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Policy Perspectives Foundation (PPF) is a non-profit, apolitical think tank on matters of national interest. PPF's activities focus on complex and inter-connected challenges to peace, stability and development in India in cognizance of the external dimension. PPF is committed to spreading awareness, building capacity and promoting resilience.

Dear Readers,

As 2024 is ushered in, I find myself reflecting on the year, its joys, successes and misses. I want to take this moment to extend my heartfelt wishes to all our readers. Thank you for being part of the PPF family. Your continued support has been a great support for our organisation. The coming year holds the promise of fresh perspectives, new connections, and shared accomplishments. PRISM will remain committed to delivering insightful, thought-provoking content. May the New Year bring you an abundance of happiness.

Vaishali Basu Sharma, Editor

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Disaster Management in India: Preparing for Future Challenges

By K M Singh

India is vulnerable, in varying degrees, to a large number of natural as well as man-made disasters. Presently, as we stand at the precipice of climate change and urban expansion, the challenges for disaster management in India are evolving rapidly.

Keeping this in view, a major initiative was taken by the Atal Bihari Vajapayee government to put in place a holistic capability to handle both natural and manmade disasters in the country. This led to enactment of the Disaster Management Act, 2005. This Act was a defining step bringing about a paradigm shift from the erstwhile relief centric approach to a proactive prevention, mitigation and preparedness driven approach for conserving developmental gains and minimising loss of life, livelihood and property.

The Disaster Management Act, 2005 provides for an institutional, financial and legal framework. The institutional framework provides for three tier institutional mechanisms at national, state and district levels comprising National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), State Disaster Management Authority (SDMA) and District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) respectively. National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) is the apex authority with the Prime Minister as its Chairman. The Act provides for the National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM) for capacity building of all stakeholders in the country in the field of disaster management. It also provides for the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) as a specialist force to respond to any natural or man made disaster.

In line with its mandate, the NDMA drafted the National Policy and National Plan for disaster management in the country besides preparing Guidelines for all natural and man-made disasters. As per the vision enshrined in the Act, the National Policy on Disaster Management envisages “to build a safe and disaster resilient India by developing a holistic, proactive, multi-disciplined technology-driven strategy through a culture of prevention, mitigation, preparedness and efficient response.”

The NDRF is a multi-skilled and multi-disciplinary force trained and equipped as per international standards to respond to any disaster. Over the years the NDRF has earned a niche for itself for its professionalism in dealing with disasters not only in the country but also abroad. Complimenting the NDRF at the National Police Academy, Hyderabad (31 July, 2021) PM Shri Modi mentioned that “the name of NDRF during disasters instils confidence among people. NDRF has created this credibility with its excellent work.” With NDRF’s professionalism and readiness to respond to disaster emergencies in countries like Japan, Nepal and Turkey, India has gained diplomatic leverage.

In 2014, after Prime Minister Narendra Modi took over the mantle of power, and infused new energy into the disaster management system. The Prime Minister’s 10-point agenda for Global Disaster Management provides direction for pre-empting disaster and ways to minimise losses with mitigation and preparedness acquiring the centre stage.

Another significant initiative of PM Modi is the launching of the ‘Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure’ (CDRI) in 2019 with 25 countries and 7 international organisations as members. It was set up with the objective of promoting resilience of new and existing infrastructure structure systems to climate and

disaster risks to support sustainable development.

As we look ahead today, several major challenges stand out. The impact of climate change, with rising global temperature, is resulting in extreme weather conditions. Increasing incidents of cyclones in the coastal areas and devastating floods in different parts of the country stand as reminders that climate change is not a distant problem but an immediate concern. At the same time, unplanned urban growth, rapid industrialisation, environmental degradation and inadequate drainage system etc adds to the risk factor. Moreover, as India continues its technological growth, the risk of man-made disasters, ranging from chemical leaks to cyber-attack on critical infrastructure, is also on the rise. Since disaster management is a state subject, effective coordination between centre and the states and also inter agency coordination is essential for efficient and effective disaster management.

To address the above mentioned challenges and achieve the vision enshrined in the 10 point agenda of the PM and the national policy, the imperative is to ensure public awareness and capacity building of all stakeholders, particularly the community, which is the first responder. This needs to be done in terms of resources, skill and information availability. Capacity building is required at all levels: Community needs to be sufficiently aware, administrators need to be sensitive to vulnerability of disasters, research institutions need to transfer knowledge to the field, corporate sectors need to be made aware of corporate social responsibility and media needs to understand its importance in spreading knowledge as a social cause. Integrating technology for real time monitoring, predictive analytics, and communication can drastically enhance response times and resource allocation.

Simultaneously, there is a pressing need to invest in disaster-resilient infrastructure.

Significantly, India has made a mark in two areas namely, cyclone risk mitigation and response mechanism. Very few casualties in cyclone 'Phailin' (2013) and cyclone 'Fani' (2019) in Odisha vindicated the 'zero casualty' policy of the Govt of Odisha. Cyclone Biparjoy in Kutch region of Gujarat in the first week of June this year with no casualty was a shining example of India's preparedness and the spirit of resilience among the people which was applauded by the PM and also the Home Minister.

While India has made significant strides in disaster management over the past decade, the road ahead presents numerous challenges. Effective planning and focus on prevention, mitigation and preparedness would greatly help in ensuring that hazards do not transform into disasters and the coping capacities of the vulnerable population is greatly increased. This would need systematic planning and coordination to ensure that the disaster risk reduction is constantly promoted and mainstreamed in the regular programmes of each department. Preparedness, adaptability, and a collective effort from government agencies, civil society, and the public will shape how we face future adversities. With dedicated action, India can lead the way in setting a global benchmark in disaster management.

