



**NETAJI SUBHAS OPEN UNIVERSITY**

**STUDY MATERIAL**

**PG : POLITICAL SCIENCE  
(PGPS)**

**PAPER - VIII  
(English Version)**

**MODULES : 1 - 4  
(All Units)**

**POST GRADUATE  
POLITICAL SCIENCE**

1. The first part of the paper discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions.

2. It then goes on to describe the various methods used to collect and analyze data, including interviews, focus groups, and surveys.

3. Finally, the paper concludes by discussing the implications of the findings for practice and policy.

## PREFACE

In the curricular structure introduced by this University for students for Post-Graduate degree programme, the opportunity to pursue Post-Graduate course in Subjects introduced by this University is equally available to all learners. Instead of being guided by any presumption about ability level, it would perhaps stand to reason if receptivity of a learner is judged in the course of the learning process. That would be entirely in keeping with the objectives of open education which does not believe in artificial differentiation.

Keeping this in view, study materials of the Post-Graduate level in different subjects are being prepared on the basis of a well laid-out syllabus. The course structure combines the best elements in the approved syllabi of Central and State Universities in respective subjects. It has been so designed as to be upgradable with the addition of new information as well as results of fresh thinking and analysis.

The accepted methodology of distance education has been followed in the preparation of these study materials. Co-operation in every form of experienced scholars is indispensable for a work of this kind. We, therefore, owe an enormous debt of gratitude to everyone whose tireless efforts went into the writing, editing and devising of proper lay-out of the materials. Practically speaking, their role amounts to an involvement in 'invisible teaching'. For whoever makes use of these study materials would virtually derive the benefit of learning under their collective care without each being seen by the other.

The more a learner would seriously pursue these study materials, the easier it will be for him or her to reach out to larger horizons of a subject. Care has also been taken to make the language lucid and presentation attractive so that may be rated as quality self-learning materials. If anything remains still obscure or difficult to follow, arrangements are there to come to terms with them through the counselling sessions regularly available at the network of study centres set up by the University.

Needless to add, a great deal of these efforts are still experimental—in fact, pioneering in certain areas. Naturally, there is every possibility of some lapse or deficiency here and there. However, these do admit of rectification and further improvement in due course. On the whole, therefore, these study materials are expected to evoke wider appreciation the more they receive serious attention of all concerned.

**Professor (Dr.) Subha Sankar Sarkar**  
Vice-Chancellor

First Edition : May, 2016

---

Printed in accordance with the regulations and financial assistance of the  
Distance Education Bureau of the University Grants Commission.





# NETAJI SUBHAS OPEN UNIVERSITY

## Post Graduate Political Science (PGPS)

### NEW SYLLABUS (w.e.f July, 2015)

#### Paper – VIII : Politics and Society in Asia : Select Regions

#### Advisory Board

Professor Mohit Bhattacharya

Professor Radharaman Chakraborti

Professor Krityapriya Ghosh

#### Subject Committee

Professor Sobhanlal Datta Gupta

Professor Apurba Mukhopadhyay

Professor Purushottam Bhattacharya

Professor Sumit Mukhopadhyay

Professor Tapan Chattopadhyay

Professor Debnarayan Modak

Dr. Barnana Guha Thakurta (Banerjee)

Sri Manoj Kumar Halder

#### Course Writing

**MODULE I** : Units 1 – 4 : Dr. Kinshuk Chatterjee

**MODULE II** : Units 1 – 4 : Professor Rajkumar Kothari

**MODULE III** : Units 1 – 4 : Dr. Ishani Naskar

**MODULE IV** : Units 1 – 4 : Professor Tridib Chakraborty and  
Ms. Tilottama Mukherjee

**Editing** : Professor Purushottam Bhattacharya

**Editorial Assistance, Formatting & Coordination** : Professor Debnarayan Modak &  
Dr. Barnana Guha Thakurta (Banerjee)

#### Notification

All rights reserved. No part of this study material may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from Netaji Subhas Open University.

**Dr. Ashit Baran Aich**

Registrar (Acting)



# NETAJI SUBHAS OPEN UNIVERSITY

Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE)

NEW SYLLABUS (w.e.f. May 2015)

Part - III: Politics and Society in Asia - Select Regions

## Advertisement

The Board of Studies, Netaji Subhas Open University, has approved the following syllabus for the PGDE (Part - III) for the session 2015-16.

### Course: PGDE (Part - III)

#### Subject: Politics

The syllabus for the subject 'Politics' is divided into four units. The units are: Unit I: Introduction to Politics; Unit II: Democracy and its Challenges; Unit III: Political Parties and Movements; Unit IV: Regional Politics in Asia.

#### Unit I: Introduction to Politics

1.1. Definition of Politics  
1.2. The State and its Functions  
1.3. Political Systems and Processes  
1.4. Political Ideologies

1.5. The Role of the Citizen  
1.6. The Role of the Media  
1.7. The Role of the Judiciary

#### Unit II: Democracy and its Challenges

2.1. The Concept of Democracy  
2.2. The Evolution of Democracy  
2.3. The Challenges to Democracy

2.4. The Role of the Citizen in Democracy  
2.5. The Role of the Media in Democracy



**Netaji Subhas  
Open University**

**Post Graduate  
P.G. Pol. Sc.-8**

## **CONTENTS**

### **Module – I West Asia**

<b>Unit 1</b> □ Arab Nationalism and Pan-Arabism	9-29
<b>Unit 2</b> □ Religion & Politics in West Asia	30-51
<b>Unit 3</b> □ The Politics of Oil in West Asia	52-63
<b>Unit 4</b> □ Politics of Regionalism & Regional Associations	64-81

### **Module – II Central Asia**

<b>Unit 1</b> □ The Central Asian Republics : Features, Problems and Prospects	85-95
<b>Unit 2</b> □ Security & Geo Strategic issues in Central Asia	96-105
<b>Unit 3</b> □ Problems of Economic Transition	106-115
<b>Unit 4</b> □ Islam & Democracy in Central Asia	116-123

### **Module – III Asia Pacific**

---

<b>Unit 1</b> □ The Concept of the Asia Pacific-Region and its significance in International Relations	127-146
<b>Unit 2</b> □ Authoritarianism, Civil-Military Relations and Prospects of Democratization in Select Pacific Countries—Indonesia, Philippines and South Korea	147-160
<b>Unit 3</b> □ Political Economy of Asia Pacific Region	161-168
<b>Unit 4</b> □ Ethnic Problems in the Asia—Pacific Region	169-187

---

### **Module – IV South East Asia**

---

<b>Unit 1</b> □ State & Civil Society in South East Asia : An Overview	191-203
<b>Unit 2</b> □ Issues Relating to the Chinese Immigrants in Southeast Asia : Case Studies of Malaysia and Singapore	204-220
<b>Unit 3</b> □ Society, Culture & Politics in Thailand & Myanmar	221-231
<b>Unit 4</b> □ Globalisation & Culture in South East Asia in the Post Cold War Era	232-244

---

# **Paper-VIII**

**Politics & Society in Asia : Select Regions**

## **Module – I**

### **West Asia**

**Unit 1 Arab Nationalism and Pan-Arabism**

**Unit 2 Religion & Politics in West Asia**

**Unit 3 The Politics of Oil in West Asia**

**Unit 4 Politics of Regionalism & Regional  
Associations**

## Paper-VIII

Politics & Society in Asia: Select Regions

### Module - I

#### West Asia

- Unit 1 Arab Nationalism and Pan-Arabism
- Unit 2 Religion & Politics in West Asia
- Unit 3 The Politics of Oil in West Asia
- Unit 4 Politics of Regionalism & Regional Association



# Module-I

## West Asia

---

### Unit : 1 □ Arab Nationalism and Pan-Arabism

---

#### Structure

#### 1.0 Objectives

#### 1.1 Arab Nationalism and Pan-Arabism

#### 1.2 Historical Foundations of Arab Nationalism—al-Nahda

#### 1.3 The Arab League

#### 1.4 Nasserism

#### 1.5 Zionism

#### 1.6 The Palestine Issue and Arab Nationalism

#### 1.7 The future of Arab Nationalism

#### 1.8 Sample Questions

#### 1.9 Suggested Reading

---

#### 1.0 Objectives

---

- To distinguish between Arab nationalism and nationalisms of the Arab states
  - To plot the development of Arab nationalism as a political movement
  - To look at how the Arab League came into being
  - To understand the reasons behind the rise of Zionism
  - To situate the Palestine issue within the larger matrix of Arab nationalism
- 

#### 1.1 Arab Nationalism and Pan-Arabism

---

Arab nationalism refers to an intellectual and political movement that had its origins in the early 20th century, in the Arab regions of the Ottoman Empire.

Emerging as a response to the centralising force of Turkish nationalism, protagonists of Arab nationalism maintained that the Arabic speaking people of the Empire together constituted one Arab nation, who were the successors of the glorious Arab civilisation of the first millennium, and believed themselves to be worthy of an existence distinct from, and not subjugated to, the Turkish people. By the time of the outbreak of the First World War, in anticipation of eventual Ottoman collapse, many of these protagonists were already working towards the eventual unification of all the Arabs in a single Arab state.

However, not all Arab speaking regions were part of the Ottoman Empire. When Arab nationalism began to flourish, there emerged the idea that all the Arabic speaking people of the Fertile Crescent, the Arabian Peninsula, North Africa together constituted the Arab nation. This feeling of a larger solidarity of all the Arab speaking people - whether independent, living under Ottoman or any other rule - is referred to very loosely as pan-Arabism. Unlike the movement of Arab nationalism, pan-Arabism never really developed into a nationalistic movement with clearly political objectives, but it remains an undercurrent in the politics of West Asia feeding into the amorphous notion of Arab brotherhood.

At the end of the First World War, creation of nation-states (Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, Iraq and Trans-Jordan) by the British and French Mandatory powers creating/rewarding particularist national sentiments (Syrian, Iraqi, Egyptian) could be said to have thwarted Arab nationalism by redrawing the map of the Middle East. Yet, Arab Nationalism and (to a lesser extent) pan-Arabism have played a major role in the shaping of the politics of the Middle East and North Africa in the 20th century - functioning as a counter-discourse to question the legitimacy of incumbent governments who tend to justify their (often authoritarian) measures by invoking nationalism. It is not incorrect to say that despite its limited success in obtaining political power in the Arab World (except in its Ba'athist variant), Arab Nationalism is one of the more potent political movements of the 20th century.

---

## 1.2 Historical Foundations of Arab Nationalism—*al-Nahda*

---

The origins of Arab Nationalism are to be sought in a complex of interrelated factors that obtained in the second half of the 19th century. Confronted with the expansionist Russian Empire with its superior military technology and organisation externally, and with rebellious Christian subjects in its European provinces internally, the Ottoman Empire was faced with an existential crisis around that time. The Ottoman state responded with the *Tanzimat* (Reforms) programme, which was designed to modernise the Empire in order to enable it to counter both internal and external threats.

At one level, the *Tanzimat* involved a rigorous centralisation of the Empire, imposing Istanbul's control over issues that had historically been left to the provinces, thus fomenting disquiet among the provincials. Since the principal protagonists of the *Tanzimat* happened to be Turkish military officers, leaving the traditional provincial elites on the receiving end, the distance grew between the Turkish-speaking Court and the Arabic-speaking Provincials.

At another level, the *Tanzimat* involved introduction of western education as a part of the overall programme of modernisation, which required adoption of advances made in industrial technology in 19th century Europe. The Ottomans, accordingly, allowed setting up of schools by French, British, German and American educationists in different parts of the Empire. Among the new ideas that began to spread as a consequence, the foremost was that of nationalism, riding high in Europe with the success of the emergence of the nation-states of Germany and Italy. Accordingly, Ottoman attempts at centralisation were largely informed by the newly emergent sense of Turkish nationalism, which valorised the Turkish language and identity over and above any of the component people of the empire. This invited a reaction from the provinces of the Empire clustering around the Arabic language.

Arab Nationalism emerged in the background of the twin forces of centralisation and western education. As western education became a means of entering imperial service, Arabic speaking students entering such institutions



became exposed to the idea of nationalism. The idea of Islamic Civilisation in all its grandeur was being touted by the Ottomans, projecting themselves as its greatest champion. The Arabic-speaking intelligentsia in the provinces began to ask why did the glory fade away, and strongly condemn the Ottomans for "betraying Islam" and the Fatherland to the Christian West. Most interestingly, unlike at any other point of time in the past, the rapid expansion of Islam and the Islamic Civilisation in the first millennium was identified not with the religion alone, but also with the language - Arabic, and it began to be claimed that Islamic civilisation was actually Arab civilisation. Thus, for the first time in a very long while, the cultural identity of an 'Arab' emerged which was larger than the territorial Suri (Syriac), Misri (Egyptian), Baghdadi, Mosuli, Basrawi. Arabic language, culture and civilisation was depicted as being far superior to its Turkish counterpart, and although no demand was formulated for the overthrow of the Ottomans, Turkish national domination of the Empire was challenged in no uncertain terms.

It needs to be understood, however, that Arab nationalism was not a mono-dimensional nationalist movement, accommodating as it did two strands of thinking at the very least. There were those among the Arab nationalists who, following Sati al-Husri (1880-1968) believed that Arabic speech (and the social and cultural values associated with it) constituted the material foundation of Arab Nationalism - this line of thinking came to be known as '*Urbah*'. The protagonists of '*Urbah*' were those who had a secularist approach to the question of Arab nationalism, and cut across sectarian lines hailing from among both Muslims and Christians. The other (and numerically more significant) strand of Arab nationalists followed thinkers like Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi and Shakib Arsalan in believing the glories of Arab Civilisation were inseparable from that of Islam, hence Arab nationhood need necessarily rest on Muslim brotherhood, which was capable of accommodating people across sectarian divides.

Arab nationalism had a very clear class-dimension as well. When western education was introduced in the Arabic-speaking provinces of the Ottoman Empire, be it in the (independent-in-all-but-name) province of *Misr* (*Egypt*) or in

those of the Bilad al-Sam (including modern Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel-Palestine), Baghdad, Basra and Mosul, it was generally embraced by the upwardly-mobile middling classes of the society looking for government jobs (known by the label of *Effendiyah*), and hardly ever in the first generation by the traditional landed elite (*Ashrafiya*). The landed elite generally stood opposed to the modernisation of the Empire on account of their vested interests, and thus were keener on upholding their territorial particularist identities rather than the larger Arab identity. By contrast, the western educated *effendiyah*, who entered into public service (provincial administration as much as the military) as well as the emerging modernised sector of the economy and the public sphere in the urban areas of the Empire, travelling far-and-wide within the Empire, developed a keen sense of the Arabic identity, rising above regional particularism.

The *effendiyah* were the principal protagonists of the idea that what was understood to be the glory of the Islamic civilisation was actually the glory of the Arabs. Over time the Arab Civilisation had lost its sheen as it became subordinated to the lesser people (such as the Turks), lying dormant with all their inherent promise as a great people. The Arab nationalists went on to argue that the Arabs needed only wake up from their stupor in order become great yet again. Accordingly, the 19th century cultural efflorescence that followed the rediscovery of the Arab heritage by the *effendiyah* was understood to be just such a recrudescence, and this phenomenon is referred to be al-Nahda ("the Awakening"), on the strength of which Arab nationalism was to flourish in the years that followed. By the turn of the century, the *Mashriq* (i.e. the East, the Ottoman domains of Levant and the Fertile Crescent and Egypt), the *Maghreb* (the West, i.e. the Arab regions of North Africa west of Egypt) and the *Jazirah* (the Peninsula, i.e. the Arabian Peninsula) began to be conceived of as one Arab world.

The Arab Nationalist movement took a decidedly political stand in the aftermath of the Young Turk revolution of 1908, which was followed by a major drive towards political centralisation. Arab *ashrafiyah* resented the Young Turk centralisation agenda; the *effendiyah* did not mind centralisation, but resented the attempted Turkification of the empire. Accordingly, a number of platforms

emerged in the wake of the Young Turk revolution, such as al-Fatat, al-Ahd, which brought together people from both *ashrafiyah* and *effendiyah* backgrounds, who were considering a separate Arab political space, if possible within the Empire, if necessary outside it. The principal centres of such platforms were Istanbul and Damascus (with Beirut a distant third). Although most of such secret societies were more concerned with their particularist identities, the idea of an "Arab Voice" was resonant enough to be noticed.

