes SCO's importance in terms of international law. In 2004, SCO launched its Observer Mechanism. After Mongolia became an observer state of SCO in July 2005, SCO's fifth meeting held in Kazakh capital Astana decided to give the observer status to three other countries - India, Pakistan and Iran.

SCO not only enhances the mutual trust and friendly cooperative relation amongst its member states, but also lays a solid foundation for the social and economic development of these countries through cooperation in security area to create a relatively stable regional environment. SCO also attaches great importance to the trade cooperation among these countries. While economic interest is one of the important components of national interest, economic security is one of the important objectives of national security. All the member states realize that, "security and trade cooperation complement and promote each other. These are two wheels that accelerate regional cooperation and development."<sup>3</sup> Therefore, establishing effective economic cooperation mechanism and practicing dialogue and cooperation on regional economic issues have become the common understanding of its member states. Economic cooperation can not only enhance the economic strength of concerned countries and help in checking crimes more effectively, but also strengthen SCO's international status.

The People's Republic of China was instrumental in the establishment of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. The development of SCO must have a profound impact on stability and development of Western China in particular. China's development as a whole. Having a long land frontier, China has 55 national minorities, 34 of them belonging to the trans-border nationalities. Among these ethnic groups that have a comparatively larger population include the Uyghur, Mongol, Kazakh, Korean, Tibetan and the Hui nationalities, with a total of 66 million people. The largest transnational nationalities of China are the Kazakh, Uyghur, Russian, Hui, Khalkha, Tajik, Uzbek and Tatar nationalities, who live on the borders across China and its northwestern neighbours.<sup>4</sup> In China's larger ethnic family, those possessing trans-border characteristics, occupy a critical position and play a very important role in developing China's relations with its neighbouring countries.

SCO is not only important for China's diplomatic policy towards Russia and Central Asia, but also a key to China's diplomatic policy as a whole, especially the guiding principle of "periphery is primary." And it continually acts as an important model. Central Asia occupies an important strategic position in China's overseas energy development. SCO will promote energy cooperation among China, Central Asia and Russia, transforming their bilateral cooperation into a multilateral one and would advance and implement China's overseas energy development strategy in the direction of Central Asia. SCO plays a vital role in the process of forming and developing China's anti-terrorist strategy, besides strengthening and improving the process of China's anti-terrorist strategy and mechanism. It has become an important platform and basic point for China's participation in the international war against terror.<sup>5</sup>

### SCO'S FUTURE ORIENTATION AND FUNCTION

The function and development of SCO cannot be discussed in abstract terms or unilaterally. Its strategic position and future should be treated in a historical and long term strategic perspective.<sup>6</sup> From this viewpoint, one can draw the conclusion that SCO should not merely be a sub-regional security and economic cooperation organization, but it should become a "stabilizer" for Eurasia's prosperity, stability, peace and coexistence. Also it should act as a "facilitator" in the triangular relationship of Russia, China and India. China should strive to make SCO as a regional model for the harmonious new world order. First, it should cultivate SCO's ability

to maintain regional safety and security. Only through action it can expand its influence in the region and the whole world. Secondly, it should facilitate economic cooperation within the framework of SCO, strive to build Central Asia Free Trade Zone in a short time, gradually realize market integration and establish Eurasian Economic Zone, thus linking the markets of India, Russia and China together.<sup>7</sup>

If SCO wants to make itself a regional and multilateral cooperation organization maintaining peace, stability and development of Eurasian hinterland, its core view should be "Neo-Eurasianism", which is a new geopolitical concept based on Eurasian hinterland, integrating Central Asia, Russia, China, India, Afghanistan and Iran into a common geopolitical space, where sea merges with land and sea power transmits into land power. It is a place where various civilizations, interests and conflicts converge and communicate. Since the collapse of bipolar system, several changes have taken place in the geopolitical structure of this region. Border discords, religious contradictions, extreme nationalism, development dilemma and super power interference have become the root cause of conflicts and unpredictable dangers at the same time. Along with the reconstruction of geopolitical relations, non-traditional security issues have become more apparent. How to resolve the intensive turbulence caused by the geopolitical changes is directly related to the stability and developing orientation of Neo-Eurasian geopolitical space.

In the future phase, SCO has two strategic directions: i) to develop itself from a unitary organization concerning only with security to a multi-functional organization, including political, economic and security cooperation. That means it will have to expand itself from a sub-regional cooperation organization based in Central Asia, absorbing India, Pakistan, Mongolia, Afghanistan and Iran into SCO to a Eurasian Regional Cooperation Community with Neo-Eurasianism as its core concept. Currently, SCO's core agenda concentrates on security cooperation, especially on fighting three "evil forces". In the future, the cooperation target of SCO in security should be a combination of guaranteeing Eurasian strategic stability, constructing a reasonable international order after the Cold War and non-traditional security issues such as terrorism and non-proliferation. As Russian President Vladimir Putin said, "SCO member states should always keep a close eye on the issue of regional stability. We open our doors broadly for the most comprehensive cooperation in this aspect. SCO thinks, it is proper to set the coordinated effort in security range and common consultation as our

target." Only by setting its fundamental purpose as guaranteeing the strategic stability of Eurasia and constructing a reasonable international order after Cold War, can it have a long term view of fighting "three forces" and non-proliferation besides hitting the arrow at the target.

SCO's second strategic task is to promote regional economic cooperation effectively. Since ancient times, Eurasian heartland has been an important aisle connecting the East and West. "Silk Road" linked China, India, Central Asia and Russia together. In future, the development of SCO will depend on whether its economic integration can accelerate the realization of interests of its member states, whether it can promote the integration and interests of various countries in the background of globalization and regional integration. At present, SCO's internal economic cooperation has a solid foundation.

#### RUSSIA-CHINA-INDIA TRIANGLE

The trilateral cooperation of Russia, China and India is a product of objective conditions. The concrete proposal for establishing trilateral cooperation of Russia- China-India was advocated by Russian Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov in 1998. At that time, after Russia found that its "leaning to one side" diplomatic policy could not work, it adopted the policy of "a double-headed eagle" and sought support from the East. However, because of the prevailing international situation and ongoing bilateral relations of these three countries, this proposal was not put into practice. In 2002, Russian President Putin reiterated the trilateral cooperation between Russia, China and India. After several years of incubation and preparation, the trilateral cooperation has now started. The reasons for the fulfillment of this process are as follows:

Firstly, some new developments have taken place in the international situation. Although peace and development remain the main theme now, uncertain factors in international relations are still apparent. Superpower politics and unilateralism prevail and non-traditional security factors such as terrorism have grown remarkably. China, Russia and India, which are in a similar situation, feel the pressure generated by the new environment, which in turn has enhanced their quest for strengthening mutual cooperation. Whereas Russia has to deal with the pressures from the West in order to resume its original status, China seeks peaceful development and India wants to emerge from a regional power to a global player. Each one of these three countries needs to take advantage of the other two.

Secondly, in order to accelerate economic globalization, Russia, China and India all need to seek profits and avoid damages and that strengthening trilateral economic cooperation is an effective way to reach this goal. Since economies of China and India are rising abruptly and that of Russia is recovering and developing, mutual economic cooperation is the common demand of these three countries. They have their own strong points and can complement each other by undertaking important economic cooperation projects. This is more so because Russia has abundant natural resources, while China and India have immense human resources which are used in manufacturing industry, service industry, science and technology. If these factors are combined together, they will be transformed into a great driving force for economic development. For example, China and India are oil importing countries, and that their dependence on oil import is 40 per cent and 70 per cent. Russia, on the other hand, is an oil exporting country and is now "interested" in expanding its oil export to China and India, hoping to "play its role in coordinating energy demand of China and India." Moreover, Russia, China and India share a rather consistent viewpoint on the recognition of international situation and adaptation of foreign policy. All these three countries insist on the democratization of international relations, so as to achieve a new international order based on international law apart from building a strong and independent UN by strengthening international cooperation in various forums.

The development of bilateral relations lays a solid foundation for trilateral cooperation. The traditional friendship between Russia and India continues to strengthen. In recent years, high officials from India and Russia have frequently visited each other. They have close economic relations and growing military cooperation. At the end of 2002, Russian President Putin visited India. The two sides signed a declaration to further strengthen strategic partnership between Russia and India. When Indian President Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam visited Russia, both sides decided to cooperate in dealing with the global and regional threats so as to guarantee the security of world and Eurasia. In the field of economic cooperation, India participated in Russia's "Sakhalin-1" oil pipeline project, while Russia helped India to build its nuclear power plant. So far as military cooperation is concerned, the two countries are developing ultrasonic cruise missile "Bulamosi" and jointly developing the fifth generation fighter plane.

In recent years, cooperation between China and Russia has achieved

three marked accomplishments. They established strategic partnership in 1994, and signed Good Neighbourly Cooperation Treaty, by declaring that they would endeavour to “maintain their friendship for generations and never become enemies”. Both countries signed a complementary treaty on their eastern border and entirely resolved their boundary question left over by history. These three great accomplishments turned a new leaf in the Sino-Russian relationship, with a rapid development in political, economic and scientific cooperation. Russia finally decided to construct a branch line of Railway connecting China, which is a huge sparkling point of energy cooperation between these two countries.

A turning point in the trilateral cooperation of Russia, China and India is a marked improvement in the relationship of China and India. During Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee’s visit to China in 2003, both sides signed a historic declaration on Sino-Indian relations. In November 2006, when Chinese President Hu Jintao made a reciprocal visit to India, it marked a new phase of Sino-Indian relations. The two countries not only entered into a strategic partnership for peace and prosperity and set guidelines for cooperation in all directions, but also reached an agreement on political principles concerning border issues thus laying the basis for finally resolving the border question. The meaningful Sino-Indian relationship is an important factor for the establishment of trilateral cooperation among China, India and Russia. As these three countries connect with each other in geographical terms, cooperation among them is propitious to cultivate good neighbourly environment, strengthen their international status respectively and realize their own international strategy.

Meanwhile, it is also necessary to promote bilateral relations amongst these three countries. It will improve economic exchange among Russia, China and India, thus providing new impetus to the economic development programme of the three countries. Indian President Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam pointed out that the trilateral economic cooperation between India, Russia and China has a very bright future. In the long run, it is not impossible to establish Russia-China-India Free Trade Zone. It would obviously help promote a new world order. The cooperation among China, Russia and India will reinforce the trend of multi-polarization, accelerate the process of democratization across the globe and objectively become a check on superpower policy and unilateralism, thus contributing to peace, stability and development of this world.



## ROLE OF SCO IN THE TRIANGLE

The cooperation among Russia, China and India bases itself upon the overall situation and has a futuristic perspective. From this layer, it is not exaggerating to term this trilateral cooperation as “strategic triangle.” But this “strategic triangle” differs from the idea of a traditional strategic triangle. It is not a product of strategic balance caused by mutual confrontation, but a strategic cooperative relationship based on mutual interests and mutual trust by agreed international concepts. The connotation of this “strategic triangle” and traditional trilateral cooperation of China, Russia and India is nonalignment and non-confrontation, and is not directed against any third country. It is constructive and open with the sole purpose gaining mutual benefit. After India acquired SCO Observer Status of SCO, the latter has been a new platform for cooperation among these three countries.

In 2001, while speaking at an international seminar in Moscow, Prof. Feng Shaolei of East China Normal University said that

“these three countries (Russia, China and India) possessed their own characteristic attitude towards trilateral cooperation; Russia was the most active member; China actively participated in it while prudently promoting; India relatively stressed that trilateral cooperation should be limited in economy taking into account the US attitude. From 9/11 till the Iraq war, the US unilateralism has been increasingly apparent, witnessed a positive attitude while China, Russia and India’s attitude towards cooperation has changed. China and Russia, and Russia and India have established strategic partnership. China and India have also decided to develop a “new relationship” based on “long term constructive partnership. He further said that three non-Euro American countries, three developing big powers, and three great nations with great civilizations have decided to cooperate and, present a unique pattern and combination. Its uniqueness lies in its vitality. This combination itself has a great potential”.

Feng Shaolei remarked “one noticeable thing is that when these three countries insist on the multipolar development of this world and criticize hegemony, they regard coordinating relation with the US as their primary foreign policy. This signifies that the trilateral cooperation among China, India and Russia may play a special role in maintaining the balance in world politics. In the meantime, they pay more attention to coordinating relations with neighbouring countries to achieve regional stability.”

Objectively speaking, the current cooperation of these three countries has not reached the expected level. If one takes trade for example, great potential exists in Sino-Russian trade volume. President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao pointed out respectively that of Sino-Russian trade volume should reach 30 billion US dollars and Sino-Indian trade should reach 10 billion US dollars. It exactly signifies that China's trade potential with these two countries is yet to be achieved. In military sphere, Russia and India have risen from simple arms trade to a stage of mutual development. Sino-Russian military cooperation has advanced greatly with the development of SCO. During Vajpayee's visit to China, both China and India affirmed that they will facilitate their armies' to visit to each other's countries.

Russia, China and India have their own strong points. On the one hand, these three countries have different direction of their development programmes and state orientation; on the other, they complement each other. For instance, as a big power with oil, natural gas and natural resources, Russia has great strategic potential in various aspects; China has a strong momentum of economic development, striding forward to modernization; India's scientific innovation ability, especially its software development ability, occupies an important place in the world. Prof. Feng thinks, if these three countries expand and strengthen their cooperation in infrastructure establishment and cultural exchange, the trilateral relations will become more solid.

Within the framework of SCO, Russia, China and India and can strengthen the trilateral cooperation. (a) to deepen the common understanding on main issues faced by today's world. Promoting democratization and multi-polarity at international level; making efforts to establish fair and reasonable new international order and letting UN play its important role in resolving international issues etc.; b) to insist upon close cooperation among Russia, China and India against terrorism, opposing double standards in the war against terror and adopt measures against illegal drug trade and other inter-state crimes; c) to expand trilateral economic cooperation, stress the tremendous potential of this cooperation particularly transportation, agriculture, energy and sophisticated technology and engaging experts and officials of these three countries in consultations and cooperation.

SCO plays a very important role in energy cooperation between China and Central Asia. From the viewpoint of geopolitical and energy potential, Central Asian countries such as Kazakhstan are sustainable

energy-providing countries. Usually, energy cooperation project involves huge amounts of investment and occupies an important position in bilateral trade cooperation. Long term cooperation may form certain relation of inter-dependence and develop an economic “interest community”, instilling more solid content in good political relations between both sides. Striving for the gas and oil resources in Central Asia and Russia is one of the critical links in constructing India-China energy security system. In the long run, China will fully exert SCO’s influence in economy, put focus on energy cooperation at Trade Minister’s meeting, enhance oil resource development between China and Central Asia to play a leading role in Central Asian affairs and finally realize its target of protecting China’s oil interests in Central Asia. Connecting the SCO members through tangible “blood vessel” of oil pipeline and oil transporting railway will further enhance cooperation between SCO member countries.

As one of the Chinese energy experts said, “the conditions for China-India-Russia energy cooperation have been ripe.” The energy cooperation between India and Russia has a long history and this kind of cooperation between China and India has entered a developing process. China and India should be hand in hand, by taking part in international energy exploitation and distribution, and diversifying risks, so as to gain more energy supply than what it is now. In June 2005, Foreign Minister of Russia, China and India held an informal meeting in Vladivostok. After the meeting, Russia released a joint communiqué stressing that the three countries will develop cooperation in the fields of agriculture, energy and high technology, and will take it as an opportunity to build a strategic energy triangle.

## CONCLUSION

Russia, China and India are all developing big powers. They share similar characteristics of a huge territory and population. They all commit themselves to economic reconstruction and have great influence on Eurasian and world affairs. While Russia and India are a long term strategic partner, China and Russia have also established a strategic partnership. After undergoing the downturn caused by South Asian nuclear crisis in 1998, Sino-Indian relations now appear to have stabilized. The mutual visits of the heads of the two countries guarantee their long term relationship. China, Russia and India have more and more common voice

at the international level.

The Declaration on the Establishment of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization sets the goals of SCO, i.e., "to strengthen mutual trust, friendship and good-neighborliness between the member states; to encourage effective cooperation between them in the political, trade and economic, scientific and technical, cultural, educational, energy, transport, environmental and other spheres; and to undertake joint efforts for the maintenance of peace, security and stability in the region, and the building of a new, democratic, just and rational international political and economic order,"<sup>8</sup> Therefore, Shanghai Cooperation Organization is an important platform where Russia, China and India must interact and work together to achieve peace, progress and stability in the region as well as across the globe.