The author is a former Indian Police Service (IPS) officer. He was the Director General of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) and a two term member of the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA). Singh was a member of the Steering Committee constituted in 2003 to decide the Response Mechanism at the National Level.

Ethnicisation of Water: Collective Claims and the Assertions of Regional Identity in Punjab

By Nazima Parveen

The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee and the Shiromani Akali Dal organised a gathering at Kapuri village in Patiala, which was at the epicentre of the 'dharam yudh' morcha launched by the Akali Dal to stop construction of the SYL canal. Addressing the gathering, Akali Dal chief Sukhbir Singh Badal Saturday appealed to Punjabis not to allow any central team wanting to conduct a survey for SYL canal land to enter the state and announced that the party will not allow a drop of water to be shared with Haryana. The evocation of Punjabi identity and the reference to the organised agitation against any possibility of sharing Satluj waters at the site of the 'Dharm-Yudh' morcha of the 1980s points to the consolidation of regional identity over natural resources in Punjab, which has a long history. It also points to the specific form of claims and counter-claims over natural resources, which transformed into interstate disputes between the state of Punjab and Haryana after reorganisation in 1966, and also a federal issue redefining Centre-State relations in the 1990s.

The reorganisation of state boundaries along linguistic lines consolidated regional aspirations and produced strong regional identities. These regional groups consolidated their claims over institutional as well as natural resources like land, and waters flowing through their boundaries. The 'sons of soil movements' emerged in different states of Maharashtra, Punjab, Haryana, Assam, Karnataka and so on asserted the rights of the local people over their land, culture, jobs, educational quotas and natural resources available in their region. The movements

underlined the view that the state specifically belongs to the main linguistic group inhabiting it or the view that the state constitutes the exclusive 'homeland' of its main language speakers who are the 'sons of the soil' or the 'local residents'. Such assertions in Punjab, however, took a different form. It intermingled deeply with the demand and struggle for the creation of Punjabi Suba. Thus, the conflict of natural resources, especially 'water' got established as a significant source/symbol of regional identity making water a political commodity. The current issue between Punjab and Haryana over Satluj-Yamuna Link Canal (SYL) should be placed in the regional identity politics as well as the changing nature of Centre-state relations.

The collective claims over water have not been given adequate attention in the consolidation of regional identities and its politics. Thus, there seems to be a gap between the understanding of regional movements in general and the statist claims over water resources. The studies on regional movements have focused on the emotive issues of belonging and rights over land and institutional resources like jobs, quotas, political representation and so on that led to violence against the migrant or minority communities. However, the regional claims over water, which affected the farmer communities the most in different regions, has remained under-researched. In fact, it has mostly been studied as an interstate or centre-state conflict and not as a symbol of regional identity formations. Thus, the water disputes have been discussed and debated with a legalist-institutional approach, which remains confined to the legal-constitutional frameworks, policy discourse, and Centre-state relations. It is, thus, an underlying assumption that only the constitutional, legislative and institutional changes can resolve such disputes.

Consequently, the water dispute resolution mechanisms have also remained confined to legal-constitutional frameworks and have completely ignored the regional aspirations over water. The paper raises a few fundamental questions: How did cultural claims and counterclaims over water consolidate regional identity in Punjab after the reorganisation? How did the party politics in Punjab, and in the Centre ethnicized water and lead to an ever-evolving dispute with Haryana? What legal-constitutional mechanism do we have to address and resolve such conflicting claims? And what should be the way forward?

Thus, there is a serious gap in the understanding of water disputes from the perspective of 'son of the soil movements' of the 1960s and their culmination/transformation into regional movements in the 1980s onwards. The paper proposes to bridge this gap.

The Demand for the Punjabi Suba and Claims Over Water

The dispute between Punjab and Haryana over the share of Ravi and Beas water, especially the Satluj-Yamuna Link canal issue, is a classic case of "water" becoming a source for the assertion of regional/ethnic (religious-linguistic) identity. The five rivers of Punjab-Satluj, Ravi, Beas, Chenab and Jhelum-have special cultural significance for this agrarian state and the Punjabi identity in general. The partition, which led to the division of Punjab in 1947 and the reorganisation of Punjab in 1966 not only changed the political and socio-cultural demography of the state but also its access and control over natural resources - Indus water systems. It made both the territory and water important symbols and/or sources for the assertion of linguistic-religious identity.

Although the demand for a Punjabi Suba, a true "Sikh Homeland", goes back to colonial politics, it contributed greatly in shaping the contemporary Sikh identity, especially in the aftermath of partition on religious lines (Muslim Pakistan) and the partition violence. With the partition of the erstwhile Punjab, the state was severely affected. It lost two-thirds of the territory and half of its population to Pakistan along with its prosperous cultural and economic capital Lahore, a large proportion of population killed and displaced, and Indus River waters to the Pakistan side of Punjab. The process of rebuilding and resettlement of a large number of Punjabi migrants after a period of partition violence also redefined the nature of identity politics. Most importantly, the hostility centred around territory, apportionment of river waters and identity intermingled deeply with the reorganisation.

State reorganisation in 1966 resulted in a further loss of more than half of the territory of the post-partition Punjab. But more than the transfer of territory, it is the changing demography of the state that has been crucial to its self-identity over the years. The Punjab after partition was made up of over 60 percent Hindu population and 31 percent Sikh population. After reorganisation into Himachal, Haryana and Punjab, Punjab became a Sikh majority state with Sikh community constituting 60 percent and the Hindus constituting 37 percent of the population. The Shiromani Akali Dal sought to demand a state that would satisfy the regional aspirations to uphold "punjabiyat". The notions of 'punjabiyat' got inextricably linked to religious identity and aspirations for "Khalsa ka bolbala" in the later period. On the contrary, mobilisation of Hindu segments by the Arya Samaj, its appeal to

Hindus to register Hindi as their mother tongue, emphasis on the vedic tradition and attempts to distance the Hindu masses from Sikh tradition contributed to the concretisation of Sikh identity as the basis of punjabiyat sowing the seeds of a communal identity and politics. Thus, the language controversy was symptomatic of a 'deeper quest for recognition and power'. This led to a different kind of linguistic-religious identity politics. In this sense, the change in demography was one of the main factors in the consolidation of identity politics in Punjab.

