

Volume 1

December 2020

COMPENDIUM

The **MIRROR** to the
MIDDLE East



CMES

The Centre for Middle East Studies
Promoting Peace Through Dialogue

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Editorial Team

Devashish Kelkar
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Tamanna Dahiya
Ayushman Thakur
Nandini Modi

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A Frozen Conflict: Nagorno Karabakh

PALAK MINDA

ABSTRACT The brief centers around the dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the territory of Nagorno Karabakh and aims to find a legitimate solution for the same. It shall also address the subjects that are a barrier to the settlement of the dispute and also endeavors to give the answers for it. Likewise, it unveils the true interests driving the “Good Samaritans” in the conflict. It also focuses on the stance of both the nations in the dispute and shall also analyze the other facets affecting it.



By The New York Times

GEOGRAPHY OF THE REGION

After the first world war in 1918 the Transcaucasian Federation split into the regions of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan¹. Georgia lies on the north of both these regions, Turkey on the west and Iran on the south. On the north of Azerbaijan lies Russia, which has close ties are with both Armenia and Azerbaijan. Both these countries were a part of the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) till they claimed independence in the early 1990s.

HISTORY OF THE CONFLICT

Joseph Stalin and Michael Gorbachev were the two leaders who seasoned a fertile ground for the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Stalin used his political tactics to ensure that both the countries were dependent on Moscow to maintain peace and order.

Firstly, they asked Azerbaijan to declare themselves as separate people and further asked them to have a definite border in order to ensure that turkey doesn't run rail road line in Baku since it shares a common language and comparatively a similar culture². He also did it in the hopes of the region becoming Communist as he saw communist tendencies in Azerbaijan. He put minorities from both regions in the other republic and then asked Azerbaijan to create a defined border in order to use them as henchmen. Thirdly he put the largely Armenian region of Nagorno Karabakh autonomous outlast within the Territory of Azerbaijan and the largely Azerbaijani Nakhichevan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic within the Territory of Armenia while it was surrounded on three sides by Azerbaijan. This was Stalin's divide and rule strategy.

Despite Armenian protest, this remained the status of Nagorno Karabakh throughout the Soviet rule. Such an

arrangement ensured that whenever conflict arose they would not have any choice but to turn to Russia for support and help. Disparities had existed between these regions for a long time over cultural and ethnic basis however Russia had maintained peaceful coexistence between them³.

Armenia is an old region with a Christian dominated population. It has closer ties to the west and European countries unlike Azerbaijan which is a fairly new region with an Islamic population therefore having closer ties to Iran and Turkey.

In 1985-6 Gorbachev's policy of Perestroika (economic restructuring) and Glasnost (political openness) provided for increased debates, criticism and also led to cultural, territorial and secessionist demands. Armenians started protesting against Azerbaijan's control over the Karabakh region and on the other hand Azerbaijanis mobilised to defend the political integrity of their region. Later the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991 led to the declaration of independence by both Armenia and Azerbaijan⁴. Nagorno Karabakh too declared its independence from Azerbaijan on 10 December 1995. Both Armenia and Karabakh stated that this independence is due to lack of self-determination rights of the people. However, this can be contradicted by Article 1 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Armenians in Azerbaijan cannot be termed as people but rather as a minority. Article 27 of the ICCPR also states that "...minorities ... shall not be denied the right ... to enjoy their common culture, to profess their own religion, or to use their common language."⁶

Immediately after the independence of Karabakh there was a violent confrontation between the two regions and later an undeclared war from 1992-4. As a result of this Nagorno- Karabakh and seven districts near it (Lachin, Kelbajar, Agdam, Jabrayil, Fizuly, Gubadly and Zangilan) were seized by the Armenian forces⁷. This led to a 15% reduction in the territory of Azerbaijan⁸. The economic condition of Azerbaijan had worsened owing to the lack of use of oil and natural gas resources. The entire population of these regions and Azerbaijanis from Nagorno-Karabakh were thrown out of their homes or they chose to emigrate out of fear from the Armenians.

Similarly, the Ethnic Armenians too fled the rest of Azerbaijan leading to major migration and shelter crisis in both the countries as well as massive human rights violation⁹. This was said to be ethnic cleansing done by Armenia. After this Nagorno Karabakh was named as the Republic of Nagorno Karabakh and later the Republic of Artsakh in 2017¹⁰. This dispute further cut off ties between Turkey and Armenia completely as Turkey supported Azerbaijan. After the end of the undeclared war a ceasefire was done in 1994. However, the truce has incurred innumerable breaches since then.

The territory of Nagorno Karabakh still remains the part of Azerbaijan lawfully and its separation and independence hasn't been recognized, as stated by Azerbaijan. However, after the independence of Azerbaijan from the Soviet Union it declared itself to be the successor of the Republic of Azerbaijan (1918-20) and therefore held all agreements and decisions made by Moscow to be void. This meant that Nagorno Karabakh was no more a part of the territory of Azerbaijan¹¹.

CEASEFIRE VIOLATION

One of the major breaches the peace between the two regions was on 1 April 2016. On this date clashes occurred in the disputed region of Nagorno Karabakh and its surrounding places. Both sides held the other responsible for the clashes in and around the towns of Aghdara, Tartar, Agdam, Khojavend, and Fuzulic. Shots were fired and lives were lost¹². Another major use of arms between the regions was on 20th May 2018. Here another round of clashes took place between the Armenian armed forces and the Azerbaijan armed forces¹³.

On September 27, 2020, sudden bombing took place in Nagorno Karabakh. Both countries have been blaming each other for breaching the ceasefire and going at each other at full force. This is being termed as the "Second Nagorno-Karabakh War".¹⁴ Martial law has been declared in parts of these region and Nagorno Karabakh.¹⁵

STANCE OF VARIOUS COUNTRIES

Various countries have been playing the role of a mediator or an ally in the dispute. After the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 Iran tried making and

maintaining ties with both Azerbaijan and Armenia. Even though it is a Shia Muslim country it has maintained neutral relations with both the countries and has tried being a mediator in the dispute. Even Europe and the United States of America have played a major role in this conflict. Although USA wants to contribute to the settlement it is against working with Iran owing to their history. Former president George W Bush had also tried to persuade both the regions of Armenia and Azerbaijan to cut off ties with Iran.

Turkey, another neighbouring country has close ties with Azerbaijan because of the common culture and religion. Armenia and Turkey maintain enmity owing to the genocide conducted by the Ottoman empire in Armenia¹⁶. Lately the interim prime minister of Armenia, Nikol Pashinyan stated that it is Turkey which doesn't want ties, the gates of Armenia are open for trade and relations¹⁷. However, in September 2018 the Turkish President Erdogan visited the Azerbaijani President Aliyev and stated that he wanted a resolution to the Karabakh dispute because he wanted an improvement in the Turkish-Armenian relations¹⁸.

However, after the recent armed confrontations between Armenia and Azerbaijan, Turkey has asked the Minsk group to come up with a new road map and “end the occupation of Azeri lands by Armenia, which has been the root cause of this problem”, said Ibrahim Kalin to Aljazeera.¹⁹ This shows Turkey's stance on the conflict and it's clear backing towards Azerbaijan.

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Total
Belarus	9	51	37	32				10	5	4	148
Czechia								4	5		9
Israel	9	5	9	25	21	116	250	136	236	3	810
Pakistan									2		2
Russia	97	477	256	325	570	210	7	109	53		2104
Slovakia								12	12		24
South Africa	6	3	10	2	3	1					25
Spain										13	13
Turkey	4	7	20	5	17	9	16	4	6	6	93
Ukraine	29	14	6	15							63
United States	1	1	2	0	1						4
Unknown supplier(s)									4		4
Total	155	557	339	404	612	335	274	275	322	25	3298

Arms exports to Azerbaijan, 2010-2019

Another major player in this conflict is Russia. Being a Christian country, it is understood that Russia has closer ties with Armenia and would supplement it with arms in case of a war. However, Russia also maintains ties with Azerbaijan and supplies it with weapons. It sees the region as an opportunity as well as a threat to it²⁰. It needs Azerbaijan in order to maintain and expand its influence in the region as Azerbaijan is its gateway to the South Caucasus region²¹. Azerbaijan has issues with Russia helping Armenia but due to lack of support from the West the country has moved towards Russia itself.

However, it has also been argued that Russia has degraded Armenia to simply a vessel for its own benefit of maintaining and expanding its influence over the region²². Therefore, Russia is trying to play the role of a mediator in this region as it wishes to maintain ties with both however it is inclined towards Armenia more. It is also a part of the Minsk group, consisting of France as well as USA, which tries maintaining peace in this conflicted region.²³

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Total
Montenegro	2										2
Russia	46	2		16			110	18		228	419
Ukraine	4	4									7
Unknown supplier(s)										21	21
Total	52	5		16			110	18		248	449

Arms exports to Armenia, 2010-2019

Even with the support as a mediator of both USA and Russia the conflicts of these two major players also has to be taken into consideration. Therefore, the personal interests, agendas and the relations of the mediators and allies also play a vital role in the resolution of the dispute between the regions. The current scenario has created a kind of an inverted pyramid. The topmost layer consists of these major players, the second layer consists of the capitals of the regions involved in the conflict, which is Baku (Azerbaijan), Yerevan (Armenia) and Stepanakert (Nagorno Karabakh) and the third layers consisted of the general Azerbaijani and Armenian population²⁴.

Moreover, the role and scope of international organizations such as the United Nations cannot be ignored in determining the status and the hopes of resolution of a dispute. The stance that they take or the

suggestion or course of resolution that they provide affects the situation drastically. Like the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group has expressed concern over the repeated large-scale infringement of the ceasefire of 1994. The co-directors of the body's Minsk Group - ministers Igor Popov of Russia, James Warlick of the US, and Pierre Andrieu of France have likewise expressed that "We strongly condemn the use of force and regret the senseless loss of life, including civilians.²⁵

OTHER FACTORS AFFECTING THE CONFLICT

The conflict also majorly depends on the economic, political and military conditions of the countries against each other. The population, finances, politics and arms have a major role to play. Nikol Pashiyani, the current Prime Minister of Armenia, stated that Armenia has the desire to solve the conflict peacefully without the use of arms and is ready for a proper session of negotiations²⁶. He had also remarked in the businessmen meeting in Russia on 8 September 2018 that he wanted Nagorno Karabakh to become a part of Armenia. He stated on September 10 in a meeting with the Russian newspaper that the leaders of both the regions should meet and discuss the issue of return of lands²⁷.

With Azerbaijan attacking Armenia with every given opportunity possible Mr. Pashiyani said that for Azerbaijan the war is more than just Nagorno Karabakh. The country now fears that the Azerbaijan is trying to distract its people from its domestic problems by keeping them engaged in the Karabakh conflict itself²⁸. On September 28, 2018 the leaders of both the regions met and came to a temporary consensus of conducting a feasible operation which will help in direct communication between Baku and Yerevan and would help decide the course of the ceasefire²⁹.

ACHIEVING A SETTLEMENT

The primary question remains whether war is the only solution to establish peace in these grief-stricken regions or is there an alternative. Initially the regions fought an undeclared war from 1992-4 but, later resorted to a negotiated solution.

War would have led to internal instability, problem of external security and breach of peace in the South Caucasus region. Both the countries decided on a ceasefire in 1994 in order to ensure peace between the regions however, the breach of the same has taken place innumerable times since it has been declared. In order to establish peace there has to be some compromise on the part of both the parties to the conflict because war is not an option for either³⁰. Armenians are scared of losing more lives considering they already have a small population, and Azerbaijanis on the other hand don't want to lose their ties with the West over the war. Also, the consent of Nagorno Karabakh which is the region in question in the conflict should be taken into consideration and political representation should also be provided to them in the peace negotiation³¹.

Settlement through negotiation can only occur if the displacement of territory and people benefits both the regions. However, in this dispute Azerbaijan wants Nagorno Karabakh to be a part of its territory again as declared by Moscow in mid 1920s. Whereas, Armenia wants to integrate Karabakh with its territory since Nagorno has a population of ethnic Armenians who themselves want to join the territory of Armenia and get independence from Azerbaijan. Nagorno Karabakh is dependent on Armenia for economic and financial support. Armenia also claims that it isn't involved in the fight of Karabakh and wants the region to get independence for which they are fighting.

Given the current circumstances, both the nations do not seem to want to negotiate. Once the situation settles a bit, Russia could revitalize the Minsk group and aim to achieve a solution to attain peace among the nations. Moreover, Turkey could solidify its role in the South Caucasus region by convincing Azerbaijan to back down while Russia could do the same for Armenia and get momentary peace. This would also satisfy Turkey's ulterior motive of gaining geo-political control of this region. However, for this to be achieved the regions need to first back down from the "ongoing war".³²

CONCLUSION

"A lasting peace will come when each side acknowledges the other's minimum requirements, not their belligerent and maximalist demands" these are the

words of Vartan Oskanian. According to him peace can only be achieved if both nations in the conflict create an environment or a condition where both have a common future and peaceful coexistence.³³

Many peace treaties have been signed over centuries however these on-paper formal peace agreements cannot bring actual peace on ground, they simply provide a basis for peace to exist or a legal infrastructure that can support it. Peace cannot be created without societal infrastructure³⁴.

The only solution in the Nagorno conflict case is that the Nagorno Karabakh region should be legally integrated with the territory of Armenia owing to the similar culture, religion and want of the people. Secondly, the Nakhichevan region should be given back to Azerbaijan so as to ensure that none of the regions lose territory or population. Although this solution may not be simply accepted by the regions considering Azerbaijan has promised to get Nagorno back and Armenia would also completely lose ties with Iran if this happens. Moreover, Armenia isn't willing to give the region back since the population there primarily consists of ethnic Armenians.