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## CHECHNYA IN THE SHADOW OF TERROR

P. L. DASH

*“Violence is the weapon of the weak; non-violence that of the strong”.*

— Mahatma Gandhi

Far too long we have known a veritable truth that warfare and military do not really resolve any dispute; they only complicate the ground realities. Sooner or later, one has to take recourse to non-violent methods of peaceful negotiations to resolve a military conflict and achieve lasting peace. Chechnya that has been bleeding for over a decade now, is no exception. Analysts, academics, political leadership, military generals and all critically thinking people must ask a pertinent question with regard to Chechnya vis-à-vis Russia. Mother Russia is mighty, it spreads across 11 time zones in two continents. Chechnya has just approximately 17,000 square kilometers of territory after it was separated from Ingushetiya.<sup>1</sup> For most people, it is difficult to locate Chechnya in the world map. The most revealing, however, is the comparative demographic data. Russia has a population of over 146 million, while Chechnya has just 850,000 people. Available data suggests that in the last census of 1991, 30 per cent of Chechnya’s population were Russian. Emigration data from the Russian sources in recent years further suggests that at least 200,000 Russian or Russian speaking population fled the republic before Russia began undertaking a four stage, 19-day military mission against Chechnya between 30 November and 18 December 1994.<sup>2</sup>

Subsequent Western sources provided still higher figure of 300,000 refugees, who had fled the fighting and bombardments in Chechnya.<sup>3</sup> If one deducts this refugee figure from the total population, we get just a rough data of 550,000 people living in Chechnya. Going by the gender logic of demographic development, one could minus half of this population

as women that leaves us with roughly 275,000 male population. Of this one could still subtract at least a quarter or say nearly 69,000 as children and elderly. Very logically, this leads us to a substantive figure of just 206,000 able bodied male Chechens, all of whom are not necessarily gun wielding fighters. It is simply incredible that 206,000 people have been engaging Russia for over a decade in one of the most sanguine battles of the Caucasus. The tragedy of the Chechen war was graphically given by a Chechen tally: 15,000 dead, 38,000 injured, 220,000 refugees, 124 villages completely destroyed and a further 280 villages with 80 per cent damage. 14,500 children have been maimed and 20,000 of them orphaned.<sup>4</sup>

Further, we get a net reduction of 15,000 dead and 38,000 injured that leaves us with 153,000 battle worthy people in Chechnya. In the background of these population figures, a fundamental question that crops up is how and from where such an insignificant population does derive its strength to wage a protracted battle for secession from a one time superpower. The question of Chechnya's aspirations for independence has been further compounded by insurmountable post-Soviet problems faced by big CIS countries like Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Belarus. If these discernible problems do not deter Chechnya from the idea of independence, one must probe what provides it the strength to fight for it. From this premise, one could easily surmise that a network of tentacles spread from Chechnya elsewhere and it is these tentacles that provide the Chechens their lifeline of support to keep the war going. This article attempts at analyzing the sources of financial support for the Chechens and makes some suggestions for the Russians to devise a modicum of disentanglement from the imbroglio in the light of recent spate of violence.

#### TERROR ALLOVER

- Chechen warlord, Shamil Basaev proclaimed himself as the military Emir of the Islamic Republic of Dagestan on 7 August 1999. He took local policemen and armed forces hostage. With massive financial support from individuals and Islamic organizations in Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and even from Osama bin Laden, he put up a stoic battle against Russian federal forces in Dagestan for nearly a month in which 104 Russian servicemen were killed and over 400 injured.<sup>5</sup>
- In early September 1999, a series of four massive explosions by a

group of 15 terrorists had wrought havoc in three Russian cities – Buinaksk, Moscow and Volgodonsk. The Russians were as much awestruck as were the authorities because it was for the first time that high rise residential blocks were targeted by Chechen terrorists in far away places beyond Chechnya and their missions were carried out effectively. As a result, 300 innocent city dwellers were killed and hundreds were injured.<sup>6</sup>

- In October 2002, Chechen rebels had seized a theatre in Moscow, where they had taken 700 spectators hostage. Many days of negotiations between the authorities and the rebel leaders brought little relief to those trapped for days without food and water inside the theatre building. When talks failed, Kremlin decided to take risk and use a powerful knock out gas to storm the building, end the siege and rescue the hostages. The result was a total of 129 people and all rebels killed.
- In May 2003, in the town of Znamenskoe located north of the Chechen capital Grozny, two rebel suicide bombers drove a truck loaded with explosives into a government building, housing the local Federal Security Forces (FSB). The security guards of the building opened fire to stop the truck, but it smashed through concrete security barriers and exploded in a fireball. The outcome was 40 people dead and several others injured. The building crumbled.<sup>7</sup>
- On 5 June 2003, a military bus on official duty was travelling from the city of Mozdok in North Ossetiya to a nearby airbase. Airmen from the Prokhladnyi airbase were travelling in the bus along with some maintenance personnel. While the bus was awaiting signal at a level crossing, an innocent looking lady in white dress approached the bus and detonated a powerful explosive that completely mangled the bus. Of the 23 people on board (some reports said there were 40 people), six were killed on the scene, nine more died in the hospital and others badly injured.<sup>8</sup>
- In the wee hours of 6 June 2003, a powerful blast ripped through a residential building in Grozny. Confusion shrouded the explosion soon after, but the outcome was atrocious: 11 killed, nine of them children in their sleep and a five storey apartment block collapsed following the blast.<sup>9</sup>
- On 5 July 2003, Kremlin declared its peace plan to hold

Presidential elections in Chechnya on 5 October 2003. In a quick retort, the rebels replied in another terrorist attack in a rock theatre in Moscow. A suicide squad of two women dressed in explosives had blown themselves up inside the theatre, killing 13 people and injuring several others. President Vladimir Putin had to cancel his trip to Uzbekistan and Malaysia in order to coordinate anti-terrorist action in the capital.<sup>10</sup>

- The Beslan school tragedy on 1 September 2005 was a heart rending one. Innocent school children were the victims of terror and the pathetic photographs of that event was too gruesome for humans to endure.

These may be some of the representative episodes of terrorist attacks involving Chechen separatists, but apparently, such a situation cannot continue in Russia for ever. Over a decade of fight put together, however, conveys an underlying tenacity of the Chechen defiance. A tiny Caucasian nation has been putting up a stoic fight against a onetime superpower to prove that military might is no solution in this case. The Chechens are determined to defy Russian authority and let Russia not pander anymore. The problem assumes further seriousness in view of Kremlin's persistent efforts to retain Chechnya to its federative fold. Last such effort was the referendum of 23 March 2003 on a republican constitution. From the Gorbachev years to post-Yeltsin period, when all other pockets of ethnic secession have evaporated across Russia, Chechnya continues to welter in the waves of tension. It remains a forepost of violence, roots of which are not purely ethnic, not necessarily Islamic and certainly not territorial. The causes of the conflict are elsewhere to be found, but the effects of it have victimized Chechnya and Russia alike. Surely, it threatens the federal fabric of the Russian federation. A combination of attributes makes Chechnya a laboratory of experiments on such issues as inter-state dispute, federal governance, ethno-nationalism, oil and pipeline politics, religious extremism, narcotic and women trafficking, foreign mercenary involvement, money laundering and a host of related issues that grow in importance with each passing year. What makes the Chechen case even more strong is her wide nexus with the outer world. The lifeline of support for the cause of Chechen separatists stems from outside, and not from within Russia. Similarly, what has made Chechnya more attractive is the rapidly changing post 9/11 scenario and Chechnya's Islamic credentials.



For over a decade, the Chechen crisis has as much crippled Russia's Caucasus policy as it has endangered its relations with other former prefectures. Ceasefire agreements were drawn up only to ensure temporary respite. At varying times, emissaries of the Russian presidents held rounds of talks, but to no avail. Presidential elections, whether of Yeltsin or Putin, had been fought on the plank of Chechnya, but a sustainable resolution of the problem has been evading both sides. In the summer months, when the jungle is green, the Chechens are the master of guerrilla warfare. They could hide in the mountains and ambush the Russian soldiers. However, in winter, when everything turns bald white, the Russians use everything from space satellite to reconnaissance planes to nab the rebels and finish them off. Thus the see-saw continues with no distinct winner and no end in sight.

#### SOURCES OF STRENGTH

A momentous change occurred after 9/11. The USA, which was looking at the Chechen problem from the viewpoint of human rights violations by Russia, suddenly ceased to be critical of Russia in that part of the world in return for the Russian support to USA in their fight against the Taliban in Afghanistan. The US also eschewed its lopsided view of Chechen imbroglio and began looking at the problem in its totality. Although the shift in the US attitude has pacified the international community to a great extent, it has not, however, changed the ground reality in Chechnya. The fissiparous tendency to the extent of total freedom dominates the thinking of the rebels. This very fact makes one to ponder over the real strength of Chechnya in terms of financial, politico-diplomatic and socio-religious support.

Over the years, the Chechen bandits have followed different illegal ways to amass wealth as their real support base. The sheer magnitude of the money that shuffled hands of the Dudayev clique threw all legal norms to the winds. Financial power brought political prowess then and since and the rest is being traded easily. Chechnya under Zhokhar Dudayev, came to be known as Ichkeria, disobeyed all Russian laws, printed its own currency, embezzled the money allocated for development by Moscow and created a regime too indignant of Russia in general and Moscow in particular. Throughout the Yeltsin years, it behaved like a bull in the China shop and Russia miserably failed to take this bull by the horns. On one occasion, when former Presidential aspirant, Alexander Lebed, who was

later a Security Advisor to Yeltsin, made fervent personal efforts by visiting Chechnya in a car, his motorcade was thrice stopped on the way to make him obey Chechen laws. All his endeavours fizzled out in an unsuccessful ceasefire.

Since then, the Chechen rebels have been waging a virtual war against Russia. Earlier confined to Chechnya itself, this war has spread across Russia in the form of terror and sabotage and become an unpredictable phenomenon. With massive financial and military resources in hand, the rebels are capable of thwarting the Russian security forces. Let us discuss the wide network of the source of this strength. Initially, the separatist Chechen leaders took hostages for huge ransom. They perfected the art of kidnapping and hostage taking, meticulously chose the financial potential of the target and practised it on potential victims for ransom in the range of 10,000 to one million US dollars. Russian Information Agency had reported that between 1995 to 1999, more than 1,700 people were kidnapped; unofficial figures pegged it at 2,000 plus. Secondly, soon after the Soviet collapse, murders with the intentions of grabbing property and money became a widespread occurrence in Chechnya. In a single post-Soviet year (1991-1992), some 1,200 murders took place in Chechnya; a figure ten times higher than in 1989-90. Mercenaries were hired to commit murders and accumulation of wealth in the hands of the rebels continued.

The third profitable source of wealth accumulation was looting passenger trains heading for Chechnya. In 1993-1994 alone, the Chechen bandits had accumulated some four million US dollars from train raids in the north Caucasian line. In 1993 alone, Grozny section of the North Caucasian railway witnessed some 559 raids on trains estimating the damage to railway property at 11.5 billion roubles. In the first half of 2000, 450 trains were raided and passengers and wagons worth more than seven billion roubles were looted.<sup>11</sup> Fourthly, production of counterfeit currency, mostly 50 and 100 dollar bills, was undertaken by the criminal groups. Fluid political situation within Russia facilitated the circulation of these banknotes widely across Russia. Sources reported that origin of 50 per cent of the fake dollars confiscated in Russia in 1999 was tracked down to Chechnya. In October 1999, Russian police detained 90 Chechens and confiscated 598,000 fake dollars from them. In Grozny and Gundermes, underground mints churned out rouble and dollar bills and field commanders often paid their soldiers in fake money. Chechnya also served as a conduit to money laundering from abroad. Fake money

printed in the Middle East and elsewhere, mixed with real money found its way to the markets of Russia through Chechnya in an unending network of launderers. In the autumn of 1993, a Chechen criminal group had brought to Russia through Chechnya 10 billion fake roubles printed in Turkey. In 1999 alone, the criminals planned to pump into the Chechen market seven million fake dollars.

Fifthly, the Chechen separatists stole oil from the national pipeline that runs through their territory from Siberia to Europe and illegally sold oil and oil products. Between 1991-1994, at least 40 million metric tons of oil were sold this way and the money obtained was channelled to financing terrorist bases. The Chechen criminal groups diversified their business activities in the oil market. Few groups of gangsters got themselves employed in the oil sector and controlled oil supplies to regions. By 1999, the Russians found that the Caucasian oil mafia was growing in strength. The Chechen criminal groups leased many filling stations from the Yukos oil company and established an underground network of small refineries. Deliveries of oil from the Samara region to other regions of Russia were controlled by the Caucasian criminal groups. In 1998, Russia had shut down 27 Chechen controlled small refineries in the Volgo region, but other reports suggest that more than 1,500 mini oil factories and refineries were operating in Chechnya before the anti-terrorist operations began in 1994.<sup>12</sup>

Drugs and narcotic trafficking were other profitable ways to fill the coffers of the bandits. From Chechnya's ruling elite, the Basayev clan was actively involved and it made the country an epicenter of narcotic trafficking in the Caucasus from where heroin travelled to Russia and Europe. Year after year, Caucasian countries grew more and more of poppy because it was a cash crop. Taking advantage of this, the Basayev clique set up special laboratories for refining the increasing poppy stock to heroin and its derivatives. Every field commander has a specific area earmarked for poppy plantation. There were three large drug enterprises in Chechnya: one in school No. 40 in the city of Grozny, the other in a Pioneer Camp for young children near Serzhen-Yurt that belonged to Jordanian Arab terrorist Khattab; and the third in the Vedenov region. Basayev group had procured several small Sesna planes to transport and facilitate drugs supplies to the Chechen-Russia border.<sup>13</sup>

Swindling of public funds was the seventh way of appropriating wealth. With fake letters of advice, enterprises and commercial banks operated massive fraud to the tune of billions of roubles. The following

figures demonstrate the dynamics of this crime: "1992 - 328 cases involving 94 billion roubles, 1993 - 469 cases with 148 billion roubles and 1994-120 cases with 175 billion roubles. Between 1992 and 1994, Russian Interior Ministry has investigated 11 cases concerning 2,393 false letters of advice to the tune of more than 113 billion."<sup>14</sup> Further investigations in 1999 by the Federal Security Service into irregular bank deals with firms in Chechnya revealed false contracts, wrong book keeping, tax dodging, duty evasion and other illegal means of money transfer embezzlement by sham companies involved in these activities at the behest of Chechen authorities.

The eighth source of fund accumulation was free flowing foreign capital from the Islamic world. Some countries in the Middle East treated Chechnya as a forepost of their holy war against blasphemous Russia and pumped money to sustain the Chechen terrorists. It was reported that the Chechen terrorists were in close contact with Osama bin Laden, who had made a clandestine trip to Chechnya to oversee the guerrilla training camps in March 1999.<sup>15</sup> He reportedly donated some 30 million US dollars to continue the anti-Russian crusade in north Caucasus. In August 2000, it was further reported that Osama had sent Khattab and Baseyev one more donation of 34 million US dollars for continuing *Jihad*. The Afghan angle, particularly the decade long Russian involvement in Afghanistan, became the subject matter of intense interaction between the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and the Chechen terrorists. Since Pakistan's ISI was training the Afghan *Mujahideen* to battle Soviet forces in Afghanistan with overt US support, it was not difficult for these *Mujahideen* to act as mercenary forces in the guise of *Jihadis* in Chechnya. The enemy was after all one - Russia- whether in Chechnya or in Afghanistan.<sup>16</sup>

There were other foreign channels from where financial support was flowing to Chechen rebels. The Kuwaiti Society for Social Reforms and the Lebanese office in Grozny have been acting as intermediaries to channel funds via Baku through courier to Chechen separatists. The Qatar charity organization had provided millions of dollars to the bandits, when they were battling with Russian forces in the Novolaksky and Tsumadinsky districts of Dagestan. In 1997, Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev, ex-President of Chechnya, undertook a special fund raising tour of Muslim countries, when he was assured that 200 million US dollars be allocated to Chechen rebels.

The Chechens received diaspora support too. Some 50 public

organizations collected donations for Chechen rebels in the United States. The International Relief Association collected 1.2 million US dollars and the Islamic Relief Worldwide collected more than 6 million US dollars. The Chechen Ingush Society of America, headed by Mohammad Shishani, a Chechen from Jordan, also raised funds Shishanis participation in the Copenhagen World Chechen Congress was vehemently opposed by Russia. Thus, it is presumed that it is not the Chechens in Chechnya, who are waging this war for years together; it is indeed a network of Islamic and diaspora groups, which support the rebel cause to the detriment of Chechnya.

### AN UNCOMMON INSTANCE

Diaspora support without proper understanding of the prevailing ground realities often creates an intractable problem. Overwhelming diaspora support flows owing to sentimental reasons of closeness towards native folks although they are thousands of kilometers away. While it may be pragmatically impractical, there is a strong diaspora support for the cause of Chechen independence. The Chechens abroad live very well. They are wealthy, powerful, influential and close to the power that be. A cursory look at the Chechens of Jordan provides us with evidence of the well being of a one time migrant population, who now wields considerable power, both political and economic.