The rural-urban divide was the second most important factor that played a crucial role in the consolidation of identity politics. Since the pre-partition days, the Hindus of Punjab have been an urban-based community and the Sikhs (along with Muslims in pre-partition phase) have been rural residents. This factor intensified the collective claims over water bodies that were needed for irrigation as well as industrialisation. Once the agitation for separate state began, the Hindu-Sikh distinctions came to the forefront more prominently than ever redefining the tussles over territory and water.

Reorganisation of States and the Evolution of Water as a Political Symbol

The linguistic reorganisation of states intensified regional aspirations and essentialized linguistic identities leading to the demands for the creation of more states on the same basis. From the 1960s onwards, a number of new states were created partitioning more territories. However, the case of Punjab was different and was, for the same reason, treated differently by the Reorganisation Commission. The Punjabi suba movement was formally launched in August 1950 with the demands of separate electorates on communal lines and reservation of seats for the Sikhs in the legislatures.

Thus, the apprehension and fear of a separate autonomous state based on religious-linguistic identity, apart from other reasons, was at the backdrop of the different attitude of the Reorganisation Commission towards the demand for a Punjabi state. The commission did not apply the linguistic criterion in case of bi-lingual Punjab (and Maharashtra). It admitted that principally the demand for a Punjabi-speaking state was analogous to the demand of other linguistic states but refused to accept the demand on its intrinsic merits alone. In this sense, even though Punjabi was recognised as a national language along with the fifteen other languages, it was denied a state on the same lines. Instead, it merged the PEPSU (an amalgamation of former princely states called Patiala and East Punjab States Union) state, the only Sikh majority area, into the Punjab, thus further adding to the grievance of the Sikh leadership. This non-recognition of linguistic identity gave a new energy to the movement and consolidated the demand for a Sikh-majority Punjabi suba. These demands, however, were not confined to territorial arrangements only.

The re-organization of territories intensified regional claims over transboundary water bodies as it changed the configuration of water-share affecting the riparian states as well as the other beneficiary states in the region. On 29 January 1955, the central government convened an interstate meeting and reached an initial agreement on the sharing of the waters of the Ravi and Beas. The agreement allocated the surplus water beyond the pre-partition (India-Pakistan) use to the states of Punjab (that also includes present-day Haryana), PEPSU, Rajasthan, and Jammu and Kashmir. In 1956, PEPSU and Punjab were merged and their water shares were decided according to the 1955 treaty. Water allocation, in this sense, did not emerge as a contested issue until the reorganisation in 1966. It was because the Indus Water Treaty between India and Pakistan

in 1960, also allowed India unrestricted use of water from Sutlej, Ravi and Beas making undivided Punjab the main beneficiary. However, water remained a simmering issue in the backdrop of the demand for homeland and found a life with a new set of claims over the surplus water after the creation of Haryana.

Punjab witnessed a series of agitations and counter-agitations, fasts and counter-fasts by the Hindu and the Sikh political leaders, the protagonists of Punjabi Suba striving for a Sikh majority and the opponents i.e. Hindu leaders manoeuvring to contain the Sikh communities in minority, denying the status of Punjabi as a language. After a struggle lasting for more than a decade, which included the Akali Dal resolution formally demanding the establishment of a Sikh Homeland with the inclusion of all the left-out Punjabi speaking areas, so as to make it a bigger Punjab, the Punjab Reorganisation Act in 1966 was passed in September. The Act divided Punjab into three parts on linguistic-religious lines: Punjabi-speaking (Sikh-dominated) Punjab, Hindi-speaking (Hindu-majority) Haryana and a new union territory called Chandigarh to serve as a capital to both states. In addition, six of Punjab's mountain regions were transferred to Himachal Pradesh. The Act was a unilateral decision of the Centre rather than a result of negotiations as a number of Sikh-dominated parts remained in Haryana. The numerical dominance of the Sikhs as a single political entity was now unchallenged, however, the reorganisation turned water into a contested commodity.

The Act of 1966 reduced the share of surplus water in Punjab dividing it between the two states. Section 78, 79 and 80 in the Act redefined the rights and liabilities of Punjab over River waters. It meant that all rights and liabilities of the existing State of Punjab in relation to Bhakra-Nangal Project and Beas

Project shall be the rights and liabilities of the successor States e.g. Haryana. Furthermore, it said that the proportion and adjustments in allocation of water can only be made by an agreement by both the States after consultation with the Central Government.

The reorganisation intensified the issue of the apportionment of river waters between Punjab and Haryana, reallocation of Punjabi-speaking areas, and the transfer of Chandigarh to Punjab. Most importantly, both states expressed their claims over water resources, especially the surplus water granted to Punjab by the Indus Treaty, which led to the resurgence of disputes as both these dry states depended on four perennial rivers for irrigation. Thus, the claims over water became increasingly contentious after the 1960s with the increased demand for irrigation. The issue of water allocation intermingled with the issues of linguistic-religious identity in this phase. The demand for greater autonomy to the state of Punjab that was raised in 1973 acquired the form of a movement in 1978 with an assertion over the surplus water for Punjab. This was also the time when claims over water became an intrinsic part of identity politics taking a form of inter-state and Centre-state conflict.