The greatest fillip to Arab Nationalism came with the outbreak of the First World War, when Ottoman Turkey joined it on the side of the Central Powers. In retaliation, Britain declared Egypt (which was under its administrative supervision from 1882) formally a protectorate. Encouraged by the stirrings of Arab disquiet they tried to trigger an uprising in the Ottoman realms itself. The British authorities in Cairo encouraged the Mufti of Mecca, Sharif al-Hussain of the Hashemite clan and a direct descendant of the Prophet, to raise the banner of rebellion. Hussain was promised by Cairo that the Arab lands of the Ottoman Empire would be constituted into a Kingdom of Arabia. Upon sounding out the Arab political circles in Baghdad and Damascus, and finding that such a revolt would enjoy widespread support among the Arab political elite, Sharif Hussain launched the Arab Revolt in 1916. In what was to become the high-point of the movement during the war, the Arab Revolt prevailed in Hejaz (in which are situated Mecca and Medina) and liberated lands as far north as Damascus from Ottoman rule.

With the Arab political and military elite from provinces as far afield as Basra, Baghdad and Damascus uniting behind the Hashemite banner, Arab Nationalism was on the verge of a veritable triumph when it was dealt a fatal blow. The British and the French carved out their respective spheres of influence by means of the secret Sykes-Picot understanding of 1916; the peace settlement at the end of the Great War instituted the basic premises of that understanding on the ground. Accordingly, it was resolved at the League of Nations that territorial nationalist aspirations of a more particular sort would be recognised over the larger Arab nationalist ones. The French were given the Mandate of training the people of the



province of Syria in the art of self-government -they took to the task by splitting the Christian-majority coastal region into the Republic of Lebanon and the Muslim-majority hinterland into the Republic of Syria. Given the Mandate over Mesopotamia, Britain put Basra, Mosul and Baghdad to create the Kingdom of Iraq, of which Sharif al-Hussain's son Faisal, the liberator of Damascus was made king. Palestine, detached from the province of Syria was split into two by the Mandatory power of the British. Abdullah, Faisal's brother was made the king of Trans-Jordan, in the lands to the East of the Jordan river. In the truncated Palestine to the West of the Jordan river, the British made a commitment to create a homeland for the Jews. The Arab Kingdom vanished into thin air without materialising as the Middle East was carved up into multiple Arab states.

Despite the creation of the new Arab states, Arab nationalism not merely survived but also evolved into a relatively more potent force in course of the 20th century. The nation-states that came into being in the Arab world after Ottoman disintegration were dominated mostly by those sections of the *effendiyah* that were accommodated by the Mandatory authorities. The new political elites broadened the social basis of public education system in such a way that education became a major tool for upward social mobility. As more and more people began to gain access to education, levels of social aspiration also rose - with people moving from country to small town to larger towns, the economies of these newly formed states were not able to generate enough jobs to absorb all of these. Many of these newly educated people from upwardly mobile social groups thus went for state service, either the bureaucracy or the military. Resenting the extent of western domination enjoyed by the Western powers, these upwardly mobile groups developed radical political ideologies — Nasserite socialism in Egypt, Ba'athist nationalism in Syria and Iraq — which sought to reclaim political sovereignty for the Arabic-speaking people.

The emergence of such radical political ideologies, running in tandem with (but theoretically distinct from) national mythologies being invented all around, was facilitated by another aftermath of Ottoman disintegration. For centuries the Ottoman political space allowed the Arabic-speaking lands of the Levant and the

eastern half of North Africa to function as a single economic unit, with commodities, labour and capital alike moving without ease. Ottoman disintegration and rise of new states resulted in the emergence of boundaries and restriction on movements of capital, labour and commodities that were unprecedented. Mercantile communities that had traded along centuries old networks suffered major reverses in new economic orders that were oriented towards their Mandatory/colonial masters (i.e. Syria and Lebanon towards France, Egypt, Iraq, Trans-Jordan and Palestine towards Britain). Victims of this kind of economic dislocation nurtured a deep-seated resentment towards the colonial economic order that the mandatory powers introduced in the Arab world, and began to favour the idea of a single Arab economic unit. More significantly, the political elite of the new states were no less resentful of western exploitation of their economies, and favoured reintegration of the Arab economic space to further their respective economic interests. Such diverse body of opinions fed into the rise of platforms like the Arab League in the first half of the 20th century.

By the middle of the 20th century, on account of the amalgamation of these diverse strands, Arab nationalism emerged as structurally a more amorphous, but politically a more significant force than its pre-war avatar. (Frequently authoritarian) governments of the Middle Eastern countries generally tended to justify their often unpopular policies in the name of national interest, Arab nationalism proved to be a powerful counter-discourse for delegitimation of such measures (thus an action may be seen as serving the narrow interest of the Egyptian government, but it is not in the interest of the Arab people of Egypt). Indeed, Arab nationalism has not quite prevailed in the sense of creating a single sovereign political space of the Arabs, but it has served as the guiding force behind at least three Middle Eastern regimes - Nasserite Egypt and Ba'athist Syria and Iraq — in the last century.

---

### **1.3 The Arab League**

---

The dismantling of the Ottoman Empire, and the rise of the successor-states of Lebanon and Syria (under French Mandatory authority), and Egypt (a British

protectorate), Iraq, Palestine and Transjordan (under Mandate of Britain) served to completely fragment the economic space of Levant and North Africa. This region remained integrated as an economy for all practical purposes from the 7th century, despite the lack of any political unity for much of that period, largely on account of the network of merchants and the spatial mobility of the region's elite as well as of labour. However, when the British and the French acquired Mandatory authority in the Ottoman successor-states, they disrupted the centuries-old networks by hardening the frontiers between the states, introducing immigration and passport controls to regulate the flow of the people, and most importantly reorienting the economy of the respective states away from their neighbours and natural economic hinterlands and subordinating them to the corresponding metropolitan economy - thus, Syrian and Lebanese economies were aligned to that of France, while Palestine and Trans-Jordan were tagged on to Britain; the Mandate in Iraq was ended after the British put Emir Feisal (of the Arab Revolt days) on its throne, and the protectorate of Egypt was replaced by the Kingdom, but London retained an overweening presence over both.

The disruption of the existing networks was not the only change that the post-Ottoman states experienced in the first half of the 20th century. The *effendiyah*-dominated nationalist elite of these successor-states concentrated on modernising their respective societies within the rubric of political control of western powers. While Egypt, erected as an independent Kingdom under British military tutelage, was the most advanced in its modernisation drive, Mandate Iraq and Syria had also begun to move in this direction early on. This modernisation drive included very basic mechanisation of production and introduction of public education along the lines of the West — two factors that generated a powerful impulse towards urbanisation. As the forces of modernisation began to gain ground in the region as a whole, the much larger but increasingly vulnerable traditional sector of economy came under tremendous pressure. The traditional sector came to generate a deep-seated resentment towards the colonial forces that the West came to signify, and also a kind of nostalgia for the vanished regional economic arena. As the Great Depression set in, the incremental economic weakening of the



colonial powers all through the 1930s subverted the very basis on which the newly emergent modern sector of the region's economy rested. As the French economy began to be reconfigured around its colonial domains, and the British worked towards a system of imperial preference, nationalists in the Levantine states (particularly Iraq and Egypt) began to play around the idea of a closer integration of the region's economy as one way out of the economic morass of the 1930s. Alongside the economic predicament, there was also the question of Palestine [see later] that began to play on the minds of many Arabs as yet another evidence that the Western powers exploited the various differences among the Arabs to wield control over a region that they could not otherwise dominate.

When World War II broke out, the Axis powers began to court the various Middle Eastern states to align with them. Like others in the colonised world, many Arab leaders also seriously considered chances of Axis victory being very high, and thus leaned towards them; typically others were wary of such a choice and were dithering. Fully aware of the uncertain nature of the situation, London took the initiative in rekindling hopes of a closer integration of the region when the British Secretary of State Anthony Eden acknowledged in May 1941 that the Arabs desire "a greater degree of unity than they now enjoy" and pledged full support for "any scheme that commands general approval."

The Arabs, thus, were poised before a dilemma at the time of the outbreak of the World War II. There were the radical nationalists who wanted to do away with the particular nation-states and replace it with a single Arab nation-state, but the beneficiaries of each of the particular states were formidable enough to thwart any such attempts. The other option was to allow the nation-states to remain sovereign, but turn them into one political community, expressing an 'Arab public opinion.' This option was welcome to protagonists of sovereignty for the particular states as well, who sought such closer integration within the rubrics of a regional bloc - a phenomenon that was beginning to surface during the war and flourish after 1945.

By 1943, as the Mandates of Syria and Lebanon had been dissolved with French defeat at the hands of Germany, the matter of reorganisation of the Levant

became an immediate issue. As bilateral and multilateral discussions began on initiatives from Amman, Cairo and Baghdad, several options surfaced. Emir Abdullah of Transjordan favoured an immediate reintegration of Greater Syria (Transjordan, Palestine, Syria and Lebanon) under the Hashemite crown (i.e. under him); the Nationalists who had taken power in Damascus liked the reintegration of Syria but not with a Hashemite at the helm; Saudi Arabia also was opposed to any enhancement of Hashemite power. Iraq's Prime Minister Nuri al-Said proposed instead a union of the whole Fertile Crescent (that is of Iraq with Greater Syria), but Cairo was completely opposed to Baghdad's prospective overshadowing of any Arab state. After a threadbare discussion of all the various options at Alexandria in September 1944, full political integration of all Arab states was completely ruled out for the time being by every state barring Syria. The Alexandria Protocols that were accordingly adopted provided for a **League of Arab States** to work towards a loose confederation satisfying both local and dynastic interests. The signatories of the Alexandria Protocols met at an Arab Conference in March 1944, and signed the **Arab Pact**, whereby the **Arab League** was formally constituted, with Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Transjordan as its founder-members [not Palestine, because it was not an Arab state]; Yemen joined the League two months later.

The League set itself the mandate of facilitating agreements between member states, to coördinate political programmes of the signatories to promote cooperation, and to safeguard the sovereign authority of the states in pursuit of the general interests of the Arab countries. Members of the League were expected to desist from pursuing policies that were prejudicial to the interests of other League members. The League had a specific mandate in promoting cooperation among its members states in economic and financial matters (viz trade, customs, currency, industry), communications (viz. railways, roadways, aviation, navigation, post and telegraph), nationality and citizenship (viz. immigration control, execution of judgements, extradition), social welfare, health and above all matters of culture. Use of force for the settlement of disputes between members is prohibited, and

if a conflict were to emerge then unless the matter involves the integrity or sovereignty of a member state, the arbitration of the League would be binding on the parties concerned.

Beginning with only six states, the Arab League today has twenty-two member states, spanning from Algeria in the west to Oman in the East. Functioning as a useful diplomatic platform among the Arab speaking countries, the body represents states as diverse in nature as Saudi Arabia and Djibouti, Sudan and the Comoros. From time to time member states are suspended for violation of the League's principles (viz that of Iraq after its invasion of Kuwait, of Syria in the light of the civil war that began after 2011 and of Yemen in 2015), but recognition of the League is generally considered to be a good diplomatic benchmark of legitimacy of authority (for instance the Transitional National Council was offered Libya's seat even before Gaddafi was completely defeated, and the opposition Free Syria forces were offered that of Syria during 2011-12).

---

#### **1.4 Nasserism**

---

Nasserism is an Arab nationalist political ideology based on the thinking of the former Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser, which constituted a major influence on pan-Arab politics in the 1950s and 1960s, and continues to have significant resonance throughout the Arab World to this day. It fed into other nationalist movements during the 1970s as well. However, the scale of Egypt's defeat in the Six Day War of 1967 severely damaged the standing of Nasser, and the ideology associated with him.

Nasserism combines nationalism with what is generally spoken of as "Arab socialism" — a political vision that speaks of a regulated economy in which the state plays a large role in allocating and redistributing resources, preventing any inequitable accumulation of wealth in private hands. Opposed ideologically both to Western capitalism, Arab socialism also developed as a rejection of communism, ostensibly because it was seen as incompatible with Arab traditions, and the religious underpinnings of Arab society. In truth Nasserism developed as a



developmental discourse that chose to modernise the Egyptian economy independent of both the capitalist and the socialist blocs during the Cold War. As a consequence, Nasserists from the 1950s to the 1980s sought to prevent the rise of communism in the Arab World, and advocated harsh penalties for individuals and organisations identified as attempting to spread communism within the region. Nasserists espouse the cause of ending Western interference in Arab affairs, promoting solidarity among the developing world and Non-Aligned group of nations awareness about the modernisation, and industrialisation as means of keeping the West at bay. Nasser himself was opposed vehemently to Western imperialism, sharing the commonly held Arab view that Zionism was an extension of European colonialism on Arab soil.

Although mindful of the Islamic and Christian heritage of the Arab World, (as with Ba'athism), Nasserism is largely a secular ideology usually espoused by the service and professional bourgeoisie in Egypt and elsewhere. This brought Nasserism into to direct conflict with Islamic oriented Arab political movements from the 1950s onwards, particularly the Muslim Brotherhood, targeting as they do similar social segments as the catchment areas of their ideology.

Having been a revolutionary and dynamic movement with definite political and social goals as late as 1960s, the stagnation of Egypt's state-led development in the 1970s made Nasserism degenerate into a much less pronounced and distinct ideology. Arabs today are informed by Nasserism more in a general sense than actually espouse its specific ideals and objectives. Confined mostly to writers, intellectuals, and minor opposition parties, Nasserism has been overshadowed by the ascendancy of Islam as a social movement in Egypt, conforming to a general trend within Egypt and the Arab World of Arab nationalism being overshadowed, and even eclipsed, by political Islam. Ironically, while Nasser governed Egypt through a strictly authoritarian one-party system, with extreme limits on any form of political dissent, present-day Nasserists stress their support for democracy, explaining Nasser's autocratic excesses as necessary to implement his revolutionary policies — their democratic pretensions however remain to be properly tested.

---

## 1.5 Zionism

---

Zionism emerged as a nationalist movement that worked till 1948 with the objective of establishing a Jewish national home in the land designated in the Bible as "Eretz Israel" (Lit. Land of Israel), where the historic Kingdom of the Jews, Judea and Samaria, used to be. The movement began in the 1890s in the light of the persecution of Jews in Europe (i.e. Ashkenazi Jews), which caused a huge outward migration of Jews, mostly from Eastern Europe (primarily Russia and Poland) but also from countries such as Germany, France and some parts of the Habsburg Empire. While an overwhelming majority of the emigrants (2 million between 1880 and 1914) headed for the USA, some European Jews began to argue that Jews should make it back to their promised land in and around Jerusalem, which was then a part of the Ottoman ruled Palestine. The aspiration for a national home in the land of Zion (the hill atop which the Old Temple of the Jews used to be situated) gave the movement its name, Zionism.

There were a few reasons why the land of Palestine was chosen by the Zionists for their homeland. At an emotional level, the Jews believe that the land in and around Jerusalem (the Biblical valley of Canaan) had been promised to them by God, where the ancient Jewish kingdoms of Judea and Samaria used to stand. Roman expulsion of the Jews from Jerusalem and destruction of the Jewish temple thereafter they overran the Jewish kingdoms, and in particular Jewish longing to return to Jerusalem had functioned as a focal point of Jewish identity across many centuries. Thus even though some Jews had actually made it back to the "promised land," others landed up in different parts of the Mediterranean world, travelling along networks of commerce and settling down among non-Jewish ('gentile') populations. The idea of the Promised Land was kept alive among the Diaspora Jews down the generations, helping preserve their distinctive identity. They remained in Europe despite never being accorded any respectability or legal status, but when the persecution aggravated to the point of elimination (as in the Anti-Semitic pogroms of Imperial Russia and popular anti-Semitism in Central and Western Europe), a large number of Jews decided to look for safer

domicile such as the Americas. The Zionist movement, under the leadership of Theodore Herzl, believed that in a world that was fast witnessing the rise of nation-states and national movements, the Jews were no longer safe to live in Diaspora among gentile populations, and should work towards their own national home. At a more pragmatic and political level, the movement chose Palestine as the site of its national home (not necessarily a sovereign state just yet) because Palestine under the Ottoman rulers was one of the few places in the world where a Jew was not persecuted on account of his Jewish identity, and thus could conceivably look at that land as his home.

The Zionist movement was allowed to bring in a small number of immigrants into the Holy Lands every year by the Ottomans, who were careful to never let too many Jews come in at any one time. By the time of the outbreak of the Great War, an estimated 40,000 had already settled in the Holy Lands, which prompted the Zionist movement to lobby with powers during wartime seeking assurances of a definitive settlement of the homeland issue in return for their support. They got this assurance from the Balfour Declaration whereby London promised support for a Jewish national home (without compromising the interests of the other religious communities in the region), and upon gaining the Mandate for Palestine proceeded to fulfil their commitment by opening Palestine to Jewish immigration. In the decade that followed the opening up of Palestine to Jewish immigration, more than a 120,000 people came into the Holy Land who settled down on lands purchased by the Zionist organisations with funds mobilised from all over the world since 1896 for that purpose. Between 1929 and 1939, another 250,000 people arrived in Palestine, fleeing from persecution in Germany, but also elsewhere in Europe.