The first Chechen migrants had arrived in Jordan in 1903, when Jordan was a part of the Ottoman Empire. Fleeing from the repressive Russian empire in search of shelter in the neighbouring Ottoman Empire was not that easy. The Chechens, however, had found Jordan a peaceful place to live in and settle down. The collapse of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I had dawned political independence for Jordan and real independence for the Chechens. Ever since they have been supportive of the Hashemite Royal family, and in turn, have enjoyed the perks, pelf and patronage of the kingdom, occupying distinguished positions in the government, army, bureaucracy as well as in the Royal Court. Loyal to the cause of their nativity, they now wish to pay back for the cause of Chechen independence.

The extent of influence of Jordanian Chechens on the two wars in Chechnya in 1994-1997 and 1999-2003 was indirect, but its repercussions directly compounded the Russo-Chechen difficulties. While points of view on help to Russian Chechens fluctuated between disapproval and agitation

vis-è-vis the world opinion, including opinion in the Islamic world, humanitarian assistance continued to flow as much directly from Amman as through the legitimate UN channels all through the past decade. Thus, the point of view of Jordanian Chechens and the support for their brethren in Russian Chechnya had a large ramification on Russo-Chechen conflict at different levels - local, Islamic and international. The point of view of the Jordanian Chechens with regard to the conflict in Russia was clearly pronounced, when demonstrations were held shoulder to shoulder with Arab brothers on the basis of religious, cultural and humanitarian relations. A Jordanian committee was formed in support of Chechens in Russia. Headed by Saeed Peeno, the committee set the following four objectives: i) to put the blame on the general public, who said that Chechens were not having supremacy, they were a miniscule minority, who entered into the Soviet Union by force; ii) to reveal the lies of Russia that accuses the Chechens of being terrorists, expose Russian oppression and violations of human rights by Russian federal forces; iii) to provide humanitarian and medical aid to the affected people in Chechnya, and iv) to define Jordanian and Arab stance as one with regard to Chechnya in the background of their civilization and culture.

There are some striking similarities between the Jordanian and Chechen viewpoints. Both of them think that Russian Chechens are an oppressed lot and they need to be liberated from Russia. Both agree on the humanitarian aspects of Chechen sufferings and try to alleviate that through aid. Both stand by the Chechen cause and support what they call a "freedom struggle". Both are in favour of creating a conducive atmosphere for the Chechens to battle out their cause by enhancing public awareness through meetings, seminars, conferences, etc. Sharif Fawwaz, Permanent Representative of Jordan at the United Nations, summed it up by saying: "we have to protect the Chechen Muslims, and it is necessary for the Islamic world and the UN to play a positive role to find a solution to the Chechen imbroglio".

Many Jordanian Chechens have participated in the Chechen *Jihad* against Russia. Umer Saku, who became the Chief of *Al-Jama-al-Islamia* before his death in 2002, was among the most notable. He mobilized people to serve the Chechen cause. He was able to persuade a number of people to die fighting Russian federal forces in Chechnya. The affinity between the Jordanian Chechens and Chechens in Russia was so close that in the regime of Dzhokar Dudayev, Shamil Amin Peeno was the Foreign Minister. The relations between Chechnya and Jordan flourished

as much as Russo-Jordanian relations declined. Dudayev's visit to Jordan was the culmination point of attracting eponymous Chechens from abroad to their homeland. Since Chechens occupy high profile posts in Jordan and possess vast experience, sharing administrative expertise was the imperative of Dudayev mission, which handsomely paid back, when Chechens like Ala Shamsuddin joined work under Zelimkhan Yanderbaev in Chechnya. The more the cooperation grew between Chechens in Russia and Chechens in Jordan, the more prominent became the roadblocks to peace and Russo-Jordanian relations remained embittered. The post- 9/ 11 scenario, however, put a dampener on the close proximity between Chechens abroad and Chechens in Russia. King Abdullah's visit to Russia in 2002 finally assured President Putin that the Jordanian government has had nothing to do with the happenings in Chechnya.

#### ROADMAPS TO PEACE

There are at least half a dozen different roadmaps to peace in Chechnya. All these plans were made available in post-Soviet years, but unfortunately none of them seems to have borne fruit so far. The Russian Roadmap is first of its kind. When Dzhokar Dudayev resigned from the Soviet Army in the summer of 1990 and returned to Chechnya to lead an anti-Russian ethnic revolt, coincidentally, Kremlin had a native Chechen, Ruslan Khasbulatov, as its Parliamentary Speaker, who was determined to keep Chechnya within Russia. Even today, Khasbualtov is a passionate pro-Russian, who advocates Chechnya to be a part of Russia, but none listens to him. The Kremlin Peace Proposal for Chechnya was, therefore, pro-Russian and included three aspects: i) encouragement of elections and referendum that would install a pliant to Moscow regime; ii) retain Chechnya as an integral part of the Russian Federation and iii) negotiate with the rebels for a peaceful settlement without changing the status quo. Kremlin has been acting consistently in these three directions sans success until Putin became the President.

The second was an imperialist agenda covertly pursued by the USA. Chechen Ingushetiya had attracted attention of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and other Western sleuths way back in 1979. It was considered then as a "relatively prospective territory, in the scheme of things to destabilize the USSR."<sup>17</sup> The destabilization plan got a fillip in the sway of ethno-national uprisings across the USSR through Gorbachev years. Although Caucasus was aflame with hostilities, Chechen Ingushetiya

was relatively quiet. The Georgian events that had installed Zviad Gamsakhurdia in power influenced the Chechen nationalism. Meanwhile, Dudayev was fostered by Western vested interests as a national hero. He and Gamsakhurdia were in close contact and helped formulate a specific Dudayev roadmap for Chechnya, apparently consented by the Western powers.

The third agenda was that of Dudayev. From his years of experience as commander of the Tartu garrison in the Baltic state of Estonia, he learnt that total independence could be the only major demand of his countrymen. Tempered in the ideals of Marxism, he learned from Lenin that the major issue in any revolution was the question of power and he began striving in that direction. In those days of anti-Soviet revolt for freedom in the Baltic, Dudayev learned the assiduousness of persisting for transfer of power. Back home, he finetuned his dream plans for an independent Chechnya, shared it with like minded anti-Russian elements in Georgia and elsewhere and chalked out an action plan that demanded severing all ties with Russia and immediate freedom and sovereignty for Chechnya. Fervent nationalism overwhelmed his activities and he swept people by his sheer demagoguery. However, where he went wrong was in overestimating his own strength vis-à-vis Russia and underestimating the plausible outcomes of aligning with Islamic forces. At that emotional point of reckoning, both Dudayev and Chechnya glided into the abyss of Islamism and became slaves in the hands of foreign forces, while a torrent of events undercut their activities and facilitated a terrorist façade of governance.

Thus came into picture the fourth roadmap, a combination of *Jihadi* agenda with Dudayev's plan and actively supported by major Western powers with a view to cornering Russia from Chechnya. From Albania to Afghanistan and from Algeria to Pakistan, aid began flowing from 18 Islamic countries. Augmented further by the diaspora Chechens and Islamic organizations from such countries as Germany, UK, Poland and the USA,<sup>18</sup> the corpus of free funds was growing in strength and Chechnya was fast slipping out of Russian control. Russia was in a precarious position. Use of force to stem the rot in governance elicited reactions from the West about human rights violations. Non-use of force enhanced the possibility of lawlessness and chaos. Russia was answerable to all that was taking place in Chechnya, while the rebels and terrorists had a field day in looting, bombing, raping and firing indiscriminately at civilians. It was a fight between the federal forces and Chechen



separatists, but the victims were innocent civilians falling prey to the sanguinary battles. Hospitals flooding with injured civilians, crying in agony for help and broadcast live on television, revealed telling stories of Chechen war. Fear, agony and apprehension overwhelmed human emotions, while truculent rebels, guided by their warlords, sidetracked the people and authorities alike in their efforts to find a solution.

Thus we have a misplaced agenda as the fifth one in the whole game plan of things. While all sorts of plans were afloat to ensure peace in Chechnya, ironically none ever took Chechen peoples' voice seriously. When results of the opinion polls or elections went in favour of Russia, the rebels branded it as "orchestrated by Moscow" and continued to fight federal forces. When Moscow was fed up with the situation, it used excessive force and the victims were civilian residents of bombarded cities. Yet the people of Chechnya did have an agenda of their own, an agenda that aimed at restoring the norms of a civil society, effective governance and peaceful development. Independence for them was immaterial. Whether within or without Russia, they wanted to live in peace. This agenda, albeit a pro-Moscow one, is certainly poorly represented in the Kremlin and least appealing to the separatists.

Then came the Putin roadmap. Two events that irreversibly changed the course of events in Chechnya were the election of Putin as President of Russia in the spring of 2000 and the gruesome 9/11 event in the USA. Thus, we get a metastasis of the situation - a Putin formula now in place supported by the USA. The earlier US criticism of Russia violating human rights in Chechnya was suddenly reversed in the aftermath of 9/11. Critics became friends and diplomacy made strange bedfellows, the consequence of which was the 23 March 2003 referendum followed by the Presidential elections in Chechnya in October 2003. The Kremlin conducted referendum was a huge success. There were international observers from the CIS countries, Great Britain, USA, Japan, Sweden, Italy, Germany, the Netherlands, Arab states and Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), who certified that the referendum was free and fair. It was reported by Valentin Kunin of *RIA Novosti* that 400,000 people or 80 per cent of all registered voters participated in the voting. Although the Chechnya separatists escalated widespread violence in the aftermath of the referendum, the elections have created a discernible divide in Chechnya. On one side, there are rebel terrorists and the Chechen people on the other. With Kadyrov Jr. in power backed by Moscow, the rebels have come to govern and as peace evades

Caucasus in general and Chechnya in particular, alienated terrorists, who had been desperately targeting civilians, now search for avenues to build bridges with the people.

### RADICAL SOLUTIONS

Almost fifteen years of ebbs and tides of war in Chechnya do not provide an ominous prognostication. The Chechen war is unlikely to end because both the warring sides have varying perceptions on all issues involved. This attitudinal difference is remarkable in the Chechen-Russian relations. What Russia now considers a legitimate part of its territory, the Chechens take it as forcible annexation and are ready to fight “what they see as the continuation of the 300 years of war of independence against invaders from the north.”<sup>19</sup> Russia wants Chechnya in the federal fold of the Russian Federation as one of its numerous other autonomous regions, but Chechnya wants separation with nothing but total independence. Russia wants positive status quo to prevail, while Chechnya wants change in governance. Russia wants ceasefire, while the Chechen rebels want the war to go on. Russia wants cessation of hostility on its own term, while the Chechens insist upon their own conditions to prevail. Russia has a peace loving approach, while the Chechens have “a fierce love for independence and a resourceful warrior tradition.”<sup>20</sup> All these mutually hostile overtures overtly demonstrate a grotesque growth on the body of Russia at the point called Chechnya too malignant to tolerate, requiring a drastic surgical operation pretty soon. Far too long has Russia suffered the pains and pangs of this malaise and it was never too late for Putin to assign the job to Kadyrov Jr. to take corrective measures. However, it remains to be seen how far he could hold the flagship of peace to prevail.

After forbearance, negotiations, friendliness and attitude of cooperation have failed, Russia eschewed the path of carrot and stick, and decided to try the old Russian adage: “Find a goat to guard cabbage”. Kadyrov is such a goat, who must find a way to isolate Chechnya from rest of its neighbours, particularly from Georgia, and if need be, impose severe travel restrictions, including visa rules in consultation with Moscow to nab trouble makers within and beyond Chechnya. Before Russia takes such a step, it must withdraw all its troops from Chechnya to the borders and leave the Chechens fight themselves. Russian civil administration, however, must be in place to monitor the situation. Secondly, it could introduce a ration system in Chechnya for essential items and impose

strict regulatory mechanism on supply of goods. This would, willy-nilly, result in Russia getting to know the sources of the rebels' material sustenance and accordingly plan secluding the separatists from innocent residents.

Thirdly, the Baku-Novorossiysk oil pipeline at both ends of the Chechen Dagestan and Chechen Ingush borders has to terminate temporarily to avoid the use of oil as weapons by the Chechen terrorists. In addition, Russia must not pay any transit fee for oil transportation. Alternative ways of transportation of oil ought to be sought to minimize further troubles. Fourthly, the business empire of the Chechens across Russia has to be brought under vigilant administrative control of tax and custom authorities and any illegalities or violations of law be dealt with a stern hand. Fifth, there must be an international arms embargo to deprive the terrorists to procure arms and ammunition easily in international market. By pursuing an adroit diplomacy, Russia must convince the international community about the dangers of terrorism stemming from Chechnya and endeavour to cut off the lifeline of support to the Chechen separatists. The Chechen rebels do not produce arms, but procure and use them without restrictions. The existing laws on possessing a license for firearms be strictly applied to all residents of Chechnya and violators of this rule must face the law. Finally, Russia must watch and see Chechnya function in the new conditions, allowing it a free hand to dabble with anything but Russia. It requires a reversal of the present policy that mandates the Kremlin to help war-torn Chechnya tide over its difficulties. In turn, Russia enters into a bargain with the Chechens how much funds to allocate. The totality of all these measures may help reverse the stalemate in Chechnya; failure to do so may perpetuate the ongoing war in the form of a low intensity conflict between Russia and Chechnya.

The Chechens have taken advantage of being citizens of the Russian Federation. This advantage ought to cease. The Chechens, who are bullying around Russia, must be dealt with firmly. While stick could be used on this front, carrot could be offered to those, who pursue peace and normalcy. Russia's diplomacy in the Islamic world requires to be aggressive and active with a view to convincing the world that the fight is not against the Chechens; the fight is against the terrorists; no matter whether they are Chechens or Arab mercenaries. Reportedly, there are 13,000 Arabs in Chechnya. Given its regional and Islamic ramifications, the Chechen case fits like none other into the global war against terror

headed by the US and supported by Russia. The issues and problems of Chechnya, therefore, ought to be addressed in that global context, and not in the regional context of the Caucasus, not in the bilateral context of Russia-Chechnya war.

### THE STAKES

A radical treatment of the Chechen problem, however, is fraught with incredible mutual stakes. For Russia, the major stake is that a small irritant prefecture has transformed over the years into a major threat to the state itself.<sup>21</sup> Russia is in a fix. If it makes excessive concessions to Chechnya, other discontented prefectures are likely to fork their head. Excessive use of security forces has not yielded the desired results. Instead, it has earned Russia the disrepute of violator of human rights and rumours are afoot about an International War Criminal Tribunal, apparently against Russia.

What is largely at stake is the federal value of democratizing Russia against a frightening growth of eponymous nationalism in Chechnya. How far Russia would deftly handle the contradictions between a federal democracy and a native nationalism depends on mutual compromise shorn off terrorism. By now, it is clear that the issue of banditry, terrorism, Islamic fundamentalism, sporadic explosions and the ilk of it have relatively little to do with Chechnya and its population. Chechnya has become the epicentre of illegality. The Russians and the Chechens are both victim of it; none of them so far could claim the status of a victor or vanquished.

The interests of neighbouring countries are also at stake; particularly Azerbaijan and Georgia for different reasons. Any disruptions along the Baku-Novorossiysk oil pipeline would jeopardize Azerbaijan's economic interest vis-à-vis Islamic Chechnya and Orthodox Russia. Georgia was caught in a precarious predicament. For a long time, Georgian leader, Eduard Shevardnadze, was claiming that the Georgian territory was not being used by Chechen rebels; Russia was counter claiming. However, after it was evident that Chechen rebels were holed up in Pankisi Gorge not far away from the Georgian Chechen borders, and waging battles against Russian federal forces from there, Georgia sent its troops to flush out the rebels from its territory. Kists, Georgia's Chechen speaking minority, live in and around the Pankisi Gorge. The Chechen rebels find the Kists welcoming and take safe haven among them away from the prying eyes of Russian federal forces or Georgian police. Thus, neighbours are not altogether free from stakes.

While Russia's and Chechnya's neighbours have political and economic stakes, the Chechen stakes are far greater than those of others. In the event of freedom from Russia, Chechnya is doomed to despair. Years of war and illegal activities have reduced the place to ruins which is too difficult to rebuild. At the same time, truant insubordination has given the rebels a stoic defiance – an ominous reason to continue instability after independence. The Chechens are not realizing this stake at present because they wage a *Jihad* and Russia is blamed for all the bad things. Independence will alter that scenario, when umbrella of protection would suddenly disappear. Rebels and terrorists cannot help redeem that situation and innocent Chechens would be left high and dry. Then they cannot use the weakness of Russia as a weapon against Russia and there will be many roadblocks to development. If the March 2003 referendum observer was any indicator, when a sizeable majority of registered Chechen voters rejected the secessionists and opted for a constitution, that itself was an evidence of the insignificant political role the rebels play and their unpopularity. However, their significant military prowess, encouraged and abetted by the network international terror network with sound financial backing, would continue to belittle every hope for sustainable peace in Chechnya and its stable future.