Anand-pur Sahab Resolution, ethnicization of Water and Interstate/Centre-State Conflict

The working committee of the Akali Dal, in October 1973, adopted the Anandpur Sahib resolution to demand the political, economic and social relationship between the centre and the state of Punjab. The Anand-Pur resolution incorporated seven objectives aimed to establish the “pre-eminence of the Khalsa through creation of a congenial environment and a political set up”. The resolution initially did not include the issue of the allocation of water until the state of Haryana evoked the issue and demanded for the intervention by the Union government.

With new territorial arrangements, Haryana was a non-riparian and non-user state in respect of the water of Ravi-Beas and Satluj, while Punjab was a riparian and user state. On the contrary, Haryana had riparian rights only over Jamuna. In May 1967, Haryana, evoking the 1955 Agreement, requested the Punjab government's consent for a share of more water out of the surplus that had been allocated to Punjab (plus PEPSU). However, the state of Punjab declined any water-sharing arrangements. Consequently, the state of Haryana requested the Union government to intervene. In 1976, acting upon Haryana's request, the Union Government issued an Executive Order and re-distributed the surplus water to Punjab, Haryana, and Delhi, and proposed the construction of the SYL Canal for better utilisation of the allocated water. The decision was made under Section 78 of the Punjab Reorganisation Act, 1966. However, under this federally regulated arrangements, 75 percent of the river waters of Punjab were being allocated to other states. Moreover, Haryana was entitled to get waters of not only the Jamuna but also of the three rivers of Punjab. At the same time Punjab was not entitled to get any water from Jamuna, because it is non-riparian to that river. These developments gave a boost to Akali Dal politics. The Dal's assertion for regional identity entwined with the waters of five rivers evoking its literal meaning e.g. - a state with five Rivers.

In 1977, after coming to power in the state, the Akali-led Punjab government opposed the Centre's decision and filed a suit requesting the SC for adjudication of water. It argued that this award would hinder further development of canal irrigation. The government asserted its federal right over water resources, and demanded that the water sharing between Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan be adjudicated by the Supreme Court. The Punjab government, evoking its rights as a riparian state, maintained that it would not spare any

water of Ravi-Beas beyond what Haryana was entitled to as a successor state.

In 1978, the Anandpur Sahab resolution was passed under the Akali government who also shared power in the Centre. The Anandpur Sahab resolution made three key demands: for Chandigarh as the capital of Punjab; the demand that the sharing of river water between Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan be adjudicated by the Supreme Court; and the demand that territorial disputes between Punjab and its neighbours be decided by the territorial tribunal, amongst other demands. The Akalis, referring to water allocation as a discriminatory and biased act of the Central government towards Punjab, further urged that disputes over water and territory be handed over to superior adjudicating bodies and that the Dal would accept the decision of these bodies only.

The Akali Dal added two new demands to the Anandpur Sahab resolutions in February 1981, which included the halting of reallocation of available waters of riparian Punjab to non-riparian states emphasising the exclusive rights of Punjab farmers over water. The set of these demands were submitted to the centre in September in the same year. However, the Congress-led Central government put off any consideration of the major issues by calling the Anandpur Sahab resolution secessionist. Most importantly, to make matters worse, after their accession to power in Punjab the Congress(I) in 1980 withdrew from the Supreme Court the case on water distribution that was filed by the earlier Akali Dal government. Interestingly, the only reason that the Congress(I) gave behind this withdrawal was that the Akalis were being unneighbourly and "unpatriotic" in moving the court. It also linked the Abohar and Fazilka with Chandigarh demand. It meant that the only way Punjab could get Chandigarh would be if it gave Abohar and

Fazilka to Haryana in return. These developments not only converted the issue of water, and territory to a Centre-State conflict but also reduced the regional issues like the allocation of water to the notion of “patriotism” and “national integration”. This was the phase of the ethnicization of the regional demands by the Congress-led politics in the state and at the centre.

The post-emergency Congress government under Indira Gandhi conducted further discussions, which now included Rajasthan as well, and a new Agreement (Distribution of Waters of Punjab Rivers) was accepted in December 1981. Under the agreement, the available surplus water under the 1955 agreement was re-estimated and revised in favour of Haryana’s demand. Additionally, more water was allocated to Rajasthan and Jammu and Kashmir completely ignoring the actual availability of waters in the Punjab rivers, which was much less than the agreed allocation. This agreement, reached by a state government allied to the central government, became a source of continued protest by the political opposition, and lobbying outside the formal political process.

The Punjab farmers organisations protested against these arrangements. A farmers' organisation in Punjab filed a writ petition in the Punjab and Haryana High Court on the grounds that sections 78, 79 and 80 of the Punjab Reorganisation Act were unconstitutional, and should be struck down. However, it did not bring any solution as the case was transferred to the Supreme Court. The repeated failures in the negotiations with the central government that began in October 1981 led to the intensification of the second phase of Akali agitation. In August 1982, the Akali Dal launched a protest and articulated the demands by calling it a ‘Dharm Yudh’ (religious war). This politics ultimately resulted in Operation Bluestar followed by

Operation Woodrose. The anti-Sikh riots that followed in Delhi and other parts of India further led to the alienation of the Sikh community. The Akali Dal leaders shifted their political stance and moved towards more democratic politics and cooperative federalism. The Punjab Accord was signed in 1985 between the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and the late Harchand Singh Longowal with a promise to transfer Chandigarh to Punjab by January, 1986, a promise of the resolution of river waters issue with the intervention of a Supreme Court tribunal, and an inquiry held into the Delhi carnage. However, none of the issues related to territory and water were resolved. The complex chain of events led to the constitution of a tribunal to examine the Ravi-Beas issue in 1986. The Ravi-Beas Tribunal further revised upward the estimate of the available surplus and made an award in 1987. Both states sought clarifications of certain aspects of the award, but the Centre did not provide these explanations. Hence, the award has not been notified and does not have the status yet of a final, binding decision.