The huge numbers of immigrants slowly began to transform the demographic composition of the Holy Lands. While this would have presumably caused trouble over the long term, the impact of the nature of Jewish settlements guaranteed conflict in the short and medium term as well. The Jewish immigrants, especially those settling in agricultural collectives - the *Kibbutzim* - set up their settlements adjacent to, or outside, existing townships in lands that were purchased from Arab



landlords, mostly those domiciled in distant locations as Damascus. After the creation of separate states of Syria, Lebanon, Transjordan, many of the absentee landlords - who found themselves stranded in 'different countries' in the neighbourhood were actually keen to sell off their lands, which were then picked up by the Zionist organisations. Once the lands came into Jewish possession, they increasingly began to employ only Jewish labour to guarantee livelihood for all immigrants, dispossessing the Palestinian *fellahin* (landless peasantry), who were then forced to move into the towns looking for alternate means of livelihood. Among such dispossessed Palestinians a strong anti-Jewish sentiment began to grow which took to periodic outbursts of violence.

The British authorities were always clear that the Balfour Declaration did not commit them to a separate state for the Jews, and thus after periodic violence they chose to clamp down on immigration - viz during 1929-33 and then 1939-45. The Zionists, accordingly, operated within the Mandate system as far as it was required, but were determined to establish a sovereign state for the Jews with or without British support. Thus, while leaders like Chaim Weizmann and David Ben Gurion were willing to negotiate for their space in the promised land, others like Ze'ev Jabotinsky prepared to fight both the Arabs and the British if necessary. By the time the World War II broke out, and London decided to restrict Jewish immigration, the Zionists had set up self-defence units (Haganah) and terrorist outfits (Palmach, Irgun, Stern Gang) to fight Arabs and protect the Jews in Palestine.

By the time the war ended, it was quite clear that the Zionist movement was firmly entrenched in Palestine, and as the enormity of the Holocaust began to come out Western support for the creation of the state of Israel grew. The British decision to pull out of Palestine prompted the newly-founded UN to appoint a commission (UNSCOP) to look into the question. The UNSCOP tabled two different proposals - the majority proposed a partition of Palestine into a Jewish and Arab state each, with Jerusalem as an internationally administered free city; the minority proposed the creation of an undivided state of Palestine with self-governing Jewish and Arab regions, within a federal structure. The majority

proposal was carried in the UN in 1948, but the Palestinians and the Arab states refused to accept it. Thus, when in June 1948, the British finally pulled out and the Zionists declared the creation of the state of Israel in the land earmarked for it by UN, all of Palestine's Arab neighbours attacked the fledgling state in unison. After a bitter war, the fledgling state of Israel defeated its Arab neighbours, and ran over most of the land designated for the Arab state of Palestine as well.

---

## 1.6 The Palestine Issue and Arab Nationalism

---

In a sense, the Palestinians were the biggest victims of Ottoman disintegration, and the Palestinian question highlights all the strengths and weaknesses of Arab nationalism, which found its strongest proponents among the Palestinians. The principal problem stemmed from the fact that Palestine had no experience as a political entity in historical memory when the Ottoman Empire disintegrated. Having for centuries been a part of the Bilad al-Sham, when the region of Palestine was dissociated from Syria and Lebanon, there was no regional particularism among the Arabic-speaking people of Palestine that could form the basis of any identity. It thus suited the British, with their commitment to the creation of a homeland for the Jews in Palestine, that while the land on the east bank of the Jordan river was made into the Emirate of Transjordan with their ally Abdullah as its Emir, the lands west of Jordan could be kept as a mandated land — not a state — for no one in specific.

To start with, the Arab population of Palestine — who had enthusiastically joined the Arab Revolt — were advocates of the cause of a single Arab state; once sovereign Arab states came into being, the Arabic-speaking people of Palestine looked to their traditional leadership domiciled mostly outside in Palestine (principally, Syria) and began to solicit the creation of a Greater Syria. But gradually, as they began dealing with the Mandate authorities who classified their subjects as Jewish and non-Jewish, and they came to deal with Zionist as a nationalist force, the Arabic-speaking people of the land began to identify themselves as Palestinian Arabs, thereby staking their claim over the land of Palestine.

By the late-20s, as Jewish population in Palestine steadily increased dispossessing the Palestinians, while many moved to the adjacent towns, yet others began to move further afield into the neighbouring Arab states, viz. Egypt, Syria, and to a lesser extent, Iraq. Since all these fledgling states were undergoing a period of restructuring themselves, the influx of Palestinians was not particularly welcome straining as it did the state infrastructure in all these countries. There was additionally the recognition that the Palestinian plight was the outcome of western imperial designs on the region. These two factors made the critics of the nationalist incumbents in power in the Arab states identify the Palestinian issue as an "Arab" cause and mobilise the disaffected upwardly mobile middle and lower-middle classes behind its banner. The foremost among these critics were the Ikhwan al-Muslimin (the Muslim Brotherhood) founded by Hasan al-Banna in 1929, which has been the staunchest bulwark of the Palestinian cause outside Palestine.

The identification of the Palestinian issue as an "Arab" issue prompted states such as Egypt, Iraq, Syria and Transjordan to attempt to mediate on their behalf with both the British and the Zionists. The huge influx of Palestinian refugees into the neighbouring Arab states during and after World War II ensured that none of Palestine's neighbours could willingly agree to the creation of a Jewish state without compromising both their own "Arab" credentials, as also the fragile balance in their own states that could be destroyed by flood of refugees. Hence, all the Arab states voted against the UNSCOP plan to partition Palestine, and Egypt, Syria, Transjordan and Iraq declared war on Israel the very day after the British pulled out. Even when they were trounced by the fledgling state of Israel, the belligerent Arab states refused to recognise the state of Israel pending the resolution of the Palestinian question. It is very suggestive that the definition of any "settlement" of the Palestinian issue involved the Palestinians' "right of return" to their own land, which is the official reason given for why none of the Arab states apart from Trans-Jordan happily accorded the Palestinians citizenship in their own "Arab" states. It can be argued that the unstated reason for such a position had more to do with the predicament of having Palestinians domiciled in



the neighbouring states, rather than any sense of Arab brotherhood. Clearly, brothers are more welcome if they stay in their own homes.

Given the fact that the various Arab states of the Levant have stabilised over time, the chances of success of any Arab nationalist wave are very slim. The Palestine question would seem to be the only issue that appears to have genuine appeal among the people all across the Arab world, i.e. in the so-called "Arab Street." It is also perhaps the only issue, which has the capacity to unite the various Arab ruling elites behind a single political agenda, although presumably not always to the point of conflict.

---

## 1.7 The future of Arab Nationalism

---

Despite the tortuous fortune of the notion of Arab nationalism, the concept continues to have some resonance in some quarters of West Asia and North Africa. The mere existence of the Arab League, the widespread antipathy towards Israel and the support for Palestine would seem to bring this out quite handsomely. Yet, for all practical purposes, the idea of Arab nationalism does not appear to have the kind of traction it did mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

The idea of Arab nationalism flourished only towards the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in opposition to the emergent Turkish nationalism, hoping to preserve the entire socio-cultural space of the Arabic language speaking intact by turning it into a political space as well. When the Ottoman Empire eventually disintegrated, particular nationalist interests had easily prevailed in establishing their political claims in the new nation-states that emerged, undermining the much larger territorial spread of Arab nationalism. In the century that followed, the nation-states deepened their roots to such an extent that considerable material interests have now come to be vested within such existing territorial dispensations. That is to say, the number of people who would benefit from the dismantling of the current dispensations is so considerable that any attempt against the particular nation-states would cause great disturbance and dislocation in the region. Hence, despite the occasional surges in the feelings of what often passes for Arab

nationalism, it is extremely unlikely for the idea of the nation-state in West Asia to be prevailed upon by the former.

And yet, in a curious way, the hope of an eventual union of all the Arab peoples linger. The rise of the petroleum economy in the region - defined in terms of those not only selling oil, but also those exporting labour to the oil economies - has actually drawn together the various Arab (and non-Arab) peoples within a regional space. The 21<sup>st</sup> century Arab has a much better sense of the geographical and cultural space of the Arab world than earlier. As of now, the dynamics of the petroleum economy are firmly under the control of the oil exporters, but when the economy begins to slow down and questions about the legitimacy of the existing dispensations emerge, the foundations of the contemporary political dispensations are sure to be undermined. In such an eventuality, the idea of Arab nationalism could resurface to take on political Islam - the only other (and increasingly the more powerful) political ideology that can claim legitimacy in the eyes of people, and has the potential of embracing the entire post-Ottoman political space, overturning the century-old international order with respect only to the West Asian region.

---

## 1.8 Sample Questions

---

### Essay Type Questions

1. Why did Arab nationalism emerge in the closing years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century?
2. How did changing social background of the Arab society influence the trajectory of Arab nationalism?
3. How did the issue of Palestine influence the trajectory of Arab nationalism in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century?

### Short Questions

1. Does the foundation of the Arab League mark the fulfilment of Arab nationalism or its defeat?

2. Give an account of the development of Zionism in the run-up to the birth of Israel in 1948.
3. Is it correct to argue that Arab nationalism has faded away completely?

### Very Short Questions

1. What is Nasserism?
2. What is Zionism?
3. What were the Alexandria Protocols?

---

## 1.9 Suggested Reading

---

1. Arthur Goldschmidt, jr and Lawrence Davidsan, *A Concise History of the Middle East*, (Boulder, CO, Westview Press, 2006).
2. Reinhard Schulze, *A Modern History of the Islamic World*, (London, I.B.Tauris, 2000)
3. Rashid Khalidi, Lisa Anderson, Muhammad Muslim, Reeve S. Simon ed), *The Origins of Arab Nationalism* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1991)
4. Adeed Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003)
5. Weldon Mathews, *Confronting an Empire, Building a Nation: Arab Nationalists and Popular Politics in Mandate Palestine*, (London and New York, I B Tauris, 2006)

---

## **Unit : 2 □ Religion and Politics in West Asia**

---

### **Structure**

#### **2.0 Objectives**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

#### **2.2 Islam & Politics in Turkey**

#### **2.3 Islam & Politics in Saudi Arabia**

#### **2.4 Islam & Politics in Egypt**

#### **2.5 Sample Questions**

#### **2.6 Suggested Reading**

---

### **2.0 Objectives**

---

- To indicate the connection between religion and politics in West Asia.
  - To explore how social movement from below has changed the character of politics in Turkey.
  - To show how Islam is used as an instrument of political legitimization in Sa'udi Arabia.
  - To trace the evolution of Islam as a political language in Egypt.
- 

### **2.1 Introduction**

---

It is frequently taken for granted that religion, (specifically, Islam) plays a major role in the politics of West Asia in a way that it does not in any other part of the modern world. It has been fairly widely believed by observers, such as the historian Bernard Lewis and the political scientist Samuel Huntington that the political dynamics of West Asia is somewhat different from most other regions - viz. at a time when people around the world have moved generally in the direction of democracy, West Asia has languished behind most. Scholars like Huntington



attribute such differential dynamics to cultural peculiarities of the various countries of this region, with particular emphasis being laid on those aspects of Islam that appear antithetical to the notion of popular sovereignty. As Lewis is often in the habit of reminding his readers, what "went wrong" in West Asia was that the people there have remained in the thrall of a religion that does not make room for the concept of popular sovereignty lest it conflicts with belief in the ultimate sovereignty of God.

As frequently is the case with such generic or culture-specific approaches to the understanding of a people, or a region, they are based on assumptions that have much less substance than meets the eye. The peculiarities of the region are conditioned more by historical forces that have given them their modern shape, than by any cultural attributes that they happen to share. It is true that Islam appears to play a large role in the politics of West Asia, but such role is played not so much on account of religion itself (i.e. considerations about the faith) but on account of its instrumental value (i.e. as in political mobilisation, claims of political legitimacy, etc). In other words, there is no necessary connection between the faith of an individual and his political choice -an individual may be a devout and practising Muslim, and yet may not resort to Islam as a political instrument; nor is it necessary that all those who claim to be working in the cause of Islam are necessarily devout Muslims. The use of Islam is a tactical choice that people in West Asia have resorted to from time to time, which has generally proven useful, and occasionally decisive, in course of the 20th century.

The use of Islam as a political instrument or ideology (which is generally referred to for the sake of convenience as **political Islam**) in West Asia in modern politics could be said to have begun towards the close of the 19th century. As the winds of modernisation began to blow in the beleaguered Ottoman Empire, the sections of the society which chose to conserve the existing dispensation and resist change attempted to legitimise their position in the name of the Islamic tradition. When the pre-war political and social order of the Ottomans gave way to completely new nation-states in the wake of the First World War (Turkey,

Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Transjordan), the ideas of territorial nationalism and economic modernisation were embraced by the new political elites that came to the helm. But the fragmentation of the traditional socio-economic space that this involved caused a lot of social dislocation as well, and thus elicited considerable resistance to the agenda of modernisation. Such resistance tended to be mobilised around the banner of Islam, an entity admittedly larger in scope than the fragments of the territorial nations — the politics of resistance in Ottoman successor states like Egypt, Syria and Turkey being good examples of this.

With time, the political language of Islam has evolved from simply the catchment area for social conservatism and reactionary politics. It has been used as a political instrument both by ruling elites and opposition in different countries of West Asia in the 20th century, largely because being the professed religion of a majority of the people in the region it has the ability to cut through other divisions in society (such as class, sect, tribe, ethnicity). Some have sought to use it to attempt to unite the people of a country behind a single "core" around which the idea of the nation-state could congeal - the best example being the house of Ibn Sa'ud, who united a large swathe of territory divided along tribal lines behind the banner of Islam, exemplified in the dynasty's custodianship of the *Harama'in* (the two holy cities of Mecca and Median). Others have used Islam to challenge the very definition of their countries in territorial terms as a nation-state, and have tried to contest the idea of a non-sectarian territorial nation-state with a cultural nationalism where Islam is accorded equal if not greater status in the making of a nation - exemplified by much of the Islamist forces in countries like Turkey, Egypt, Iran and increasingly from the 1980s, Palestine.

In some cases, the political experimentation with Islam has allowed its protagonists to gain and exercise political authority to the exclusion of others (viz. Sa'udi Arabia, Islamic Republic of Iran). Elsewhere protagonists of political Islam have had to jostle with those opposed to it, occasionally coming out triumphant (as in contemporary Turkey) occasionally not (viz. Egypt), and sometimes vacillating in between (as in Lebanon and Syria). In some of these



cases political Islam has come in the form of a social movement from below (as in Lebanon, Turkey and Egypt); elsewhere they may have seized power at an opportune moment (viz. Islamic Republic of Iran), but have held power since then with a grim determination.

It is thus important to understand that there is no unilinear corelation between religion and politics in West Asia. The structural and historical dynamics of the component regions have taken the various countries each along their own particular trajectories. In the sections that follow, we would look at three such case studies : Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

---

## 2.2 Islam and Politics in Turkey

---

The question of the role played by Islam in politics has dominated the political discourse in Turkey from the mid-19th century. Repeatedly worsted in the battlefield by European powers (principally Russia), some members of ruling establishment in the Ottoman Empire had tried to modernise it, introducing a series of reforms known collectively as the *tanzimat*. Central to the assumptions of the reform agenda was the idea that the material superiority of the western countries was on account of their mastery of natural sciences, which the Ottomans would also have to master in order to survive. The programme of modernisation of the empire involved a complete transformation of the society and the economy, and was thus thwarted by vested interests in both, rallying under the banner of Islamic tradition. Having failed to modernise, the Ottoman Empire collapsed in course of the First World War. After being shorn of all its Arab provinces by the treaty of Sevres, the Turkish successor-state came into being under the leadership of Kemal Ataturk driving out Allied forces of occupation. Forged in the battlefield, this definitive Kemalist brand of Turkish nationalism was formulated almost entirely on ethno-linguistic Turkish identity, which abolished the Caliphate (i.e. the titular claim of the Ottoman Sultan to the spiritual leadership of the Sunni Muslims of the world) in March 1924, emphasising the definitively ethno-linguistic character of the newly instituted Republic of Turkey (November 1923).