However, this is the only solution where both the countries lose and gain something at the same time³⁵. Else, the current status of both the countries would lead to nothing but a war, dragging other countries into it and leading to loss of infinite lives and resources.

However, these two countries aren't ready for a proper war or a ultimate solution since it is evident that neither does Azerbaijan want to lose its ties with the West by going in a full scale war against Armenia, nor does the latter wants to endanger the life of its limited population by starting a war. The other countries playing the roles of allies and mediators are not keen on witnessing a war and want these disputed nations to resort to a negotiated solution without the use of arms. Therefore, one common conclusion is that all parties, on whichever side of the conflict, are opposed to a full-fledged war if it is within their control. The only thing that's missing is sufficient incentive for both parties to resolve the conflict.

AUTHOR BIO: Palak Minda is a student at the Jindal Global Law School, O.P. Jindal Global University and a Research Intern at the Centre for Middle East Studies

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Repercussions of the ottoman rule and its influence on Turkey's Foreign Policy

TANVI ASANG DANI

ABSTARCT: The following issue brief aims to discuss the origins of the long-lasting political problems within and surrounding the modern nation state of Turkey. It also outlines the history of the Ottoman Empire's strategies for dealing with minorities, the problems faced by the different ethnic groups, their struggles, and the Ottoman's empire's efforts to reconcile the differences amongst them. Furthermore, the history of these issues is discussed, from the last few decades of the Ottoman rule to the 21st century dilemmas in the region. The most prominent issues dominating the current landscape of Turkish foreign and domestic policy- the Kurdish problem and Turkey's position in the ongoing conflict between two of its neighbours Azerbaijan and Armenia is delved into in the issue brief. Lastly, the brief also aims to discuss the prospects and recommendations for these ongoing entanglements faced by the Turkish political system.

INTRODUCTION

The Ottoman Empire disintegrated after its defeat against the Allies in WW1. After independence, the modern state Turkey has had to grapple with the problems about the minorities who were discriminated, harassed, and killed within the Empire. Independent Turkey adopted a secular, internationalist view under Kemal Ataturk, but today, after the rise of the ACP strongman Erdogan, Turkey has drastically reoriented its domestic and foreign policy. With recent decisions like the conversion of the Hagia Sophia, a historical heritage with both Christian and Muslim history, from a museum to a mosque, along with other such conversions, Turkey has been trying to reassert its role as the regional hegemon in the Islamic world. Erdogan aspires to be the Sultan of the Muslim world and help Turkey regain its Ottoman glory but he needs to realise that the problems that persist in and around Turkey are a continuing legacy of the Ottoman Empire's relations with its minorities. Turkey's foreign policy entanglements as the

successor of the Empire, thus, reflect the Ottoman continuities.

THE ORIGIN OF THE KURDISH PROBLEM IN MODERN-DAY TURKEY

The Kurdish minority has been one of the most powerful and feared communities in the Ottoman Empire. They have been governed under the Ottoman Empire through the millet system. Through this system employed by the Ottoman Sultans, each community was able to preserve their cultural identity and language, practice their customary laws, and exercise judicial and administrative autonomy over the region they governed.³⁶ In this practice, the ethnic, religious or tribal communities had a right to have their own leader and be self-governing. The Ottoman Empire used this system to effectively govern newly acquired lands as it promoted both intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic peace and security. In general, the Ottoman Sultans adopted the policy of “non-assimilation”.³⁷ The millets could have their own

legal practices and in total, there were 18 different legal practices, recognized in the Ottoman Empire.

As mentioned earlier, the Kurds were one of the largest and most feared millets in the Empire. They were spread out in a relatively large geographical and enjoyed the status of semi-independent principalities. In fact, Sultan Murad IV reminded his local military and governors from interfering with or harassing Kurdish tribes 38. This is to illustrate the extent to which the Kurds were able to maintain their territorial and cultural identity and this is the specific reason why they never asked for becoming an independent state when the Ottoman Empire collapsed.³⁹

But the situation changed dramatically from the middle of the 19th century, in the period before the WWI and continuing during the war itself. Turkish nationalism was heavily pursued by the Young Turks movement (formally called the Committee for Union and Progress) and other nationalist elements, which led to greater centralization being pursued by the Ottoman Empire. The legal system was tightened and more uniform regulations were set up by the first Ottoman Constitution of 1876 in conjunction of the 1839 Tanzimat Edict, 1856 Islahat Edict and the 1869 nationality law. 40 Quataert claims that the Turkification pursued by the Tanzimat or the Young Turks carried on till the end of the Ottoman Empire.⁴¹

THE ORIGINS OF THE ARMENIAN QUESTION, HISTORY AND GENOCIDE

The Armenians also made up a significant minority within the Ottoman Empire. But they had a starkly different history within the Empire than the Kurds. Armenians in the early 19th century were stuck between the Russian and Ottoman Empire. Due to numerous wars and conquests by the Russians in the Caucasus, by mid-1800s the Ottomans were left with only 2 million Armenians, mostly concentrated in 6 vilayets. The Armenians regularly suffered from Kurdish aggression and raids, and thus suffered from “double taxation” on

account of being non-Muslims and due to the looting by the Kurds. Hence, in the late 19th century, their central demands were limited to security, administrative matters, taxes, and property reforms.⁴² Also, when the Young Turks came to power after overthrowing the Sultan in July 1908, they favoured friendly relations with the Christian minorities to strengthen their secularist and liberal claims.

The Armenian position within the Empire started altering after the Ottoman loss of the war with Russia in 1877. In the Treaty of Berlin in 1878, the Ottoman Empire lost most of its Christian citizens because of the loss of Serbia, Montenegro, Romania, and Bulgaria attaining greater autonomy. 43 This was accompanied by the Russian promise to withdraw from Ottoman lands only after the Armenians were granted their reforms. Even though the Russians did not harbour any intentions for the dissolution of Ottoman Empire, they intended to weaken it. This third-party engagement in the Ottoman Empire’s domestic affairs was perceived with paranoia.

Thus, the loss of almost 40 % of its territory and 25% of its population during the Balkan wars, induced a significant shift in the ideology of the Young Turks as well as the Armenians. The interests of each power can be described as such:

Russia wanted to expand its influence and placate its Armenian minority; Turkey wanted to minimize foreign involvement on its territory above all else; Germany sought to gain a foothold in the region; and Britain wanted to ensure that neither Russia nor Germany gained too much.⁴⁴

In the Mandelstam plan signed in February 1914 between the two Empires as well as Britain, Germany and France, they agreed on the creation of two Armenian “zones”—one in the six eastern Armenian vilayets and one consisting of Trebizond on the Black Sea—to be administered by two neutral European inspectors at the Porte. 45 Additionally, the Ottomans were angry at the

Armenians for demanding reforms when the Empire had endured devastating territorial losses during the war; the Ottomans were also suspicious of an Armenian uprising similar to other Christian minorities' uprisings with the support of the "third-party" Russia. The fact that Armenia was located on the borders of both the Empires made it a threatening subject for the Young Turks.

Moreover, the anti-Armenian sentiment and paranoia increased to intolerable levels during the WW1 when the Armenians were accused of siding with the Russians, who in turn helped press the Armenian claim for an independent state. Furthermore, the Armenians refused to cooperate during the war when asked by the Young Turks.⁴⁶ The level of desertions and association with Russians was increasing and the Ottoman commanders took note of it. The rising suspicions led the Ministry of War to create the Secret Organization for dealing with security threats throughout the Empire. Thus, this organization along with several armed youth groups started the killings of Armenians in late summer 1914 and increased dramatically during the spring of 1915.⁴⁷

THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE HISTORY OF OTTOMAN EMPIRE'S GOVERNANCE MISTAKES AND REPRESSION AND TURKEY'S STARTERGIES OF DEALING WITH MINORITIES INSIDE AND OUTSIDE ITS BOUNDARIES

Since Turkish independence when Ataturk had promised autonomy to the Kurds for their contribution in the WW1, the Turkish Kurds are more oppressed, culturally, and politically than their brethren in other parts of greater Kurdistan.⁴⁸ Under the Law 2932 of 1983, use of Kurdish language, music, dress as well as holidays were banned. ⁴⁹ To curtail Kurdish political participation, a high threshold of 10% was enacted for parties to secure entry to the parliament. This prevented Kurdish representation in parliament for 25 years (1990-2015), until the pro-Kurdish political party (HDP) entered parliament. ⁵⁰

Furthermore, the suppression and homogenizing of Kurds culminated into the formation of a student organization called the Kurdistan's Workers Party (PKK) headed by Abdullah Öcalan in 1978.⁵¹ After the 1980 military coup d'état, war started between the PKK militants and the Turkish armed forces.⁵²

Furthermore, because of PKK's designation as a terrorist organization by both the US and the EU at the request of Turkey and due to Ocalan's imprisonment, the PPK declared a ceasefire for 5 years.⁵³ But the PKK was emboldened by the KRGs' achievement in Iraq after the 2003 Iraqi war and resumed fighting. The AKP government led by Erdogan tried to pacify the PKK by orchestrating a meeting with Ocalan, resulting the in the "Road Map" document which served as the starting point to the secret dialogue between the AKP and PKK in Oslo.⁵⁴ Followed by another round of peace talks in 2013 by Erdogan to gain Kurdish support for the referendum on changing Turkish parliamentary system into a political system, a war flared up between the PKK and Turkish forces in July 2015.

As for the Armenians, they got integrated into the Transcaucasian Federation during the Russian Revolution and after the revolution became a part of the Soviet Union as the Armenian Socialist Soviet Republic in 1920. Armenia declared independence from the Soviet Union on 23 August 1990.⁵⁵ Turkey was one of the first countries to recognize Armenia's independence but refused to establish diplomatic relations with Yerevan. It established 2 conditions stating that Armenia should recognize the Turkish-Armenian border established by the Kars Treaty of 1921, and end the process of international recognition of the Armenian genocide.⁵⁶ Furthermore, the Turkish-Armenian relations deteriorated during the Nagorno-Karabakh war where Turkey sided with their traditional allies Azerbaijan for the claim over the territory.

THE SPILL OVER OF HISTORICAL CONFLICTS IN TODAY'S TURKEY AND CURRENT FOREIGN POLICY ENTANGLEMENTS

The Kurdish problem as elaborated in the beginning of this brief has persisted for more than a century and has evolved into a much bigger geo-politically perceived threat for Turkey. The threat posed by the designated terrorist group PKK has increased significantly after the Turkish government got involved in the Syrian civil war, initially to overthrow Bashar-Al-Assad's regime and replace it with a Muslim-Brotherhood inspired government. But over the 4-5 years, the focus of the Turks has shifted towards containing the military advances of the Syrian Kurds.⁵⁷ Turkey believes the YPG⁵⁸, which dominates the alliance Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) is an extension of the PKK, a designated terrorist organization fighting for Kurdish autonomy in Turkey for years.⁵⁹ The SDF is an alliance of Kurdish and Arab militias which were instrumental in driving the IS out of northern Syria with the backing of a US-led multinational coalition.⁶⁰ Furthermore, although the YPG and PKK share a similar ideology regarding Kurdish autonomy, there is no confirmation regarding the extent of affiliation between the two groups. Turkey claims the YPG is a national security threat to the Turkish state and has thus employed a new approach of creating areas of control along the Syrian border as a buffer zone against the YPG.⁶¹

The biggest change in Syria happened during October-November 2019. After the US had declared the IS defeat in March 2019, Erdogan and the US agreed on creating a safe zone for the resettlement of refugees. The YPG also agreed to withdraw from the areas. But on 6 October, Erdogan informed Trump of his decision of unilaterally setting up a safe zone, after which Trump ordered his troops to pull back from the area.⁶² On October 9, Turkey started an offensive operation named "Operation Peace Spring" against the YPG and to secure resettlement for the Syrian

refugees. According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, 120 civilians approximately have lost their lives in this offensive, along with severe civilian infrastructural damage.⁶³ Because of US withdrawal from Syria a few days after this offensive, the Kurds (YPG) felt betrayed and vulnerable, and subsequently struck a deal with the Assad government. The Assad government agreed to deploy the Syrian army against the Turkish forces, while Russia sent military police to key locations.⁶⁴

Coming back to the Armenians; right after Armenia and Azerbaijan separated from the erstwhile Soviet Union in 1990, Yerevan has been embroiled in a bitter conflict with its neighbour Baku over the Nagorno-Karabakh region. Nagorno-Karabakh province of the Azerbaijani territory when both Azerbaijan and Armenia gained independence. But right after independence, the ethnic Armenians of the region seceded, resulting in a bloody war. According to the ceasefire agreed upon four years later, the Armenians gained control over the Nagorno-Karabakh and adjoining Azerbaijani territory.⁶⁵ The fighting which has erupted on September 29, 2020 is the deadliest since the war during the early 1990s.

Although many foreign powers including Russia, US and France have urged both sides to maintain peace and come to the negotiating table, Turkey has taken a drastically courageous stand in the conflict. This is because Turkey shares ethnic and linguistic ties with the Azeris of Azerbaijan and refers to them as "brothers". The Turkish state backs the Azerbaijani position of Armenians usurping the Nagorno-Karabakh region through aggression. Erdogan, in his speech to the Turkish parliament on 1 October said, "Our Azerbaijani brothers are now waiting for the day they will return to their land."⁶⁶ Turkey has also extended military support to Azerbaijan in this conflict.