Should the present situation continue, a great stake could be visualized in the unpleasant impact of Chechnya on other Muslim areas in Russia. Russian non-Muslims fear Islamic radicalism, while Russian Muslims distrust the Kremlin. As Russia's Muslim population continues to grow, the gap between this fear and distrust will significantly increase in areas around Chechnya, where sizeable Muslim population is concentrated. Muslims number anywhere from 11 million to 25 million or 7 to 17 per cent of the population of Russia. In the absence of data, it is difficult to know the exact figures. However, for sure, Russian Muslims are increasing in number and Russia has the largest number of them than any other Western European country.<sup>22</sup> This increasing number of Muslims and inherent fear of the Russians are likely to corrode mutual confidence. Unless corrective confidence building measures are taken, this corrosion will lead to perpetuation of mutual hostility between the crescent (Chechens) and the cross (Russian). Traditional Islamic laws which the *Shariat* prescribe or Wahabis propagate, shall inevitably clash with the norms of a modern civil society advocated by Russia. And this will be a perpetual clash, albeit not of civilizations.

CONCLUSIONS

It is clear that the illegal nexus flowing to Chechnya from different parts of the Islamic world plus the sympathetic support of diaspora and Western powers make the Chechen cause for freedom sustainable. However, going by the accounts of tragedy committed by Chechen rebels, this has also made terrorism stemming from Chechnya a focal point of concern. In order to stem the rot, even at this stage, terrorists must be separated from peaceloving Chechens. While peaceloving Chechens ought to be dealt sympathetically, terrorists in the guise of freedom fighters must be dealt ruthlessly. The core issue, whether Chechnya will remain a part of the Russian Federation or be independent, has not been adequately addressed in all negotiations, instead Russia's focus has been how to tame the rebels. While the core issue remained in the periphery, all solutions so far have been symptomatic of the crisis ridden situation, whether continuation of war or a ceasefire agreement. As the recent referendum or previous opinion polls have indicated, 90 per cent of the Chechens want their land to remain a part of Russia,<sup>23</sup> and yet the war goes on, chronically waged by just ten per cent of the local population. That the residents of Grozny have tolerated the gruesome killing of 25 to 30 people everyday for the past ten years<sup>24</sup>, is a telling testimony of the massacre, rape, banditry, vandalism and all the lawlessness the Chechens as citizens of Russia have experienced. It is certainly the ineffectiveness of the local administration, whether civil or military. There is no single person responsible for running the affairs of Chechnya. The Kremlin sent military administration is hopelessly divided and the local warlords are yet more divisive. The result is the collapse of governance and paralysis of a civil society. Considerable preponderance is required in this direction, sooner the better.

Russia's diplomacy must aim at convincing the Islamic and the Western world alike about the viability of Chechnya as an independent entity within and without Russia, the pros and cons of both aspects as well as its future prospects; and accordingly transform the peace process in Chechnya from the one that puts emphasis on independence to one that would prioritize fight against terrorism as the prime object. Evidences are aplenty, particularly after the March 2003 referendum, to corroborate the Chechen case as an integral part of global terror; and not a singular cause for independence. Russia has been pursuing so far a reactive policy in Chechnya. The Chechen separatists strike first, and

then Russia chalks out reactive strategy in defence. Time has come for Russia to recast its Chechen policy by transforming it into one of proactive approach.

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# INDO-RUSSIAN TRADE AND ECONOMIC COOPERATION

ARUN MOHANTY

Independent India gave a lot of emphasis on attaining economic self-reliance, which became the bedrock of its development strategy in subsequent decades. At the time of independence, India was predominantly an agrarian country with agriculture accounting for 49 per cent of national income and 70 per cent of employment in the country. Industry that accounted for 17 per cent of national income was dominated by Group B (light industry) with small scale enterprises and cottage industry contributing 60 per cent of total industrial production. India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru wanted to eliminate economic backwardness and bring about economic modernization of the country by developing heavy industry in state sector through Five Year Plans. Since Indian private capital at that point of time was not able to invest in heavy industry, Nehru wanted to build heavy industry in state sector through mobilization of funds by the state. Nehru's concept of economic development stressed that state sector should occupy commanding heights in the economy. For this, he found Soviet experience quite useful and relevant.

## SOVIET ROLE IN INDIA'S INDUSTRIALIZATION

The tasks of demolishing the colonial structure of economy, and elimination of backwardness on the basis of rapid industrialization were closely linked with issues of restructuring of foreign economic relations. India was not in a position to bring about rapid industrialization without foreign assistance. When Western capitalist countries were reluctant to provide assistance to India in executing this type of modernization, India had to look towards socialist countries, first and foremost, the erstwhile Soviet



Union. Economic restructuring with the development of heavy industry in the state sector through Five Year Plans was the alpha and omega of India's development strategy, which was declared in the second Industrial Act promulgated in mid-1950s. Soviet experience and assistance played an important role in executing this strategy.

Elimination of colonial structure of the economy through rapid industrialization depended on import of modern machinery, equipment, technology on the one hand, and curbing the position of foreign capital in the economy on the other. Import of modern machines and technology played a significant role in the course of implementation of first three Five Year Plans for achieving rapid industrialization. Former socialist countries, particularly the erstwhile USSR, extended maximum assistance in the successful implementation of this particular development strategy.

While the first bilateral agreement between India and the erstwhile Soviet Union was signed on 2 February 1955 for building Bhilai Steel Plant with a capacity of one million tonnes with Soviet assistance, the first trade agreement between the two countries was signed in 1953 for achieving a trade turnover worth 13 million rupees.<sup>1</sup> It should be emphasized here that the initial cooperation between the two countries began on India's existing participation in international division of labour. Due to the backward structure of Indian economy, bilateral cooperation took place only through trade. However, India's rapid industrialization programme through development of heavy industry in the state sector through Five Year Plans provided a strong boost to mutually beneficial bilateral economic cooperation starting from second half of 1950s to late 1980s.

With the implementation of country's second Five Year Plan in 1956-57, India began executing its rapid industrialization programme. Soviet assistance in the form of providing long term credit at easy rates, technical assistance, as well as rupee-rouble trade arrangement in subsequent years dramatically changed the nature of Indo-Russian economic relations between 1960s and 1980s. These arrangements helped increase trade turnover between the two sides substantially in the following years. While India embarked on its rapid industrialization programme in mid-1950s, it was not producing enough machines and equipment required for building industrial enterprises, and did not have adequate skilled personnel for carrying out this task. That is why the country was in dire need of foreign technical assistance for its industrialisation. Indian establishment at first tried to involve Western countries in accomplishing

this task. However, Western countries were not very keen to provide such assistance. Instead they put tough terms and conditions for giving that kind of assistance as they always looked at India as a market for their finished products and a source for raw materials for their industry. They were averse to India's plan of building a self-reliant economy. The Western countries were particularly concerned about India's plan to construct capital goods industry in the state sector.

At this juncture, the erstwhile USSR provided assistance for rapid industrialization of India through construction of capital goods industry in the state sector. An important feature of this assistance was that USSR was helping in building national cadres for running such enterprises. The other important feature of this cooperation was that the ownership of the enterprises was being transferred to India after completion of its construction. However, the management right from the beginning remained in the hands of Indian specialists. The Soviet specialists at the construction site worked as advisors or instructors. The analysis of technical assistance provided by USSR shows that bulk of it was extended to build branches of heavy industry. There are more than 120 industrial enterprises that were built in India with Soviet technical know how. A very significant feature of the Soviet know how was that it was extended not for building individual enterprises but for constructing production complexes and enterprises which are associated with each other through mutual production links. At least three such complexes like metallurgy, electro-energy and oil sector can be mentioned in this respect. Building of such complexes helped in the emergence of direct and reverse inter-branch links between raw material extraction, its processing, production of major industrial machineries, training of cadres and creation of project-construction base. This kind of interlink not only helps in creating industrial branches supplementing each other but also ensures conditions for their normal functioning at the national level. For example, the steel plants at Bhilai and Bokaro, the heavy machinery factory at Ranchi and mining equipment factory at Durgapur created the basis for such production complexes. The heavy machinery factory at Ranchi and mining equipment factory at Durgapur produce many types of metallurgical and mining equipment, which are used in building steel plants. While India imported almost 90 per cent of the equipment at the time of construction of Bhilai plant, most of the equipment used for construction of the steel plant at Visakhapatnam, also built with Russian know how, were made in India.

### **Petroleum Industry**

USSR also extended substantial assistance in building India's oil industry. In spite of large territory with a potential for oil survey, Western oil companies, interested in keeping India as a market for their oil products, were affirming that there existed no oil in India. However, advent of the Soviet specialists changed the scenario in this sector. Soviet specialists discovered more than 40 oil and gas fields in India. The first oil deposit was discovered at Cambay in 1958 and Ankaleswar in 1960. Former Soviet Union helped India in building oil refineries at Barauni and Koiyali as well. The oil refineries have also been set up with Soviet assistance at Mathura and Guwahati. Soviet help to India in oil and gas sector covered the entire process starting from survey, and extraction to building and exploitation of oil refineries, supply of equipment, training of specialists etc. In fact, Soviet assistance in creating India's premier state owned oil and gas company known as Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Ltd. (ONGC) is commendable. Besides, equipment for petroleum industry is produced in factories built with Soviet technical know-how.

### **Power Industry**

Power industry is one of the vital sectors where both countries have cooperated for decades. Since India ranked among those countries having low per capita electricity generation. Increasing electricity generation became one of the priority goals of the industrial policy of India soon after independence. As a result India's power generation capacity rose from 2.3 million KW in 1951 to 31.9 million KW in 1982, in which Soviet contribution is commendable. The power plants at Bhakra, Neyveli, Patratu, Balimela, Obra and Vindhyanchal were built with Soviet assistance. It has been estimated that around 10 per cent of India's power generation capacity has been built with Soviet assistance.

### **Coal Industry**

India's coal output rose from 32 million tons to 131 million tons in 1982 in the post-independence period, out of which 128 million tons were extracted in the state sector itself. The entire coal sector was nationalized in 1974. The coal mines at Banki, Surakachar and Manikpur were developed with the Soviet help, apart from a mining equipment repair plant which was set up at Korba. Besides, the mining equipment plant at Durgapur has played an important role in the development of India's coal industry.

### **Pharmaceutical Industry**

Since foreign monopolies were dominating India's pharmaceutical industry for a long time, the prices of major medicines were extremely high. Soviet assistance in this sector led to the construction of a pharmaceutical factory at Hyderabad, another for production of antibiotics at Rishikesh, and yet another for surgery equipment at Madras etc.

Significance of Soviet assistance in building India's national industry can be judged from the fact that at the beginning of 1980s, 40 per cent of India's total steel and alloy production, about 89 per cent metallurgy plant equipment, more than 40 per cent mining equipment, more than 55 per cent heavy power generation equipment, more than 10 per cent electricity, a significant part of, oil products and coal were coming from enterprises built with the Soviet technical know how<sup>2</sup>. Enterprises built with Soviet assistance constituted the backbone of India's state sector, which played significant role in ensuring economic self-reliance of the country and weakening the position of foreign capital in Indian economy. In the mid-1980s, 98 per cent of total coal output, total oil and petroleum production, 65.5 per cent of steel, 81 per cent of Zinc, 100 per cent of medicines, 55 per cent of chemical fertilizers, all railway engines and wagons, 100 ships, 92 per cent of turbines and generators, major part of metallurgical, mining and oil equipment and 50 per cent of lathe machines were coming from the state sector.<sup>3</sup>

### INDO-SOVIET TRADE

India's foreign economic relations witnessed a sea change after attainment of its independence. These changes reflect strengthening of India's political and economic independence, and use of these ties for strengthening economic self-reliance. The share of USSR in India's total exports grew from one per cent to 19.3 per cent during 1951- 1982, period while its share in India's total import rose from 0.2 to 8.5 per cent during the same period.<sup>4</sup> Indo-Soviet trade turnover grew from 0.5 billion roubles in 1956-60 to 5.1 billion roubles in 1976-1980, which further reached 10 billion roubles between 1981-84. India was former Soviet Union's largest trading partner among the developing countries and hence Soviet share in India's trade constituted about 18 per cent of India's total export and more than 10 per cent of its total import.<sup>5</sup>

Indo-Soviet trade and economic relations were regulated by inter-

protection from market fluctuations. If one analyses structure of India's trade basket with the former USSR, we find that capital goods dominated Indian imports from Soviet Union. Share of machines and equipment in India's total import from USSR constituted 54 to 68 per cent during the rapid industrialization period from mid-1950s to mid-1960s. The subsequent period witnessed decline in the share of these goods in Indian imports from USSR while the share of oil and fertilizers went up.

Former Soviet Union became a huge market for India's traditional exports of agricultural and consumer goods. Amidst heavy competition in the international market, Soviet Union became a stable market for Indian goods, while India became a stable market for Soviet Union's capital goods. The rupee trade played a significant role in increasing trade turnover between the two countries due to acute shortage of hard currency. The clearing system helped India get capital goods from Soviet Union by not spending hard-earned hard currency. This system played a key role in boosting bilateral trade turnover which reached 5.5 billion US dollars in 1990.

#### POST-SOVIET BILATERAL TRADE AND ECONOMIC RELATIONS

Disintegration of the former Soviet Union witnessed a dramatic decline in trade and economic relations between India and new Russia with trade turnover falling from 5.5 billion US dollars in 1990 to just 0.5 billion US dollars in 1992. There are several reasons for this drastic fall. First of all, Russia started unprecedented reforms in order to become a market economy. One of the major directions of Russia's market reform was elimination of state monopoly over foreign trade. Whereas in the past, trade between the two countries was regulated by inter-governmental agreements and protocols, this practice was abruptly abolished since 1992 leaving the bilateral trade completely dependent on market forces. Indo-Soviet trade to remain which was based on inter-governmental agreements and protocols saw a free fall as a result of radical market reforms following the Soviet disintegration.

Secondly, Soviet market, which was largely a sellers' market, now turned into a buyers' market. India had a near monopoly in some segments of Russian domestic market which was wiped out following the radical market reforms. India suddenly found many competitors like China, Turkey and the Middle East in these segments. Indian exporters, on the other

hand, failed to realize the new reality hoping the good old days to return. In the meantime, countries like China, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates occupied the space in Russian domestic market, which earlier belonged to India.

Thirdly, bilateral trade transactions are now conducted in hard currency. However, during President Boris Yeltsin's state visit to India in 1993, India and Russia reached an agreement that the former would pay Soviet-time debts estimated at about 10 billion US dollars in kind to the latter by exporting goods worth one billion US dollars every year through rupee funds. Though this arrangement boosted Indian exports to Russia, it opened the flood-gates for exporting substandard goods to Russia, thus causing significant damage to the reputation of Indian goods the loss of reputation of Indian goods in Russian market ultimately. It is to be noted that almost 80 per cent of Indian export to Russia came through rupee channel. In the process, Indian goods have lost their reputation in the Russian market, which is becoming an uphill task to regain.

Indo-Russian trade and economic relations are important components of bilateral cooperation and have the potential to take the volume of bilateral trade to much higher level than the current turnover. However, no serious effort has been made by both sides to harness this potential to each others advantage. Annual bilateral trade turnover hovering around 3 billion US dollars does not correspond to the economic potential that the two countries possess nor does it reflect the high level of political relations between them.

Lack of stability has been the characteristic trait of Indo-Russian trade over the last 16 years now. Trade relations between Delhi and Moscow grew very fast and reached 5,485 million US dollars in the year 1990. The trade turnover was reduced by more than 2 billion US dollars reaching 3,487 million US dollars in the year 1991. However, the trade volume nosedived in 1992 to 1,391 million US dollars in 1992 and further declined to 1,100 million US dollars in 1993. The settlement of debt-repayment issue between the two countries provided a boost to bilateral trade, which reached 1,914 million US dollars in 1995, which is the highest volume during the 1990s. In the following years Indo-Russian trade witnessed ups and downs, which never reached 2 billion dollars level during the next few years.

A significant feature of Indo-Russian trade during 1993-2003 period was that almost 80 per cent of Indian exports were financed through

debt repayment channel. Though this arrangement facilitated Indian exports to Russia, yet in the process, it resulted in corruption, reduced the competitiveness of Indian goods in Russian market and dealt a heavy blow to the reputation of Indian commodities. The end of the arrangement for Indian supplies through debt-repayment rupee channel was apprehended to deliver a mortal blow to Indian exports to Russia. However, latest trends show an upward movement in the Indo-Russian trade relations.