The Kemalist regime drew its principal support from the upwardly mobile middle and lower middle classes of Turkey (from which Kemal himself hailed), who had benefited from the introduction of western education in the Ottoman Empire, and had found in the civilian bureaucracy and the military both means of livelihood and social status. Accordingly they resumed the task of modernisation of the state begun during Ottoman era, but thwarted yet again by a combination of landed notables and traditionalist vested interests the regime they embarked on an assault on the social bases of traditionalism itself. Since the traditionalist forces of mercantile and landed interests generally mobilised public opinion in the name of Islam, the Kemalist regime decided upon complete secularisation of the public sphere of the Republic of Turkey. In 1925, the traditional headgear - the fez - which bore symbols of social and sectarian distinctions was outlawed, and the European hat was introduced in its stead; the Gregorian calendar replaced the Islamic calendar in 1926; the *Dervish* orders, which represented the more popular variety of Islam that traditionalists often aligned with, were progressively dissolved; most significantly, the Shari'ah was replaced with secular civil (inspired by the Swiss), criminal (Italian) and commercial (Italian and German) codes. This was followed up by the abandonment of the Perso-Arabic alphabet for writing Turkish and its replacement by a new Turkish alphabet derived from the Latin one.

Despite such aggressive attempts at secularisation by the Kemalist regime, Islam could not be fully eliminated from the scope of public life. The secular educational institutions were mostly limited to the urban areas of Turkey, and failed to penetrate the countryside in any big way. This was partly due to resistance from the traditionalists, but also because of the failure of economic modernisation to generate enough economic opportunities in the interwar period - the usefulness of the new educational system was not immediately apparent to a largely illiterate body of peasantry and other country people. The little downward percolation of western education that happened in the interwar period in the countryside was owing to the energy of those among the country-folk who

had received education upon joining the army, and were eager to instruct their fellow country-folk upon returning home.

In the post-1945 era, shortage of capital — the biggest obstacle to the industrialisation and modernisation of Turkish economy - was overcome with massive capital infusions under the Marshall plan. This transformed the countryside by mechanising Turkish agriculture in course of the 1950s and '60s, rendering uncompetitive those poor and marginal farmers who were unable to keep up with such mechanisation. Pushed out of the agrarian economy, such small and marginal farmers often left the rural areas looking for better job opportunities in the towns, which were slowly becoming better destinations for those in search of a livelihood. The decade of the '60s, thus proved to be a period of great social turmoil and economic stagnation for Turkey, allowing the gradual strengthening of what had begun as a very weak and insipid communist movement and Turkey's urban underclass — to the point where Turkish military considered it imperative to stage a coup to prevent sliding into the communist axis.

The '60s was also the time when the Islamist alternative began to acquire its momentum. Failure of western education to penetrate the Turkish countryside did not mean that the country-folk were completely bereft of opportunities of education. Once 'modern' education began to be pushed as the key to employment in the modernising economy, the same religious orders that had earlier resisted the introduction of western education now began to adapt Islamic learning with those subjects that gave modern education the competitive edge in the job market - viz geography, history, mathematics and the natural sciences. The role played by the Nursi order of the Naqshbandi Sufis was particularly notable in this regard.

When the town-ward migrations began, a kind of culture clash followed as people of deeply traditional backgrounds were confronted with a society that was highly secularised. With migrant children and youth feeling alienated from both their traditionalist setting as well as the society around them, they began to drift towards left-wing radicalism. The problem acquired alarming proportions particularly in the Anatolian region, as the casualty rates proved pretty high



between alcohol and drug use and left-wing politics. Attempts were undertaken to stem this rot, the most noticeable and successful one being the Gülen movement, which began from the Anatolian province of Konya and then spread elsewhere. These attempts emerged typically in the form of reading circles where participants were given Islamic reading materials to bind them close as a community, and also providing middling and working class youth with support for academic subjects, opening before them the doors of higher education for the first time. The Islamisation of the Turkish social space on account of the works of the Gülen, Nursi and other such movements gave politics claiming to articulate Islamic values a toehold in Turkish politics.

In the 1970s, regional economy of the Middle East transformed all around Turkey with the spectacular rise in petroleum prices. As demand for manufactured goods shot up in the neighbourhood, powered by petrodollars and remittances, the largely state-controlled Turkish industrial sector failed to respond to this expansion in demand, although the private sector refused to miss the opportunity that came their way. Thus demand for skilled labour grew in regions other than the traditional industrial areas, especially in the regions like Konya, and the Gülen educational venture went quite a distance in making available that skilled labour, unlike the state educational institutions.

The need for political representation by this ascendant petty bourgeois and artisanal class brought into being the *Milli Gorus* (National Outlook) movement of Necmettin Erbakan, speaking for the homogeneous Muslim base of farmers and conservative petty-bourgeois shopkeepers, and about the underdevelopment of Anatolia. Erbakan's discourse was class-based, criticising Kemalist ideology as "alien" and economic policies as "alienating," favouring instead modernisation (industrialisation, better health care, technological improvements) through Turko-Islamic values. Erbakan's economic agenda solicited state-leadership in heavy industry and generous economic credit and machinery support to small and middle-size companies, reducing the scale of western penetration of Turkish economy by means of joint-ventures with Istanbul-based industrialists.



Turkey, however, was not immediately in a position to take advantage of the changing economic landscape around it, and thus, began to experience a lot of disquiet. Considerable street violence was witnessed between left-wing radicals and right-wing nationalist forces, occasioning two military coups in 1971 and 1980. Given the spectacular successes of the socialist camp in the 1970s worldwide, and major reverses for the US-led western bloc culminating in the Islamic Revolution of Iran, the Turkish military came around to the opinion that socialist insurgency posed a much greater threat to the Republic, and decided to go soft towards the votaries of Islamisation.

This is why, by 1983, faced with an economic crisis Ankara embarked on liberalisation under the deeply religious Prime Minister Turgut Ozal (closely associated with the Nursi order) and his Motherland Party, in economics and generally as well. This opened up massive opportunities as private capital and entrepreneurship was allowed a free-run. However, capital was not easily accessible for those outside the charmed circle of Turkey's highly secularised and urban elite; it was particularly difficult for a large section of small entrepreneurs (especially those in the provinces) to gain access to capital that was necessary for their business to expand. A number of initiatives resulted from this need. One of the more important of these was the support Gülen provided. To start with, informal networks for capital mobilisation, by means of setting up financial cooperatives that made available capital for those associated with the movement on the Islam-sanctioned *be-ribah* (interest-free, ie. profit-sharing) basis. The success of the venture was so breathtaking that Ankara was persuaded to amend Turkish law to allow for Islamic banking. The Gülen movement then used its network to reach out to various Turkish expatriate communities in different parts of the world mobilising credit, particularly from Germany. With the capital thus mobilised, the economic landscape of the Anatolian backwaters of Turkey was transformed, generating a very strong stimulating effect in the economy as a whole, and giving birth to a new actor in Turkish politics, the Islamic bourgeoisie.

The changing societal landscape gave a boost to Erbakan and his *Milli Gorus* movement who brought about something like a municipal revolution in the early

1990s. As the head of the newly formed Refah partisi (Welfare Party), Erbakan and his men began winning municipal elections with the agenda of making state resources available for the economic development of the emergent Islamic bourgeoisie. A building boom followed, bringing closely in its wake a massive improvement of the living conditions and municipal amenities alongside a veritable urban revolution. By mid-90s the Refah Partisi proved strong enough to emerge as principal challenger to the secular parties. Heady with victory, Erbakan decided to embark on an aggressive campaign of Islamising the social space, against the better advice of moderates like Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who favoured continuing the actual work of infrastructure development. Predictably, the secular establishment dominated by the military staged another coup in 1997 to take Erbakan out of the political run. Erdogan left the Refah with its moderates and set up the Adalet wa Kalkinima Party (Justice and Development Party), which has won decisive victories since then in general elections in 2002, 2007, 2011 and 2015.

---

### **2.3 Islam and Politics in Sa'udi Arabia**

---

Quite a few countries in the Muslim world claim to be Islamic in their dispensation, (i.e. where Islamic jurisprudence is instituted as the law of the land), and a few of these actually proclaim that ultimate sovereign authority belongs only to Allah. But Sa'udi Arabia is probably the only country in the world which can rightly claim to have had Islam play a role in its very foundation. This does not mean that Saudi Arabia is any more or less Islamic in its belief or practice than any of the other Muslim countries. It merely implies that the profession of Islamic faith by the house of Ibn Sa'ud was instrumental in a decisive way in the foundation of the Sa'udi kingdom, an entity that never existed before the 20th century.

Before the house of Ibn Sa'ud unified a large part of the Arabian peninsula, it had seen no centralised rule for more than a thousand years. Dominating a landscape that is primarily barren or deserts, with little or no land conducive to

agricultural activity capable of supporting large populations, the peninsula had resources neither to support sustained centralised rule, nor to attract any external power in the region. The coastal regions bordering the Red Sea, the Arabian Sea and the Persian Gulf had bustling commercial activities to sustain them, but in the interior of the peninsula pastoral nomadism of the bedouin and marginal farming communities in and around the small patches of green and the oases, and the caravan traders that supplied such scattered settled communities comprised the whole range of economic life. Thus while Hejaz on the Red Sea coast, and the southern coast of the peninsula were coveted by external actors (the Ottomans, the Portuguese, the Dutch and the British), the interior saw the rise and fall of short-lived emirates based in Nejd, Hasa and Asir, trying to form tribal confederations throughout the second millennium - each making war looking for resources, and each failing because of paucity of resources to hold on to power even after acquiring it.

The house of Ibn Sa'ud had established two such emirates (1744-1818, 1824-91) over a coalition of tribal confederations, which proved slightly more durable than most, on account of their alignment with the extremely puritanical Wahhabi sect. Followers of the 18th century thinker 'Abd al-Wahhab, the Wahhabi sect of the Hanbali school of law is among the most fiercely conservative among Sunni Muslims. The sect gained a strong following among the sparse and scattered *hadar* (settled) communities of the northern area of Nejd. The Wahhabis believed that most Muslims had deviated from the true Islamic practices, and that it was imperative on true Muslims to force others to abandon such corrupt practices. The missionary zeal that this provided the Wahhabi clergy provided them with a kind of moral authority, that made the very frugal way of life that was typical of the barren Nejd appear as a religious virtue. The house of Ibn Sa'ud aligned with this Wahhabi sect, and provided cover to the *mutawwain* (a class of religious figures of no great learning, who insist merely on the practice of the faith) in their attempts at 'Islamisation.' The Wahhabi link gave the Sa'udis a kind of legitimacy for political expansion, which allowed them even to run over the two holy cities of



Mecca and Medina in Hejaz before the Ottomans recovered it. Even though the Sa'udi emirates were defeated and broken by first the Ottomans ruling Hejaz and then the house of al-Rashid in Nejd, the Sa'udi-Wahhabi link remained intact.

The Sa'udi comeback in the politics of the peninsula began in 1902, as earlier with the support of the *mutawwain*, but even more importantly with the aid of subsidies from British India. The Raj had entered into political arrangements with virtually every Arab emir on the Arabian side of the Persian Gulf in course of the 19th century, principally with an eye on containing piracy off the Gulf coast - the Sa'udis were no exception. As British relations with the Ottomans soured in the run-up to the First World War, the British authorities began to back Ibn Sa'ud to maintain a foothold in the peninsula in the event of war. The subsidies provided by the Raj gave the Sa'udis steady access to resources, which they deployed in mobilising a body drawn from bedouin warriors from all across the peninsular interior who were willing to follow the Wahhabi version of Islam - these were the formidable *Ikhwan*. Having run over most of the peninsula barring the Trucial emirates and the southern coast, the Sa'udis overran Hejaz in 1926, ousting Hussain, the Hashemite King of Hejaz, who had been propped up by the British as a reward for the Arab Revolt (see previous section). Having thus united most of peninsular Arabia under one rule, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was proclaimed in 1932.

The house of Ibn Sa'ud forged the kingdom by right of conquest, but they have always been careful to derive legitimacy for their rule in their championship of Wahhabi variant of Islam. Having dispossessed Hussain, a direct descendant of the Prophet himself, the Sa'udis sought to establish their Islamic credentials not merely by upholding the Wahhabi Islam, but also by dint of their custodianship of the twin cities of Mecca and Medina - thus being entrusted with the proper and efficient management of not merely some of the holiest places in Islamic lore, but also of the *Hajj*, the annual pilgrimage to Mecca which is incumbent on every able-bodied Muslim at least once in his life. The kingdom accepts God alone as the sovereign authority, and has instituted the Wahhabi variant of Hanbali fiqh as



the foundational postulate of jurisprudence in the country. Islam was accorded this pivotal and definitive role in the shaping of the kingdom because it provided the glue that could hold together the numerous tribes (of which 26 are major); the Wahhabi variant of Islam was championed because the *mutawwain* and the *Ikkwan* alike had tamed much of the opposition from the various tribes by threatening them *with jihad*.

It would be too simplistic to take the Islamic credentials of the kingdom at face value. The peninsula had never seen a kingdom in its entire history, and it was believed that while both emirate (*imara*) and sultanate (*saltanat*) were Islamic forms of government, a kingdom was not. This was in fact the argument raised by the *Ikhwan* during their rebellion in 1927, who favoured a loose confederation of emirates all over the peninsula, with strict implementation of the Wahhabi faith. The first king, 'Abd al-Aziz ibn Sa'ud, however was steadily working towards a resolute centralisation of political authority in his own hands, and successfully thwarted the challenge by the *Ikhwan* by deftly playing the tribal and subvention cards. Marrying into virtually all the tribal formations, and doling out cash transfers for the tribal leaders (provided by British subsidies till the 1930s), Ibn Sa'ud guaranteed that most of the tribal leadership would develop a stake in his survival, to the point of taking on the *Ikhwan* if it came to that. Money was being pumped into the clerical establishment as well, hence there were not many people who questioned the Islamic credentials of Ibn Sa'ud, particularly as he instituted the Wahhabi variant of Islam as the official dispensation.

With the discovery of oil in the 1920s, and the beginning of commercial exploration of oil by the Americans in 1933, the Sa'udi state progressively acquired a kind of solidity as a rentier state that is often difficult to fathom. The earlier relationship of symbiotic dependence between the king and the tribal chieftains - viz. extraction of the social surplus by way of 'Islamic taxes' - was reduced to nothing as the Sa'udi state became incrementally independent of the traditional resources of its subjects during the 1940s and '50s, as the kingdom's income from oil exports began to rise. The tribal chiefs were now increasingly

dependent on the state for handouts, as the state's capacity for patronage increased exponentially — complete and unquestioning loyalty towards the kingdom was the price to be paid.

The exponential growth of oil revenue in the 1950s, and then even more so in the 1960s have completely transformed the kingdom. As the kingdom grew in strength, military and financial, the house of Ibn Sa'ud deftly tempered the pace of the kingdom's entry into the modern era, so that the dislocation brought about by rapid change did not raise the call of "Islam in danger" and broke the kingdom up. The principal beneficiary of the oil boom, King Faysal, whose reign (1964-75) coincided in the main with the oil boom, set the tone by allowing modernisation of technology but tight societal regulation. The significance of the traditional redistributive role of peninsular rulers went on a veritable overdrive, as huge subsidies were made available to loyal Sa'udi subjects -education, health, and social welfare was incrementally heavily subsidised; territorial subventions to the crown were phased out. Gradually attaining complete financial independence from their subjects, the state became less tolerant towards dissent around the same time.

The unprecedented bounty provided by oil completely reworked Sa'udi house's relationship with the religious establishment as well. A major challenge before the Sa'udis was how to usher in modernity without offending the Islamic establishment, as was evident as early as 1926 when having taken Hejaz they debated whether the telegraph system was in accordance with Islam. When oil revenues began to pour in to start with, the house of Sa'ud began to distribute a large part of it among its allies in the Wahhabi clergy, who thus gradually developed an even greater stake than earlier in the Sa'udi establishment. With the coming of the oil boom, prodigiously large resources were pumped into the traditional Islamic seminarian infrastructure, encouraging Sa'udi subjects to take up Islamic learning, contrary to the drift towards modern education away from theological studies elsewhere in the world (including Iran). Since greater enrolment of students in the seminary circuit implied greater subsidies from the state, the clergy fully appreciated that they never had it this good - accordingly

the Sa'udi claim to be gallant champions of the Islamic way of life was amply demonstrated.