The reasons why Turkey has been extra vocal and involved in this conflict are manifold. While

Turkey and Azerbaijan share ethnic ties, Armenia and Turkey's relations have always been hazy due to the memory of the genocide of 1915. Turkey has been firm on the claim that Yerevan started the fighting and should withdraw from occupied lands, as they are not following the pronouncements of international law.⁶⁷ These demands highlight the increasingly aggressive and adventurous stand Turkey is taking in the South Caucasus conflict with respect to Armenia. Even though top Presidential Spokesperson Ibrahim Kalin to US national security advisor O'Brien that Turkey supports the negotiations, a permanent solution can only be achieved through Armenia's withdrawal from the occupied Azerbaijani territory of Nagorno Karabakh and its surroundings.⁶⁸ Furthermore, Turkey and Azerbaijan conducted military exercises together during July and August this year.⁶⁹ Additionally, France and Russia have both claimed that Turkey is transferring Syrian and Libyan rebel fighters into the Nagorno-Karabakh region.⁷⁰

CONCLUSION

As discussed in the issue brief, Turkey has become embroiled in multiple conflicts with its neighbours which risk bulging into larger internationalized conflicts. Turkey has taken adventurous steps in north-eastern Syria to curb the movement of the YPG along the Syrian-Turkish border during the Operation Peace Spring in November 2019. Since 2019, the US has held several talks between the stakeholders in Northeast Syria, including Kurdish-Arab and Intra-Kurdish dialogue. But the final goal of Turkish-Kurdish talks is a sensitive topic for both Erdogan and the Turkish public.⁷¹ Nevertheless, for consensus to emerge for these talks, the alleged links between the PKK and the YPG need to be cleared with patience by a third-party state. Furthermore, the focus should be on establishing a more ethnically and religiously

inclusive governance structure in northeast Syria.⁷² However, considering the high support for Operation Peace Spring amongst the Turkish public and the probability of an early election in summer 2021, Erdogan would not be willing to withdraw from Syria anytime soon.⁷³ Going forward, getting Turkey on the negotiating table is extremely crucial and Washington should try to do so. Trump should make use of his personal camaraderie with Erdogan to make him settle for talks with the stakeholders in Syria.

The most pressing concern for Turkey currently, is the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict over the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh. Turkey, as mentioned before, has not shied away from supporting its ally Azerbaijan; but it is yet again, on Russia's wrong side. It is important to note here, that Russia has a mutual defence treaty with Armenia and has a military base there.⁷⁴ While, it also upholds good relations with Azerbaijan, Turkey's increased assertiveness in their former Soviet backyard has led to an uneasy power balance between the two stakeholders. Ankara and Moscow support different armed groups in Syria. Furthermore, Turkey has been veering away from the U.S rapidly since it bought anti-aircraft missiles from Russia this year. Additionally, it has been increasing the strategic divides on various fronts for which it has garnered fierce objections from NATO; for example, over the purchase of Russian anti-aircraft system, violation of the arms embargo in Libya and the constant demonization of Israel.⁷⁵ Although with the increasing neo-Ottomanism and aggressive foreign policy pursued by Turkey in Syria, Libya, Cyprus and Kurdish regions of Turkey, it has given up the hope of EU membership; to ensure peace in the Southern Caucasus, it is absolutely essential that both Turkey and Russia take measured responses while pressing for continued negotiations with other regional and international actors.

AUTHOR BIO: Tanvi Asang Dani is a student at the Jindal School of International Affairs, O.P. Jindal Global University and a Research Intern at the Centre for Middle East Studies

NOTES

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Assessing Sustainable Development in the MENA Region

HIMANI YADAV

ABSTRACT: For far too long the world has relied upon unsustainable development. It is manifested through various anthropocentric actions such as destroying forests, exploiting animals, degrading land, overconsumption of water and excessive usage of fossil fuels. As long as the world continues relying on unsustainable development, the consequences will continue to worsen. Climate change has already begun to show its claws and can be observed across the globe in the form of rising temperatures, frequent flooding, wildfires, and severe drought. The Middle East and North African (MENA) Region is particularly at a high risk of bearing the brunt of climate change. This issue brief highlights the reasons for the same in the form of three environmental concerns in the region, which are water scarcity, land degradation and solid waste management. It further highlights their impact and sustainability measures taken up by agencies in the MENA region to counter these issues.

Keywords: Middle East, North Africa, water scarcity, land degradation, solid waste management

INTRODUCTION

The term ‘sustainability’ has its roots in the German word ‘Nachhaltigkeit’, which means ‘sustained yield’. This term first appeared in the German handbook of forestry in 1713, where it meant ‘not harvesting more than the forest can regenerate’. The translated English term began to appear towards the beginning of the mid-19th century. Over time, the term ‘sustainable’ became more inclusive and began encompassing all biological systems. During the late 1980s, ‘sustainability’ came to be known in terms of human beings’ consumption pattern. Today the most widely used definition of ‘sustainable development’ comes from the United Nations, Brundtland’s Commission, 1987. The commission defined sustainable development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

While there are multiple definitions of countries constituting the MENA region, there is no standard

definition. For this issue brief, the definition given by Abumoghli and Gonclaves in their paper ‘Environmental Challenges in the MENA Region’ (2020) is adopted. The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region consists of 21 countries located in four subgroups: the Mashreq region (Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria), the Maghreb region (Algeria, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia), the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries (Bahrein, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates), and the fourth cluster including Arab Least Developed Countries (Sudan, Yemen). Israel, Turkey and Iran are usually segregated but are sometimes included in the Mashreq region.

There are huge disparities in the MENA region when it comes to development, income level, education, access to health care, etc. However, one aspect that is common to all the countries situated in the MENA region is the immediate threat posed by environmental degradation and climate change. The region deals with several environmental stressors such as water scarcity, land degradation

and waste management. Each of these issues will be individually dealt with in the upcoming section.

WATER SCARCITY

The MENA region faces an acute shortage of water. According to the estimates by Veolia Water Company and International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), (2011), 60 per cent of the population living in the region faces water shortage as opposed to 35 per cent globally. According to a report released by the World Resource Institute (WRI) in 2019, 12 countries in the MENA region were among the 17 most water-stressed countries in the world. In the Aqueduct Water Risk Atlas released by WRI in 2019 Qatar was seen as the most water risked, drought risked and riverine flood risk country in the world followed by Israel, Lebanon, Iran, Jordan, Libya, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain and Oman.

Continuous growth in the urban population across all the nations in the MENA region is one of the most prominent reasons for the extreme water scarcity. An increase in urban population leads to an increase in industries and a rise in living standards which puts more pressure on the countries already facing a severe water crisis. In addition to water scarcity, the region faces a whole lot of other challenges that stem from water scarcity, such as droughts, floods, water management, conflict and violence over water. Due to an increase in population in the region, many countries have continued to exploit and destroy their water resource base.

This rise in population consequently results in a higher demand for water. To meet the exponentially growing demand for water the governments in the region have adopted measures which have done more harm than good. Overexploitation of groundwater, poor water management system and seawater intrusion have all contributed to a lower quality of water. Further, Agriculture usually requires the most amount of water. According to the State of Food and Agriculture report 2016, 86% of

MENA regions annual freshwater was withdrawn by the agricultural sector. Due to the growing scarcity of water, the agricultural sector also faces the risk of not being able to fetch enough water for itself. Such a risk poses a big threat to food security. This threat is also likely to exacerbate due to climate change and its consequences such as an increase in temperature, precipitation patterns and a further decrease in the availability of water.

To combat water scarcity, the MENA region relies heavily on desalination - a process of treating seawater to make it appropriate for consumption. The region comprises of more than half of the world's desalination capacity. According to the World Bank, the desalination plants in the MENA region have a cumulative capacity to treat about 24 million cubic meters of seawater a day. According to the data provided by the Global Water Intelligence (2016a) MENA region had 46.7% of the world's total desalination plants. According to the UNDP in 2013, desalinated water only formed 1.8 per cent of total water supply in the region. This share is anticipated to increase to 8.5 per cent by 2025.

Most of this increase will come from high-income Gulf countries. Despite relying heavily on desalination plants, the countries in the region do not spend much on Research & Development (R&D). Due to low spending on R&D, the desalination plants often lead to harmful environmental consequences such as air pollution and emission of greenhouse gases. Apart from relying on desalination, countries in the MENA region usually resort to treating wastewater to meet their growing demand. Based on the method countries choose for wastewater disposal they can be divided into three groups: Group 1 comprises Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. All these countries reuse a high percentage of treated water in irrigation. They follow strict norms concerning the treatment of wastewater and releasing remaining water after

treatment back into the sea. Group 2 consists of Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Morocco and Syria.

These countries use wastewater after treatment for irrigation, landscaping and for industrial purposes. They follow moderate norms concerning the treatment and release of remaining water back into the sea. Group 3 comprises Lebanon, the West Bank and Yemen. These countries use large amounts of wastewater for irrigation without treating it (World Bank,2018). Although reusing wastewater is advantageous, there have been concerns regarding its usage without treating it and also regarding its acceptance among people. Several countries in the MENA region rely on non-conventional methods to conserve and use water. Relying on rainwater harvesting, cisterns, constructing small dams and underground storage are fairly popular methods to store and save water in the region. Weather modification via cloud seeding to increase rainfall, improving harvesting techniques, investing in water harvesting structures and training for farmers are some other measures through which the MENA region is trying to meet its increasing demand of water.

LAND DEGRADATION

Land Degradation refers to a decrease or loss in economic or biological productivity of land due to human activities and patterns of habitation. According to a report by the Joint Research Centre (JRC) 4.2 million km² land is degraded annually. Africa and Asia are the most affected continents by land degradation. According to a report published by the United Nation's Environment Program, 2016, 40 per cent of the total land in the MENA region has already degraded. The region is heavily impacted by desertification. The same report by UNEP (2016) further elucidated that 31 per cent of the region is severely desertified and 11 per cent is very severely desertified. Such exponential amount of desertification has given rise to undesirable consequences like soil erosion, dust storms and salinization of agricultural lands.

The Mashreq region consisting of Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and Syria is considered to be the hotspot of land degradation in the MENA region. The factors which contribute to land degradation in the region are increasing population, unsustainable farming practices, wildfires, extreme temperatures, overgrazing, flooding, migration, dislocation of labour, lack of planning, conflict, and sand or dust storms. Regional differences such as Egypt's high population and dependence on intensively managed irrigation system, dependence on groundwater by the countries in the Arabian Peninsula and reliance on rainfall by countries surrounding Mediterranean Sea influence desertification within the MENA region. Distinct socioeconomic factors like urbanization and economic development also contribute to land degradation. Land degradation severely reduces the income of people. Degraded lands in Africa and Asia (comprising of MENA) cost both the continents 7,000 million USD each year (Dregne and Chou,1992). There are other indirect consequences of land degradation whose costs are much harder to calculate, such as food insecurity, increased poverty and undesirable health effects.

Authorities in the MENA region have taken several initiatives to combat land degradation. One of the initiatives is the restoration of degraded lands. Degraded land on the western side of the Nile Delta in Egypt, along the Euphrates River in Syria, in the central Arabian Peninsula, and recently in the marshlands of southern Iraq have been successfully restored. Restoration of land is not only beneficial for the productivity of land, but it also generates jobs and economic growth. According to World Bank, (2019) restoring 150 million hectares of degraded agricultural land could give rise to 85 billion USD in net benefits to national and local economies, provide 30–40 billion USD a year in extra income for farmers, and provide food for an additional 200 million people. Several agencies are working in the region to combat desertification. Apart from these agencies, there has been an initiation of several international

agreements and commitments to address land degradation and desertification. International Organisations such as United Nations: Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO), World Bank Partnership on Combating Desertification (WBPCD), Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD)/Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS), Union for the Mediterranean have emerged as main stakeholders for combating desertification.

There have been several regional and national initiatives that have emerged to address land degradation. A few prominent examples are Great Green Wall initiative, Middle East North Africa Water and Livelihoods Initiative (WLI)- Regional, Updated rangeland strategy for Jordan, AFR 100 (the African Forest Landscape and Restoration Initiative) and Agadir commitment among others. These initiatives have been quite successful. For example, the Green Wall Initiative's website lists its accomplishments as follows. The initiative, which was launched in 2007 and is roughly 15 per cent underway, has restored 5 million hectares of land already and is delivering an additional 500,000 tons of grain per year in Niger.

The Middle East North Africa Water and Livelihoods Initiative (WLI) began in 2009 and was completed in 2018. The initiative was funded by United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and managed by the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA). The interventions carried out during the course of the initiative were aimed at increasing crop yield, awareness of sustainable practices and awareness about climate change. The initiative also aimed at addressing technological challenges such as building infrastructure in the region for the adoption of sustainable practices. The success stories of various initiatives taken up by agencies, highlight how sustained efforts can stop the disastrous consequences of land degradation and desertification.

Despite these advantages, the process of restoration in the MENA region is still lacking. One reason for this is lack of funds or investments. According to the World Wildlife Fund (2014), out of the 350 billion USD needed for land restoration, only 50 billion USD is available. Private investments are limited to 10 billion USD a year. Investors do not invest because of sustained investments, late benefits and risk associated. One of the other barriers is the top-down approach adopted by agencies which leads to a failure in understanding the importance of participation at the grassroots level. Issues about training, inclusivity, monitoring of land management, small environmental budgets also act as deterrents in the way of land restoration.

SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

An increase in population, expansion of urbanization, increase in consumption and a rise in living standards have contributed to an increased generation of all sorts of waste. Solid Waste Management is often seen as an important service that a city or local government provides. The process of Solid Waste Management (SWM) is expensive and can be the single highest budget item across countries. According to World Bank's report titled "What A Waste: A Global Review of Solid Waste Management" (2012), the budget allocated to SWM can range from 4 per cent of the municipal budget in high-income countries to 20 per cent of the municipal budget in low-income countries.