A disturbing feature of the bilateral trade has been seen in the balance of trade between the two countries which has always been in favour of Russia all these years since the Soviet collapse. The balance of trade has turned very strongly in favour of Russia especially in the last few years starting from 1999, which remains a matter of serious concern for India. According to Russian sources, the balance of trade between the two countries was more than 1.3 billion US dollars in the year 2005 which was clearly in favour of Russia. If one includes defence purchases in the trade, the balance is in favour of Russia by more than four times.<sup>6</sup> One of the weak features of Indo-Russian trade has been the narrow base of the trade basket. If one looks at the composition of Indian exports to Russia, one would find that three groups of products such as, agricultural (tea, coffee, rice, tobacco etc.), textiles and pharmaceutical products constitute almost 80 per cent of Russia's total imports from India. Similar is the case with Russian exports to India. Four products such as metal, newsprint, chemicals and fertilizers dominate Russian export to India. The narrow base of import and export from both sides is quite evident from Table 1 and Table 2. However, there is a change in the structure of Russian export to India as a result of increase in supplies of machinery to Kudankulam nuclear plant in Tamil Nadu.

Russia has been a key destination for Indian tea for decades. However, it should be noted that export of Indian tea to Russia has been declining very fast over the last several years, and India is losing this lucrative market to other exporter countries, especially to Sri Lanka. So is the case with textiles, the other major commodity in Indian export basket. However, it is a matter of satisfaction that exports of Indian pharmaceutical products to Russia are now on the rise after steady decline for several years.

### PROSPECTS FOR TRADE EXPANSION

India and Russia have large economies, which are supplementary in

**TABLE 1**  
**Composition of Indo-Russian Trade**

Top 10 Imports from Russia in 2005-06  
(Value in million US dollars)

<i>Commodity</i>	<i>2005-06</i>
Iron & steel	590.09
Fertilizers	484.95
Natural and colored pearls, precious, or semi-precious stones, pre-metals, jewellery articles	157.20
Nickel, nickel products	147.01
Newsprint, paper boards	100.5
Rubber and rubber articles	80.91
Copper and copper articles	76.52
Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery	62.70
Organic chemicals	46.11
Salt, sulphur, stone, lime, cement, plastering material	41.45

**TABLE 2**  
**Top 10 Exports to Russia in 2005-06**

(Value in million US dollars)

<i>Commodity</i>	<i>2005-06</i>
Pharmaceutical products	233.15
Tea, coffee, spices	67.77
Miscellaneous edible preparations	54.92
Tobacco and tobacco substitutes	39.27
Preparations of vegetables, fruits, nuts	31.18
Cotton	27.75
Plastic and plastic products	25.49
Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery	22.67
Articles of apparel and clothing accessories	17.84
Electrical machinery and equipment , electronic goods	16.79

*Source:* Ministry of Commerce, Government of India.

nature. Annual rate of growth of both the economies is significant. Hence, there is a huge potential for growth of bilateral trade. However, little has been done to harness this potential. Although India and Russia are strategic partners and enjoy excellent political relationship, bilateral trade does not reflect this strategic partnership nor does it correspond to the mutual



potential. Governments of both countries have expressed serious concern over the state of bilateral trade, and have set up a joint study group in order to find ways and means to provide strong boost to trade ties. Both countries have decided to achieve the trade turnover worth 10 billion US dollars by the year 2010 during President Vladimir Putin's official visit to India in January 2007.<sup>7</sup>

## REMOVING BOTTLENECKS

India and Russia have signed dozens of agreements which provide the legal foundation for promoting trade and economic ties. Agreements on mutual investment protection and avoidance of double taxation are in place for facilitating ties. However, these are not enough. There are several infrastructural bottlenecks which need to be removed in order to improve trade ties.

### **Banking**

After debt-repayment rupee funds are exhausted, adequate banking facilities are urgently required for facilitating bilateral trade. Following the massive financial meltdown in Russia in the year 1998, Indian banks lost faith in Russian banking system, thus creating a problem in the area of trade facilitation. Indian banks simply stopped honouring the Letter of Credits (LCs) and guarantees issued by Russian banks. Guarantees provided by banks in each other's country should be honoured to promote trade. State Bank of India and Canara Bank, which had (their own) representative offices at Moscow since Soviet times, have now opened a joint venture bank with 60:40 equity correspondingly. ICICI bank, which entered Russian market recently, has purchased a Russian bank. With *Vnesheconombank* having opened its office in Delhi other Russian banks are also planning to open their branches in Delhi for promotion of bilateral trade and economic relations.. These are steps in the right direction for bilateral trade promotion.

### **Shipping Arrangement**

The movement of goods between the two countries is taking place through shipping companies of third countries. Adequate shipping arrangements and port facilities should be built for strengthening trade. In this context, North-South International Transport Corridor issue should be taken up more seriously. If the corridor becomes functional, transit time for Russia

bound Indian goods could be reduced by half. India and Russia along with Iran should make serious efforts for making the transport corridor fully functional to the benefit of all countries of the region.

### **Russian Visa Problem**

Receiving Russian visa has been a major constraint in the development of trade and economic ties between the two countries. The cumbersome visa process and harassment at Moscow international airport has dissuaded many Indians to do business in Russia. Moscow has been insisting upon the signing of re-admission agreement with Delhi in order to ease the visa process system, which is not acceptable to the Indian side. The crux of the problem lies in the fact that Russia has become a springboard for many illegal Indians trying to penetrate into Europe, which in turn has been exerting lot of pressure on Russia to end the illegal migration of foreigners from Russian territory. The delay in signing of re-admission agreement and the cumbersome Russian visa procedure, have resulted in dampening the spirit of Indian businessmen willing to visit Russia for developing business there. Though the issue is serious, it can be resolved given the flexibility, goodwill and mutual accommodation from both sides.

### **Cooperation in the Energy Sector**

India being an energy consumer and Russia being an energy producing country are natural partners for cooperation in this area. Russia can play a vital role in ensuring India's energy security in coming decades as our energy consumption grows. India has invested 1.7 billion US dollars in Sakhalin energy project from where the first oil shipment has reached India. India is seriously thinking of buying 10 million tons of Russian oil annually. According to Indian Petroleum Minister, Murli Deora, India would import as much as 50 million tons of oil from Russia in future. India is seriously contemplating to invest in Sakhalin-3 project and to participate in the development of Kovytko gas field. According to Irkutsk administration sources, Indian investment in Kovytko can reach 6.5 billion US dollars. India has serious intentions of investing in East Siberian oil and gas fields.

Russian gas giant GAZPROM has entered into strategic cooperation agreement with Gas Authority of India Ltd (GAIL) and has signed MoU with Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) Videsh Ltd for projects to supply gas and hydrocarbons. GAZPROM and Zarubezhneftgaz jointly with GAIL are working on exploration and drilling operations in

the Bay of Bengal. Russia is working in Block No. 26 of Bay of Bengal. GAZPROM has signed MoU with GAIL for joint cooperation in each other's country as well as in third countries. There is an agreement between Russian company Lukoil and Indian Oil Corporation for long term 15 million ton annual supplies of oil and petroleum products to India. Lukoil and OVL are engaged in talks for cooperation. Reliance has also shown interest in investing in Russian energy sector, which is a welcome sign. Russia has been our traditional partner in electricity production for decades. There are number of projects in the area where Russian companies are successfully working. Russian participation in mini-hydro projects can be significant.

### **Modernization of Coal Industry**

Jhanjra mine, which was designed and built with Soviet technical assistance in the 1980s, is still considered as one of the most promising supply units in Indian coal industry. Russian companies like, Rusugolmash and Zarubezhugol are interested in projects to modernize mines in India. Giproskhakht Institute implemented various design projects within the framework of the MoU signed with CMPDII of India. According to Coal India Ltd. managers, Russian equipment are of world class and price-wise competitive, and would fully comply with the techno-economic requirements for the development of new open cast mines in India.

### **Nuclear Energy Generation**

Nuclear energy generation is yet another important area where bilateral cooperation promises a bright future. Kudankulam nuclear plant with two reactors is under construction in Tamil Nadu with Russian technical know how on the basis of Russian credit. Both countries have reached an understanding that the expansion of the plant would take place with construction of another four reactors with Russian technical assistance.

### **Investment**

In spite of the agreement on mutual investment protection and other accords, mutual investment in each other's country has been insignificant. Total Russian investment in India is around 200 million US dollars and total Indian investment is at around two billion US dollars, out of which ONGC Videsh alone has invested 1.7 billion US dollars in Sakhalin energy project.<sup>8</sup>

Economies of both countries have been dominated by private sectors. However, private players in both countries are yet to look at each other for business development. Sustained efforts should be made to bring the private players of both countries closer for making investments in each other's country. The largest ever Indo-Russian Investment Forum, aimed at bringing the private sectors of both countries closer was organized in February 2007 following President Putin's visit to Delhi in January 2007. The second Indo-Russian Investment Forum, which was organized recently in February 2008, evoked a lot of interest among private players of the two countries. Such forums organized on a regular basis can play significant role in private sector participation in each other's country. New Para Sun Group, the major Indian private player in Russian market, which has been working in Russia for the last 50 years, has invested 200 million US dollars in the sphere of beer production in Russia and controls around 40 per cent of beer production in that country. Sun Capital has also made major acquisitions in Russian energy sector. It has acquired 25 per cent of stakes in Itera Energy Company, and making bids for acquiring stakes in other Russian companies. Sun Capital has signed an agreement with Russian energy major Rao EEC during the St. Petersburg Economic Forum in 2007 for building power plants in India with Russian technical know how. Mahindra and Tata are making serious efforts to manufacture their vehicles in Russia. Amtel is another story of success in Russia. The company has a strong foothold in Russian tyre industry and its annual turnover is reportedly more than a billion US dollars. Reliance has been negotiating to participate in Russian upstream and downstream oil business.

Russian private players seem to be waking up to do business in India. An Ural based Russian truck company has signed agreement to manufacture trucks in West Bengal. Major Russian companies like AFK Systema and Basic Element of late have shown serious interest in doing business in India. AFK Systema has started investing in Indian telecommunication and real estate. Another Russian company Altima is planning massive investment in India's telecommunication and real estate sectors.

### **Reinvestment of Debt-Repayment Rupee Funds**

Both countries have finally agreed to use the leftover debt-repayment rupee funds as investment in India. Both countries have also agreed to invest in the joint manufacturing of the multi-role transport aircraft, joint production of titanium dioxide in India for the purpose of exporting it to Russia and

other projects. Part of this has been proposed to be used as investment in Indian energy sector too. This is likely to augment bilateral economic cooperation in coming years.

### CONCLUSION

Structural reforms coupled with application of full-scale market mechanism in trade dealt a heavy blow to bilateral trade and economic relations between India and Russia. Signing of momentous bilateral agreements has done little to promote trade and economic relations between the two strategic partners. Their trade and economic ties which do not reflect the excellent political relations enjoyed by them, constitute the weakest link in their growing strategic partnership. In spite of repeated calls to double the trade turnover target over the last decade, bilateral trade volume does not show signs of significant growth. Sustained efforts need to be made to woo the private economic players of both the countries in order to bolster bilateral trade and economic relations. Ways and means have to be found to diversify each other's export and import baskets.

Everything in the sphere of trade and economic relations should not be left entirely to the market forces. If India and Russia are strategic partners, state intervention in promoting trade and economic ties is essential. Prudent state intervention combined with marriage of private sectors of both countries holds the key for strengthening of trade and economic relations between the two natural and genuine strategic partners. Setting up of an India-Russia Chamber of Commerce is a step in the right direction. It is time for both sides to draft a bilateral Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) or think of some kind of a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in order to infuse new blood into the stagnating bilateral trade and economic relations.

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# KASHMIR IN SOVIET/RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY CALCULATIONS

DEBIDATTA AUROBINDA MAHAPATRA

The Soviet Russian policy towards Kashmir can be called an archetypal phenomenon in international politics in the sense that it is more marked by a friendly approach in bilateral relations between India and Russia, except for a brief period of uncertainty following the disintegration of the Soviet Union. This paper particularly focuses on this aspect of bilateral relations in which Kashmir issue has been analysed, though other aspects of bilateral relations appear occasionally. Starting with the independence of the Indian subcontinent to the collapse of the former Soviet Union, the Cold War politics had much shaped the Kashmir issue. After the collapse of the Soviet Union the relationship reached a low point, though it geared up later on. However, in all these phases starting from the very beginning of the Kashmir conflict, the Soviet/Russian policy towards Kashmir is marked by consistency in approach, more aptly characterised by a policy of continuity in the midst of change. The paper also deals with the factors that emerged in post-Cold War scenario such as terrorism, which brought both the countries together to adopt common approach on issues like Chechnya and Kashmir.

## SHIFT IN THE SOVIET POLICY

The Kashmir issue surfaced in the wake of the independence of the Indian subcontinent in 1947 from the British colonialism. The Soviet perception towards the Kashmir issue was non-committal at that time as the Soviet leader Stalin was under the impression that the whole Indian subcontinent was an offshoot of capitalism; hence it had no role to play in the region. It was the Cold War, moulded with ideological rivalry between the power

blocs that influenced Soviet policy towards the Kashmir issue. Stalin was of the view that India, like Pakistan, leaned towards Anglo-American bloc, hence the need to maintain equidistance from both the countries. In pursuit of this policy, the Soviet representative remained absent during voting when the Kashmir question first came up for discussion in the United Nations Security Council in 1948.

However, the years that followed witnessed dramatic changes in the international political scenario. In 1948, Pakistan offered a base to the US in Gilgit area of Pak-occupied Kashmir. For the Soviet Union, the US presence in the South Asian region was to have its superpower rival near its border, threatening its security. In 1949, Pakistani Prime Minister visited the US, where he was offered military and economic support. Pakistan joined the US sponsored South East Atlantic Treaty Organisation (SEATO) in 1954 and Baghdad Pact in 1955. These developments led to reorientation in Soviet foreign policy. Besides the factor of growing US-Pak axis, India's spearheading of Non Aligned Movement (NAM) also attracted the Soviet leadership. India was against any sort of military alliance or any sort of hegemonic action of any state. According to T. N. Kaul, the former Indian Ambassador to the Soviet Union,

“the essence of non-alignment is independence of non-aligned countries to judge each issue on its merits, without any previous commitment to one side or the other, as it affects the national interest of each non-aligned country, the legitimate interest of other non-aligned countries and the larger interest of peace, security and development throughout the world”.<sup>1</sup>

This policy of India, to a large extent, brought her and the former Soviet Union closer. There were also many common factors in their foreign policy approaches such as disarmament, anti-colonialism, anti-racism and the concept of peaceful coexistence between different social and political systems. The first major statement by the then Soviet Premier Malenkov, which indicated that the Soviet Union had become more appreciative of India's non-aligned foreign policy, was contained in his August 1953 address to the Supreme Soviet. Malenkov said,

“In the efforts of the peaceloving countries directed towards ending the Korean War, India made a significant contribution. Our relations with India are becoming stronger and our cultural ties are growing. We hope that in future, relations between India and the USSR will grow stronger and develop in a spirit of friendly cooperation”.<sup>2</sup>

According to some writers, Moscow regarded non-alignment as an



integral component of the competitive struggle between East and West,<sup>3</sup> rather than a disengaged influence on this struggle. As the prominence of Non Aligned Movement grew in international politics, the Soviet leaders began to consider its long term strategic goals. They encouraged the non-aligned countries to adopt a political programme, which would conform to Soviet strategic interests in the Third World. However, it would be unfair to assume that the Non Alignment Movement was formed to serve the Soviet interests. On the other hand, "while pursuing its friendship with Moscow, India has continued to defend its independence and the principles of non-alignment". Perhaps the key to India's conception of non-alignment is not only its refusal to join any military alliance, but also its denial to any foreign power of military or naval bases. It would like to keep superpowers and China out of South Asia and out of the Indian Ocean. However, the non-aligned policy of India was one of the factors that brought both the former Soviet Union and India closer. This earned India the Soviet support on Kashmir in United Nations Security Council meetings. Later years witnessed high level visits, which further strengthened relationship between the two countries.

Hence, it took about four years for the Soviet Union to take any stand on the Kashmir issue since its inception. When the United Nations Security Council met on 17 January 1952 to discuss the issue in its 570th meeting, the Soviet delegate, Jacob Malik, spoke at length on the problem. Referring to various plans put forward by London and Washington, he said, that those plans "instead of speaking a real settlement, were aimed at prolonging the dispute and at converting Kashmir into a trust territory of the US and the UK under the pretext of giving it assistance through the United Nations."<sup>4</sup> In support of his argument, he quoted Pakistan and the US newspapers. On 9 August 1952, *Pravda* published a report on the proceedings of Indian Parliament and supported the proposal made by the Communist Party of India (CPI) members, A.K. Gopalan and Prof. H. Mukerjee in their debate on 7 August 1952 to withdraw the Kashmir question from the United Nations (UN).