Court Rooms as a Battle Ground for Regional Claims over Water

Since the late 1990s, the issue of “fair” distribution of water has been mired into the politics of litigation and has played havoc leaving the SYL Canal ever-contested. In fact, it entered into a legal battle involving the state governments, the Union and the Supreme Court. The state of Haryana took the dispute to the Supreme Court citing the incomplete Sutlej-Yamuna Link (SYL) project in the 1990s. The Supreme Court gave three months’ time to both parties to reach an agreement. On 15 January 2002, the Supreme Court ordered Punjab to complete the SYL within six months, failing which the central government had to finish the task. The Punjab government filed an appeal with a special leave petition for

review twice in 2004, which was rejected by the Court. The Punjab state, changing its earlier position, also contended that this issue was not within the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court, as it was a water dispute in the ambit of article 262 of the constitution. Ultimately, Punjab was forced to unilaterally abrogate all previous accords by passing an Act “Punjab Termination of Agreement Act-2004” in Punjab Legislative Assembly, on 12 July 2004. On June 4, 2004, the apex court announced its final verdict on the SYL issue, the highlights of which are as follows:

- Since the Punjab Government had failed to complete the canal within the one-year deadline imposed by the January 15, 2002 verdict, the Court directed the Centre to construct the unfinished portion of the SYL canal.
- The Punjab Government was also ordered to provide adequate security to the officials of the executing agency and to the construction workers engaged by it.
- The executing agency was directed to prepare a new map of the canal on the basis of a fresh survey by keeping in mind that no damage was caused to the green belt falling in the way.

In July 2017, the Supreme Court Instructed Punjab to first build the SYL canal before bringing their respective points of view and challenges on the vexed issue. There has, however, been no progress in the matter since then. The Centre also did not make any effort for the construction of the unfinished Canal.

Recently, in July 2019, the Supreme Court directed the states of Punjab, Haryana, and the Centre to resolve SYL issue by 3 September 2019 (a next date of hearing the SLP). The Court directed all three parties to convene a meeting and find a solution to the problem. Nothing much has been done so far and the issue is

still lingering. In fact, one of the most important aspects of Punjab politics under the Akali Dal actually signify the relative lack of initiative on the part of the party while in power to pursue vigorously what for them have been the three core issues since 1966, i.e., the status of Chandigarh, territorial adjustment along the linguistic issue and the sharing of river water. The recent Supreme Court order, response of the AAP-led Punjab government and Akali Dal will add new dimensions to the regional claims over water.

The recent Supreme Court order, the response of the AAP-led Punjab government, and the position parties including the Akali Dal and Congress have added new dimensions to the regional claims over water. The AAP-led Punjab government resorted to organising an ‘open debate’ on the issue in order to expose the politics of parties that ruled the state previously rather than organising an all-party meet for resolution. Akali Dal, which has actually failed to pursue the issue even during its rule, is provoking Punjabi sentiments; Congress, on the other hand, is protesting against the order in Punjab and lobbying for support in Haryana. While BJP at the Centre is ethnicising the regional demands by evoking the past of communal politics in the state. The sudden rise, arrest and release of the so called Khalistani leader Deep Sidhu, and blame on the farmers of Punjab for being ‘anti-national’ and ‘pro-Khalistani’ elements during the recent farmer’s movement are the new chapter in Punjab politics that will also set the terms of water issue in coming years.

The discussion shows that water emerged as a significant symbol of regional identity politics post-reorganisation. It, in fact, consolidated regional identities with the formation of states on linguistic-religious lines. But it is also a fact that identity politics has reduced water as a contested and

disputing commodity, and not as a scarce resource. Therefore, the river water dispute between Punjab and Haryana has been guided by apportionment rather than harnessing of the available water resources. The 'son of the soil movements', in this sense, too remained focused on making claims over these sacred resources rather than making efforts towards the efficient use of the available resources through conservation, management and development. Secondly, it gave rise to regional conflicts over a natural resource making it vulnerable to party politics in the states and at the Centre. The experiences have shown that political parties do not go beyond their political agenda and electoral gains when they negotiate regional issues. Party-politics in the state led to the ethnicization of water with the Anad-Pur Sahab resolution, which in return, resulted in the neglect of the riparian rights of the state as well as the needs of agrarian communities. The counter-ethnicization of regional demands and water by the political parties at the Centre also resulted in the neglect of the rights of the farmers in both states. Thirdly, the political leadership has abdicated its responsibility to the judiciary, which has made water-sharing arrangements ever-contested. It has produced new debates regarding the: rights and control over water bodies – Centre or the states; power of adjudication – tribunals or the courts. Fourthly, the Centre has emerged as an arbitrator in the existing interstate disputes resolution mechanism. Even though the centre is still bound by the obligations of coalition governments, the emerging legislative discourse over the interstate water disputes and resolution mechanism is leading towards more centralisation.

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Central Asia Amidst Global Turmoil: Towards New Vistas

By Poonam Mann

Ever since Russia's "Special Military Operations" in Ukraine in early 2022, the Central Asian Republics (CARs) have found themselves in a tight diplomatic spotlight. With the flurry of summits between the leaders of Central Asian republics and the leaders of various global/regional powers, like, Russia, China, United States, Germany, France, European Union etc., it seems, the tug of war in the region has been intensified. Once again, the geo-political location of the region has put the countries of the region into the new hotspot. Situated at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, the region's potential to bridge the gap between the East and the West has become a contentious factor. Interestingly, the CARs are well accustomed to such scenarios. Over the years, these scenarios have been given different names like the 'Great Game' or 'New Great Game' or symbolising the region as a 'chessboard'. So far, the CARs have managed to pull off a balancing act and have successfully walked this diplomatic tightrope. Following this course, two major narratives have been constant companions-CARs as the strategic backyard for Russia and the competitive cooperation between Russia and China in the region. While these two narratives have dominated the perceptions, however, the autonomy of the CARs' governments and societies has been treated in an underwhelming manner. Therefore, amidst the backdrop of the Ukrainian crisis, if the CARs are dealing with the evolving landscape amicably or not, is an important point of discussion.