According to World Bank, by 2025 the urban population which is estimated to be about 4.3 billion will generate about 2.2 billion tons of waste annually averaging about 1.42 kg/capita/day of municipal solid waste. According to another report of World Bank titled "What a Waste 2.0: A Global Snapshot of Solid Waste Management to 2050" global waste will grow to 3.40 billion tonnes by 2050. Poorly managed waste has several undesirable consequences such as contamination of seawater, clogging of drains, flooding, the spread of diseases, and general harm to the ecosystem,

which makes it imperative to promote better solid waste management.

The Middle East and North African Region produced 6 per cent of the total global waste generated in 2016. This figure is estimated to nearly double by 2050 (World Bank, 2018). Waste management practices have extreme variations across the region. High-income countries in the region such as Bahrain, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates generated more than 1.5 kg of waste per person per day in 2016. Low-income countries such as Morocco, Djibouti and Yemen generated less than 0.6 kg per person per day in 2016. Food and green waste comprised of 58 per cent of the type of waste generated in the MENA region in 2016, followed by paper and cardboard waste at 13 per cent, plastic waste at 12 per cent, other waste at 8 per cent, glass and metal waste at 3 per cent each, rubber and leather waste at 2 per cent and wood waste at 1 per cent. Total waste collection of the region averages at 84 per cent. Waste collection is high in the urban areas of the region averaging at 90 per cent while it is relatively low in rural areas averaging at 74 per cent. There are variations in the collection of rural waste. In Qatar, for example, 100 per cent of rural waste is collected while in Tunisia, only 5 per cent (World Bank, 2018).

According to the World Bank (2018), open dumping is the most prevalent waste disposal practice in the region averaging at 53 per cent of total waste management. Usage of landfills is also increasing. In Morocco, for example, landfill usage increased from 10 per cent in 2008 to 53 per cent in 2016. Countries are increasingly becoming aware of waste management practices. The Government of Morocco, for example, invested 0.3 billion USD between 2008 and 2014 to improve municipal waste management. This investment cut environmental costs by an estimated 0.4 billion USD during the period. The government of Morocco has also taken several other initiatives to increase citizen participation in waste collection and management.

High-income countries in the region such as Bahrain, Qatar, UAE are adopting sustainable methods of waste disposal, such as converting waste to energy, building infrastructure using waste, planning properly designed waste management facilities which include incinerators and sanitary landfills. Recycling and composting are also gaining popularity in the region. Out of 21 countries, 16 countries engage in some form of recycling activity, and 9 countries engage in some form of composting activity. Although the countries in the MENA region are working towards waste management, the pace of progress is not up to the amount of increase in the waste generated each year.

CONCLUSION

Through concerted efforts, the MENA region is transitioning towards sustainability, but the progress is slow. There are variabilities concerning the transition towards sustainability. Low- and Middle-income countries like Algeria, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia, Yemen, West Bank and Gaza have made slower progress towards sustainability when compared to high-income countries like Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Saudi Arabia. The slow progress makes low- and middle-income countries more vulnerable to direct and indirect effects of global warming, in comparison with high-income countries. This vulnerability stems from low adaptability and capacity to adjust to complex environmental changes. Further institutional and socio-economic factors like political instability, poor governance, low financial capitals and factor mobility act as deterrents to capacity building.

The low-and middle-income countries in the region need to develop a model of cooperation with other countries (especially with high-income countries) and within their own country to accelerate the sustainability measures. There is a need to incentivize private investments in projects concerning sustainability. These countries also need to increase investment in Research &

Development (R & D) and initiatives concerning citizen participation. There is an urgent need to make sustainability initiatives more inclusive and enhance training programs. The authorities need to

be transparent and accountable with the people of the region if they want to achieve their sustainability goals and avoid the consequences of climate change.

AUTHOR BIO: Himani Yadav is a student at the Jindal Global Law School, O.P. Jindal Global University and a Researcher at the Centre for Middle East Studies

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Saudi Arabia & Jordan: A Difference in the Approaches to Looming Water Crises.

AYMAN KHAN

ABSTRACT Saudi Arabia and Jordan are monarchies situated in the Middle East. They both occupy strategically important areas that are of geopolitical importance in the region and have been allies for much of their respective existence. However, Saudi Arabia is in a position to procure water through industrialised and extortionate means whereas Jordan has natural resources of strategic importance which it uses to achieve water security through diplomatic means. Due to this difference, amongst many others, this brief assesses their modern divergence in strategy for securing water, namely, Jordan's dependence on diplomacy and Saudi Arabia's dependence on finance and technology.

INTRODUCTION

Saudi Arabia & Jordan are quite similar in many aspects. Both are Sunni Arab monarchies, with the latter's ruling Hashemite Dynasty having its origins in Saudi Arabia's Hejaz province, where they once ruled. In terms of geography, both nations inhabit mostly arid desert landscapes & mountains, interspersed with the occasional Wadi. Wadis are dry riverbeds, which frequently host seasonal rivers that dry up in the summer. Historically, these Wadis were the primary water source for agriculture irrigation and were at the heart of several desert settlements in both countries. However, this is where the similarities in their geography end. The Jordan River inhabits the Jordan valley, from which the Kingdom derives its name. In contrast, Saudi Arabia is one of 16 countries on Earth without a permanent river, the rest being micro-states and fellow gulf nations (Migiro).

Both countries experience severe water scarcity, which is resolved through active involvement of both governments through investments, diplomacy, subsidies and technological advancements. This brief will highlight Jordan's dependence on diplomacy and leveraging strategic assets in contrast to Saudi Arabia's dependence on

investments and technology. It highlights these differences in order to explain the causes behind the divergence in strategy, despite the similarities between the two monarchies.

JORDAN & "WATER-DIPLOMACY"

Jordan: Water and Demographic stressors

Jordan has a unique position in the Middle East. Situated in the lower Levant region, bordering Saudi Arabia, Israel, Syria and the West Bank, it is in the heart of a region marked by political instability. Due to its relatively stable presence in the crossroads of the Middle East, it has periodically been burdened by large scale refugee influx into the Kingdom. Jordan has a history of granting asylum to large populations of persecuted peoples and refugees. The recent Syrian crisis has led to Jordan taking in an estimated 1.2 million Syrians into its own fold of 8 million inhabitants (Diep 41). Over-reliance on groundwater exploitation along with low rainfall figures has led to a large degree of water stress. This has led to demographic pressures in certain regions of Jordan, with groundwater aquifers in such regions being either heavily stressed or almost empty. Aquifers are underground basins that store large quantities of

water, some of whom are non-renewable (Lindsey). Resources are few and far between, and until 1965, Jordan was unable to export them reliably as political instabilities led to unreliable import/export routes. While it is classified as an upper-middle-income country, it is limited in natural resources and depends heavily on expatriate remittances and tourism (Diep 41). The population increase and lack of resources compounded with improper management exponentiates the issue of water scarcity.

In 2019, Jordan was ranked as the 5th most water-stressed country in the world (Lindsey). Despite the low consumption rate, water is still rationed leading to load shedding practices and scarcity in several regions (Lindsey). Jordan has only twenty-seven kilometres of coastline, which means it has the lowest land-coastline ratio in the Middle East after Iraq (Drysdale 86). Much of the water comes from groundwater aquifers, whose depletion is a growing concern. Predictions estimate that by 2060, all of Jordan's groundwater would be consumed (Diep 43). The Jordan River had historically been the primary source of water for irrigation and consumption; currently, however, it has been reduced to just 2% of its original flow (Susskind 196). Despite having an overall low rate of consumption per capita at around 80 litres per day in contrast to Egypt's 130 litres & Europe's 200 litres, Jordanians still have to ration water (Lindsey). This is virtually unheard of in other Peninsular Arabian states. The water supply is even more stressed as improperly maintained networks lead to a loss of 120 million cubic litres of water annually (Diep 48). To mitigate all these issues, Jordan focused on diplomacy with two of its most powerful neighbours: Saudi Arabia & Israel.

Jordan: Saudi Arabia, Israel and leveraging geography

The creation of Israel in 1948 rendered Jordan landlocked. Previously Jordan had unfettered access to the Mediterranean through Mandatory Palestine as both were British administered

territories (Drysdale 87). The establishment of Israel and the ensuing Arab embargo meant that Jordan could not use these ports anymore. Further instability in the Levant region meant that the important port of Beirut was also rendered inaccessible. Its only other option was a border left undefined by the United Kingdom around the Gulf of Aqaba. It soon became a national priority in the 1950s to develop a port in the Gulf of Aqaba. Facilities in the port of Aqaba were limited due to the aforementioned reasons, further compounded with geopolitical sensitivities. The port coalesced into one large urban agglomeration with Saudi Arabian, Israeli and Egyptian port cities, divided by their respective borders (Drysdale 91). Due to geographic limitations affecting routes and trade volumes, it was a risky investment on a macroeconomic scale. The most pressing uncertainty was the vaguely defined border with Saudi Arabia. However, the aforementioned was resolved in 1965, when Saudi Arabia and Jordan reached an agreement, with Jordan exchanging 7000 sq. km of land for 6000sq. km of Saudi land and 19km along the gulf (International Boundary Study).

This exchange was vital to Jordan since, despite ceding a larger area, Jordan had a new port which it was able to industrialize and find a solution to its water-security problem. This industrialisation was also important as Jordan was able to export its products, including petroleum products (the treaty included a provision that called for sharing any such resources found in the exchanged land) (International Boundary Study). More importantly, Jordan's reputation for stability within the Levant region led to other countries, chief of whom was Iraq, also depending on the port. In September 1980, Iraq's invasion of Iran led to war which rendered the former's ports paralysed. Iraq then proceeded to rely on Jordan's Aqaba port as a lifeline (Drysdale 99). This proceeded to become a heavy diplomatic advantage, which allowed for Jordan to take more advantageous positions while negotiating. It was beneficial to Jordan's water

security as it allowed for Jordan to make proposals with Israel while leveraging its newfound access to sea. One such proposal with Israel is the Red Sea-Dead Sea conveyance project. This entails a potential artificial canal from the Red Sea through the Gulf of Aqaba into the Dead Sea to replenish the latter, which is situated in Israel. An ambitious project, it also entails the creation a desalination plant at the port of Aqaba. The potable water generated through the plant is to be shared between Jordan, Israel and Palestine while the brine would be deposited in the Dead Sea (Susskind 196). The aim is to replenish the Dead Sea, which is shrinking, and to generate electricity and potable water through the proposed plant at the Gulf of Aqaba.

While talks are currently ongoing regarding this project, it is not the first instance of Jordan using water-diplomacy. In 1994, Israel signed a peace treaty with Jordan, only the second time Israel engaged in such an accord with its Arab neighbours (Susskind 195). The treaty included provisions and an annex dealing with techniques and solutions in pursuit of bettering Israel and Jordan's water supply. Being the only such treaty with specifications on water sharing, it has provisions that allow for Israel to draw water from the Yarmouk tributary in Jordan and store it in Israel's lake Tiberius during the wet season (Susskind 195). It allows for Jordan to use the water (about 50 million cubic metres through Jordanian pipes) stored in Tiberius during the dry season thereby strengthening Jordan and Israel's water security (Susskind 195). It allows for Israel to use Jordan's groundwater resources for its purposes while Jordan uses the former's lake Tiberius to store water, similar to grain in a silo. This treaty is a diplomatic success, working for well over a decade. This is also successful as such a negotiated diplomatic outcome between Israel and her Arab neighbours is unprecedented. It has also led to the creation of the Joint (Israel-Jordan) Water Commission (JWC) which allocates funds for investment in dams, desalination and research that

has aided Jordan in identifying additional aquifers and water resources (Susskind 196). The JWC still meets regularly to negotiate over the proposed Red-Sea Dead-Sea conveyance project mentioned earlier.

SAUDI ARABIA

Saudi Arabia: Self-sufficiency through finance and technology.

Saudi Arabia has no natural surface-level water resources. Due to sparse rainfall limited to small regions in the country, agriculture is also limited in scope. Only in the Asir Province, a region encompassing 3% of the country, does enough rainfall occur to sustain agriculture (Nowshirwani 7). While smaller farms did exist in other, mostly frontier, regions, the country depended on food imports and water reservoirs to feed its population. However, from the 1970s, an effort was launched to use technological input and government subsidies to bolster the Saudi agricultural and water resource sectors. The government heavily subsidised mechanical inputs necessary for commercialised agriculture in an effort to increase output. From 1975 – 1985, wheat output grew tenfold, with Saudi Arabia even providing 50,000 tons of food Aid to Bangladesh in 1984 (Nowshirwani 7). Saudi Arabia went from a net importer of basic foodstuffs to one that was facing domestic storage issues for grain. Saudi Arabia soon started wheat exports to nearby Arab Gulf states. Wheat was not the only agricultural surplus; the kingdom also reached an exportable surplus of eggs and near self-sufficiency in poultry and dairy products (Nowshirwani 7). This success can be primarily attributed to aggressive commercialisation and to mechanisation of the agriculture sector with government subsidies as well as raised ceilings on no-interest loans provided for the purchase of irrigation and farm equipment (Nowshirwani 8). Among these was a push to use the deep depletable groundwater aquifers via the provision of subsidised mechanical pumps. The exploitation of these aquifers, non-renewable

though they were, permitted the irrigation required for large scale commercial farming. Public land grant programmes initially allotted for settling Bedouin nomads were expanded to provide public lands for the furthering of agricultural goals. Through investments and government subsidy programs, the aim of Saudi self-sufficiency in agriculture was achieved, leading to Saudi Arabia being the sixth-largest wheat exporter in the world by the late 1980s (Jones 26).