#### THE FOUNDATION OF FRIENDSHIP

The visit of the Soviet leaders, Khrushchev and Bulganin to India in November-December 1955 laid the foundation of the beginning of a new era in Indo-Soviet relationship. This was the first major visit of the top Soviet leaders to India after its independence. During their visit, the Soviet

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leaders assured India that though India and the Soviet Union had different political and social structures, they had many common stakes in international politics. Speaking at the banquet held in his honour and Khrushchev by Prime Minister Nehru on 20 November 1955, Bulganin said that "Öthe word 'peace' was equally sacred for both. This desire for peace brings us closer, unites us and allows to participate more actively in the peaceful settlement of complicated international problems".<sup>5</sup> The Soviet leaders supported the Indian stand on the Kashmir issue explicitly during the course of talks and speeches. Speaking at the reception given by G. M. Bakshi, the then Prime Minister of Kashmir, in honour of visiting Soviet dignitaries on 10 December 1955, Khrushchev expressed the unequivocal support to Indian stand on the Kashmir issue. He said, "Kashmir is one of the states of the Republic of India that has been decided by the people of Kashmir. It is a question that the people themselves have decided".<sup>6</sup> He viewed the Kashmir problem as an imperialist design and severely criticized "divide and rule" policy of the imperialist powers.

As a mark of growing friendship, the Soviet Union cast its first veto in the Security Council proceedings on Kashmir in February 1957 on a resolution to use a UN force to facilitate demilitarization. In 1958, both countries signed the second India-Soviet trade agreement. It constituted a qualitative leap in their economic relations as Indian exports to the Soviet Union expanded three-fold between 1960 and 1965. The former Soviet Union supported Indian stand on the Kashmir issue unequivocally during Khrushchev period. The relations were so strong it seemed that the Soviet Union was not, as Khrushchev said during his visit, just fair- weather friend of India but a friend at times of difficulties. In pursuit of this policy, the Soviet Union opposed the draft resolution co-sponsored by Great Britain, the US, Australia and Cuba on 14 February 1957. The resolution had noted the importance the Security Council "attached to the demilitarization of the state of Jammu and Kashmir preparatory to the holding of a plebiscite", and "Pakistan's proposal for the use of a temporary United Nations force in connection with demilitarization".

## BREZHNEV'S POLICY AND ITS REAPPRAISAL

The initial years of Brezhnev regime witnessed a trend in the Soviet diplomacy to extricate the Soviet Union from involvement in intricate problems which were of no direct concern to it. It took a neutral attitude towards Kashmir issue, as it was interested in developing closer

relationship with both India and Pakistan. Brezhnev, unlike his predecessor, envisaged the Kashmir issue as an opportunity to bring India and Pakistan closer and to turn the subcontinent into a peaceful arena under the aegis of the former Soviet Union. It made attempts in the 1960s to develop good relations with Pakistan but it was mainly aimed at countering Chinese influence in Pakistan. Brezhnev thought that the Soviet interests could be advanced if India and Pakistan could be developed as an independent counter-force free of American and Chinese influence. If Pakistan could be reconciled with the Soviet Union, Brezhnev thought, it would help in improving Indo-Pak relations and would fulfil the Soviet dream of India-Pakistan-Soviet alliance. Such a triangular alliance, if it could be forged, would be a great bulwark against American and Chinese intervention in the subcontinent.

From the position of negative neutrality, that is to say, simply limiting the Soviet action to the development of relations with the two rivals, the Soviet leaders began to display concern over the manner in which the relations between the two countries continued to deteriorate. Following the outbreak of war between India and Pakistan in August 1965, Kosygin sent several letters to the leaders of India and Pakistan, appealing for immediate cessation of hostilities and offered his country's 'good offices' in negotiating for a peaceful settlement. After a weeklong (4-10 January 1966) hectic parleys at Tashkent between the two sides, in which the Soviet Premier, Kosygin broke the deadlock to arrive at a mutually suitable agreement, Lal Bahadur Shastri and Ayub signed the Tashkent Declaration on 10 January 1966. Kosygin hailed the Tashkent Declaration as "an important political document and a new stage in the development of relations between India and Pakistan".

It was only in late 1970 that the change, i.e., reviving the old policy of supporting Indian stand on the Kashmir issue was perceived in Soviet policy. The Pakistani refusal to endorse the Soviet proposals for South Asian Regional Trade and Transit treaty and an Asian Collective Security system annoyed the Soviet leaders. The disillusionment finally led to reappraisal of Moscow's policy towards Pakistan and an abrupt end to the arms supplies. Thereafter, the establishment of amicable relations with India became the focal point of Soviet politics in the sub continent. Between 6-8 June 1971, the then Indian External Affairs Minister, Swaran Singh paid an official visit to Moscow and met former Soviet Foreign Minister, Andrei Gromyko and other leaders. The crucial talks took place against the disquieting background of the Pakistan war threats, the

growing discord between India and the US and the obvious Chinese bid to exploit the East Pakistan crisis to its advantage. These factors provided the urgency and immediacy for India and the former Soviet Union to enter into the Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation on 9 August 1971. The treaty, consisting of 12 Articles, dealt with, in the main, the promotion of friendship, peace and security both at bilateral and international levels and it was based on mutual respect for each other's sovereignty, despite ideological differences. The treaty declared: "The further development of friendship and cooperation meets the basic national interests of both the states as well as the interests of lasting peace in Asia and the world." Article IX of the treaty provided that the contracting parties would consult each other in case of attack or threat thereof to remove such threat and to take appropriate effective measures to ensure peace and security of their countries. The treaty offered credible assurances to India of Soviet assistance in the event of an attack by China or Pakistan.<sup>7</sup>

As the situation in East Pakistan worsened with millions of refugees pouring into India, the latter's relations with Pakistan became increasingly strained. Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi visited the Soviet Union on 27-29 September 1971 and discussed the developments in East Pakistan and their impact on India with the Soviet leaders. A joint statement issued at the end of the visit, testified to the mutual understanding on many issues. However, escalation of the crisis led to outbreak of war between India and Pakistan on 3 December 1971. A TASS statement issued on 5 December 1971 warned Pakistan, declaring that "the Soviet Union cannot remain indifferent to the developments, considering also the circumstances that are taking place in direct proximity of the USSR's borders and, therefore involve the interests of its security"<sup>8</sup> It also warned the other world powers to stay clear of the India-Pakistan conflict. On 5 December 1971, the Soviet Union vetoed a US resolution calling for ceasefire, withdrawal of Indian and Pakistani forces to their own side of borders, posting of UN observers and for exercise of UN Secretary General's good offices. The Soviet Union used the veto on 6 December 1971 for the second time in twenty four hours to block a UN ceasefire appeal. Tension was also heightened by the decision of the US to send a taskforce of its Seventh Fleet, headed by the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, USS Enterprise, from the Gulf of Tonkin to the Bay of Bengal. A counter move made by the Soviet Fleet in the Indian Ocean area, however, immediately acted as an effective deterrent to the

US designs. With the surrender of the Pakistani forces in Bangladesh on 16 December 1971, the Indo-Pakistan conflict came to a halt. The Soviet commentators welcomed the Shimla Agreement, signed by India and Pakistan on 2 July 1972 as an important instrument for the relaxation of tension in Asia and for peaceful coexistence.

### IMPACT OF PERESTROIKA

With the introduction of *Perestroika* (restructuring), the Soviet leadership focused on broader issues like democracy and economic reforms. Gorbachev's 'New Thinking', the foreign policy counterpart of domestic reforms prompted him to redefine the place and role of the Soviet Union in the world and to come out of 'stagnation' in foreign policy launched under Brezhnev. Highlighting the negative aspects of the old Soviet policy, Andrei Kozyrev, the Deputy Head of the Department for International Organization, who later became the Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation, said, "our direct or indirect entanglement in regional conflicts brings about enormous losses, exacerbating overall international tensions, justifying the arms race and hampering mutually beneficial economic ties with the West".<sup>9</sup> Gorbachev was interested in enhancing relationship with the West, arms cut and opening the polity and economy to the forces of globalization, marketization and democratization. As a result of this policy, Indo-Soviet relationship was looked in a wider perspective.

The Delhi declaration on the principles of nuclear weapon free and non-violent world, signed during the visit of Gorbachev to New Delhi on 28 November 1986, demonstrated a novel approach to inter-state relations. The recognition of the priority of universal human values in this space and nuclear age formed the philosophical and ethical foundation of the declaration. Though the two countries elaborated the document, its significance went far beyond bilateral and regional boundaries. This broad framework of Gorbachev's policy approach aimed at achieving a nuclear-weapon free and non-violent world, and developing closer relationship with all countries including the US and China. But Gorbachev hastened to add, "what we do to improve relations with China will not weaken our relations with India", essentially reiterating his earlier assertion that "we shall not make a single step that could damage India's real interests". Reportedly, he privately assured Rajiv Gandhi about Soviet support in case of a Sino-Indian conflict.<sup>10</sup> During the talks, both sides shared common positions on most other foreign policy issues – the Indian Ocean and Diego

Gracia, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, South Africa and Nicaragua.

The Indo-Soviet relations were cordial though there were phases of ups and downs. As P. N. Haksar avers: "it does bear repetition that India's foreign policy, including its relations with the Soviet Union has strengthened India's independence and sovereignty."<sup>11</sup> From the phase of initial hesitation to develop closer relations with India, the Soviet Union realized the importance of India and the dynamics of the Cold War further provided the ground for closer cooperation. Pakistan's proximity with the US was a major factor for the Soviet Union to search for partners in the third world. The vast geography and population of India, its leadership of NAM were some of the obvious attractions for the Soviet Union. The Khrushchev and Bulganin visit was the landmark in the relations in the Cold War era, as the Soviet Union took a firm stand on Kashmir completely in favour of India.

#### NEW SHIFT IN RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY

The disintegration of the former Soviet Union changed the whole gamut of international relations. Hence, its impact on Indo-Russian relations was obvious. Gorbachev, during his resignation speech on 25 December 1991 stated: "We live in a new world. The Cold War is finished..." That 'new world' saw the emergence of Russia as the 'continuer-state' of the Soviet Union, losing its super power status but retaining the permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). Russian foreign policy was no more designed to serve "the utopian aim of spreading communist ideas round the world". Rather, as Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev said during his visit to Rome in November 1991, it sought 'full blooded cooperation' with the West to become a part of the 'civilized world'.<sup>12</sup> Russian leadership adopted the policy of 'pro-Western romanticism' or 'enlightened pragmatism' with a view to streamlining the process of its transformation to democracy, market reforms and pluralism. Kozyrev urged the Russian leadership in his article in *Izvestia* to give up 'artificial situation of confrontation' with the US because 'the developed countries of the West are Russia's natural allies', not 'adversaries'. In this drive of full-blooded cooperation with the West, Russia paid less attention to its old allies like India, hence giving a blow to the special relationship existing between India and Russia for about four decades.

Russia's policy towards Kashmir, during the year 1991-92 was not based on any clear-cut policy framework. The pro-Western drive to protect

and promote Russia's national interests was the major thrust of Russia's foreign policy in that period. Hence, it was not surprising to see change in Russia's Kashmir policy on unexpected lines. It became evident during the visit of Russian Vice President, Alexander Rutskoi to Pakistan in December 1991. During this visit, he stated that the right to self determination of the Kashmiri people should be decided under UN auspices and in accordance with its resolutions. The Russia-Pakistan Joint Communiqué, issued on 22 December 1991, reads, along with other things: "The Russian side acknowledged Pakistan's position and expressed the hope that the issue would be resolved peacefully through negotiations between Pakistan and India on the basis of international agreements".<sup>13</sup> This was clear negation of the Indian stand on the Kashmir issue. It was also against the provisions of the Shimla Agreement, signed by both India and Pakistan, which emphasized the resolution of the Kashmir issue bilaterally without any third party mediation. This new approach of Russia caused concern in the Indian political establishment and public in general.<sup>14</sup>

Russia's policy towards India and particularly on Kashmir was thus not identical with earlier Soviet policy. In this period of transition, marked by turbulence in every aspect of Russian society, polity, economy and culture, the leadership gave up the traditional approach towards its old allies including India. In the post-confrontation, post-Cold War world, Russia focused on democracy, market reforms and pluralism, for which, the Russian leaders viewed. Western aid being essential. But the sudden shift in the priority areas proved costly for the Russian society. Gulf crisis, Yugoslavia crisis and cryogenic rocket controversy etc. provided ample proofs of Russia's weakness. It was thus on expected lines that its relations with India, including its stance on the Kashmir issue, should get affected in 1991-92. But to view it as a radical change was, however, premature as was unfolded during the later years. Though initially Russian leaders displayed some kind of interest in the Pakistani stand on the Kashmir issue, as was evident from Rutskoi's visit, it soon realized India's importance and role in the region.

#### THE YELTSIN PERIOD

In the years 1991-1992, the dominant view in the Russian foreign policy establishment was to maintain a balance in relations among the countries in South Asia, mainly India and Pakistan, but this pursuit of 'enlightened pragmatism' waned within two years, which was due to various factors.

Firstly, the Russian frustration at the non-receipt of Western aid to revive Russia's economy forced the leaders to rethink about their pro-Western romanticism. Secondly, the Indian lobby at Moscow and the strong defence ties between the two countries brought them closer. Needless to mention that India is the largest recipient of Russian weaponry. India also acquired geo-strategic significance for Russia which got now convinced about India's capabilities as a regional power in maintaining tranquillity in this troubled region. Thirdly, in contrast to India, Pakistan was gradually viewed differently by Russian policy makers. The old painful Afghanistan memories notwithstanding, in which Pakistan contributed substantially to the defeat of the Soviet forces, Islamabad's vigorous pursuit in strengthening its relations with the newly formed Central Asian states caused concern in Moscow. This was perceived by the Russians as an attempt to create an Islamic bloc in its 'near abroad.'

Russia's policy towards the Kashmir issue favouring India appeared in a major way during the Yeltsin visit. The Russian President minced no words in expressing Russia's 'unequivocal' support to the Indian stand on the Kashmir issue. He cleared the doubt in the Indian mind that the newly emerging Russian state, in its drive to shed the old ideology, had made a dramatic turn from the old Soviet policy. Speaking at a meeting with Indian businessmen on 28 January 1993 in New Delhi, Yeltsin made Russian stand on Kashmir clear: "we stand for the integrity of India. We support the settlement in Kashmir according to the Indian version so as to maintain integrity and unity of India. We support it. And in whatever international organizations it may be – the United Nations Security Council or others – we shall stand by this point of view."<sup>15</sup> There could be no more certain words in describing Russia's support to India on the Kashmir issue than the above words of President Yeltsin.

Russia's Kashmir policy, i.e., supporting Indian stand on the issue was reiterated later on many occasions. For instance, in the wake of Hazratbal crisis, Russia came forward to support India. In diplomatic exchanges, the Russian government assured the Indian government that it sees Jammu and Kashmir as an integral part of India and the happenings there as internal affairs of the country. Russia came upon heavily on Pakistan for artificially politicizing the Kashmir issue and for using human rights slogans for 'non-human rights end.' The First Deputy Head of the Russian Foreign Ministry's Department on International Humanitarian Cooperation and Human Rights, Oleg Malghinov, during his visit to India in the first week of June 1994, voiced his concern over this artificial



politicization of the Kashmir issue by Pakistan. According to him, "Kashmir is not a human rights issue," and "the issue should be resolved by means of direct talks by India and Pakistan on the basis of Shimla agreement." Malghinov was a member of the Russian delegation at the session of the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva in 1994 where Pakistan had to withdraw its bid to press for a vote on the human rights issue related to Kashmir. Emphasizing on the Russian policy, he said that "we are for India's integrity and we think that manipulating human rights slogans to give an additional argument by those who stand for its disintegration is a bad practice." Malghinov compared the Indian situation with Russia's problems emerging out of ethnic violence and separatism and said, "we have the same problems here in Russia."<sup>16</sup> In this context, the Russian support to India on the Kashmir issue was reassuring: while Russia was confronting the problems of separatism and religious fundamentalism in Chechnya, India was suffering from similar problems in Kashmir.

In the spring of 1999 Pakistani regular forces backed an infiltration and armed intrusion in the Kargil sector of Kashmir. The intrusion plan was conceived even while Indian Prime Minister visited Lahore in February 1999 to extend friendship to Pakistan. During the crisis, Russia assured India that it would block any Pakistani attempt to internationalise the issue at any international forum including the United Nations Security Council. A senior official in the Russian Foreign Ministry said: "we will block any attempt by Pakistan to raise the Kashmir issue in the United Nations." This stand could be compared with Yeltsin's unequivocal support to the Indian stand on the Kashmir issue about six years ago in January 1993. Hence, the whole Yeltsin period, except for the initial two years, was marked by consistency regarding Russia's Kashmir policy.

### PUTIN'S APPROACH

India and Russia have many common stakes in the changing world order. There is increasing realisation in the world that locus of global power is shifting from the West to East. Second, global geo-strategic imperatives and historical realities indicate that there is no issue of potential disagreement, leave alone tension, between the two countries. For example, both countries are seeking closer relations with the US, the sole superpower, on the one side and China, the rising power, on the other. China, India and Russia have de facto formed a troika consultative group of foreign ministers, with regular annual meetings to exchange views on issues of

common concern. Energy is one component in that process. The major post-Cold War factors that shaped their relations are terrorism, multipolarism, economic opportunities in energy, military technology and other sectors.