Central Asian Republics' Response to the Ukraine Crisis and their Relation with Russia

The five Central Asian republics have adopted a very guarded approach towards Russia's "special military operations" in Ukraine. They neither condemned Russia for its operations in Ukraine nor endorsed it. This was evident during the United Nations General Assembly's (UNGA) resolution on 2nd March, 2022, that demanded Russia to "immediately, completely and unconditionally withdraw all of its military forces from the territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders", the republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan abstained while Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan did not vote. Similarly, in the UNGA resolution to consider the expulsion of Russia from the UN Human Rights Council on 7th April, 2022, the republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan voted against the resolution while Turkmenistan again did not vote. Clearly, Central Asia's political leadership viewed the Ukraine crisis through the prism of their own interests. Considering how closely they are tied with an umbilical cord to Russia where (i) Russia still remains the guarantor of security in the region, (ii) their economies are closely intertwined (iii) they are heavily dependent on Russia for their export routes and (iv) the Russian labour market is a vital source of employment for many Central Asians, the leadership of these five states have tried to follow a balanced diplomatic strategy i.e. neither getting closer nor drifting apart from Russia. In 2022, after the military operation in Ukraine Russian President Vladimir Putin visited every Central Asian republic and held more than fifty meetings with his Central Asian counterparts. Besides, he also travelled to Kyrgyzstan in October, 2023, on his first foreign trip since the International Criminal Court (ICC)

issued his arrest warrant for his alleged war crimes. There, he attended a ceremony marking the 20th anniversary of Russia's airbase in Kant, a small town, about 20 kilometres east of Bishkek. Also, as a part of his visit, he attended the summit of heads of states of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), an intergovernmental organisation made up of former Soviet republics. Nonetheless, the Presidents of all five Central Asian republics attended Russia's May 9, 2023, parade in Moscow commemorating the defeat of Nazi Germany in World War II. Further, in October 2023, Kazakhstan's President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev along with President Putin and Uzbekistan's President Shavkat Mirziyoyev attended a ceremony in Moscow, to launch supply of gas from Russia to Uzbekistan via Kazakhstan.

Clearly these visits reflect Russia's attempts to re-engage with the region, which it regards as its own strategic backyard. This increased the importance of Central Asia to Russia in the light of shifting geopolitics, allowing Central Asian republics to up their negotiation power in the context of an isolated and sanctions-ridden Russia. Further, the whole scenario also signifies that Russia's war against Ukraine has disconcerted its allies, who are wooing, and being wooed by other global/regional players.

China's Increased Engagement with the Central Asian Republics

Though Central Asia's significance for China did not start with the start of the Ukraine war, but the growing anxiety in the region over the Ukraine crisis, does create a promising situation for China. For instance, post-pandemic, in September 2022, President Xi Jinping chose Central Asia for his first foreign visit where he held meetings with all his Central Asian counterparts. However, while

in Kazakhstan, he echoed his support for Kazakhstan's territorial integrity at a time when the latter was startled by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. At the same time, amidst the Western sanctions on Russia, China-Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan also signed a long-anticipated agreement to move forward with the construction of a rail-road linking these countries. This route, if and when completed, will establish a shorter route to Europe bypassing Russia. Further, the one of its kind inaugural meeting between the heads of states of Central Asian republics and China, in May 2023 was considered as a milestone to strengthen relations between China- Central Asia.

All these developments should be taken as a part of China's long term strategy to secure its economic, social, political and security interests rather than an attempt to replace Russia in the region. So far, China's engagement has been appreciated and supported by the Central Asian political elites. But do they want overdependence on one country is an important question to discuss. In the present context also, these republics are seeking to build political, economic and security relations with various countries without creating any adversaries. Therefore, in this endeavour, Central Asian Republics' engagement with the United States (US) and some of the European countries is vital.

With Ukraine in mind, the US and Europe are trying to enhance their cooperation with the Central Asian countries. First, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, visited Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan in February, 2023 seeking to step up US' engagement with the region. Building on the outcomes of these meetings, the first-ever C5+1 Presidential Summit happened in September 2023, attended by US President

Joe Biden and his Central Asian counterparts. After ten days, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz welcomed the Central Asian leaders to Berlin. In November, 2023, the French President Emmanuel Macron travelled to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan to discuss political and economic relations. Furthermore, the United Kingdom (UK) pursued its own strategy to intensify its engagement with the countries of the region. To identify various opportunities and challenges for broadening its engagement, the House of Commons Foreign Committee published a report to seek answers to that end. Similarly, the representatives of the European Union also met the Central Asian representatives, in October, 2023 to discuss how they can improve their relationship and strengthen cooperation on economic, trade, energy and security related matters.

The global significance of the Central Asian region is growing. This sudden upsurge of interests in the Central Asian region from the Western world is a promising sign, but how it will materialise remains to be seen. Clearly, the Ukraine crisis and changing geo-political environment has prompted many countries to reassess and reconsider their diplomatic relations with the countries of the region. Central Asian countries have also shown their keenness to further develop their political, economic and social ties with these countries as these provide them an opportunity to diversify and balance. They are coordinating within the C5+1 format with India, Japan, and South Korea also. They (specifically Kazakhstan) are exploring alternative routes, like the Middle Corridor through the Caspian Sea, connecting with Georgia, Azerbaijan, Turkey and Europe. Amidst the turbulent war in Ukraine, subsequent confrontation between Russia and the West, Eurasia's political landscape is changing. This provides an opportunity to the Central Asian republics to develop intensive contacts with new partners.