Saudi Arabia: Change in plans, visions for the future.

However, the effects of groundwater depletion eventually made themselves apparent. Due to the non-renewable nature of some aquifers, several of the major aquifers had depleted unsustainably, such as The Saq-Ram aquifer dropping by 105m (Molle 84). Such trends were reflected across most aquifers. Even in renewable ones, the groundwater's rate of utilisation for irrigation alone was ten times the rate of replenishment (Diep 84). In 2008, the country ended wheat subsidies (Jones 26). It returned to a policy of importing all its wheat by 2016 as the drop in the aquifers was problematic since they were also shared with population centres. The decision to change from one of the largest wheat exporters in the world to a net importer was carried rapidly, with the balance resembling the pre-1970s programme era. In 2016, Saudi Arabia banned the farming of forage crops, used for dairy feed such as Alfalfa, due to the aforementioned issues with increasing unsustainability & expense (Amery 85). To pursue its policy of food security, Saudi Arabia has leased, invested in and purchased lands in agricultural regions across the globe, primarily in the Africa and the Americas. Saudi companies proceeded on purchasing hundreds of thousands of acres of lands in Argentina, Sudan and Arizona to procure forage for their Saudi farms starting in 2012. (Amery 85). The world's largest dairy farm, Almarai, foresaw the inevitable and invested in large farmlands before government initiatives pushed for it. This programme has

proven successful as Saudi Arabia has been able to secure wheat, grain and livestock fodder to meet domestic requirements without depleting its limited water sources.

Saudi Arabia has also increasingly depended on the creation of seawater desalination plants to meet domestic water consumption requirements. Saltwater desalination has emerged in the wealthier Arab states as a viable means to reduce dependence on groundwater aquifers and other natural water sources. This is a trend reflected in Arab Gulf countries as well, with UAE and Saudi Arabia producing over 30% of the world's desalinated water (Molle 113). This is a popular trend, with estimates stating that by 2025, 8.5 % of the Arab World's water supply will come from desalination plants (Molle 113). Since the 2000s, several Arab Gulf states have increasingly viewed water as a strategic resource, constructing several artificial aquifers, reservoir and storage tanks. However, due to their expensive nature, only Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, and UAE have been able to construct multiple desalination plants in the hopes of supplying urban centres. It costs \$3 to produce one cubic metre of desalinated water, twice as expensive as what it requires for surface water (Amery 76).

However, citizens in many Arab Gulf states, including Saudi Arabia, enjoy government subsidies for water. This has led to wastage and improper maintenance. In Saudi Arabia, the Saudi minister of water and electricity estimated a per capita daily water use of 265 cubic metres per person (Amery 76). This is in sheer contrast to Jordan's aforementioned rate of 70 cubic metres per capita. In 2014, the Ras Al Khair desalination plant, largest in the world, joined 16 other such plants to make Saudi Arabia the largest producer of desalinated water in the world. Desalinated water fulfils most of urban Saudi Arabia's requirements, with the Ras Al Khair plant alone producing over 1 million cubic metres daily (Amery 82). As the data presented within this brief has shown, high costs

due to government water subsidies, high costs, wastage and reliance on fossil fuels coupled with environmental degradation makes this unsustainable in the long run.

CONCLUSION

Despite being neighbours and sharing many cultural, geographic and political similarities, Jordan and Saudi Arabia diverge when it comes to approaching the problem of water scarcity. They have unique geopolitical sensitivities and economic factors. Saudi Arabia's reliance on long term financial plans, public sector investments and technological advancements is possible mainly due

to its large-scale subsidy programmes and its ability to financially sustain them. This is however unsustainable mainly due to economic and environmental factors. Saudi Arabia will have to deal with the issues of high costs, fossil-fuel dependency and wastage in order to plan long term water security. Jordan, however, cannot maintain such expensive programs and therefore relies on utilizing its natural and strategic geographical advantages to pursue water-diplomacy to meet the demands of water scarcity. In order to secure its water security, it needs to sustainably plan its water diplomacy to account for political instability in the region while also resolving the additional issues of infrastructure and demographic management.

AUTHOR BIO: Ayman Khan is a student at the Jindal Global Law School, O.P. Jindal Global University and a Research Intern at the Centre for Middle East Studies

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India and the Gulf States: An Assessment of the Last Five Years

PRADEEK KRISHNA

Introduction

Owing to the large population of Indian expatriates residing in the GCC states and the healthy economic ties between India and the region, India has been friendly to the gulf countries. Although, diplomatically the gulf countries have failed to support India on many fronts due to their alliance with Pakistan. However, a significant shift could be seen in the past few years, this could clearly be seen in Gulf countries' change in stance towards issues like the Kashmir issue and also very recently, their muted response to the contentious Citizenship Amendment Act. This could be attributed to many factors, economically, India being a rapidly growing economy is a huge market for Oil which is the Gulf countries' major export.

Further Prime Minister Modi's Look West policy, which aims at developing deeper diplomatic ties with the Gulf countries, has also contributed significantly to this recent change.⁷⁶ Even the Gulf countries have been looking towards the East in a bid to balance out Iran. India has enjoyed cordial diplomatic and economic ties with Iran, while simultaneously holding a balance in the middle east region, prior to the sanctions imposed on Iran, India was the 2nd largest customer of Iranian oil. Bilateral trade between both countries resumed after the signing of the nuclear agreement lifting sanctions on Iran, however India has diversified its oil purchases with Saudi and UAE accounting for a huge number of India's oil imports.⁷⁷

The shift in dynamics of India's ties with the Gulf countries is also highlighted by the support extended by most of the gulf countries towards India's counter-terrorism agenda. This was firstly

resonated in the Riyadh Declaration signed by India and Saudi Arabia in 2006. Even after Prime Minister Modi took charge, India has been mooted the agenda of counter terrorism on a global stage, in a bid to isolate its neighbor Pakistan, which is known to sponsor terrorism and terrorist attacks on Indian soil. The support shown by the gulf states was resonated when UAE and Saudi deported perpetrators of terrorism wanted by India.

Further, India had delayed diplomatic ties with Israel for a long time due to its relations with Israel, however, India has been cooperating with Israel rather openly in the past few years. This could clearly be because the gulf countries have stopped looking at Israel as their number one threat and have started cooperating with Israel in order to counter Iran. This gives India a window to strengthen ties with Israel which it is using very well.

Indo-Saudi Arabia Relations

India and Saudi have enjoyed cordial relations with each other ever since India won independence in 1947, but it could be seen that Saudi has traditionally held a predilection towards Pakistan and India has been more inclined towards Iran.

Despite these limitations, the past few years have seen a drastic improvement in ties between India and Saudi Arabia. Saudi's recent shift in priorities could surely be attributed to the Bête Noire of most GCC members, Iran. Until very recently, India was the second largest consumer of Iranian Oil, and following the sanctions imposed on Iran by the United States, developing markets like India could play an important role in Iran's re-emergence as a

regional superpower.⁷⁸ Viewed from an Indian perspective, ever since Prime Minister Modi's cabinet has taken charge, India, in a bid to isolate Pakistan, has sought to build ties with countries which were historically closer to Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia is an instrumental country if India intends to do so. A significant shift in Saudi's stance on India could be seen after India decided to repeal some parts of Article 370 of the constitution which granted special status to Kashmir. Saudi had a muted response to this move which infuriated Pakistan, as it was desperately trying to raise this issue on an International stage. Saudi's stance on Kashmir was elucidated when they declined Pakistan's urge to convene a meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to discuss Kashmir. Pakistan's frustrations became lucid when Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi took the unprecedented step of publicly criticizing Saudi Arabia. However, this effort proved futile and further deteriorated the diplomatic fallout between both countries as Saudi retaliated by demanding the early repayment of a loan worth \$3 Billion and Saudi refused to renew a \$3.2 Billion Oil Credit facility. Pakistan Army Chief, in an attempt to mollify Saudi leadership visited Riyadh shortly following the statement made by Qureshi, but he failed to even schedule a meeting with Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman.⁷⁹

An improvement of diplomatic ties between India and Saudi Arabia was highlighted when Prime Minister Modi visited Riyadh in 2016. PM Modi was conferred with Saudi Arabia's highest civilian honour, The King Abdulaziz Sash.⁸⁰

Additionally, India has been pressing the agenda of counter-terrorism ever since PM Modi took charge, and India has held several rounds of talks with Saudi Arabia regarding this. Talks with Saudi Arabia over counter-terrorism have been going on for a long time, in 2010, when Former Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh visited Saudi Arabia, both countries inked the crucial Riyadh

Declaration, under which both countries agreed to develop joint strategies to counter terrorism.⁸¹ Saudi Arabia could potentially be the key factor which makes this counter-terrorism drive an effective one. Saudi has historically been a safe haven for terrorist conspirators and the role of Saudi has also been uncovered in many terrorist attacks on Indian soil including the 2008 Mumbai attacks. Apart from territorial harboring of terrorists, Saudi has also been a major source of funding for various jihadist groups and Indian administration has berated Saudi on several occasions for not taking any concrete action against terrorism.⁸² However, in recent times, Saudi and India have improved their partnership in the field of counter terrorism, intelligence sharing and law enforcement, having inked several instrumental agreements including an extradition treaty, and during Crown Prince Bin Salman's visit to India in 2019, both countries decided to set up a joint working group on counter terrorism. These agreements and dialogues proved to not be mere rhetoric, as Saudi Arabia deported several terrorists wanted on Indian soil including Abu Sufiyan and Abu Jundal, the dreaded terrorist wanted for the 2008 Attacks on Mumbai.

One more avenue to explore in the ties between Saudi and India is that of the Muslims in India. Iran has enjoyed a large sphere of influence among Indian Muslims through various Shia seminaries throughout the country⁸³, however in a bid to counter this influence, Saudi Arabia has also funded Islamic Organizations and preachers to spread their influence in India. A leaked internal document of the Intelligence Bureau reports that Saudi has pumped nearly Rupees 1,700 Crores into India to spread Wahhabism, the state religion of Saudi Arabia.⁸⁴

Any discussion on Indo-Saudi Arabian ties would be incomplete without exploring the economic aspects of the relationship. Bilateral trade between both countries have seen a considerable amount of growth in the past 5 years with total trade rising

from \$26.71 billion in the financial year 2015-2016 to \$33.07 billion in 2019-2020.⁸⁵ Oil has always been the focal point of economic ties between India and Saudi Arabia, considering the fact that India is one of the fastest growing economies in the world and naturally that creates a significant demand for oil. Historically, Iran has been one of India's biggest suppliers of crude oil, but with US imposed sanctions on Iran, India has stopped the import of oil from Iran and that void is being filled by other GCC countries especially Saudi Arabia. There have been many dialogues and plans to facilitate bilateral trade, and India has contributed across different sectors towards Saudi's Vision 2030. Saudi's oil and natural gas company, Saudi Aramco has invested in several oil refineries across India to further spread their footprint in India. The recent deal between Reliance Industries and Saudi Aramco saw Aramco buying 20% stake in Reliance's oil-to-chemical business which is one of Aramco's biggest investments in India. Further, Major Indian companies like L&T, Tata, Wipro, TCS, Shapoorji & Pallonji, Air India, Go Air, Indigo, Spice Jet and several others have established their footprint in Saudi Arabia.⁸⁶

Saudi Arabia is India's fourth largest trading partner and if the two countries manage to uphold this level of cooperation, then trade and other aspects are bound to improve.

Indo-UAE Relations

India and UAE have enjoyed cordial relationships for centuries and in the past few years, this relationship has nothing but flourished even further. Prime Minister Modi's policies towards the middle eastern countries have nothing but helped bolster this relationship. Trade between India and UAE are steadily growing, and even though oil remains the driving force of this economic relationship, India and UAE have looked to improve economic cooperation in non-oil sectors too. When India was coerced to stop importing oil from Iran, UAE was one of the countries which stepped in to fill the void. India-UAE trade is

valued at around US\$60 Billion which makes UAE India's largest trading partner, furthermore UAE is also India's second largest export destination with Indian exports to UAE valued at around US\$30 Billion. UAE is also the 10th biggest FDI investor in India with an investment worth of around \$13-14 billion in India. Indian investment in UAE is estimated to be around \$85 billion, with around 4365 Indian companies registered in UAE including leading Indian companies like HCL, Wipro, Tata, L&T.⁸⁷

In February 2018, a consortium led by India's Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) acquired 10% stake in the offshore Lower Zakum Concession in Abu Dhabi for 40 years.⁸⁸

Politically, the relationship has never seen better times. The friendship between India and UAE has thrived under Prime Minister Modi and Crown Prince Mohammad bin Zayed al-Nahyan. Prime Minister Modi made a visit to UAE in August 2015 which started off a new level of cooperation and partnership between both countries. Crown Prince MBZ reciprocated the gesture with a customary state visit to India in February 2016. In an unprecedented gesture, Crown Prince MBZ attended the 2017 Republic Day Parade in New Delhi as the Chief Guest and this visit also saw Indo-UAE bilateral relations get upgraded to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. ⁸⁹

PM Modi visited UAE again in 2018 and was honored with UAE's highest civilian order, the Order of Zayed.⁹⁰ This visit was also important for one more reason, during his visit in 2018, PM Modi laid the foundation for the very first Hindu Temple in UAE.⁹¹

This also calls for underlining the rich cultural links between India and UAE. There are around 3.5 million Indians in the UAE which makes it the country's largest ethnic group, composing around 30% of the total population. 15 eminent Indians and one Indian Community Association from UAE

have been honoured with Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award.⁹²

Indo-UAE relations reached an apotheosis when India was invited to the 46th Organisation of Islamic Cooperation(OIC) meeting of Council of Foreign Ministers in Abu Dhabi by the host country UAE.⁹³ India was long denied a role in the OIC despite having one of the largest Muslim Populations in the world due to constant opposition from Pakistan, however, this move came as a huge victory for PM Modi's new Middle East policy. Another big win for India diplomatically, was UAE's muted response to India's decision to abrogate parts of Article 370 which granted special rights to Kashmir, much to the anguish of Pakistan, UAE recognized this as an internal matter stipulated by the Indian Constitution.⁹⁴ UAE also had a muted response to India's controversial Citizenship Amendment Act of 2020.