Ever since the 70s, the house of Sa'ud has kept investing heavily in the kingdom's infrastructure, improving the communications, education, health and industrial capabilities of the kingdom, bringing about a veritable urban revolution as small settlements have been transformed into urban conurbations, large and small. The communication infrastructure set up around the *ifajj*, and the complete overhauling of the cities of Mecca are considered spectacular by any standards if one compares them with even mid-20th century. Having already invested in the Islamic infrastructure to start with, making **huge** endowments to existing mosques, setting up new ones in the new towns that have come up (hence allowing the clergy to go looking for newer pastures), the house of Sa'ud pre-empted any accusations of deviation from the puritanism that was associated with the Wahhabi ideology.

Having carefully nursed the Wahhabi Islamic establishment, the house of Sa'ud has virtually completely expunged any political space that may have existed in the kingdom for any secular language of politics. Thus, the voices of dissent that surfaced in the kingdom demanding popular sovereignty were hammered into silence throughout the 20th century - demands for even a constitution were dismissed by saying the Qur'an is the constitution. But as the oil boom petered out from the mid-1980s and the Sa'udi state curtailed some of its redistributive excesses, costs of living have begun to rise while economic opportunities have not expanded on account of tardy pace of modernisation of the country. Accordingly, discontent and disaffection has begun to surface once again. The focus of such discontent has generally been on the ostentatious and unIslamic lifestyle of the princes of the house of Sa'ud, and how the resources of the kingdom have not been equitably shared with its subjects. The Sa'udi royal house has always tried to thwart such attempts at questioning of their Islamic credentials by publicly embracing causes popularly identified as 'Islamic' (such as resistance to Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in the 1980s). Sa'udi funding for the spread of Wahhabi school of thought elsewhere, such as training Muslims in *madrasehs* in post-



Soviet Central Asia and countries of South and South-East Asia, has often been motivated by the desire of 'exporting' such critics out of Sa'udi Arabia—Usama bin Laden being the most well known of such examples of exported critics before he turned to violence against the state.

Since the political discourse has been deliberately Islamised by the ruling establishment, the opposition too has resorted to Islamic political discourse to prevent being stifled. Those sections of the Sa'udi society which had flourished on account of the oil boom had themselves invested in the Islamic establishment of the kingdom by setting up mosques and *madraseshs*. Such patronage won for them the support of a section of the '*ulema*'. When the boom years phased out, the clerical clients and their wealthy patrons demanded greater accountability from the government in the use of the kingdom's resources. Such social groups comprise the two organisations Committee for Defence of legitimate Rights (CDLR) and Movement for Islamic Reform in Arabia (MIRA) that have dominated the discourse of the Islamic opposition in the kingdom in the 1990s.

The relative success of the discourse of Islamic reform came from the time of the first Gulf War of 1991 (where Riyadh bankrolled US military endeavour), as Sa'udi finances acquired a dreadful shape. Going for the jugular, the opposition resumed its demand for constitutional checks on the government, leading to the first major concession from the crown - the promulgation of Basic Laws (described as an elaboration of rules that are derived from, but not covered in, the Qur'an). A steady slew of reforms have since then kept on coming, where demands earlier dismissed as unislamic began to be steadily accommodated - constitution of a consultative council (*al-Majlis al-Shoura*) introduction of the elective principle at the level of municipal administration, and allowing women entry into the political arena (2015) happen to be important landmarks.

---

## 2.4 Islam and Politics in Egypt

---

Somewhat like Turkey, political Islam In Egypt has to confront with a very strong secular political tradition, and thus has developed as a strong social



movement from below. Unlike Sa'udi Arabia and Turkey, political Islam is yet to hold power for any length of time - the longest stint it had was during the presidency of Mohammad Mursi after the 2011 Tahrir Square revolution. Interestingly, therefore, the language of political Islam has evolved into the principal discourse of opposition in Egypt, and possibly the most evolved such language next only to the discourse of Islamic opposition to Iran before 1979.

Egypt was the earliest among the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire to be exposed to the penetrative force of western colonial power, as also of the dynamics of modernisation unleashed by them. Under Muhammad 'Ali Pasha, Egypt began to drift away from its Ottoman links and gravitated closer to the western colonial orbit, to the extent that Britain imposed its military control over the land in 1882, and formally established a protectorate over it upon the outbreak of the First World War. Ever since 1882, however, British occupation was steadfastly resisted by a section of the Egyptian society, including those that favoured modernisation of Egypt. Under British occupation, the pace of modernisation picked up and accelerated the rise of a western educated middle class who were determined to modernise Egyptian economy but not keep the land colonised. Grouped under the nationalist Wafd party, these represented the forces of secular modernism similar to their Turkish counterparts.

Having struggled against British colonial power, the Wafd nationalists compromised in the 1920s and 1930s by upholding an economic order where traditional landed elite and the urban professional and commercial middle class domination came at the price of not challenging vested western interests. The most crucial among such interests was the British strategic presence in the Suez Canal. This period of secular nationalism was dominated by a preoccupation about "building" the Egyptian nation, involving quite a bit of investment in educational infrastructure and industries that would not threaten western interests in Egypt. The changed economic landscape severely damaged the traditional economic sector, both on account of the fragmentation of the Ottoman economic space as also rise of a new economic elite as a handmaiden of western economic interests.

By the 1940s, Egypt had witnessed the rise of an educated middle and lower middle class of suburban and country origins who, in absence of any significant expansion of economic opportunities, found in the Egyptian military its only available vehicle of upward social mobility. This newly emerged class of educated military professionals was deeply resentful continued British influence in Egypt, which found its voice in the Free Officers coup under Nasser, who toppled the regime headed by King Farouk in 1953. Nasser not only ended urban middle class and traditional elite domination of Egyptian politics, to his credit, he also steered Egypt away from the ex-colonial orbit at the price even of a war (the Suez Crisis of 1956). When his attempts at mobilising capital from the international market failed, Nasser launched his famed project of Arab socialism. Deeply suspicious of the potentially subversive character of capital, he nationalised almost all major industrial ventures in Egypt.

After the failure of Nasser's Arab socialist experiment, his successor President Sadat ushered in a new era (1970-81). A former associate of Nasser, Sadat in the 1970s launched the policy of *infitah* (opening up) of the Egyptian economy to industrial capitalism. He reduced the stakes of the Egyptian state in the industrial sector, allowing entry of private capital and even foreign capital. Nevertheless, he allowed companies run by the military to retain the predominant position they had come to acquire under Nasser.

Mubarak continued with the policy of *infitah*, relaxing controls on private and foreign capital, yet allowing the military to continue its domination of the industrial landscape. He even defied the IMF's recommendation in the 1980s to reducing state military control over industry by merely handing over some civilian public sector undertakings to the military. He thus preserved the same balance in favour of capitalist forces albeit under strict regulation, allowing private capital to invest only in areas where it offers no substantive competition to the industrial ventures run by the military, and preventing the rise of any large private industrial conglomerate. This trend was reinforced by Mubarak's liberalisation of the Egyptian economy in the early 1990s.

However, the economic condition of Egypt has remained the soft underbelly of the regime, particularly in the background of the changing social character of the country. In course of the 20th century, Egyptian agriculture has steadily become moribund, pushing people out of the countryside and causing a veritable urban explosion. As industry failed to generate adequate employment opportunities and multiplier effects in the economy, they led to social tensions of the sort that culminated in the Nasserite revolution.

Historically, Islam had been deployed by some traditionalist forces in Egypt, as elsewhere in the Middle East, from the very beginning of its encounter with western imperialism in the 19th century. But the phenomenon of political Islam that has come to challenge the existing political regimes in the Middle East is a distinctively 20th century phenomenon, responding to problems originating in the 20th century. The problem of overcrowding of cities, and the need to house, feed and provide for the swelling ranks of the urban masses resulted in the rise of the most influential symbol of political Islam in the 20th century, the Ikhwan al-Muslimin, founded by Hasan al-Banna in 1928. The Ikhwan was set up to cater to a social constituency of migrants from sub-urban and rural Egypt, either illiterate or educated within the traditional educational apparatus of madreshs, who had to take up low-skilled jobs in the modern economic sectors. The Ikhwan gained considerable influence beginning in the 1930s by opposing Jewish immigration into Palestine (following the Balfour Declaration of 1917), as a large number of Palestinians displaced by the growing Jewish settlements came to Egypt and threatened precisely the same social constituency that the Ikhwan catered to. Dismayed by the policy of the Egyptian government, both toward Palestine and its own country, the Ikhwan aided Nasser during the 1952 uprising.

The repression unleashed by Nasser's regime resulted in the development of a militant dimension in the Ikhwan under Sayyid Qutb, beginning in the 1960s. The violence that erupted unleashed even harsher repression, resulting in the imprisonment and execution of Qutb himself. In 1967, Emergency Laws were introduced to stem the tide of rising Islamist militancy, that remained in force



intermittently till 2011. The repression continued under Sadat, even though Sadat occasionally relaxed the strictures on Islamists hoping to play them off against the left-wingers in Egyptian politics who were opposed to the *infitah* and meant to develop a stronger constituency among the underclass. This relaxation of the vigil eventually contributed to the assassination of Sadat by a soldier during a parade, as a retribution against his normalisation of ties with Israel.

It was Mubarak who finally broke the back of the militant wing of the Ikhwan in the early 1990s with relentless repression, alternated with some space for the more moderate elements. Behind the cover of the Emergency Laws, Mubarak made it virtually impossible for the Ikhwan to operate with the kind of ease that characterised the closing years of Sadat's rule. Although the more militant elements among the Islamists functioned in the form of groups like the Gama'a al-Islamiyya and al-Jihad al-Islami, continuing to carry out sensational outrages like the killing of Coptic Christians and foreign tourists in Luxor in 1997, by the early 1990s the militant wing of the Ikhwan was a spent force for all practical purposes.

This however did not mean that the Ikhwan itself was broken by Sadat and Mubarak. All through the militant phase, a large segment of the Ikhwan had continued to provide basic civic and social services (such as health, education, housing, livelihood, welfare for the indigent, infirm, widows and orphans, etc.) to the urban Egyptian underclass - services that should have been provided by the Egyptian state itself. In the 1980s, a new wave of Islamic movements began in the middling echelons of the Egyptian society, among the professionals returning from the Gulf states. Partially inspired by a stricter notion of the practice of Islam and of Islamic values dealing with a sense of entitlements of the faithful in an Islamic order, and partially determined to raise the standard of living of the people, such returning professionals began to interrogate the secularist and paternalistic dispensation of the Egyptian state. Joining the Ikhwan, this new generation of Islamic activists began to penetrate all professional associations (such as those of lawyers, doctors, engineers, academics) that the Egyptian state



allowed to exist, democratised the associations and successfully created a space for Islam in the public space. These associations became even more significant to the cause of a social revolution along Islamic lines when the regime allowed elections at various levels of local government in the 1990s, as a large number of outfits emerged without any formal affiliation with the Ikhwan, nevertheless pushing its larger social agenda.

This coincided with a rearguard action mounted at al-Azhar by Gad al-Haq 'Ali Gad al-Haq, the Grand Mufti (1981-96), making Islam a powerful tool of opposition to the government. The Islamic University of al-Azhar used to be *the* major centre of Sunni learning for centuries on end, till it was nationalised during Nasserite rule. As the secularist state robbed al-Azhar of its intellectual autonomy, the prestige of al-Azhar began to decline somewhat even as new centres of Islamic learning began to emerge in Cairo, Damascus, Beirut, Zaytuna. To revive al-Azhar's prestige, Gad al-Haq launched an offensive in reinstating the traditionalist version of Islam at al-Azhar by appointing like-minded Islamic scholars, breaking free of the statist posture that had come to characterise the institution from 1960s. This resulted in an increasing number of occasions when al-Azhar has come out in opposition to directives of the state in a bid "to shield the society from evil and guiding it towards faith." Thus, the space opened up for Islam by civil society free from state control was broadened in its scope by the reassertion of al-Azhar.

Civil society in Egypt began to be Islamised with the penetration of the Islamists, such as of the Ikhwan, in public offices, civil society organisations like social, cultural and professional associations, NGOs, print and electronic media, etc. Asef Bayat, an Iranian sociologist, calls this process 'Islamisation without an Islamic state'. He notices a 'decline of the core' i.e. militant wing of the Ikhwan and militant outfits like al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya, accompanied by the rise of a 'fragmented' Islamic space. The process of Islamisation could not be stopped because there was no frontal attack on the authority of the state, but the steady advances made by the Islamists were readily discernible. Bayat for instance shows

that the health centres, educational and other public services run by Islamists in accordance with Islamic principles amounted virtually to a parallel authority in the relatively poorer southern part of the city of Cairo. This model of civil society organisations working among the underclass resulted in the creation of a virtual social security net for a large segment of the people. Such activities were depicted as being in consonance with the Islamic notion of al-fitr (charitable works). A corresponding growth in the media presence of public intellectuals and media personalities like Hasan Hanifa and Amr Khalid played an influential role in drawing even middle and upper class Egyptians into the ambit of this Islamic civil society.

In 2011, when the Egyptian people rose up against the tyranny of Mubarak regime, the Islamists led by the *Ikhwan* were initially found to stand at a politically advantageous position, in the sense they were the only outfit with an organised apparatus left standing after years of repression. The election of Muhammad Mursi to the presidency of Egypt and a working majority on the floor of the house of the Egyptian parliament bore this out. But, the Egyptian society is deeply divided, as are Egyptian Islamists (the *Ikhwan* represents the urban constituency alone), and any attempt at a determined Islamisation of the public space was bound to be counter-productive - as it happened when in 2014 Mursi was overthrown and military rule was reinstalled with support of the secularists.

---

## 2.5 Sample Questions

---

### Essay Type Questions

1. How do you account for the ascendancy of Islam in Turkish politics in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century?
2. Is it correct to say that the Sa'udi regime owes its power more to oil than it does to Islam?
3. Islam is witnessing a veritable social movement from below in contemporary Egypt, despite the contestation in its political arena. — Comment.

### Short Questions

1. What role has Wahhabism played in cementing the authority of the House of Ibn Sa'ud?
2. Why did secularism lose its attraction for the people in Turkey?
3. How do you account for the success of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt?

### Very Short Questions

1. How significant were tribal alliances in laying the foundations of Sa'udi power?
2. What role did the Islamic networks play in Turkey's urban revolution?
3. How has the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt evolved over time?

---

### 2.6 Suggested Reading

---

1. Reinhard Schulze, *A Modern History of the Islamic World.*, (London, LB.Tauris, 2000)
2. Arthur Goldschmidt, *A Brief History of Egypt*, (New York, Facts on file, 2001)
3. Madawi al-Rashid, *A history of Saudi Arabia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010)
4. Feroz Ahmad, *Making of Modern Turkey*, (London: Routledge, 1993)
5. Umut Azak, *Islam and Secularism in Turkey; Kemalism, Religion and the Nation State*, (London I.B. Tauris, 2010)



---

## **Unit : 3 □ The Politics of Oil in West Asia**

---

### **Structure**

#### **3.0 Objectives**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

#### **3.2 The Politics of oil in West Asia**

#### **3.3 Formation of OAPEC & its organisation**

#### **3.4 Oil & Politics since the 1970s**

#### **3.5 Sample Questions**

#### **3.6 Suggested Reading**

---

### **3.0 Objectives**

---

- To introduce the basics of the global trade in oil and the politics around it.
- To show how the market dominance shifted from the oil companies to the oil exporting countries.
- To discuss the role played by OAPEC in the global oil trade.
- To give a sense of the changes that have occurred in the oil market since the 1970s.

---

### **3.1 Introduction**

---

West Asia has a little over half of the proven global reserve of petroleum and natural gas, and accounts for more than half of the global production and export of oil and gas at present. This makes the region one of the pivots of the global economy, and makes stability in the region a pressing concern for global politics even for countries that do not belong to the neighbourhood. Accordingly, oil and gas have played a dual role in the politics of West Asia. The region has drawn the interest and attention of major powers from around the world whose primary interest is in ensuring steady supply of chief energy resources from West Asia.



Neither have the countries of West Asia been successful in ridding themselves of the external actors, because these are also essential in the region's ability to explore, extract and export its resources in the global market. Such persistent external presence has often decisively influenced the trajectories of development of the component countries of the region, and has frequently come in the way of organic growth of institutions in the region. But this has also made the outside world fairly, if only reluctantly, receptive towards the concerns of the people or governments of the region, which gives the West Asian countries a kind of leverage few other regions possess outside the developed world.