One of the major concerns for India and Russia was the fact that Taliban-ruled Afghanistan had accommodated many insurgent groups operating in Central and South Asia, the Middle East, and beyond. In addition to Osama bin Laden's Al Qaeda network, the *Mujahideen-e-Khalq* of Iran, the *Xinjiang Liberation Front* of China, the *Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan* and the *Hizbul Mujahideen* operating in Jammu and Kashmir all took advantage of the Taliban hospitality and military training they received in Pakistan. And it was only the Taliban regime, which recognized Chechnya as an independent state. Hence, the Taliban regime proved to be "potentially mortal danger to regional stability, pro-Russian regimes, Russian influence and ultimately, Russia's own borders."<sup>17</sup>

India's approach to the situation in Afghanistan and Central Asia has not been much different from that of Russia. The terrorists active in Kashmir have their bases in Pakistan and Afghanistan. In May 2000, the Northern Alliance Foreign Minister, Abdullah Abdullah revealed that 5,000 Pakistanis were receiving training in Taliban-run camps for guerrilla war and terrorism in Kashmir. In this context, both India and Russia have common stakes in the turn of events in Afghanistan and Central Asia. Russian Ambassador to India, Alexander Kadakin rightly pointed out in the background of Prime Minister Vajpayee's visit to Moscow in November 2003 that "New Delhi's views on the situation in Afghanistan and Iraq are consonant with the assessments of our diplomacy." The joint declaration issued during the same visit stated that "India and the Russian Federation strongly believe that Afghanistan should emerge as a peaceful, strong, prosperous, united and independent nation that would be free from external interference and living in peace and harmony with its neighbours." It could be mentioned here that the emerging political scenario that came to sight after September 2001 provided the opportunity for leaders of both India and Russia to understand each other's concerns; and this mutual understanding in turn led to the convergence of approaches of both the countries in tackling the terrorist menace in Chechnya, Kashmir and elsewhere.

A new development that took place after Putin came to power was the recognition of similarities between the issues of Chechnya and Kashmir by the Russian leader. Putin utilized several occasions to draw

parallels between the two issues. Some instances can be cited to corroborate this point of view. During his visit to India in October 2000, Putin shared a piece of information with the members of Indian Parliament that “the same individuals, the same terrorist organizations, extremist organizations are organizing and, very often, the same individuals participate in organizing, in conducting and igniting terrorist acts from Philippines to Kosovo including Kashmir, Afghanistan and Russia’s northern Caucasus.” When one Moscow theatre named Nord-Ost was under siege of the Chechen separatists on 22 October 2002, Putin replied to those who advocated for negotiations with the terrorists by saying that “Osama bin Laden, Taliban supremo Mullah Omar and their like minded are calling shots in Kashmir, West Asia, Chechnya and elsewhere in the world.”<sup>18</sup> Putin rejected any possibility of talks with the terrorists. It is reported that in the year 2003 alone, the terrorists killed about 300 people in Russia, and the situation was even worse in case of India. It was the psychological urge, besides the pragmatic considerations, that brought leadership of both the countries together. In this background, it was no surprise to see the Russian leadership to urge Pakistan to stop cross-border terrorism in India. In this context, it would be appropriate to mention that one *Moscow News File* enlisted eleven terrorist organizations, established in Pakistan, being active in fomenting terrorism in Chechnya.<sup>19</sup>

In order to tackle the menace of terrorism jointly, both Russia and India signed the Moscow Declaration on terrorism during the visit of Indian Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee to Moscow in November 2001. And both countries set up a Joint Working Group in December 2002 during the visit of President Putin to India. It may be emphasized that terrorism remains one of the most important contributory factors for perceptual convergence between the two countries. And this convergence has led Russia to support India’s stand on Kashmir and vice versa. For instance, Indian Foreign Ministry’s official spokesman praised the referendum in March 2003 in Chechnya under the guidance of the Russian government as an important stage of the restoration within the democratic framework and the normalization, rehabilitation and economic reconstruction of Russian Federation’s Chechen republic. Similarly, the Russian Foreign Ministry’s release, in the aftermath of the general elections in Jammu and Kashmir in October 2002, said that “the very fact of holding elections is an evidence of the striving of Delhi and the population of Jammu and Kashmir to restore the normal situation in the state. Despite the attempts of the extremist elements to frighten the population of

Kashmir, they could not hinder the voting."<sup>20</sup>

President Putin, besides recognizing the problem of terrorism as a common point of reckoning, could see other areas of convergence between the two countries. He emphasized the importance of multipolar world structure as the emerging world order. India too has been a strong advocate of multipolarism. This common concern found expression in joint agreements and declarations. For instance, Putin hailed the Strategic Partnership document signed between the two countries during his visit to India in October 2000 as a 'practical document', because "it was very important one for the two countries for a multipolar world order."<sup>21</sup> During the same October visit, he praised Indian democracy because he was of the view that 'this positive experience' would be valuable for Russia. Putin was pragmatic enough to identify emerging areas of cooperation and concerns between both the countries. And this mutual understanding strengthened bilateral ties and helped in a better appreciation of the issues of Chechnya and Kashmir.

In fact, as Russian scholars would argue, there are no differences between the two countries in their approaches to various bilateral and international issues. Whether it is the US attack on Iraq, West Asia peace process, the issue of terrorism, the restructuring of the United Nations, both countries have adopted similar positions. For instance on the issue of Iraq, Putin, during his speech at 58th session of the UN General Assembly on 25 September 2003, said that "Russia's position is consistent and crystal clear: it is only through the United Nations direct involvement in the reconstruction of Iraq that its people will get an opportunity to decide their own future." Putin was of the firm belief that "United Nations should preserve its leadership in international affairs." Regarding Israeli-Palestine conflict, Russia along with India called for the "prevention of the failure of the roadmap to settle the problem." Both agreed that any failure of the road- map, backed by the quartet of Russia, the US, the UN and the EU, might result in the situation in Israel and Palestine, as also the entire West Asia, spiralling beyond control. And both the countries have been adopting similar approaches to issues like Kashmir and Chechnya.

## CONCLUSION

A pattern of continuity can be discerned in Indo-Russian relations, though the factors governing the relations have changed. Starting from the emergence of the Indian nation to the breakdown of the Soviet Union,

and starting from the emergence of new Russia till the recent period, a dual pattern can be identified in the relations. Like the initial hesitation of the Soviet Union to meddle into the South Asian affairs, the initial years of new Russia have been marked by negligence of Asian affairs, though the factors behind this similarity remained totally different. Factors like terrorism, problems in Chechnya and Kashmir, the rise of Islamic extremism, attempts to subdue the role of international organizations and emerging cooperation in economic field are matters of common interest. President Putin, in contrast to other Russian leaders, has been able to steer Russia's foreign policy to guard its national interests with pragmatism and cautious optimism. His approach toward India is marked by an understanding of India's emergence as a regional power and appreciation of India's stand on various issues. Both countries have no clash of interests and virtually no antagonism against each other. Given the prevailing circumstances, the ongoing pace of Indo-Russian relations is likely to continue unabated. A thread of continuity is thus discerned in Indo-Russian relations.

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# UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL (FIRST SESSION)

## A Report

SHARAD K. SONI

A new era began in the history of United Nations, particularly in its work on human rights, when the General Assembly resolution A/60/251 of 15 March 2006 created a new Human Rights Council to replace the Commission on Human Rights. The idea behind the creation of the Human Rights Council was to firmly tackle the issues leading to the violations of human rights, including gross and systematic violations, and promote effective coordination and the mainstreaming of human rights within the United Nations system. On 9 May 2006, in accordance with the resolution, the 191-member General Assembly in what its President Jan Eliasson of Sweden called “a new beginning for the promotion and protection of human rights”, elected the first 47 members of the newly-created Human Rights Council. In electing the Council’s first members, the General Assembly followed a procedure that significantly differed from that of the often criticized Human Rights Commission, which was abolished on 16 June 2006.

Significantly, the Council’s 47 founding members were to be individually elected by an absolute majority of 96 votes by the General Assembly’s members. If the Council members failed to uphold the highest human rights standards, they could be suspended by a two-thirds majority vote by the General Assembly members present at the meeting. In his address to the General Assembly, President Jan Eliasson noted that “by creating the Council as a subsidiary organ of the Assembly, Member States had further strengthened the Organization’s human rights machinery and elevated the institutional standing of its human rights

work. It was now time to implement that historic achievement.”

### HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL: AN IMPROVED FRAMEWORK

The Commission on Human Rights, which since its creation in 1946 had been the principal human rights organ of the United Nations, came under criticism in recent years on various counts including on charges of politicisation. The Commission, which had a large group of thematic or country-specific procedures and mechanisms to help it carry out its work, bequeathed to the Council these bodies for reviewing, improving and rationalizing, all mandates within one year after the holding of its first session, according to General Assembly resolution A/60/251 which created the Council.

The resolution also states that the Council shall be responsible for promoting universal respect for the protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction of any kind and in a fair and equal manner; should address situations of violations of human rights, including gross and systematic violations, and make recommendations thereon; and that the work of the Council shall be guided by the principles of universality, impartiality, objectivity and non-selectivity, constructive international dialogue and cooperation, with a view to enhancing the promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development. The Council is mandated to meet regularly throughout the year for no fewer than three sessions, including a main session, for a total duration of no less than 10 weeks.

The resolution establishing the Human Rights Council provides the framework for a significant improvement in the work of promoting and protecting human rights worldwide in the following manner:

- (a) A “universal periodic review” will ensure that all 191 Member States of the United Nations, starting with the members of the Council itself, will have their records examined in order to improve human rights conditions worldwide. All states must be held accountable for their shortcomings.
- (b) The Council will hold more meetings throughout the year and for longer total duration than the Commission. It will also have a simplified and more efficient mechanism to convene special sessions to respond promptly to human rights crises.



- (c) As the Council is elected directly by the General Assembly, the new body reflects the high level of importance given to human rights as something belonging to all people and, alongside development and security, one of the three pillars of the United Nations.
- (d) Any Council member who commits gross and systematic violations of human rights can have their rights of membership suspended by a two-thirds majority of the General Assembly.
- (e) The first election of members to the Council on 9 May 2006 was the first indication that the new Council was not “business as usual”. Countries competed for seats in an open and fair election and, for the first time ever, candidates put forward voluntary pledges and comments to promote and uphold human rights to which they will be held accountable.

#### FIRST SESSION OF HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

The first session of the newly established Human Rights Council took place at the Palais des Nations in Geneva from 19 to 30 June 2006, marking a new beginning for United Nations efforts to promote and protect fundamental freedoms worldwide. This inaugural session brought together high-level representatives from over 100 countries to begin concrete work to allow the Council to build on the recognized strengths of its predecessor - the Commission on Human Rights - and make it a stronger and more effective human rights body.

At the opening session, the General Assembly President, Jan Eliasson said that the establishment of the Human Rights Council shows that Member States can overcome differences and deliver outcomes relevant to the people of the world. He said that the resolution on the Human Rights Council was also a victory for multilateralism. “It showed that you, the Member States, require a strong United Nations role and engagement in human rights. Never before have we needed strong and well-functioning multilateral institutions as we do today. Without them we cannot achieve our common global objective to free all people from fear, want and indignity.” The United Nations, through the new Human Rights Council, sends a message of respect of human dignity and a message of hope and solidarity to the peoples of the world. The resolution provides the framework and global legitimacy to the Council and represents a unique opportunity for a fresh start of the work on human rights within

the United Nations. There was consensus on the need to build on the strengths of the Commission on Human Rights, such as the NGO participation and the system of Special Procedures.

Recalling his proposal to establish a new Human Rights Council in his report leading up to the World Summit, the UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan said that "last year, in my report *In Larger Freedom*, I stressed that human rights form the third of the three pillars, with economic and social development and peace and security, on which all the work of the United Nations must be based. I argued that these three are interlinked and mutually reinforcing, and are the pre-requisites for our collective well-being. In short, lack of respect for human rights and human dignity is the fundamental reason why the peace of the world today is so precarious, and why prosperity is so unequally shared." He contented that the world leaders, at the Summit in September 2005, endorsed this vision and resolved to integrate the promotion and protection of human rights into national policies, and to support the further mainstreaming of human rights throughout the United Nations system. However, he stressed that the Council's work must mark a clean break from the past. "In place of the culture of confrontation and distrust, which pervaded the Commission in its final years, we must see a culture of cooperation and commitment, inspired by mature leadership – which cannot rest only on the shoulders of your President, but must be collective. The General Assembly has given you a good set of rules to start from, but ultimately your success or failure will be determined by your working methods, and by the aspirations and attitudes that inform them."

In her address, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Louise Arbour, said that "58 years after the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, they were on the threshold of a new era. Great hopes had been placed in the new Council, which should herald the way to a new period of affirmation of the ideals and standards of human rights, towards a period that would ensure their effective implementation." She said that "the creation of institutions, such as the Commission of Human Rights and now the Council, gave tangible form to their vision and also displayed that ideals could be not only a source of inspiration, but also a durable heritage for all. Yet no institution maintained its legitimacy in perpetuity without the driving force and courage of reinvention." She stressed that today, there could be no doubt that human rights, peace and security and economic and social development represented the three mutually reinforcing, interlinked

pillars of the United Nations, and the prerequisites for the collective well-being. She added that "the Human Rights Council was uniquely positioned to redress the shortcomings of the past. It was empowered to devise the means that would prevent abuses, protect the most vulnerable, and expose perpetrators."

Another dignitary, the Nobel Peace Laureate 2004, Wangari Maathai also spoke at the opening session. Highlighting the importance of institutions like the United Nations, and organs such as the Human Rights Council, which could monitor the state of human rights in the world, Maathai said that "with its higher and more active status, the Council should be an effective forum that would not only encourage States to honour their pledges to protect, especially the rights of their citizens but also those who found themselves in their jurisdiction." He said, that was necessary because even though human rights were guaranteed in many documents and national constitutions, many people still had their rights violated by those who should protect them. "The old vices of greed, corruption, selfishness and blind pursuit for power and all the privileges that came with it, continued to be powerful forces, while the universal values of justice, integrity, compassion and love were sacrificed," he added. "Such a Council should serve to restrain strong nations so that they did not walk all over the weak ones."

The President of the First Session of the Human Rights Council, Luis Alfonso De Alba of Mexico argued that what had been achieved so far was not minor, and the best proof of this lay in the importance acquired by human rights and in response to the numerous victims of violations throughout the years. He stated that by creating this Council, the international community had the opportunity to enhance that system and, even more so, to bestow upon it a truly universal, fair and balanced character. From now on, human rights were not just going to be a priority in the work of the United Nations but they would also constitute one of its three fundamental pillars. "It was time to show with facts how solid these commitments were and to demonstrate unwavering resolve to incorporate all actors of society in this effort," he said. "As of today, a new institution able to respond to the expectations of the world's peoples was being built. It was a complex task that would certainly require gradual measures, inherent to any transition, but also, and foremost, it provided an opportunity to overcome the deficiencies that contributed to discredit the institutions that preceded this Council." He stressed the importance of agreeing on a balanced agenda that reflected the will to

address all rights in all countries, to identify gaps and to avoid unnecessary duplications to strengthen the existing mechanisms. He expressed hope that a mechanism of universal and periodic evaluation to know the improvements and more pressing duties every State had in human rights issues should be generated in order to avoid the excessive politicisation and the use of double standards of which the former Commission was accused.

The six items on the agenda of the Human Rights Council were the election of officers; adoption of the agenda and organization of work; the report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights; the implementation of General Assembly Resolution A/60/251 "Human Rights Council"; the programme of work for the first year; and the report of the session. The adoption of the agenda items followed a high-level segment, which took place over the first four days of the session. In this segment, the Council was addressed by high-ranking representatives, who, among other things, underscored the importance of the new body and its duty to become the world's foremost human rights body without falling into the errors of the Commission on Human Rights; the need to reaffirm the indivisibility, universality and interdependence of all human rights; gender equality; and national efforts to ensure the promotion and protection of human rights. Several speakers also pointed out that the eyes of the world rested on the Council, and that many who had suffered from human rights violations were expecting the Council to help in redressing their plight. Speakers also urged Member States to fulfil the task they had set themselves, without descending into politicisation, remaining impartial, and always keeping in mind those whose rights were denied. Many speakers also raised the need to move quickly on the Convention on Involuntary Disappearances, and the draft Convention on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Among other issues raised were that of terrorism, and the duty of States to protect their populations, whilst fully respecting the human rights of all. The importance of protecting and promoting the human rights of women was also brought up by several speakers.