India and UAE have also looked to improve cooperation in the field of counter terrorism and intelligence sharing. This was highlighted by the Joint Statement delivered by both countries when Prime Minister Modi visited UAE for the first time in 2015. This included dismantling the infrastructure of terrorism, bringing perpetrators of terrorism to justice and also dismantling the alliance between money laundering, criminal networks and violent extremism.

Another field of cooperation between India and UAE is that of space. The space agencies of both countries, India's ISRO and UAE's UAESA signed an MoU in May 2016 which would lead to the formation of a Joint Working Group between two agencies and both agencies agreed to cooperate in exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes.⁹⁵

Additionally, UAE's Nayif 1 nanosatellite was launched by India along with 103 other satellites in a single flight from Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota. The inking of a formal agreement between two agencies would only buttress further

cooperation in the field of space between two countries and this partnership could be highly strategic and instrumental considering the emergence of space as an important arena in recent times.⁹⁶

Indo-Qatar Relations

India and Qatar have been historically close to each other and share deep economic and cultural ties. There are around 700,000 Indians working in Qatar, which makes it the largest expatriate community in Qatar.⁹⁷ Prime Minister Modi visited Qatar in 2016 following the visit made by his counterpart Emir of Qatar Sheikh Tamin bin Hamad al Thani in 2015. Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) remains the main Qatari import to India with New Delhi looking for cleaner fuel options to meet its energy demands. Qatar accounts for nearly 80% of Indian LNG imports. In 2015, an agreement between Qatari RasGas and Indian Petronet raised LNG supply by 1 million metric tonnes per annum in addition to an existing long-term contract of 7.5 million metric tonnes.⁹⁸ During PM Modi's visit in 2016, there was an effort to extend cooperation between both countries beyond trade and various MoUs were signed in the field of cyber security, defense, health and energy.⁹⁹ PM Modi also encouraged Qatar to invest further in India and in return he promised to facilitate skilled labour for the upcoming 2022 FIFA world cup. One area where both countries have failed to find a common ground is the field of counter-terrorism. Counter-terrorism has been number one on Prime Minister Modi's priority list and talks were held with Qatar for holding joint operations in battling terrorism and intelligence sharing, however, no concrete steps have been taken towards that and adding to this, Qatar's support towards the Muslim Brotherhood could also cause issues between the two countries.¹⁰⁰

India faced a dilemma with regard to Qatar recently when a diplomatic crisis arose in the Gulf. Countries led by Saudi Arabia were pushing to

boycott Qatar and this could have had widespread implications for India. India referred to this fallout as an internal matter of the GCC but this could have posed further challenges for India because if the matter escalated, India would have had to stop trade with Qatar and India would also have had to find a solution to evacuate Indians living in Qatar. However, this feud de-escalated and New Delhi did not have to face any serious implications. Although, Saudi and UAE are bound to have strained relations with Qatar and this could take a toll on India's relationship with Qatar considering India's growing relations with UAE and Saudi.

Looking into the future, Qatar's recent exit from OPEC could impact India's economic relations with Qatar greatly in a positive direction. Following its decision to exit OPEC, Qatar has stepped up to increase its LNG supply and India could be a huge market for the same.

Indo-Kuwait Relations

India and Kuwait bilateral relations have historically been cordial, although both countries have had disagreements in the past, but they have successfully stood the test of time. Indian community remains the largest expatriate community with over 1 million Indians residing in Kuwait, this number continues to grow at 5-6% per annum.¹⁰¹ Both countries share deep trade links with each other with India constantly being among Kuwait's top 10 trade partners. Kuwait fulfils around 10-11% of India's annual crude oil requirements, bilateral trade between both countries stood at US\$8.76 Billion. Given India's never-ending energy demands, these numbers are expected to grow in the future and could further increase trade between both countries.

Diplomatically, India and Kuwait have never failed to support each other in times of crisis, and that should be the case in the future, this mutual support has also extended at the time of the pandemic considering the large number of migrant Indian workers living in Kuwait. Most of the migrant

Indian workers live in unsanitary labour camps where the chances of spread of diseases like the corona virus remains high. In April 2020, India sent a 15-member medical team to Kuwait to render medical assistance in testing and treating of the Corona Virus Disease.¹⁰²

Further, India's major export to Kuwait has been labour, and it is seen that Indian technology has not solidified its place in the Kuwaiti market, in order to increase economic cooperation between both countries, India should increase exports to Kuwait and Indian goods can work well in Kuwait's mall culture and advances could be made towards this in the coming years.

Indo-Bahrain Relations

India and Bahrain share an excellent diplomatic relation with both of them being close allies. Both countries share close political, trade and cultural ties. Despite being a small country geographically and population wise, Bahrain is home to more than 350,000 Indians. In 2015, Bahrain launched 'Little India in Bahrain' project to acknowledge the contributions of Indians living there. Bahrain is also home to a 200-year old Hindu temple. Bahrain has historically supported India diplomatically with Bahrain being one of the countries which supports India's bid to win a permanent seat at the United Nations Security Council.¹⁰³ During PM Modi's visit in 2019, India and Bahrain inked an agreements on Cultural Exchange between both countries, cooperation in space technology and cooperation in the International Solar Alliance.¹⁰⁴

On the trade front, bilateral trade between both countries is valued at around US\$1.28 Billions and Bahraini investment in India is calculated to be around US\$173.38 Million. An MoU was signed for the launch of RuPay card in Bahrain when PM Modi visited Bahrain in 2019.¹⁰⁵

Counter-terrorism again remains an important avenue of cooperation among the two countries. In this regard, an agreement on Counter-terrorism and

transnational organized crime was inked when Bahrain's Interior Minister Lt. General Shaikh Rashid bin Abdulla Al Khalifa visited India in 2015.¹⁰⁶

Both countries have stood for each other when it was needed, however, the biggest test of their relations is yet to come. The economic implications of the pandemic may result in the unemployment of many Indians living in Bahrain, it would be up to both countries to collaborate and form a safe channel for the Indian workforce in Bahrain. This cooperation was seen recently as India airlifted workers from Bahrain as a part of the Vande Bharat Mission.

Indo-Oman Relations

India and Oman have maintained cordial relations with each other which can be attributed to the close maritime linkage between both countries, the royal family's relations with India and the huge expatriate community in Oman. Earlier this year when longtime ruler of Oman Sultan Qaboos passed away, India declared a day of mourning in his honor. There are about 700,000 Indian expatriates in Oman and close to 3000 Omani citizens have Indian origins.¹⁰⁷

India is one of Oman's top trading partners and India is Oman's 3rd largest market for non-oil exports. In the Financial Year 2019-2020, bilateral trade between both countries was valued at around US\$5.93 Billion. Further Indian companies have invested heavily in Oman in sectors like iron and steel, cement, fertilizers etc. The total Indian investment is at around US\$2 Billion.¹⁰⁸

Oman is India's oldest strategic and defense partner in the region, various agreements have been signed by both countries to improve cooperation in the field of defense. Both countries participate in a joint Naval exercise, Naseem al-Bahr, the 12th edition of which was held in Goa earlier this year.¹⁰⁹

Both countries reached an instrumental agreement when Prime Minister Modi visited Oman in 2018, which granted India access to the strategic Duqm Port in the south coast of Oman. This will allow the Indian Navy to use the port for logistics and allow it to sustain operations in Western Indian Ocean.¹¹⁰

Conclusion

Diplomatic ties between India and the Gulf states have come a long way, from being a totally transactional relation, limited to trade and purchase of oil, India and the Gulf States have started cooperating in many different avenues like counter-terrorism, intelligence sharing and also in the upcoming field of space. Even bilateral trade between India and the region has seen an upward shift in the past 5 years, with the gulf countries looking to increase non-oil trade with India.

On the diplomatic front, GCC countries who have been traditionally aligned towards Pakistan have supported India on many fronts including the Kashmir issue and the Citizenship Amendment Act showing a shift in paradigm of Indo-Gulf relations and looking towards the future, these relations could be better than ever given the current situations and the agreements signed by both parties. India could also take the opportunity and play a major part in Saudi Arabia and UAE's plan to diversify their economy and reduce their dependence on oil. India has already started contributing in various sectors towards Saudi's Vision 2030, if this cooperation increases, the friendship between India and the region is bound to increase drastically.

However, given the large number of Indian expatriates living in GCC countries, a huge challenge might just be looming over India and the gulf, the pandemic induced economic crisis can cause many Indians to lose jobs and this could raise concerns over their safety. India will have to collaborate with the region to find a safe solution for the same. These collaborations have been taking

shape in form of the Vande Bharat Mission launched by the Indian government. Looking at the future of these relations, right now they are better than ever and given the circumstances, they are going to get better with time.

AUTHOR BIO: Pradeek Krishna is a student at the Jindal School of International Affairs, O.P. Jindal Global University and a Research Intern at the Centre for Middle East Studies

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Turkey's Defiant Role in the East Mediterranean Sea

Analyzing the Turkey- Cyprus- Greece Mediterranean crisis and understanding the narrative of Aegean Sea Dispute.

JYOT SHIKHAR SINGH

ABSTRACT: The conflict in the East Mediterranean Sea has raised concern in the international community regarding the peace and security of the Aegean Sea. What we are seeing is a deep diplomatic confrontation that Turkey and Greece find themselves in. Turkish exploration is regarded by the Greek delegation and the Cypriot Republic as violating the territorial rights of both the nation-states. Even after repeated condemnation by the European Union and Mediterranean nation-states, Turkey continues to explore the East Mediterranean with an aggressive intent to claim their territorial rights in the region. This narrative of Turkey's defiant stance puts certain things in question: What is the underlying reason for Turkish exploration in the region? How is the Turkish exploration in the East Mediterranean a cause for concern for Greek and Cypriot republic? What is the foreign policy stance of Greece and Cyprus in regard to the rising conflict in the region? How the military standoff between Turkey and Greece is a grave cause for concern for stability in the region? Is there a historical narrative behind this aggressive stance of both the nation-states? In order to fully comprehend the issue and the consequences of the conflict, this brief will attempt to broaden an understanding of the reasons behind the conflict, the history that brought about the conflict and how the aggressive actions of the countries affect the narrative and norm of resolution and peace for the whole region.

INTRODUCTION

When one analyzes Turkey's stance in the 21st Century international affairs, it becomes apparent that it is a stance of defiance. Turkey, led by the populist President Erdogan, plays a substantially controversial role when it comes to political, economic and territorial issues. Along with maintaining a balance with the US delegation and the Russian delegation and establishing their power in the Middle East and the Mediterranean, Turkey has committed a significant part of its policy in exerting their influence as a powerful nation in the international arena. This heightened defiant role in the international relation seeks to attract many theorists and scholars arguing that Turkey is in a

continuous effort to seek and establish their identity as a powerful nation in the region, with the possibility of panning out as a leading force in the international arena.

This poses a number of critical questions: Is Turkey proving to be a considerable security threat? Is this defiant role as effective as it is made out to be? How does the recent conflict affect Turkey's objective of establishing itself as a major power? How is the conflict consequential to Cyprus and Greece? What is the future pathway expected out of this conflict? This needs to be analyzed and understood from a broader perspective. This perspective requires an understanding of Turkish foreign policy. And this analysis can be understood as per the recent

emerging conflict of Turkey- Cyprus- Greece over drilling rights in the maritime ocean. This issue is based on some sensitive narratives which makes the idea of this conflict a volatile state. Along with the fact that this issue is based on the violation of the international maritime law, the sensitivity of the issue at hand can also be reflected when one understands the historical narrative these nation-states are sharing. In that regard, we need to understand and discuss the alleged illegal activities that Turkey has been conducting in the Aegean Dispute and what is the consequential notion of this emerging conflict. This issue brief will be based on the following categorization of topics and analysis:

1. Conflict of Gas Fields and Sovereignty
2. A History of Independence and Recognition
3. Consequence of Turkey's Defiant Role
4. Conclusion

CONFLICT OF GAS FIELDS AND SOVERIGNITY

In order to have a substantial neutral understanding about the conflict and to avoid any ideological inclination towards this topic, three main questions shall be posed: What is the primary reason behind the conflict? What is the consequential outcome of the issue for the Aegean Sea? What's the historical narrative behind this conflict? The Turkey- Cyprus- Greece issue is based on two major issues: that of Mediterranean Gas Field and that of Sovereignty. The Aegean Sea dispute is one of those disputes that has remained unresolved since the post-War period. As a part of the East Mediterranean Sea, it comprises a long bay that is located between the Greek and Anatolian peninsula, which forms around the majority of modern day Turkish territory and the area that the sea consists of around 215,000 square kilometers (Lindley, 2007). The strategic value of the Aegean Sea is also vital for the nation-states associated with the sea as it is connected to the Marmara Sea and the Black Sea by two straits, straits of Dardanelles and Bosphorus.