---

### 3.2 The Politics of Oil in West Asia

---

Owing to the very nature of the oil industry, despite having nearly three-fifths of the global oil reserves, the oil rich countries of West Asia do not enjoy the kind of domination of the market as the figures would suggest. Oil was discovered in huge quantities in the early years of the 20th century in West Asia, but the technology required for exploration (i.e. the process by which oil is searched out), extraction (the process by which it is taken out from the underground or underwater deposits) and distribution (the process by which it is taken all around the world where it could be refined and then used) was of such an order that the western companies (mostly British, American, Dutch) were the only serious players in the business at the time oil was discovered in West Asia. Since then, a few non-European players have entered the field over a period of time (such as Sinopec and CNPC of China). Yet even then the oil majors, known collectively as Seven Sisters, continue to wield a disproportionate share of the global trade in oil.<sup>1</sup>

The earliest use of oil as a major energy source for industrial economies began almost simultaneously in Europe and America, looking for substitute for

---

1 The seven companies that have come to constitute Seven Sisters have changed over time. Most of these companies have tended to be American - such as Exxon, Mobil, Caltech, Chevron, Texnaco, etc - which have often merged with other dominant players. The major non-American oil majors are British Petroleum and Royal Dutch Shell.

coal. With some of the major discoveries being made on American mainland, US companies had stolen an early edge in the global oil industry. The British oil industry had its first major break in the Kingdom of Persia, where it set up the Anglo-Persian Oil Corporation (later to become BP) which began exporting oil in 1913. The discovery of oil in Persia encouraged exploration elsewhere in the Persian Gulf as well, with the British leading such prospecting missions. By the time World War One came to a close in 1918 it was reasonably clear that the Ottoman region of Mesopotamia would have similar oil reserves, as would its southern-most appanage of Kuwait. The British acquired the Mandate for the Mesopotamian regions of Baghdad, Basra and Mosul, which they constituted into the kingdom of Iraq, and after detaching the emirate of Kuwait, over which they established their protectorate which was dissolved only in 1961 - both the newly constituted states were opened to exploration by an international consortium, the Turkish Petroleum Company (TPC), dominated by the British and the French. American Companies, however, keen on entering the oil arena in West Asia demanded to be included, and the European companies agreed that it made better sense to work together rather than against each other.

Accordingly, on July 31, 1928, following the discovery of an immense oil field in Iraq, representatives from the APOC, Royal Dutch/Shell, the French Compagnie Francaise des Petroles (CFP, later Total), and the American consortium Near East Development Corporation (NEDC) signed the Red Line Agreement in Ostend, Belgium. Under the terms of the agreement, each of the four received a 23.75% share of all the crude oil produced by TPC, which was allowed to operate anywhere in the Middle East between the Suez Canal and Iran, with the exception of Kuwait. The most important feature of the Red Line Agreement, however, was its 'self-denying' clause. It stipulated that the participating companies would agree not to develop oilfields within the territory comprising the TPC unless they secured the support of the other members.

The last clause was crucial. In seeking entry into the oil sector in West Asia, the most significant leverage enjoyed by the European and American companies

was the complete absence of the technology required for exploration in the region. Thus the initial exploration rights, such as those sought by the D'Arcy in Persia and Frank Holmes in Mesopotamia, were sought on very favourable terms for the companies, with only a pittance being offered by way of royalties in the event of eventual discovery and sale. Since none of the numerous emirates around the Gulf were particularly solvent, whatever payment was made initially by way of exploratory concessions (and thereafter royalties), made significant addition to the coffers of the states. The lion's share of the profits, after absorbing all costs, were retained by the oil companies. In such a lucrative business, the mere existence of competitors would have given the states fanning out such concessions much greater bargaining power. Accordingly, once the oil potential of the Gulf region became clear, the Red Line Agreement was signed precipitately to ensure the domination of the market by the oil majors continued in the foreseeable future.

The Red Line arrangement made investment in West Asian oil phenomenally lucrative since oil reserves of the region were susceptible of much easier exploration (than say in the oilfields of North America and the Russian north), and therefore cheaper in terms of costs. Since the per unit cost of exploring, extracting and distribution in West Asia was significantly less than what it cost elsewhere, per unit returns on investment in West Asian oil could be kept very high indeed since the primary owners of the resources (the emirates and kingdoms farming these out) were being paid peanuts - Persia was being paid less than 5% of the gross profits for the first 20 years.

But despite the Red Line arrangement, domination by the concerned oil majors proved open to two types of problems, it could not keep non-member companies from seeking concessions within the area covered by the TPC (which was renamed the Iraqi Petroleum Company in 1929). In 1928, Socal secured a concession to search for oil in Bahrain and, in 1933, they managed to gain another concession from the Saudi Government that encompassed the province of al-Hasa. In 1936, the Texas Oil Company purchased a 50% share within the California Arabian Standard Oil Company (the Saudi subsidiary of Socal, which was



renamed Aramco in 1944) in order to further develop Socal's concession within Saudi Arabia. The Red Line Agreement collapsed after Socal and Texaco invited Jersey Standard and Socony to join them as partners in Aramco in 1946, but the latter two were barred from doing so under the terms of the Red Line Agreement unless they invited the other members of the TPC to join them. Consequently, Jersey Standard and Socony joined the U.S. Government in pressuring the other members of the IPC to abrogate the terms of the Red Line Agreement, whose boundaries were now redrawn to exclude Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Bahrain, Egypt, Israel, and the western-half of Jordan.

The second problem pertained to the share of royalties paid to the ruling dispensations in the area. The West Asian kingdoms, emirates and potentates had farmed out concessions for oil first because they had no idea of the existence of the reserves, or even their value, and then because they did not have the know-how. As Persian oil entered the global market, and oil was discovered in Iraq (1927), the ruling dispensations became aware of its promise. Tehran tried to negotiate its share of the royalties in 1933, and although it did not get as much as it hoped, the upward revision of its share was considerable enough to launch a programme of state-led industrial development and modernisation under Reza Shah Pahlavi. By the time World War Two came to an end, there was widespread awareness of how the oil companies were depriving the oil-rich countries of their rightful share of the proceeds of the oil trade, culminating in the abortive Iranian attempt at nationalisation of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Corporation (AIOC, formerly APOC) in 1952-53.

Although Iran's bid to establish control over the sale of Iranian oil failed, it made it clear that oil companies wielded disproportionately large influence in the global oil market. As the volume of Saudi and Iraqi oil exports began to grow, they too became mindful of this influence. The unilateral reduction of 10% of the price of Middle Eastern and Venezuelan oil in 1959 angered the oil exporting countries, particularly Sa'udi Arabia, because it reduced their corresponding royalties. A second such unilateral price cut in 1960 brought together Iran, Iraq,



Kuwait, Venezuela and Sa'udi Arabia to set up a cartel of oil exporting countries the OPEC (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries), later joined by Qatar (1961), Libya, (1962), and UAE (1967) among others.

OPEC began to operate as an informal bargaining unit for oil-rich third-world countries, confining its activities till the mid-60s to gaining a larger share of the profits generated by oil companies and greater control over member production levels. In the early 1970s, the Arab members of OPEC, who came to organise themselves as the Organisation of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) began to exert economic and political strength, triggering a crisis that made the oil companies and importing nations suddenly confront a unified exporter bloc that had effectively wrested control over the supply of oil.

---

### **3.3 Formation of OAPEC and its organisation**

---

The basic idea behind the foundation of the OAPEC can be traced back to the oil blockade of 1967. On 5th June 1967, the Egyptian President Nasser fulminated against Israel's invasion of Egypt and Syria and Israel's support from the West at the beginning of the Six Day War, exhorting the Arab countries to use the "oil weapon". A day later the Arab oil exporting countries obliged, having decided to stop oil exports to those countries who militarily supported the Israelis in the ongoing war with its Arab neighbours. The Baghdad Resolution of 9th June was passed denying "Arab oil" directly or indirectly participating or supporting any aggression on any Arab territory. Although the blockade was imposed reluctantly (to avert public outrage in the Arab streets) and did not last very long (brought effectively to an end by the Khartoum Resolution of September 1, 1967), it made it clear that the Arab oil exporting states could use the supply of oil as a bargaining chip in the politics of oil.

The 1967 oil embargo, ironically, was called upon by Arab countries that did not export any oil. While all Arab governments opposed Israel, the cost of attacking Israel with the oil weapon fell almost entirely on Arab oil exporters. This asymmetry made non-oil exporters much more enthusiastic about applying

the oil weapon than oil exporters. Traditionally, the oil rich Arab countries tended to be swamped by these in the Arab League. They resented losing income to non-Arab oil exporters, and control over their economies and foreign policies to mostly non-oil exporting Arab countries. They felt isolated in the OPEC as well where Venezuela and Iran tended to call the shots quite often, and gained from the Arab decision to not sell oil to the west by supplying some of the shortfall. However, an important lesson was learnt in 1967. Two months of cut-backs in oil production pushed oil prices upwards. Accordingly, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Libya set out to establish the Organisation of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) in 1968 to bring about tighter policy coordination among the Arab oil exporting nations.

OAPEC was originally intended to be a conservative Arab political organization which, by restricting membership to countries whose main export was oil, would exclude governments seen as radical such as Egypt and Algeria. This organizational exclusivity was bolstered by an additional rule in the organization's charter requiring the three founders' approval of all new members. The original aim was to control the economic weapon of potential oil embargo and prevent its use caused by popular emotion. Iraq initially declined to join, preferring to work under the umbrella of the Arab League considering OAPEC too conservative. Equally the three founders considered Iraq too radical to be desirable as a member. However, by early 1972, the criteria for admission changed to oil being a significant source, rather than the principal source of revenue of a prospective member nation and Algeria (1970), Iraq (1972), Syria (1972) and Egypt (1973) had been admitted alongside the oil-rich Bahrain (1970), Qatar (1970), and United Arab Emirates (1970). Consequently the OAPEC became a much more activist organization, contrary to the original intention.

OAPEC flourished in tandem with OPEC as an organisation beginning in 1969, when after the Libyan revolution, the Muammar Gaddafi regime successfully revised its share of the royalties upwards, followed by Tehran achieving the same the next year. Other OPEC member countries began

following suit, opening negotiations aimed at establishing control of the producer countries over the oil majors.

1973 proved a turning point for the OAPEC. In October that year, the combined forces of Egypt and Syria launched an offensive against the state of Israel, later known as the Yom Kippur War. On 16 October, after President Nixon called upon the Congress to make available \$2.2 billion in aid to Israel, OAPEC instituted an oil embargo on the United States. Kuwait hosted separate meetings of both OAPEC and the Persian Gulf members of OPEC including Iran. OAPEC resolved to cut oil production 5% monthly "until the Israeli forces are completely evacuated from all the Arab territories occupied in the June 1967 war." The embargo lasted for some five months before it was lifted in March 1974 after negotiations at the Washington Oil Summit. For the oil exporting countries, the embargo was the first instance of the exercise of their ability to leverage their production for political gains. These cuts nearly quadrupled the price of oil from \$2.90 a barrel before the embargo to \$11.65 a barrel in January 1974. In March 1974, amid disagreements within OAPEC on how long to continue the punishment, the embargo was officially lifted. The higher oil prices, on the other hand, remained. A number of the member nations would use this sense of control to renegotiate the contracts they had made with the companies that had discovered and exploited their resources. This marked, in effect, the end of the era of control by oil majors, and the rise of ascendancy of the oil producing countries in its stead.

There was an important factor that helped the Oil Price Revolution of 1973. The embargo of 1967 did not prove particularly effective against the western companies because they were by and large able to offset their production cut-backs in West Asia with increased production elsewhere, particularly in the Americas, and especially USA. But the closure of Suez Canal compelled oil tankers coming from the Gulf to make much longer journeys around Africa, vastly increasing transit time and costs. The closure of the canal created an effective tanker shortage with respect to oil shipments to Europe from the Gulf. This drove



the prices upwards in an irreversible manner. By 1973, global demand for oil was increasing relentlessly, and US production had peaked by then. Hence, when the OAPEC embargo kicked in, the industrial countries had no other direction to turn to looking for alternative supplies. The leverage that the oil producing countries had thus come to acquire proved to be qualitatively more significant than the one that the oil majors had enjoyed. Within a decade, virtually all the major oil producing countries of West Asia and elsewhere had established veritable sovereign control over both oil production and oil trade, beginning to enjoy the lion's share of the profits.

---

### **3.4 Oil and Politics since the 1970s**

---

Ironically the vastly increased revenues would prove addictive, and a unified OAPEC oil embargo was never again possible. The exponential rise in the price of oil in the 1970s enabled most of the Middle Eastern rentier states not merely to remain independent of their people in seeking resources for running the state, it also enabled the states to spend lavishly in order to develop core constituencies of supporters behind the regimes as they became more authoritarian. Beginning in the 1970s, the share of government expenditure tended to rise between thirty and fifty per cent of the GDP of most of the Gulf states, reaching as high as 74% in Saudi Arabia in 1984. The only exception to this is the government of the UAE, spending on an average between 12 and 15% of GDP, which also happens to be the Gulf state where authoritarianism is least pronounced. The oil-rich states also began to provide the "substitution effect" required to stimulate the non-oil sector of the economy of these states, creating demand in real estate, construction, infrastructure development, etc. The citizenry of the oil-rich states are, in a way, given plenty of material advantages to encourage silence on matters dealing with the dispensation of power in the state. On account of such high expenditure, the room for manoeuvre of the West Asian oil exporting countries are much less than they were in the 1970s because of their dependence on high levels of revenue. The OAPEC, or indeed any other oil exporting country, would not be able to think of a kind of oil embargo without scaling down its own expenditures domestically.



The organisation has thus progressively lost its leverage to the OPEC, where much greater coordination has become possible through systematic attempts at pro-rationing (i.e. allocating its member states with specified production quotas) involving even non-Arab producers. The AOPEC began to lose its leverage progressively from the 1990s, as Iran - a major non-AOPEC producer - came back into the market after its war with Iraq through the 1980s, while supplies from Iraq - an AOPEC member - were interrupted by the two Gulf Wars and the sanctions regime in between. The pivotal force behind both OPEC and OAPEC, the kingdom of Sa'udi Arabia continues to exercise great leverage with respect to global oil prices. Riyadh, capable of producing over 10 million barrels per day produces much less, keeping its spare capacity intact. In case of a sudden surge in demand, the Sa'udis function as a swing producer and meet the excess demand with its spare productive capacity. This was one of the principal reasons of a kind of relative stability in global oil prices through the 1990s.

As the rate of exhaustion of the proven reserves have outpaced discovery of new ones in most of the smaller Gulf States (viz. Bahrain, Qatar and Libya), OAPEC has progressively lost its effectiveness even as a bloc capable of affecting global supplies in the medium-to-long terms. Divisions within the OPEC have further contributed to weakening of both OPEC and OAPEC. In the 1990s, Iran (non-OAPEC) and Libya (OAPEC member) together pressed for less oil production looking for greater unit price, while Riyadh favoured higher oil production to keep the per unit cost low. In an even greater setback for the West Asian oil producing countries, the steady recovery of the Russian oil industry (after two decades of relative decline) and Moscow's outpacing of Riyadh as the largest exporter of oil and gas in the world, Sa'udis have lost their relative edge in the global oil market despite having much greater reserves. Even the return of Iraq to normal production schedule by 2017 and the prospective removal of sanctions against Iran is unlikely to offset the steady growth of non-OPEC and non-AOPEC oil producers like Russia. Perhaps the greatest blow to OPEC (and

AOPEC) domination of the global market in oil has been struck with the discovery of shale oil and the phenomenal reserves that USA has of these. This alone has pushed oil prices down globally by the largest margin since 1967, pushing down revenue of major oil producing countries of West Asia.

In the light of all these factors driving the politics of oil in the beginning of the 21st century, it can be said without any fear of contradiction that OAPEC is extremely unlikely to regain the leverage it once enjoyed in the global oil trade in the early 1970s.

---

### **3.5 Sample Question**

---

#### **Essay Type Questions**

1. How do you account for the domination of the global market by the oil companies in the first half of the twentieth century?
2. Why did the oil exporting countries of the Arab world work towards the foundation of the OAPEC?
3. Do you notice any shift in the global market of oil since the 1970s?

#### **Short Questions**

1. Why did oil prices rise sharply between 1967 and 1973?
2. What is the Red Line Agreement? Why was it concluded?
3. What was the rationale behind Nassers idea of 'oil blockade'? Why did the Sa'udis promote it after the Nasser era?