This will help them in achieving their primary foreign policy goal of sustaining pragmatic multi-vector relationships.

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Building Tomorrow: The Interplay of Infrastructure and Manufacturing in India

By Manika Malhotra Jain

As India moves closer to achieving significant economic milestones, its manufacturing sector emerges as a key driver of growth. With the aim of reaching a \$5 trillion economy, the Indian government has been actively involved in fostering economic growth, particularly by focusing on infrastructure development. In recent years, the government's hands-on approach has played a crucial role in building up physical infrastructure, specifically tailored to support and boost the manufacturing sector. These efforts not only set the stage for industrial expansion but also create an environment that supports strong and sustainable economic growth.

The Make in India campaign, initiated in 2014, has played a pivotal role in India's manufacturing journey. This initiative has not only attracted significant domestic investments but has also positioned India as a preferred destination for global manufacturing operations.

Complementing these efforts, the National

Manufacturing Policy outlined a strategic roadmap to boost the manufacturing sector's contribution to India's GDP. The policy's focus on creating industrial zones, enhancing infrastructure, and offering incentives for technology upgrades and skill development indicates a targeted approach.

Notable projects like the Bharatmala Project for road development and Sagarmala for port-led development have brought about substantial improvements in transportation and logistics. These projects address existing bottlenecks, ensuring the seamless movement of goods and supporting a more efficient manufacturing supply chain.

Strategic establishment of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) and industrial corridors like the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC) and Chennai-Bengaluru Industrial Corridor (CBIC) serve as models, fostering an environment where businesses can thrive.

Initiatives like the Phased Manufacturing Program (PMP) in sectors like electronics and electric vehicles showcase a commitment to reducing dependence on imports and building a self-reliant manufacturing ecosystem.

The link between infrastructure and manufacturing capacity has evolved significantly over the years. The current challenge lies in the economic gap within the existing infrastructure capacities and the actual requirements. Quantifying infrastructure demand is tricky, as it hinges on people's consumption patterns. To bridge the demand-supply gap and meet consumer needs, collaboration between the infrastructure and manufacturing sectors is

crucial. Reforms are underway, but more streamlined processes and grassroots-level changes are needed to implement and introduce policies effectively.

In the face of global economic challenges, many countries are enhancing their real estate and infrastructure development to support vital industries. Unfortunately, the lingering effect of COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns persist and have caused delays in large-scale projects, impacting employment and small to medium-sized businesses. Governments are now collaborating with private entities to navigate these challenges and ensure the smooth execution of major infrastructure projects.

Despite India's economic reliance on key industries like automotive, engineering, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, renewable energy, and consumer durables, the manufacturing sector still struggles to some extent in terms of its global export share. For example: India has remained below 2 percent in terms of its share in global merchandise exports. India's G20 presidency is a strategic opportunity to position its manufacturing sector globally. Overcoming challenges related to infrastructure and logistics inefficiencies will be crucial for the manufacturing sector to unlock its untapped export potential and significantly contribute to India's economic growth. India's adept inclusion of growth strategies from industrial economies in the Global South, positions the nation as an appealing manufacturing hub. The Business 20 (B20), a pivotal G20 dialogue forum, plays a crucial role in this endeavor. Through such platforms, India has successfully influenced outcomes such as the 'India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor.' This forward-thinking initiative envisions a cost-effective cross-border ship-

to-rail transit network connecting India with Arab countries, the EU, and the US. Beyond boosting trade, it opens doors to new investment opportunities, thereby reinforcing India's standing on the global economic stage.

India's manufacturing sector faces a unique opportunity with the talent crunch in developed countries, creating potential for growth when balanced with automation. To leverage this, India must focus on creating robust infrastructure to retain skilled workers. The persistent challenge of an inconsistent power supply, outweighing the power gap, remains a critical obstacle. A reliable power supply is fundamental to support manufacturing operations, ensuring consistent electricity for machinery and equipment. The existing infrastructure gap, though improving, requires sustained efforts.

The rise in rural manufacturing amplifies this dual challenge, emphasising the imperative for parallel infrastructure development. While the shift to rural manufacturing brings cost benefits, the higher cost of capital in these areas necessitates a skilled workforce. Adequate transportation infrastructure along with a focus on educational and training facilities is essential to enhance the skills of the local workforce, promoting a skilled labour pool. Furthermore, the creation of industrial zones and clusters can provide a concentrated and organised setup for manufacturing activities, fostering growth and efficiency in rural areas. Thus, infrastructure development must align with efforts to enhance the skills and education levels of the rural workforce, creating an environment conducive to the growth of rural manufacturing.

As the global landscape continues to evolve, India's ability to close this infrastructure gap becomes pivotal in positioning itself as a

formidable player in the competitive arena of manufacturing. The government's commitment to Industry 4.0, representing the integration of digital technologies and automation in manufacturing, should be unwavering. Supporting startups involved in advanced technologies ensures that India remains at the forefront of innovation, contributing to the country's competitiveness in the global manufacturing landscape. Investing in research and development is a cornerstone for innovation and competitiveness as it allows companies to develop new technologies, processes, and products, contributing to long-term growth and sustainability in manufacturing. Substantial investments in large-scale infrastructure are essential, creating significant growth opportunities. Presently, manufacturing is concentrated in a few states, and to diversify, an examination of barriers in the other states is necessary. State-specific industrialization strategies, formulated with active central government support, can unlock untapped potential and foster a conducive environment for manufacturing growth.