Consisting of the subdivisions known as the Thracian Sea and the Myrtoan Sea, the region witnesses regular naval exercises and securing the naval mainland from any security threat (ibid.). The Aegean Sea also holds historical significance, being used profusely by the ancient Greek Civilization to establish strong trade routes between Europe and Asia. After the fall of the Greek and subsequent Roman Civilization, and the conquest of the region from the ouster of the Byzantine Empire by the Ottoman Empire, this area has been contested between the Greeks and Turks historically. After the Second World War and the restoration of the Hellenic Republic, the Aegean Sea has been a bone of contention between the Turkish and Greek nation-state since the 1970's which includes a number of issues like delimitation of territorial waters, national airspace, exclusive economic zones and flight information regions (ibid.).

Along with these highly strategic and security implications, this part of the Eastern Mediterranean Sea has also been historically important for the associated nation-states for its resources and natural gases. This part of the eastern Mediterranean extends its consequential nature to not only Turkey and Greece but includes Cyprus, Egypt, Israel and Libya (Tsarouches, 2009). Along with the strategic importance of the Aegean Sea, the region characterizes itself as a possible source of energy and natural gases, which can be beneficial for other countries, encompassing the Mediterranean Sea. In regard to that, in 2018, after a rigorous exploration of the Eastern Mediterranean Sea in search of energy resources, a discovery was made which revealed an abundance of hydrocarbons which constitute an important component of petroleum and natural gas (Kazamais, 2020).

This becomes a very substantial issue as these sources of petroleum and gas can substantially reduce the dependency of oil and gas the European nation-state has on Russian delegation. Not only restricted to petroleum and natural gas,

hydrocarbons can also be used in the production of plastic, fibres, rubbers and explosives. If we consider the quantity of the energy sources, the biggest find is seen in Egypt's Zohr field which holds around 30 trillion cubic feet of gas which provide more than a year and a half of energy supply for Europe (ibid.). The Tamar and Leviathan fields off Israel's coast hold 11 and 22 trillion cubic feet respectively along the smaller Aphrodite Field that lay off the coast of Cyprus (ibid.).

As per the United States Geological Survey's estimation in 2010, the gas discovered in the Levant and Nile Delta basins were upward of those amounts. With regard to the vision of cooperation, in January 2019 Cyprus, Israel, Egypt, Jordan, Greece, Palestinian Authority and Italy founded the East Mediterranean Gas Forum an effort to establish a regional gas market and an exporting hub to Europe (Mitchell, 2020). In light of this particular development, in January 2020, Greece, Israel and Cyprus signed an accord for the construction of a 1181-mile undersea pipeline, called the EastMed, to connect gas fields in the Eastern Mediterranean with European Markets through Greece and Italy (Kazamais, 2020).

As an antithesis to these developments regarding the discovery of gas and energy sources, Turkey has opted for the mechanism of force rather than cooperation with other nation-states for the annexation of the hydrocarbons. Before this year, Turkey had used its warships to interfere with gas exploration and established its dominance through with this naval activity. In 2018, Turkish vessels blocked a ship contracted by the Italian oil company- ENiSpA from approaching a work site within Cyprus's Economic Exclusive Zone and Turkey had employed drilling ships in order to search and acquire gas sources in the region (Sharma, 2020). "Faith" and "Barbos",

Turkish drilling ships have been drilling in water below Cyprus's Karpas Peninsula under an agreement with the Turkish Cypriots before moving to the Black Sea and Barbos has been

searching for energy in the waters along southeast of the Island (Kazamais, 2020). The exploration by these ships was essentially discontinued until August 2020 when Turkey restarted its exploration and naval exercises in waters which are contested by Greece and Cyprus to establish their exclusive economic rights. In regard to that, Turkey sent out a seismic research vessel, the Oruc Reis, into the waters which are contested with Greece. Greece, as an international actor, has always been seen to establish a forefront in negotiation and diplomacy (Arabiya, 2020). However, during this activity, the Athenian Government rejected all the negotiation talks with the Turkish government and announced a maritime delimitation agreement with Egypt.

In reaction to that, Turkish delegation was able to sign a bi-lateral treaty with Libya, aligning towards cooperation between both the states in regard to the distribution of the resources in the Eastern Mediterranean Seas. Libya being one of the stakeholders of the resources discovered in the region, this treaty enabled Turkey to solidify and substantiate their rogue action towards the Athenian Government. Following this particular action, Turkish delegation displayed a heightened sense of defiance when it rejected all the claims of hydrocarbons that were with Italy and France after the Second World War and rejected any sort of French mediation or negotiation in the conflict.

This particular Turkish defiance was heavily criticized by the European Union. The Union has been openly critical of the past exploration actions of the Turkish delegation stating that these operations pose a considerable threat to the peace and stability of the Mediterranean and the European continent. Following the actions of August 2020, these actions were outrightly deemed illegal by the European Union. The European Union has strong reasons to believe that this particular conflict can undermine the settlement talks that have been a core negotiation policy between Turkey and Cyprus. What this further implies is that the relations between the Turkish delegation and

European Union has arrived at a critical standpoint. The Turkish delegation has openly rejected any regional or international doctrine that has been established towards sea exploration and establishment of Exclusive Economic Zones of neighboring countries in the region (Djavit, 2018). The United Nations Convention of Laws of Seas (UNCLOS) is one of the most important doctrines in the modern era used to define the continental shelf and the idea of territorial waters of the nation-states.

As per the UNCLOS, the Exclusive Economic Zones of the Greek and Turkish nations have been recognized upto 200 Nautical Miles but Turkey has not ratified the UNCLOS and claims that the Economic Exclusive Zone right of the Greek and Cypriot delegation are only restricted upto 12 Nautical Miles, the minimum limit established by the UNCLOS (Burns, Saiot, 2003). In the context of the Cyprus delegation, Ankara backs the argument that the exploration is being conducted under the proclaimed Turkish Cypriot State. One question that needs to be further addressed is why Turkey was left out of the economic cooperation talks of other associate nation- states?

A HISTORY OF INDEPENDENCE AND RECOGNITION

The recent conflict between Turkey- Cyprus- Greece cannot be limited to the acquisition of resource or natural gas. The issue pans out into the issue of state sovereignty, so much so that it has introduced the element of an armed conflict within this dispute. One of the main indicators as to how this issue has a historic sovereign notion to it can be seen by Turkey's rejection of the international doctrine. As established before, Turkey has not ratified the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the Convention on the Continental Shelf both which are recognized and ratified by the Greek state. One needs to understand the narrative that the conventions not only define the territory of the Economic Exclusive Zone, which tend to signify how and up to what extent they can conduct

their economic activities around the Eastern Mediterranean islands, but this definition also indicates the manner in which the sovereign territorial rights have been divided between Turkey and Greece.

With Cyprus , the issue tends to become complicated. One of the main substantive points that drives Turkey to conduct exploration into the Cyprus Economic Exclusive Zone is how the Turkish Cypriots are still recognized and backed by the Turkish delegation. During the economic negotiations and formation of the East Mediterranean Forum that was established in the 2019, Turkey was left out of the negotiation because the Republic of Cyprus was an active participant of the forum and negotiations. In 1570, predominantly Greek- speaking islands of Cyprus were under the control of the Ottoman Empire. Along with this annexation, Turks started settling into those islands and it led to the establishment of a sizable Turkish Cypriot community on the islands.

When the decline of Ottoman Empire began in the 19th century, Cyprus was officially leased to the United Kingdom by the Empire (Hacagolu, 2020). After the lease and subsequent interference of the United Kingdom's delegation into the Cyprus nation-state, a struggle for independence was into the running and Cyprus became an independent country in 1960(*ibid.*). At the time, the Cypriot community constituted around three- quarters of the population but Turkish speakers were still a minority. Now, because there was a minority present in the region and Turkish Cypriots arguing for their recognition as an official state with backing from Turkey, Greek-Turkish relations came under danger with outbreaks of violence between nationalist groups of both sides of the conflict. The height of the conflict was reached when in 1974, a military coup was attempted in order to annex Cyprus as a part of Greece which prompted a military response from the Turkish state. The resultant military invasion led to the

capture of the northern city of Kyrenia, the northern Corridor between Kyrenia and capital Nicosia and Turkish quarter of Nicosia itself (Isikal, 2002).

Even after there were peace negotiations led by Geneva, the Turkish state's distrust of the project grew and it opted for a second military invasion. This military invasion was the biggest annexation occupation of the Turkish state to annex the cities of Morphou, Karpass, Famagusta and Mesaoria which led to a United Nations backed ceasefire.

In 1983, the Turkish Cypriots, after growing discontentment with United Nations intervention and the idea of rotating the presidency for both Turkey and Cyprus, saw the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) declare independence by taking advantage of the post-Turkish election instability (Hacagolu, 2020). Yet, the issue becomes further entangled when, in the international community, two different blocs emerged one which recognised the TRNC, important to know that only Turkey recognises the TRNC and the majority of nation-states refused to recognise the formation of TRNC.

This discontentment was also seen when the United Nations Security Council Resolution 541 was passed which clearly stated that it would not accept the new state and that the decision disrupted efforts to reach a settlement (Ibid.). The only constructed effort that has been able to materialise the Draft Framework Agreement of 1986 (Heraclides, 2011). The plan was to create an independent, non-aligned, bi-communal, bi-zonal state in Cyprus, which received heavy criticism from the Greek Cypriots upon the discontentment on the increasing number of Turkish settlers on the island. The conflict then revolved around 3 contentions:

1. Freedom of Turkish Cypriots
2. Greek Cypriots retaining their territory
3. Turkish endorsement of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

The only official recognition of the Turkish Cypriot State is seen in the Economic Cooperation Organization. It was known as Northern Cyprus but the Turkish Cypriot State was the official name that was used in the status of the state in the organization. In 2018, the United Nations resumed the negotiation talks between the stakeholders of the Aegean Dispute. In February 2019, Greece and Turkey decided to resolve the issue in order to contribute to the peace and stability of the Cypriot nation-state and this was possible only if Turkey and Cyprus decided to have meaningful constructive talks in order to create terms of reference towards the reunification of the country (DW, 2020).

This is not to ignore that Northern Cyprus also has growing concerns about how Turkey is going to cooperate. Similar to the annexation of Crimea, Northern Cyprus also has a reasonable concern to believe that the growing Turkish endeavors can lead to a situation where a forceful annexation is possible.

In 2019, the United States of America withdrew its financial aid for Northern Cyprus- a move that was not appreciated by the Turkish delegation as financial aid continues to be provided by the Republic of Cyprus (ibid.).

The foreign stance of Northern Cyprus invites substantial enforcement from the Turkish delegation for financial and political movement against the Greek Cypriots but annexation is a concern for the people. This hostility is very much dependent on the notion that the deviant Turkish state will pave the way for future acts of Turkey in the East Mediterranean and the nation-state abiding by it.

Rejecting particular claims of the Russian delegation, the Trump administration and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, it raises particular concerns about how Turkey will continue to act with the neighboring nation-states and revolve its stance revolving around the Aegean dispute.

CONSEQUENCES OF A DEFIANT TURKISH ROLE

Turkey, in the international community, has always held a controversial and defiant role. Ranging from the national political instability towards Erdogan to how it has handled diplomatic relations, notably the balance of power between the United States of America and Russian delegation. The idea of being a defiant in the international community signifies two major consequences. Firstly, the nation-state which is ready to defy the norms and standards of established ideals of peace is being designated as having a strong political and cultural stance of their own in the international community. Secondly, the idea that defiance can also be a considerable security threat when it comes to resolving conflicts and working towards solidarity is a growing concern. This defiant role, when assessed, has consequences in the Mediterranean and becomes a real threat to the norms of security in the region. The European Union, before the events of 2020 as well, has been in constant declaration that the Turkish delegation, with its drilling of natural gas and oil, poses a real threat to the norms of European Union.

The argument that Turkey has legitimate rights over the gas resources and the established rights of TRNC hold an equivalent importance in the Mediterranean describes the extent of the agenda that Turkey is trying to pursue. Even in the recent North Atlantic Council Mediterranean Dialogue (25-27 November 2019), Turkey has constantly urged all the nation-states to back Turkey's claim on the agenda and their exercise of sovereignty in the region (Mediterranean Dialogue, 2019). This notion of sovereignty gets a substantial economic argumentative backing due to the abundance of resources found near the Cyprus coast in 2013. Any hope of solidarity, reunification or of a cooperative dialogue towards peace between Turkey-Cyprus-Greece is seriously under jeopardy. What is the concern here is that this undermining is generating a greater internationalization of the Turko-Hellenic

Dispute in the region (Maghdid, 2016). The aggressive political stance that Turkey has adopted to take by not acknowledging the negotiation attempts of the United States of America, French Republic and European Union along with the increased number of military exercises in the sea just highlights the element of defiance from the Turkish republic. All of these instances give an empirical validity to the realist claim of international relations by signifying how Erdogan is not at all ready to compromise on Turkey's sovereign territorial rights and the possibility of acquiring economic resources in the East Mediterranean. A conflict of independence and recognition of territory, Turko-Hellenic dispute has now an added element of economic dispute and resource annexation as well.

Oruc Reis, the Turkish Seismic research vessel currently navigating these waters, is now becoming a prominent symbol of defiance for the international community. The conflict is now progressing towards the ignorance of norms of international law. The norms, which establish the idea of fiduciary relationship between all the member states of the international community, tend to create a diplomatic crisis between prominent actors of the conflicts. This is highlighted by the fact that the Greek Republic is accusing the Turkish Republic of having imperialist fantasies through the operation of exploration.