In presenting her annual report, High Commissioner Louise Arbour said that poverty continued to be the most serious, invidious and widespread human rights violation to be confronted. Next to poverty, discrimination constituted another widespread source of disempowerment and of denial of rights, freedom and dignity. The proliferation of acts and expressions contributing to the exacerbation of

cultural and religious tensions was producing new cleavages within and between communities, and had recently led to unprecedented levels of violence and destruction, on the ashes of which trust and tolerance had now to be rebuilt. She also said that the willingness of Governments to include the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in their efforts to promote and protect human rights should be viewed as the most positive indicator of a Government's serious commitment to the realization of rights.

During the session, the Council discussed the reports of the Intergovernmental Working Group on the effective implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, the Working Group on the Right to Development, the Working Group on the elaboration of an Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Working Group on the elaboration of a Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, and the Working Group on a draft United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. It also discussed how to set up the modalities of the universal periodic review mechanism, which would periodically review the situation of human rights in all countries, and the review of the mandates and mechanisms which it inherited from the former Commission on Human Rights. Finally, the Council discussed its programme of work for its future sessions and debated the issue of dialogue and cooperation on human rights, which included human rights education and learning, advisory services, technical assistance and capacity-building.

## RESOLUTIONS

The Human Rights Council concluded its first session on 30 June 2006 by adopting eight resolutions, three decisions and two Presidential statements. It adopted decisions and resolutions on, among others, the human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories and the incitement to racial and religious hatred, and the promotion of tolerance. In addition, the Council adopted its framework for a programme of work of the Council for the next year.

During its two-week session, the new Human Rights Council addressed a range of issues, exchanging views with representatives of some special procedures, the Sub-Commission and treaty bodies, holding substantive debates on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 60/251 of 15 March 2006; the situation of human rights in the occupied

Arab territories, including Palestine; support for the Abuja Agreement; avoiding incitement to hatred and violence for reasons of religion or race; the human rights of migrants; and the role of human rights defenders in promoting and protecting human rights.

The Council decided to adopt the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Both texts were forwarded to the General Assembly for adoption. The Council also welcomed the entry into force on 22 June 2006 of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, which was adopted on 18 December 2002 by the General Assembly in its resolution 57/199.

Subsequent to a discussion on whether the mandates and mechanisms which it had inherited from the former Commission on Human Rights should be extended, the Council decided to extend the mandate of the Open-ended Working Group on an Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights for a period of two years; decided to renew the mandate of the Working Group on the Right to Development for a period of one year; decided to extend for one year the mandates and the mandate-holders of all the Commission's special procedures, of the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights as well as the procedure established in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1503; and decided to extend the mandate of the Working Group on the Effective Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action for three years.

In a resolution on the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Effective Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, the Human Rights Council endorsed the conclusions and recommendations contained in the report of the Working Group on its fourth session. The Council requested the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to select, in close consultations with the regional groups, five highly qualified experts to study the content and scope of the substantive gaps in the existing international instruments to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. The Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief and the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance as well as the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights were asked to report to

the next session on this phenomenon. The next session of the Council was fixed to be held from 18 September to 6 October 2006. In a resolution on the right to development, which was adopted without a vote, the Human Rights Council endorsed the conclusions and recommendations adopted by consensus by the Working Group on the Right to Development at its seventh session in January 2006. It requested the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, or its successor expert-advice mechanism, to pursue its ongoing work on the right to development in accordance with the relevant provisions of General Assembly and Commission on Human Rights resolutions, and in compliance with decisions to be taken by the Human Rights Council. It also requested the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to take all the necessary measures and to allocate the necessary resources for the effective implementation of the present resolution besides deciding to consider the next report of the Working Group on the Right to Development at its session in March/ April 2007.

In a statement by the President on hostage-taking, the Council reaffirmed that all acts of hostage-taking, wherever and by whomever committed, were a serious crime aimed at the destruction of human rights and were, under any circumstances, unjustifiable; strongly condemned all acts of hostage-taking anywhere in the world; and reaffirmed that hostage-taking calls for concerted efforts on the part of all States and the international community, acting in full compliance with international humanitarian law and international human rights standards, in order to bring such abhorrent practices to an end. The Human Rights Council welcomed the entry into force, on 22 June 2006, of the Optional Protocol to the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, following ratification by 20 States.

In his concluding remarks, the President said that the Council has recently started to be built. The Council sought to achieve inclusion and transparency at all times. Some innovations have been introduced, some of which would be repeated. Interactive dialogues were held, allowing for important topics to be addressed. Particularly important decisions have been taken, including the first decisions on the International Convention on the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearances, and the United Nations Statement on the Rights of Indigenous peoples. These reflected the capacity of the Council to improve the system of protection of human rights at the normative level, and this now needed to be expressed on the ground.

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## SOUNDS OF EURASIA

### Cultural Festival in Buryatia Republic of Russia (25 September – 1 October 2007)

*(A Report on the Participation by the Himalayan  
Research and Cultural Foundation)*

East Siberian Academy of Culture and Arts and the Ministry of Culture and Mass Communications, Buryatia Republic of the Russian Federation organised an International Festival on *Sounds of Eurasia* at Ulan-Ude from 25 September to 1 October 2007. The only foreign participants in this Festival were the group of Indian musicians (Mrs. Savita Bakshi – *Sitar*, Mr. R.K. Majumdar – *Santoor*, Mr. Anil Kaul – *Tabla*, Mr. Rakesh Anand – *Flute/Bansuri* and Mr. Ravinder Kaul – Comperer) which was led by Prof. K. Warikoo, Secretary General of Himalayan Research and Cultural Foundation. It has been for the first time that any Indian cultural group has visited Buryatia/East Siberia. This programme has been a result of cooperation between the Himalayan Research and Cultural Foundation and East Siberia Academy of Culture and Arts (ESACA), for promoting Indo-Russian/India-Siberia cultural contacts. The *Himalayan and Central Asian Studies* brought out a Special Buryatia Issue which was released on this occasion. The Festival received enthusiastic official and public response in Ulan-Ude. On 25 September 2007 the Indian delegation was accorded a ceremonial welcome before being formally received by the Rector, East Siberian Academy of Cultures and Arts. The inaugural ceremony which took place at the Ulan Ude Musical College, was attended by the cultural/literary elite of Ulan Ude, with over 600 people assembled in the Hall.

In his inaugural message, Mr. V.V. Nagovicin, President-Chairman of Government of Buryatia, described Buryatia as a “model of friendship and brotherhood of Eurasian peoples”. Describing this festival as a special cultural event, the President expressed his happiness at this occasion as it provided “an opportunity to the people of the Republic to learn traditional instrumental music of Russia and India.” He was especially delighted at



the publication of Buryatia Special Issue of *Himalayan and Central Asian Studies* by the Himalayan Research and Cultural Foundation which was released during this Festival.

Mr. G.A. Aidaev, Mayor of Ulan Ude city, while speaking on the occasion of the Inauguration of the Festival on 25 September 2007 stated that “participation of our Indian friends in the Festival once again emphasises our kind fraternal ties”. Prof. R.I. Pschenichnikova, Rector, East Siberian State Academy of Cultures and Arts, in her speech while welcoming the delegates, described the traditional music as a bridge between the past, present and future.

In his speech Prof. K. Warikoo expressed his sincere thanks to East Siberia Academy of Culture and Arts and Prof. V. Kitov for organising this excellent composite programme. He stated that “culture knows no frontiers. India and Eurasia have had close social, cultural and economic linkages, as Buddhism spread from India to Central Asia, Mongolia, Buryatia and far wide. India has continued to maintain such cultural contacts with Eurasia through history”. Prof. Warikoo described this festival as another link in the long chain of historico-cultural contacts. “And we are thus seeing history being enacted, as this composite cultural programme, academic presentations, artistic performances by well known and experienced artistes from Buryatia, Khakasia, Krasnoyarsk, Chita and India symbolises common cultural traditions, values and aspirations of the people in this entire region”, he added.

Next day on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2007, Mr. R.K. Majumdar, *Santoor* player held a demonstration class at the Ulan Ude Musical College on *Santoor* to the students and faculty of the College. Same day afternoon, Prof. Warikoo discussed the contribution of Himalayan Research and Cultural Foundation to the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage in South and Central Asia, through its diverse activities including publications, seminars, exhibitions, films/documentaries and other cultural programmes.

In the evening, the exclusive Concert on *Music of India*, which included separate performances by Mrs. Savita Bakshi on *Sitar* accompanied by A.K. Kaul (on *Tabla*) and Mr. Rakesh Anand (*Flute/Bansuri*) was held for over two hours, in the jam-packed hall. The Indian performances enthralled the audience so much that they were spell bound by Indian music, which they acknowledged and described simply as “magic”.

On the morning of Thursday, 27<sup>th</sup> September 2007, A.K. Kaul held demonstration class on *Tabla* for the students and faculty of the Ulan Ude

Music College. In the afternoon a special official ceremony was organised at the Conference Hall of National Library of Republic of Buryatia, where the Buryatia Special Issue of *Himalayan and Central Asian Studies* was formally released by the Minister of Culture and Mass Communications, Ulan Ude. Other dignitaries who participated in this impressive function were Rector, East Siberian Academy of Culture and Arts, Mr. Balhaeva, Director, National Library, Prof. V. Kitov, Academician Naidakova, Prof. Khorogozov and other eminent personalities.

While releasing the Buryatia Special Issue of *Himalayan and Central Asian Studies*, the Minister of Culture and Mass Communication, Ulan Ude Mrs. V. Sh. Serenova, in her speech welcomed and appreciated the work done by Prof. Warikoo and Himalayan Research and Cultural Foundation by publishing the Buryatia Special Issue of the journal and thus record the traditions and culture of Buryatia Republic of Russian Federation. The Minister also presented a Special Award to Prof. Warikoo for his efforts to preserve cultural heritage and for promoting cultural contacts with Buryatia.

Prof. Khorogouzov speaking on the occasion, reiterated the importance of Indian culture. He said that sciences originated in India and Europeans used the Indian creations – sugar, textiles, Arabic numerals. Many ancient poets, scientists and philosophers lived in India. “India has played a great role in its relations with Russia. Today the most important link is not computer, but this book (which being in English) will be read universally. This book is a very important link in our relations”, he added.

Prof. Raisa, Rector, ESACA described this as a historical event, as very few international conferences take place in Buryatia. “India is a great culture and it has influenced the history and culture in Russia as well. This is another link between our two countries and will help in developing future relations both in cultural and scientific studies. I hope this book is not a last one, but will continue in future”, she added while congratulating Prof. Warikoo for this great work.

Academician Naidakova expressed her happiness at the visit of Prof. Warikoo and Indian cultural group to Buryatia. “We are very thankful that you came from a far land – great India. On behalf of all authors, I thank you for bringing out Buryatia issue in English language.”

The 45 minute Documentary on *Shrines and Pilgrimages of Kashmir* produced by the Himalayan Research and Cultural Foundation and dubbed in Russian language was also screened on this occasion. The audience greatly appreciated the film, and realised the adverse impact of

terrorism on indigenous cultural heritage in Kashmir.

On Friday morning of 28 September 2007, Mrs. Savita Bakshi and Mr. Rakesh Anand held demonstration classes of *Sitar* and *Bansuri* (Flute) for the students and faculty of Ulan Ude Musical College. In the evening, a concert *Magic of Rhythm* was held at a crowded hall in the Musical College, with exclusive performances by R. Majumdar on *Santoor* and by A.K. Kaul on *Tabla*. The *Santoor* music mesmerised the audience.

The Festival concluded on Saturday, 29 September 2007. And in the evening, a formal ceremony was held at the main hall of Ulan Ude Musical College, where a Gala Concert of all the participants from India, Buryatia, Chita, Krasnoyarsk, Khakassia and other parts of Russia was held. All these artists and musicians from different cultural/ethnic backgrounds presented a fantastic musical programme which demonstrated both harmony and symphony between different musical traditions. Indian classical music of *Santoor*, *Sitar* and *Flute* accompanied the Russian *Balalaika*, Buryat *Chanz* and *Yatagan* and other instruments. The gala concert of all these artistes and musicians, spell bound the audience with their musical performances, which was most ably conceived and conducted by Prof. V. Kitov.

On Sunday, the delegates went on a sight seeing visit to Baikal Lake. We from India were quite impressed by the traditions of obeisance before the lake which is considered sacred by the people of Buryatia. Their customs and traditions and worshipping of elements of nature-fire, water, trees and air, symbolise a deep affinity with the Indian traditions.

The Festival concluded with the signing of a MoU between the Himalayan Foundation and ESACA on bilateral cooperation for promoting academic and cultural activities, by Prof. Raisa (Rector, ESACA) and Prof. K. Warikoo (Secretary General, Himalayan Foundation). The Festival was well received by the people of Buryatia who not only evinced keen and enthusiastic interest in India but they were too overwhelmed by the richness of Indian culture. Our experience in Buryatia shows that this was just a beginning and such joint cultural programmes and Seminars need to be organised at regular intervals.



A view of Gala Concert (29-9-2007)



A view of joint performances by Indian and Russian artistes at the

Gala Concert (29-9-2007)



Prof. V. Kitove introduces Prof. K. Warikoo to leading academics of Buryatia (27-9-2007)



Mrs. Serenova, Minister of Culture and Communications, Buryatia speaking on the occasion of release of Buryatia Special Issue of *Himalayan and Central Asian Studies* (27-9-2007)



Prof. Raisa, Rector,  
ESCA greeting Prof. Warikoo  
at the concluding  
function (29-9-2007)



Indian group at Baikal Lake (30-9-2007)

# EARLY TIMES

JAMMU, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 11, 2007

## JK artists return from Eastern Siberia tour

EARLYTIMES REPORTER  
JAMMU | OCT 10

A 6-member member team from J&K State today returned

**Participated first time in International Festival of Music**

after participating in the International Music Festival "Sounds of Eurasian Instruments," organised by the East Siberian State Academy of Culture and Arts (ESSACA) in Ulan, Ude, the capital of the Republic of Buryatia in the Russian Federation (Eastern Siberia) under the auspices of Himalayan Research and Cultural Foundation (HRCF), in collaboration with the J&K Academy of Art, Culture and Languages.

The members of the team who participated in the festival include Prof. K. Warikoo, Secretary General, Himalayan Research and Cultural Foundation HRCF (team leader), Savita Bakshi (Sitar), Anil Kaul (Tabla), Raj Kumar (Santoor), Rakshi Anand (Flute) and Ravinder Kaul (Art, Theatre and Music Critic).

Reporting the details of their participation in the festival, Ravinder Kaul, Secretary of the J&K Chapter of HRCF said in a press conference here today that the idea of the par-



Early Times / Praveen Singh

### COMEBACK

Artists after returning from an international event describing experience to media persons in Jammu on Wednesday

ticipation of a team of instrumental musicians in the International Festival in Ulan Ude was envisaged in a meeting between Prof. K. Warikoo, Secretary General of HRCF and Prof. A. Zhibikov of the ESSACA in Andong in South Korea in the year 2005. The members of the visiting team also narrated their wonderful experiences during

the Festival. A short film produced by HRCF highlighting all the special features of the Festival was screened on the occasion.

He further said that the Festival in Ulan Ude was in the nature of a performance cum academic exercise. While all the four artists performed in the Festival with their respective musical instruments, they

also presented research papers relating to their musical instruments. While their performances were highly appreciated by the connoisseurs of music, their research papers were also appreciated by the experts of music. The J&K musicians indulged the listeners in Ulan Ude, who were hearing the sound of Indian musical instruments for the

first time, as no musician from India, has ever visited the Republic of Buryatia in the past. A documentary titled "Sitaras and Pilgrimages of Kashmir", was screened in the festival. The cultural exchange between the artists and a cross-border performance of all the artists on the last day marked the grand finale of the Festival.

**HIMALAYAN AND CENTRAL ASIAN STUDIES** is a quarterly Journal published by the Himalayan Research and Cultural Foundation, which is a non-governmental, non-profit research, cultural and development facilitative organisation. The Journal is devoted to the study of various issues pertaining to the Himalayan and trans-Himalayan region in South and Central Asia or parts thereof, connected with its environment, resources, history, art and culture, language and literature, demography, social structures, communication, tourism, regional development, governance, human rights, geopolitics etc.

While the principal concern of the Journal will be on its focal area, i.e., from Afghanistan to Myanmar including the Central Asian states of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, China, Mongolia, Nepal, Bhutan and the Indian Himalayan States of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Uttaranchal and North East states; papers with a broad sweep addressing environmental, social, cultural, economic, geopolitical and human rights issues are also welcomed.

The objective is to make a scientific appraisal of the issues confronting the Himalayan and adjoining region in South and Central Asia or parts thereof, and to make specific policy oriented studies and need based recommendations as the means to promote the human, educational and economic advancement of the peoples of the region besides preserving and enriching their ethno-cultural, literary and historical heritage. Promotion of human rights, social justice, peace, harmony and national integration are the other key areas in which the Himalayan Research and Cultural Foundation has been active.

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