#### **Very Short Questions**

1. What is the OAPEC? Why was it needed over and above the OPEC?
2. What are the Seven Sisters?

---

### 3.6 Suggested Reading

---

1. Nicholas Parra, *Oil Politics : A modern history of Petroleum*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004)
2. Oystein Noreng, *Crude Power: Politics and the Oil Market*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007)
3. William Engdahl, *A Century of War Anglo-American Oil Politics and the New World Order*, (London, Pluto, 1992)
4. John M. Blai, *The Control of Oil* (New York, Pantheon Books, 1976)

---

## **Unit : 4 □ Politics of Regionalism and Regional Associations**

---

### **Structure**

- 4.0 Objectives**
- 4.1 Introduction**
- 4.2 The Arab League**
- 4.3 The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO)**
- 4.4 Organisation of Islamic Cooperation/Conference (OIC)**
- 4.5 The Gulf Cooperation Council**
- 4.6 The Arab Cooperation Council**
- 4.7 Sample Questions**
- 4.8 Suggested Reading**

---

### **4.0 Objectives**

---

- To introduce the complexity of regionalism in West Asia.
- To discuss the evolution of the Arab League.
- To familiarise the reader with the nature and evolution of the PLO.
- To give a brief sketch of the QIC, GCC, and the ACC.

---

### **4.1 Introduction**

---

In the post-1945 world politics, as international relations of countries tended to become truly global, multilateral diplomacy emerged as more effective in many respects in being able to rise above narrow particular differences among states, and confront more meaningfully problems that affect a number of states in a larger neighbourhood, i.e. a region. In this sense, West Asia as a region can be



said to have given the slip to a major feature of the evolution of international politics in the twentieth century. Middle Eastern countries are generally found to resort to highly traditional considerations revolving around the security of their individual states, despite the widely held perception that the various component states enjoy a degree of social, economic and cultural congruence rare in the modern world. In an age when security considerations have increasingly tended to transcend political boundaries, such resilience of statism and the relative neglect of any major drive for regional security does not sit easily with global developments. However, given the manner in which the region has evolved in the 20th century, such deviation in the trajectory would be comprehensible.

As the integrative dynamics of shared geographical and cultural experience began to be reinforced by the emergence of a largely oil-driven economy in the second half of the twentieth century, more and more people and ideas began to move within, as much as to and from, the region. Inevitably attendant upon such infra-regional movements, the nature of threats to security and threat perceptions also tended to become trans-national and intra-regional in their character. Only in this sense has security become a regional concern meaningful in the West Asia. However, in view of the fact that many of the state frontiers within the region are not quite settled, states have historically been wary of any durable or extensive security cooperation with their neighbours over any extended period of time.

Accordingly, regionalism has not penetrated very deep into the marrow of politics in West Asia. Regional associations have tended to remain fewer over the years than almost any other region in the world (perhaps barring Africa), and even when they have been set up, they have not had the kind of impact regional associations have had in most other regions of the world. One factor behind this could be the fact that the region has a higher concentration of regional actors of near-equal powers (Egypt, Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia) - who are, thus, too strong to follow the lead of any other near-equal power, but not strong enough to lead them either. A second factor happens to be their relentless attempts to jostle with each

other for regional leadership (viz. between Egypt and Iraq in the 1950s and '60s, between Iraq and Iran, Saudi Arabia and Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Iran, etc). Hence, by means of a kind of inverted logic, regional associations in West Asia tend to be more effective and focussed the fewer members they have (viz. GCC), led by only of the regional actors, and begin to be less effective the larger the number of regional powers involved (viz. OIC).

In the sections that follow, we would be looking at some of the organisations that have tried to bring together West Asian countries under the regional matrix. These are the Arab League, the PLO, GCC, OIC and Arab Cooperation Council.

---

## 4.2 The Arab League

---

The Arab League is probably the only organisation that was motivated by a desire to keep the Arab political space together. Coming into being during World War II, the League was partly a response to the popular desire for keeping the Arab political space from being completely disintegrated, and thus hopes of Arab nationalism [See Unit 1] completely dashed, and partly an attempt at putting back the Arab economic space shattered by the rise of nation-states. Starting with only six members in 1945, the Arab League has expanded to have 22 members, and 4 observer states, from all over the Arab World. The League is a political organization which aims to help integrate its members economically, and purports to resolve issues among its member countries without having recourse to countries outside it.

The Arab League had its origins in a series of initiatives that culminated in the Alexandria Protocols of 1944, which followed British encouragement for closer Arab cooperation during World War II. Confronted with the impending question of Palestine, where the creation of a Jewish state seemed a strong possibility at that date, the various Arab countries found in the plight of the Palestinians the clearest evidence that (outside) western powers could get away with anything in the Arab world so long as the Arabs were divided. The six

founder members (Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Transjordan, Saudi Arabia and Lebanon) accordingly favoured the creation of a platform that would prevent just such division among the Arabs, and allow them to present a united front to the non-Arabs. They renounced violence for the settlement of conflicts between members and empowered League offices to mediate in such disputes, as well as in those with non-members. Signatories agreed to collaborate on military affairs. In 1950, the League that introduced the principle of collective security into the Arab League, by concluding the Joint Defence and Economic Cooperation Treaty that made any act of aggression against a member state an act of aggression against all.

One of the earliest issues before the League, which continues even today, was the question of Palestine. Shortly after it was set up, five of its six-founder members (all barring Saudi Arabia) entered into Palestine in defence of their fellow-Arabs, in a bid to overthrow the recently established state of Israel. Defeated by the fledgling Jewish state, the League remained wedded to the cause of Palestine, as hundreds of thousands of refugees began to leave Israel and Israeli occupied areas that the UN had designated for the Arab state of Palestine. At the Cairo Summit of 1964, the Arab League initiated the creation of an organisation representing the Palestinian people, the Palestinian National Council, which first gathered in East Jerusalem on 29 May 1964. The Palestinian Liberation Organization was founded during this meeting on 2 June 1964. Palestine was soon after admitted in to the Arab League, represented by the PLO, and continues to remain as a full-fledged member of the League despite not being a sovereign state.

The Palestine issue dominated much of the dynamics of the League essentially for the first two decades of the League's existence, while the League's actions were dominated by Egypt. In 1967, when Israel embarked on pre-emptive action against Syria and Egypt, two League members, the rest of the League was faced with a quandary. The Egyptian President, Nasser, wanted the other League



members to embark on a total boycott of oil by League member countries to any power found aligned with Israel; the largest such Arab oil exporting country, Saudi Arabia was not particularly keen on the measure. In that year, the League issued the Khartoum Resolution, which enjoined its members on "no peace with Israel, no recognition of Israel, no negotiations with it." Members of the League have maintained an official boycott of Israeli goods and companies since 1948, but measuring the effects of the ban is difficult due to lax enforcement and limited trade flows.

With Egypt's defeat in 1967, and the almost parallel rise of oil-rich states like Saudi Arabia and Libya since then, the character of the League steadily changed as it began to address issues of common Arab concern beyond the limits of the Palestine affair. The oil-exporting members of the Arab League did indeed enforce an oil embargo (the type that Nasser sought in 1967) in 1973, but that was driven as by their determination to assert control over oil prices against the western companies as by any solidarity with Egypt and Syria. When Egypt signed its separate peace in violation of the Khartoum Resolution, it was suspended (1979) at the initiative of Riyadh which emerged as the most influential member of the League. By the time Egypt was readmitted to the League (1989), the body had expanded its scope to focus more on economic and cultural integration than on political matters.

Indeed, the League had provided the platform for many landmark documents promoting economic integration even before the change of leadership, viz, the Joint Arab Economic Action Charter, which outlines the principles for economic activities in the region; a common market had already been established in 1965. But economic and cultural considerations became the *raison d'etre* of the League only since the 1973 through institutions such as the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO) and the Economic and Social Council of the Arab League, Council of Arab Economic Unity (CAEU). It has also played a role in shaping school curricula, advancing the role of women in the



Arab societies, promoting child welfare, encouraging youth and sports programs, preserving Arab cultural heritage and fostering cultural exchanges between the member states. Literacy campaigns have been launched, intellectual works reproduced and modern technical terminology is translated for the use within member states. The league encourages measures against crime and drug abuse, and deals with labour issues—particularly among the emigrant Arab workforce.

The Arab League has progressively been limited to only such economic, cultural and social issues, and has little political clout for quite some time. Having no mechanism to compel members' compliance with its resolutions, the organization has been criticised as a "glorified debating society." The charter states that decisions reached by a majority "shall bind only those [states] that accept them," which places a premium on national sovereignty and limits the League's ability to take collective action. While some actions are taken under the aegis of the Arab League, they are executed only by a small faction - including its biggest success, ending the Lebanese civil war. The Ta'if agreement, generally claimed as an achievement of the League was more the product of Sa'udi initiatives than that of any League team.

In recent times, growing tensions between the Sunni and Shi'i, exacerbated by wars in Syria and Iraq, are creating new fissures among Arabs. Even as the Arab League condemns the Sunni extremist group of ISIS, and Sunni powers such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Jordan, and the United Arab Emirates launch air strikes on the terrorist organization, few Arab countries are willing to coordinate efforts with the Iraqi government after it invited Iranian military advisers and deployed Tehran-funded Shi'i militias in its battle against ISIS.

---

### **4.3 The Palestine Liberation Organisation**

---

At its first summit meeting in Cairo in 1964, the Arab League initiated the creation the Palestinian National Council, which convened in Jerusalem on 28 May 1964. Towards the close of deliberations at the Council, the Palestinian

Liberation Organisation was founded on 2 June 1964 with its stated goal as the liberation of Palestine through armed struggle. In the three decades since then, the PLO became the face of both the Palestinian people and their struggle before the international community. With the conclusion of Oslo Accords, global attention having shifted to the Palestinian Authority, the PLO has faded from the international community's attention and is no longer believed to have the same resonance in Palestinian life, and thus in the politics of the region as well.

Committed to the struggle for Palestinian independence and liberation, the PLO incorporated a range of generally secular ideologies of different Palestinian movements. It formally is an umbrella organization that includes numerous organizations of the resistance movement, political parties, and popular organizations both in occupied Palestine as well in the countries where the Palestinian diaspora were dispersed. From the beginning, the PLO was designed as a government in exile, with a parliament (Palestinian National Council or the PNC), chosen by the Palestinian people, as the highest authority in the PLO, and an executing government (Executive Council or EC) elected by the PNC. ,

The basic idea in the PLO's ideology, embedded in the Palestinian National Charter is that Zionists had unjustly expelled the Palestinians from Palestine and established a Jewish state claiming historic and Jewish ties with Palestine. They demanded that Palestinian refugees should be allowed to return to their homes. The PLO has always, above all, had the Palestinian people labelled as Arabs. This was as much a natural consequence of the fact that the PLO was an offshoot of the Arab League, as it was a tactical element, as to keep the backing of Arab states. Over the years, the Arab identity remained the stated nature of the Palestinian State.

In its first five years the PLO was led by veteran Palestinian politicians from the Mandate era Ahmad Shiikeiri and Yahia Hammuda. In 1969, marking the rise of a new generation of politicians who had grown up outside Palestine, Yasser Arafat - founder of the FaTaH (*Harkat al-Tahrir al-Filistiniyun* or the Palestinian

Freedom Movement) became its Chairman, a position he held till his death in 2004). Under Arafat, the PLO promoted the option of armed struggle aiming at the physical extinction of Israel by means of waging a war of attrition against the Zionist state, carrying out high-profile guerrilla attacks.

PLO's war of attrition was tacitly supported by the Arab governments in the neighbourhood that had to harbour the largest numbers of Palestinian refugees. Egypt was the most important patron of armed Palestinian struggle till the late 1960s, but in the post-Nasser era ascendancy of the PLO (and of Arafat with it) was on account of the guerrilla attacks it carried out *suo moto* from its bases in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Egypt. While terrorist outrages committed by other factions of the PLO happened to be more spectacular (Munich Olympic massacre, a spate of hijackings in the 1960s and 70s, etc), it was the guerilla operations of Arafat's Fatah faction staged from PLO's bases in Jordan that caused maximum damage to Israel.

However, while PLO struggle did not lead to any immediate achievement of Palestinian objectives, its growing military stature created complications in the region itself, which often caused the neighbouring states to turn on the PLO instead. Thus Israeli attack on Egypt and Syria in 1967, and its occupation of Gaza and Golan Heights respectively was motivated by its desire to demolish PLO presence in those areas. These territorial losses played their part in gradually making the Arab hosts get less enthusiastic in encouraging the PLO. In 1971, when Jordan witnessed one such Israeli pre-emptive military strike inside its territory, the kingdom's attempts to tone down Palestinian activities from PLO bases resulted in a backlash so violent that King Hussain deemed it prudent to expel the PLO from Jordan. When the fugitive PLO guerrillas landed up in Lebanon, they were sucked up into the politics of the highly sectarian political space of the republic, resulting in the outbreak of the civil war in the country.

By the 1980s, the PLO had exhausted its options of using the neighbourhood as a launch-pad for its conflict against Israel, and thus shifted its base to Tunis.



In the meantime, in a bid to undermine the secular Arab nationalist Fatah within the PLO, Israel allowed Islamic voluntary services outfits to operate in occupied-Palestine. By late 1980s, thus, a large number of Palestinians disgruntled with the Fatah began to seek an Islamist alternative which surfaced in the form of HAMAS (Islamic Resistance Movement) around the first *Intifada*.

In 1987, when the *intifada* broke out in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, it caught the PLO by surprise, and the leadership abroad could only follow the developments on the ground. After Jordan proclaimed the administrative and legal separation of the West Bank from Jordan in 1988, the Palestine National Council adopted the Declaration of Independence in Algiers, proclaiming an independent State of Palestine largely in a bid to remain relevant in Palestinian politics. In a desperate bid to seize the initiative, Arafat declared that the PLO would support a political solution of the conflict with Israel, i.e. effectively the PLO recognized Israel's right to exist within pre-1967 borders, with the understanding that the Palestinians would be allowed to set up their own state in the West Bank and Gaza. Realising that while the PLO could be tackled abroad, crushing the *intifada* was not militarily possible, Tel Aviv was just as keen on peace. Accordingly, back channel talks were opened, which culminated in the Oslo Accords with Israel (August 1993), granting the Palestinians right to self-government on the Gaza Strip and the city of Jericho in the West Bank through the creation of the Palestinian Authority (PA). Yasser Arafat was appointed head of the Palestinian Authority and a timetable for elections was laid out. From the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993, negotiation and diplomacy became the only official policy of the PLO as much as the PA, despite the contrary disposition of the HAMAS.

The Oslo Accords deliberately detached the Palestinian population in the occupied territories from the PLO and the Palestinians in exile by creating the PA. Although many in the PLO opposed the Oslo Agreements, the Executive Committee and the Central Council approved the Accords. It marked the beginning of the PLO's decline, as the PA came to replace the PLO as the prime



Palestinian political institution. Political factions within the PLO that had opposed the Oslo process were marginalized. Only during the Hamas-led PA Government in 2006-2007, the PLO resurfaced.

The Palestine Liberation Organization was recognized by the Arab League as the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and by the United Nations as "the representative of the Palestinian people." While the PLO was designated a terrorist organization by the United States in 1987 (and by Israel till 1991), most of the rest of the world recognized the PLO as the legitimate representatives of the Palestinian people from the mid-1970s onwards (after the PLO's admission to the UN as an observer.) The United Nations General Assembly recognized the PLO as the "representative of the Palestinian people" in November 1974. It was later admitted as a full member of the of the Asia group in April 1986. After the Oslo Accords, while the PA has come to administer the Palestinians within the Israeli state, the PLO continues to speak for the Palestinian cause - that they are two distinct organisations became clear when the Hamas won control over the PA through electoral victory, but the Fatah-dominated PLO continued to represent it in the UN where it made a bid for full membership at the UN under the leadership of the Fatah Leader and PA President Mahmud Abbas.

---

#### **4.4 Organisation of Islamic Cooperation/Conference (OIC)**

---

The Organisation of Islamic Conference, (renamed in 2012 to the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation) is an international organisation founded in 1969, which has grown now to constitute of some 69 states. The organisation aspires to be "the collective voice of the Muslim World" and works to "safeguard and protect the interests of the Muslim world in the spirit of promoting international peace and harmony." It counts among its members countries from the continents of Asia, Africa, Europe - not merely those that have the majority of its population following Islam as their faith, but even some that are not (such as Gabon which

has only 10% Muslims). India has the dubious distinction of being blocked by the OIC from membership or even observer status, despite having a larger Muslim population than most of the states of the region.

In the 19th century, as the Ottoman Sultan was claimed to be the Caliph of the Sunni Muslims of the world, some Muslims aspired to *ummah* (the Muslim community as a whole regardless of the regions they happen to inhabit) to serve their common political, economic, and social interests. The collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the Caliphate after World War I eventually opened the question whether the global *ummah* ceases to exist in absence of its putative leadership. Islamic Conferences began to be organised in and around West Asia from the 1920s, with the first notable assembly taking place actually during the third such conference in Jerusalem (1931). An abortive political move in that direction was seen only after World War II, with a conference of political leaders in 1954, but it did not go anywhere. In the wake of the criminal arson perpetrated against the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, one of the holiest shrines in Islam, in August 1969, the Kings and Heads of State and Government of Islamic countries decided to organize the First Islamic Conference, held in Rabat, Morocco, from September 22 to 25, 1969. The outcome of this Summit was the expression of their solidarity with the Palestinian people and their commitment to foster mutual economic, cultural and religious cooperation among Muslim countries of the world.