We do need to understand that the Turkish defiance taxes back to the post-War period when, in the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne which gave the Ottoman Empire rights to define its continental shelf, was necessary in order for the empire to define their territorial sovereignty (Maghdid, 2016). The treaty also set most of the modern-day frontiers of the Turkish republic but after the Allies distributed and leased the regions to the neighboring states, all the islands of the Aegean Sea, especially the northeast extension of East Mediterranean, were now under the Greek Republic. With the subsequent formation of the UNCLOS, the Hellenic Republic sought to

have a legal decision in order to establish their Economic Exclusive Zone. Since then, the Turkish Republic has always argued that Turkey has been forced to acquire small and narrow territory in the waters. This is a conflict that has an extensive historical backing to it and the current crisis is aggravated because of a high economic potential of the region.

CONCLUSION

The Turkey-Cyprus-Greece dispute is a sensitive issue in the Mediterranean. One needs to understand that the conflict has an equal weightage to all the nation-states of the East Mediterranean. The idea of an armed conflict between the Turkish Republic and the Greek state does not symbolize the idea of peace and security in the region. One must realize that the issue is not new to the contemporary international community. After the Second World War, the world has seen many disputed territorial conflicts, of which the Aegean Sea Dispute has not been resolved yet. It's not an issue of territory alone. The representation of a minority, claims of states, the equitable distribution

of resources of petroleum and gas shows the multitude of issues that are involved in this dispute. The negotiation practices of European Union, French Republic, United States of America have tried to establish a constructive dialogue between the three nation-states but they have failed and now the dialogue stands steeped in conflict and militarization.

Moreover, the solution continues to revolve around the dialogue between the three nation-states. Until and unless the Turkish Republic is not aware of the consequential nature of its defiance in the international community and until the Greek State seeks an effective resolution from the international organizations and quit their "quid- pro quo" policy of aggressive foreign policy stance, the derogatory consequences of the conflict cannot be sustained. The idea of peace can only be restored once the aggressive foreign policy stance of the states are removed from the question and the defiant nature of the Turkish should not compromise the will and the due respect of the sovereign rights in the international law.

AUTHOR BIO: Jyot Shikhar Singh is a student at the Jindal School of International Affairs, O.P. Jindal Global University and a Research Intern at the Centre for Middle East Studies

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American reconstruction in Iraq and Russian Reconstruction in Syria: A comparative study

DHRUV NILKANTH

ABSTRACT The two Middle Eastern neighbours Iraq and Syria have both faced severe destruction due to war within the last twenty years. In this issue brief, a comparison between the Russian reconstruction in Syria has been made with the reconstruction of Iraq by the United States based on various criteria and, after having examined the similarities and differences certain conclusions have been reached. The future possibilities for Syria have been listed and a brief insight on Russia's strategy and choices in the country has been provided.

INTRODUCTION

In 2003, the United States led a coalition of countries in Invasion of Iraq, bringing an end to the long-standing authoritarian regime of Saddam Hussein. Seventeen years and multiple reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts later, Iraq still finds itself struggling to recover from the war. Whether the invasion ordered by President George W. Bush was the right move is a highly contentious issue; yet, even those who support it have agreed that the United States has failed to bring stability, let alone prosperity to a country whose government it ousted. By 2011, the withdrawal of US troops from Iraq was completed, but the same year saw the rise of multiple anti-government protests against authoritarian rule throughout the Middle East in what came to be known as the Arab Spring. The violent suppression of these protests by one of the stalwarts of the next generation of authoritarian leaders, President Bashar al-Assad, led to civil war breaking out in Syria, one of colossal bloodshed which continues till date.

While the war continues, Russia, who backs the Assad government, has taken the initiative to reconstruct Syria. The USA and Russia have been competing for power ever since the end of the Second World War. While Russia might have been left behind along the line, they still are a major force

and have the opportunity and resources to rebuild Syria and reap the benefits they seek from it. In this process, they can surely look back at what mistakes the United States made in Iraq and try to learn from them. On the other hand, ever since Russia got involved in Syria back in 2015, the circumstances they face and their approach both have been quite different from the USA in Iraq.

THE INITIATIVE OF RECONSTRUCTION

There is a stark difference in the reasons why the United States and Russia took the initiative of reconstruction in Iraq and Syria respectively. Considering that the United States invaded and deposed the government of Iraq, it would not be incorrect to say that it was an obligation for them to rebuild the country they put through a war. On the other hand, Russia voluntarily joined the war in Syria with heavy military intervention and support for the ruling dispensation. Russia has clearly taken the initiative of Syrian reconstruction upon them and, while it may be argued that Iran has a bigger role in terms of the amount it has spent in Syria, Russia is clearly the superior in their alliance. Taking initiative was not obligatory upon Russia but it was undoubtedly necessary having spent an immense amount of money in the war, thus, it became important that they also reap benefits in the long term. For this reason, it is important that Syria

undergoes investment and growth, so that Russia can reap its benefits. Although the roles adopted by both countries have been very different, both countries alike know that the stakes in the Middle East are always high. Russia understands the importance of asserting its power while, at the same time, securing their economic interests. But even above all that lies, international reputation and the global perception of the reconstruction project in Syria could be a key factor in determining it.

DIFFERENCES IN APPROACH TO RECONSTRUCTION

The US and Russia have taken very different approaches to reconstruction in Iraq and Syria respectively. While the reconstruction of Syria is an ongoing process, the Russian stand seems quite firm and might not change significantly over the course of time. The reconstruction efforts undertaken by the United States were focused on rehabilitation and a smooth process of liberalisation following the invasion. On the other hand, Russia focused on maintaining status quo by backing the oppressive Assad regime. This would seem to favour Russia as it is easier to rebuild without having to reform the political system, but clearly the government faces widespread dissent and there is an unwillingness amongst the common public to accept them, the primary reason of the war.

Another major difference is the approach to spending. While the United States of America naturally took up most of the external burden of funding the process, Russia has been doing quite the opposite. Russia's approach has been to seek foreign funding to Syria, which will enable Russian companies with huge contracts from the Syrian government. This also brings up another contrast in both the outlooks. Even though the US efforts failed to improve the on-ground living conditions, the aim was well defined and unaltered through the years. The Russian approach from the beginning is supposed to be a payback for their involvement in Syria and their support to Assad. Their expectation from the process of reconstruction is to acquire

infrastructure and power plant contracts for Russian companies and to facilitate their own economic growth.

SIMILARITIES IN THE RECONSTRUCTION PROCESS

The US reconstruction efforts in Iraq failed to address some key concerns and made assumptions of the situation in the country which were not always an accurate representation of the actual situation on the ground. Both the countries faced immense problems due to rising terrorism and military insurgency which further hampered the process of reconstruction in the two Middle Eastern neighbours. As soon as the United States left Iraq, the radical Islamic militant group, the Islamic State (or Daesh) launched multiple attacks on the government. This group spread to Syria, only to make matters worse for the already war-torn country. This forced the redeployment of American troops in Iraq in 2014. Both USA and Russia had to spend immense amounts of funds and face innumerable casualties in the region. Another similarity, one which is most striking, is the miscalculations and false assumptions of both USA and Russia in this process. Clearly, in Iraq a large majority of the funds were used to fill-up pockets of American companies who had close relations with US government officials and legislators. There were multiple incidents of corruption including theft, bribery, etc. carried out by a handful of high ranking US Military Officers in Iraq, who worked in tandem with Iraqi companies contracted to undertake reconstruction projects. In case of Russia, the reconstruction process has almost come to a standstill due to the inability of the Syrian government to internally spend on the process as well as the lack of willingness from Russia to invest anymore significant funds into it. Russia faces further problems with Turkey's support to the Interim government (Syrian Opposition) and while China has made significant investments into infrastructure projects, they clearly have tried to

stay away from rehabilitation efforts and have chosen to play the waiting game.

THE COST AND FUNDING OF THE RECONSTRUCTION

Both the Iraqi and Syrian conflicts have seen massive military spending from various countries, but when it comes to rebuilding, the list becomes shorter and the splurge smaller. While the reconstruction of Iraq failed to improve the living conditions of the common people quite significantly, the amount of money that went into the process was huge. An estimated \$213 billion was spent by multiple governments between 2003 and 2012 in efforts to build Iraq again.¹ Out of the aforementioned amount, \$138 billion was pumped in by the US backed Iraqi government itself. This influx of cash mainly came from exporting oil. The next biggest donor was clearly the United States. An appropriated \$61 billion was spent by the Americans in this process while a few other governments put in a combined \$14 billion in the same period.² Even though such high amounts of money were spent on the rehabilitation process, Iraq to this day is facing crisis after crisis. While there are multiple other factors such as rising terrorism and radical militant insurgency causing Iraq to suffer, it has become clear after multiple reports and investigations into especially the US contracts in Iraq, that these funds were underutilized, worsened further by extensive corruption.

Through 2018 and 2019, multiple reports by the United Nations envoy and Syrian government claims estimate that the cost of reconstruction in Syria lies somewhere between \$250 to \$400 billion.³ The cost of reconstruction is only marginally higher than Iraq, considering inflation and other economic factors. The difference between Iraq and Syria, however, is the problem of financing this reconstruction and putting the war to bed before doing so. Clearly, the United States will not be funding this reconstruction as the country is ruled by the Russian backed government which

they heavily oppose combined with a growing sentiment of non intervention in the Middle East which earlier led to US exiting the war. The Syrian government itself does not possess the amount of resources or funds to finance this process and it is believed that the Assad government is pushing for reconstruction only for its own political and economic gains rather than the actual improvement of living conditions in Syria. On one hand, even though Russia has taken the initiative, they are more than unwilling to pay for the reconstruction. They have already spent billions of dollars on conducting airstrikes in Syria and are now looking to reap benefits of their involvement in the country. Recently, Russia has urged the European Union to pay for the reconstruction in Syria. It claims that reconstruction would enable millions of Syrian refugees to return thereby easing the burden of refugees in Europe. The EU however, clearly opposes the Ba'athist government and is not likely to pay in order to build up pressure on Russia. According to the EU, it along with its members have already been the biggest donors in the process of Syrian relief claiming to have assigned more than €10 billion towards humanitarian and development assistance.⁴

POSSIBILITIES FOR RUSSIA IN SYRIA

The reconstruction process is still very much ongoing in Syria and so is Russia's involvement in it. Currently Russia faces many challenges in Syria which largely impact their strategy in the country. Although the situation in Syria is always developing, there are some possible approaches Russia can take depending on what changes they are willing to make in order to successfully end the war and start the process. Some of the most problematic obstacles that are bound to create unwanted turbulence in the process of rebuilding Syria include the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic and the Turkish support of the Syrian Opposition. The pandemic has further hurt the country's already fractured economy and worsened living conditions. This will make it even more difficult to come out of

the economic crisis and initiate growth. Furthermore, the US and other foreign sanctions have already stunted Syrian growth over the past years. The second problem is Turkey. Turkey has constantly backed the Interim government and there have been no signs of their acknowledgement of the status quo or of withdrawal from Syria. In the past five years since the intervention of Russia, there have been many points where the tensions between Russia and Turkey have reached boiling points. Another problem Russia faces is that Syria itself lacks the economic capacity to spend extensively on reconstruction. Furthermore, as time goes on Russia faces pressure from Damascus on one side and Brussels on the other.

As for things are proceeding at the moment, it has become a matter of whether and when will Europe accept to finance the reconstruction. Clearly this is extremely unpredictable as there are very strong views within the Union on whether it should undertake the responsibility. The EU openly opposes the Assad government and would not go ahead with the reconstruction of Syria without the deposition of the current regime. On the other hand, Russia is trying to persuade them to finance the process as it would mean that Syrian refugees would be able to return home which would deeply benefit the European countries who have seen a massive influx of refugees since the war began. But there is a strong belief in Brussels that without the removal of this government, the quality of life in Syria would not improve. Thus, it is highly unlikely that Syria can expect European funding to the government for reconstruction. Another option which Russia could explore is to take the burden of reconstruction upon themselves. This would mean further spending in Syria and a longer wait for returns on the billions already spent during the war. This option too seems highly unlikely given the fact that Russia has shown extreme hesitance to increase spending on the reconstruction in Syria. If they were to give in, it would also hamper their authority but at the same time a successful reconstruction would definitely improve their

global reputation. Another possibility is limiting losses and immediate withdrawal from Syria. This, however is not very likely and will have severe consequences for Russia. They would receive tremendous backlash from Syria for abandoning them and also globally for having intervened in the war and then dropping the responsibility to rebuild. As mentioned before, although China has made considerable investments in Syria, they have shown no interests in participating in the reconstruction efforts at this moment. A possibility is that China might invest in Syria after it manages to come out of this crisis, but this too would require both Syria and Russia to play the long game. Thus, it can be said that if Russia really still wants to benefit from their involvement in the country, they have to be patient and wait or take more risks by funding the reconstruction process themselves.

CONCLUSION

It has become clear that the post war reconstruction of any country is an extremely complex and difficult process. After comparing the approaches of the United States of America in Iraq and Russia in Syria, it can be said that both the superpowers failed to address certain on-ground issues in both the planning and execution of their endeavours. However, in the case of Syria, there are still many options which are available to Russia and it still is not too late to make major policy changes. While individuals in Damascus, Moscow, Brussels, Tehran and Ankara continue to play the game of politics, the suffering of the Syrian citizens continues. The prospects for Syria at the moment seem bleak but not all hope is lost as there are still many major powers involved in the country and there could very well be efforts in the right direction in the near future. The variables however are still the same and quite a few questions remain unanswered. One thing is for sure though that Russia still has a chance to be in Syria what the United States failed to be in Iraq.

AUTHOR BIO: Jyot Shikhar Singh is a student at the Jindal School of International Affairs, O.P. Jindal Global University and a Research Intern at the Centre for Middle East Studies

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