With a strong governmental focus on infrastructure development, exemplified by initiatives like GatiShakti, India is poised for substantial growth, fostering overall economic progress. This transformative approach aims to overcome long-standing challenges such as multiple approvals and delayed clearances, acting as a catalyst for streamlined processes, expedited project implementation, and cost control. Leveraging technology for transparent and efficient project management can significantly enhance accountability and reduce delays.

Fostering collaboration between the public and private sectors is pivotal. Encouraging private companies to actively participate in

national infrastructure projects not only brings in expertise but also injects efficiency and innovation into the development process. If executed diligently, initiatives like GatiShakti have the potential to revolutionise India's infrastructure landscape, paving the way for accelerated economic growth, job creation, and global competitiveness. The future of Indian manufacturing is intertwined with infrastructure evolution—keep the momentum, escalate growth, and pave the way to global prominence.

The author is a researcher with PPF. This article was originally published in BJYM Magazine, November Edition

COP-28 Floundered on Fossil Fuels, Coal and Finance

By Vaishali Basu Sharma

Aside from stark geopolitical tensions which have become characteristic of international summits lately, this year's global climate conference COP28 witnessed sharper differences between the 'Like Minded Developing Countries' of the Global South and the developed countries of the Global North. After the final day (December 12) of the two-week COP28 climate summit in Dubai saw a stalemate over the draft agreement, representatives continued negotiations to finally arrive at what is clearly now a compromised consensus, with terms like 'unambitious,' 'incremental,' 'menu' and of 'half measures' being used to describe the final agreement.

The draft presented by COP28 President, UAE's Sultan al-Jaber proposed eight options that countries could use to cut emissions, including: "reducing both consumption and production of fossil fuels, in a just, orderly

and equitable manner so as to achieve net zero by, before, or around 2050”, falling short of referring to a “phase out” of fossil fuels. It included tripling renewable energy capacity by 2030, “rapidly phasing down unabated coal” and scaling up technologies including those to capture CO2 emissions to keep them from the atmosphere. The US, UK and EU led more than a hundred countries to oppose the draft agreement which mentions the need to reduce emissions but did not outrightly state that fossil fuels should be phased out. Representatives for smaller Island Nations called it a “death sentence”.

The final deal now calls for “transitioning away from fossil fuels in energy systems, in a just, orderly and equitable manner ... so as to achieve net zero by 2050 in keeping with the science,” dropping the term “phasing away” and including “fossil fuel.” The agreement further calls for phasing out inefficient fossil fuel subsidies and for “accelerating phase down” of coal usage.

While developing nations along with major oil producers are opposed to any demand for phasing out fossil fuels, the point that India had been making throughout the discussions is that the focus needs to move away from coal because the science very clearly states that it is a carbon emission problem and all the fossil fuels need to be targeted. Although the discussions failed to feature accountability for historic polluters, in his speech Prime Minister Narendra Modi “rebuked” large emitters like the US for releasing the most climate-warming emissions since the Industrial Revolution at COP28, “Over the past century, a small section of humanity has indiscriminately exploited nature. However, entire humanity is paying the price for this, especially people living in the Global South.”

The exclusive focus on ‘rapidly phasing down coal’ drew exception from India, and it was joined by China in abstaining from

signing the Global Renewables and Energy Efficiency Pledge aimed at tripling installed renewable energy capacity by 2030. Despite finding mention at the G20 declaration in September, India’s decision to not sign the COP28 global pledge was likely related to the framing of the text specifically around the severe stance on phasing out coal. India has been at the forefront of phasing in renewables, and upholds that tripling of renewable energy and doubling of energy efficiency must not be covered with the phasing out of coal. As part of its nationally determined contributions (NDCs), it has already committed to installing 500 GW of electricity from non-fossil fuel sources by 2030. Between 2017-23, India added 100 GW of installed electric capacity, of which 80% was from renewable sources.

But coal’s days are not over in India. Despite setting out some of the most aggressive renewable energy targets in the world, coal remains at the heart of India’s urban industrial development projects, and a major source of jobs. It is important for the Global North to appreciate what transition from coal means for poor countries like India. Just consider the coal supply chains, taking India as a typical country of the global South. From the pitheads, coal is brought by trucks to a nearby cold depot from where it is transported again by trucks to the nearest railway station. Truck driving is the profession of choice for many poor migrants from rural areas and there are some two million registered on Indian roads. By a conservative estimate, at least a quarter of this carries coal. Each truck has a driver and two helpers who have families, which means that 1.5 million are reliant on just coal trucking.

Supply chain disruptions due to developments in Ukraine have slowed down the momentum in transitioning to renewable

energy options, everywhere. Upgrades for electricity storage require large tracts of land and transmission systems are built for coal and fossil fuels, which means they will need significant technology advancement for renewables. Nuclear and hydropower are considered essential to energy transitions, but globally there is some disagreement over whether large dams are within the purview of renewable energy sources.

Commitments made around climate finance at COP28 remain weak, and although a \$700 million loss and damage fund has been approved, it falls way below the estimated \$400 billion needed to effectively begin addressing climate change. Technology transfers have been spoken of at COP28; but how much of this will actually transpire remains to be seen. The developed world retains its significant representation in deciding where funds go. Without financial backing, developing nations cannot think of ambitious action on mitigations. Sustainable finance instruments and technology transfer remain critical to building expensive projects that can effectively address climate change. The nature of finance flows needs to be demystified.

India must insist that the fossil fuel phase-out must be differentiated depending on national circumstances and on a time scale, and technology transfer, co-development and access form the core of the energy transition. The COP28 Dubai agreement may have created optics of convergence between the developed and developing countries, but there will be massive dissonance over how differentiated responsibility

will be worked out in determining the absolute reduction of emissions over the next decade and more.

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