The real drive behind the OIC came to be provided by the ascendant power of Sa'udi Arabia, a regime that deliberately derives its political legitimacy from its custodianship of the two holiest sites of Islam, Mecca and Medina. After Egypt and Syria lost the Six-Day War in 1967 Egypt mounted a major diplomatic offensive in the Arab League on how its oil-rich Arab neighbours had let it down by not putting together an oil blockade of Israel and its western allies. The Sa'udis responded by mobilising diplomatic capital gained from its organisation of the annual Hajj pilgrimage at the Rabat conference. In 1970, King Faisal of Saudi

Arabia convened in Jeddah the First Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, who decided to take steps for their own mutual international cooperation and create a forum for discussion about the main topics affecting the Muslim world. This forum would bring forth the Organization of the Islamic Conference, whose foundational platform -the Constitution of the OIC- was adopted in Jeddah in March 1972, and put into effect on February 28, 1973.

According to its charter, the OIC aims to preserve Islamic social and economic values; promote solidarity amongst member states; increase cooperation in social, economic, cultural, scientific, and political areas; uphold international peace and security; and advance education, particularly in the fields of science and technology.

As a multilateral diplomatic platform, the OIC has little impact of any substance outside the Muslim world, since its resolutions have tended to target only the Muslim countries. Within the OIC, contrary to the expectations of Riyadh, Sa'udi Arabia has not managed to dominate the organisation as other powers with comparable powers of economic patronage (such as Iran, Iraq, Libya) or historical claims of leadership among Muslim countries (Egypt, Turkey, Morocco, Oman) have challenged it as have countries with decent standing in the Muslim world such as Indonesia, Malaysia and Pakistan. Hence, a number of issues other than the status of Jerusalem have come to gain the attention of OIC at various points of time such as reintegration of the former Soviet states in Central Asia into the Muslim world.

The OIC, addressing such issues as human rights, has increasingly become a force for change with moderation in the Muslim world. In August 1990, 45 foreign ministers of the OIC adopted the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam to serve as a guide for the member states in the matters of human rights in as much as they are compatible with the Shari'ah, or Qur'anic Law. By June 2008, the OIC conducted a formal revision of its charter to promote human rights, fundamental freedoms, and good governance in all member states removing any



mention of the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam. Within the revised charter, the OIC has chosen to support the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international law.

As the organisation has kept on expanding (absorbing all the predominantly Muslim states of Africa and Asia barring India), the platform has progressively lost the character of a regional organisation and is now a supra-regional platform merely dominated by a major cluster of states from West Asia.

---

#### **4.5 The Gulf Cooperation Council**

---

Set up in 1981 at Abu Dhabi, the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, also known as the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is a regional intergovernmental political and economic union consisting of all the Arab states of the Persian Gulf. Its member states are Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Sa'udi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. All the current member states are 20th century monarchies (except Oman, whose monarchy is of a much older vintage. Three of these states have constitutional monarchies (Qatar, Kuwait, and Bahrain), while two are theoretically absolute (Saudi Arabia and Oman) having no constitution instituted to impose a check on them; there is also a federal monarchy (the United Arab Emirates, comprising seven emirates). There have been discussions regarding the future membership of two more monarchies, viz. Jordan and Morocco. There is yet another proposal to include Yemen - should that happen, it would be the first republic to be inducted into the GCC. A 2011 proposal to transform the GCC into a "Gulf Union" with tighter economic, political and military coordination has been advanced by Saudi Arabia, in a bid to check the ascendancy of the Shi'i in the region with the aid of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Although initiatives for bringing the various Gulf monarchies under one umbrella organisation had come from the emirates of Qatar, Bahrain and Kuwait as much as Sa'udi Arabia from the mid-1970s, the principal driver of the project



when it took off was, of course, Sa'udi Arabia. Faced with a series of developments that threatened the stability of the region (in particular its monarchies) - such as the Iranian revolution of 1979 and the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq war of 1980 - Riyadh gave a major diplomatic push to ensure the revolutionary impulses generated by Iran remain clear of the Gulf shores.

From the early 1980s itself, GCC set about formulating regulations in various fields such as religion, finance, trade, customs, tourism, legislation, and administration. The basic intent behind this was to ensure that with burgeoning oil revenues in the hand of the state, public disaffection should be kept minimal by developing a standard in governance that was unprecedented in the region. The unstated purpose, however, was to make sure none of the monarchies would end up conceding more to the people than what the rest of the monarchies were prepared to at any given point of time. The GCC also undertook to promoting scientific and technical progress in industry, mining, agriculture, water and animal resources as means of economic diversification that would allow modernisation of the non-oil sector of their economies. This area has some of the fastest growing economies in the world, mostly due to a boom in oil and gas revenues coupled with a building and investment boom backed by decades of saved petroleum revenues.

A major objective of the GCC was to set up a closely integrated economy in the Gulf region. A very important early step in this direction was taken with the elimination of customs duties between member states from March 1 1983, on all agricultural, animal, industrial, and natural resource products of national origin. In 1983 the GCC members accounted for only about 2% of their exports and 7% of their imports from within the group. Between then and 2003, the total volume of trade had increased nearly 10 times to stand at over \$20 billion. By 1998, the GCC began to look towards a customs union, the first phase of which was already in place by 2003.

Despite a setback that delayed its launched, the common market for GCC

states came into operation in January 2008 with plans to realise a fully integrated single market. It eased the movement of goods and services. The 2009 financial crisis has slowed the complete integration of the regional market which was scheduled to become fully operational on 1 January 2015. In January 2015, the common market was further integrated, allowing full equality among GCC citizens to work in each others' government and private sectors, social insurance and retirement coverage, real estate ownership, capital movement, access to education, health and other social services in all member states. However, some barriers remained in the free movement of goods and services. The coordination of taxation systems, accounting standards and civil legislation is currently in progress. The GCC also launched common economic projects to promote and facilitate integration. The member states have cooperated in order to connect their power grids. A water connection project was launched and plans to be partly in use by 2020. The GCC also launched major rail projects in order to connect the peninsula, with around 40,000 kilometres of rail network across the GCC scheduled to be completed by 2018.

Despite the progressive integration carried out by the GCC states, subtle tensions have tended to grow as states like UAE and Qatar come to the forum with their respective agenda. One of the more eagerly anticipated objectives of the GCC was its promise of a monetary union, using the new currency of Khaleeji, which if realised, the GCC monetary union would be the second largest supranational monetary union in the world, measured by GDP of the common-currency area. Following the announcement, however, that the central bank for the monetary union would be located in Riyadh and not in the UAE, the UAE announced their withdrawal from the monetary union project in May 2009. In 2014, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and Saudi Arabia nevertheless took major steps to ensure the creation of a single currency.

Qatar's support for the Muslim Brotherhood across the larger West Asia North Africa, Hamas and extremist Islamists in Libya during the Arab Spring have

caused tensions with other Arab states of the Persian Gulf, especially Riyadh. So much so that after the March 2014 meeting of the GCC, the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain recalled their ambassadors to Qatar. This indicated that the GCC was on the verge of a crisis linked to the emergence of distinct political blocs with conflicting interests. Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain were beginning to engage in a political struggle with Qatar, while Oman and Kuwait represent a non-aligned bloc within the GCC. In a sense the aerial operations by the GCC members Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, UAE, Qatar plus pending member Jordan, against the ISIS in Syria and against the allegedly Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen has shown that the GCC can still work together. But Riyadh and Abu Dhabi are among the nations that oppose the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria, which Qatar has historically supported. The organisation can still fall out if the long-term strategic visions of their member states do not fall in line.

---

#### **4.6 The Arab Cooperation Council**

---

Indeed the League had provided the platform for many landmark documents promoting. The Arab Cooperation Council (ACC) was founded in February 1989 by North Yemen, Iraq Jordan, and Egypt. The ACC was created partly in response to the four being left out of the GCC, and partly out of a desire to promote closer economic cooperation and integration to compete better with their GCC neighbours.

The initiative came primarily from Cairo in an Egyptian bid to re-establish itself as the leading Arab state, taking on Riyadh which had marginalised it in Arab politics following its peace treaty with Israel. Thus, the ACC charter explicitly stated its objective of becoming a pan-Arab body by keeping its membership open to any Arab state wishing to join it, including those who happen to be members of the GCC.

The ACC experiment, despite the high level of institutionalisation that characterised its brief tenure, could not survive the crisis that followed Iraq's



invasion of Kuwait on August 2, 1990. This failure has often been attributed to the lack of common geopolitical interests of the four members, being located in different parts of the Arab world (Egypt in North Africa, Jordan in the Levant, Iraq in the Gulf and North Yemen near the Arabian Sea), the absence of a true shared identity (beyond common status as Arab states), and tensions between Egypt and Iraq. Egyptian opposition to Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, joining the coalition that sent troops to Saudi Arabia and eventually liberated Kuwait, the chances of breathing any kind of life into the ACC were very slim.

---

## 4.7 Sample Questions

---

### Essay Type Questions

1. Is it correct to consider the PLO as the best platform representing the Palestinian cause?
2. Would you agree with the view that Saudi Arabia has definitively replaced Egypt as the principal Arab power in today's world?
3. How relevant are the OIC and the Arab League in the politics of the region in the light of their lack of any enforcement mechanism?

### Short Questions

1. How has the Arab League evolved over the years?
2. How has the GCC worked towards integration of the Arab states of the Persian Gulf?
3. Do you agree with the assessment that the Oslo Peace Process was started by PLO in order to stay relevant in the politics of Palestine?

### Very Short Questions

1. Why was the Arab Cooperation Council set up? Why did it fail?
2. Is the Arab League relevant as an organisation any more?
3. Is it correct to consider the OIC as a regional organisation?

---

## 4.8 Suggested Reading

---

1. Reinhard Schulze, *A Modern History of the Islamic World*, (London, I.B.Tauris, 2000)
2. Adeed Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century : From Triumph to Despair*, (Princeton : Princeton University Press, 2003)
3. C.E.Toffolo, Peggy Kahn, S.H. Couch, *The Arab League : Global Organisations*, (London : Chelsea House, 2008)
4. Paul Rivlin, *Arab Economies in the twenty-first century*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).





# **Paper-VIII**

**Politics & Society in Asia : Select Regions**

## **Module – II**

### **Central Asia**

- Unit 1 The Central Asian Republics : Features Problems and Prospects**
- Unit 2 Security & Geo Strategic issues in Central Asia**
- Unit 3 Problems of Economic Transition**
- Unit 4 Islam & Democracy in Central Asia**

# Paper VII

Politics & Society in Asia & Pacific Regions

## Module - II

### Central Asia

Unit 1: The Central Asian Republics: Political Systems and Processes

Unit 2: The Role of the State in Economic Development

Unit 3: Transition to Democracy: Transition to Democracy

Unit 4: Islam & Democracy in Central Asia

# Module-II

## Central Asia

---

### Unit : 1 □ The Central Asian Republics : Features Problems and Prospects

---

#### Structure

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction to Central Asia
- 1.2 Features of Central Asia
- 1.3 Problems of the Region
- 1.4 Future Prospects
- 1.5 Concluding Note
- 1.6 Summary
- 1.7 Sample Questions
- 1.8 Suggested Reading

---

#### 1.0 Objectives

---

Central Asia, central region of Asia, extending from the Caspian Sea in the west to the border of western China in the east, is bounded in the north by Russia and on the south by Iran, Afghanistan and China. During the Soviet era the region was directly governed and controlled by Moscow which took a new shape after the demise of the Soviet Union. The objective of the study is as follows :

- to make the readers familiar about Central Asia;
- to understand the important features of the Region;
- to discuss the key challenges and problems faced by the countries;
- to discuss future prospects of Central Asia

---

## 1.1 Introduction to Central Asia

---

The Central Asian Sub-region is the territory of about 4 million square kilometers situated at the turn of Europe and Asia. It includes the following sovereign countries—Republic of Kazakhstan, Republic of Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Tajikistan, Republic of Turkmenistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan, which proclaimed their independence in 1991 after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The total population of the Central Asian region is more than 59 million people with an average density of 15 people per square kilometer. In the post-Soviet years, the Central Asian countries with their identical historical, social and religious traditions have faced a number of identical political, economic, social and environmental problems. The newly independent countries had to establish new institutes, approaches and working skills for functioning in conditions of the serious economic crisis. All countries searched for their ways of addressing many difficult problems/challenges which required new approaches to integration and coordination of activities at all levels.

Throughout the Cold War, the land-locked Central Asian states remained isolated subjects of the Soviet Union. Their emergence as independent states ended a long period of Russian/Soviet domination and initiated a painful transition period characterized by multi-dimensional challenges. Initially for about one decade, the Central Asian states had to struggle with the legacy of the Soviet era. In fact, these five states (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan) gained independence much earlier than anyone had anticipated. Therefore, these states had to work hard to understand the most fundamental element of statehood. Several key questions remained unanswered : (i) What was the meaning and importance of state sovereignty; (ii) What was the cultural character of the states? (iii) Who would be its inhabitants? (iv) Who were their allies and rivals? (v) Would the states in future be best protected/secured through joining some kind of federation, confederation or union? (vi) What were the intentions and attitudes of the states surrounding them? (vii) What were the



immediate internal and external threats to their national existence? These were some of the complex questions to which they had no readymade answers.

---

## 1.2 Features of Central Asia

---

The Central Asian republics had no history as nation states before 1992. During the Soviet era, economic policy and development strategies were determined in Moscow. The region was divided into five republics during Stalin's time which unleashed a new scenario for international tensions and distrust in spite of the common origins, religion and culture of the local nations. Tensions further grew out of territorial disputes; competition for control of natural resources; trade policy etc. Under the Soviet system each of the republics had little or no options to resolve these problems independently and in the process all the Central Asian republics became integral part of the Soviet system.

It is important to note that none of the republics had anticipated the dissolution of the Soviet Union before its final months, and therefore all were unprepared for the severing of Soviet ties. All the countries faced unexpected challenges of nation building and transition from a centrally planned economy, which had begun in the late 1980s but had little influence on Central Asia before the Soviet economic system began to untangle in 1991. Attempts to maintain economic links by retaining the 'ruble' as a common currency in 1992-93 aggravated the problem of hyperinflation and were abandoned by the end of 1993.

The decade—after the independence of Central Asian states - was dominated by nation-building, which was a slow process in countries where the main state institutions and the associated human capital had been controlled from Moscow. The national leaders tried to legitimize their authority and power by creating super-presidential regimes, in which the balance of power between executive and legislature was overwhelmingly weighed towards the former. In Tajikistan however, the bloody civil war dominated political developments until 1997 and finally by the end of the decade President Rahmonov had constructed a political system identical to rest of the four Central Asian countries.

In order to stand on their own feet, these countries followed divergent economic strategies. Despite similarities in culture, history, geography and economic structure, their transition from the Soviet centrally planned economic model ranged from the most rapidly liberalizing—the Kyrgyz republic—to the least reforming Turkmenistan. By the turn of the century, the Central Asian countries had created vastly different economic systems.

Uzbekistan was doing well in the first decade after the dissolution of Soviet Union in respect of GDP performances but then in the next decade its performances have not been impressive. Kazakhstan, the other large economy in Central Asia, appeared to underperform in the 1990s due to large scale corruption; but in the next decade the country emerged as one of the best performing economies in the world. The economic performance of the other three states—Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan—has however been less impressive. Tajikistan is now one of the poorest countries in Asia with the tag of a failed state. Kyrgyzstan also follows suit, despite being praised by many economists during the 1990s for introducing market friendly reforms. The case of Turkmenistan is little different in the sense that on the one hand it has abundant energy resources and on the other hand the nature of regime remains opaque.

Politically, the five Central Asian states had no history as nation states till the dissolution of the USSR. During the Soviet years, economic policy and development strategies were determined in Moscow by the central authority. None of the countries had anticipated the dissolution of the Soviet Union before its final months and all of them were unprepared for severing their ties with the USSR. All the five republics faced the uphill task of nation building. They suffered serious disruptions from the dissolution of the USSR. Demand-supply network collapsed. Soon the Ruble currency lost its credibility without any viable alternative.

The five countries gradually became more differentiated as their governments introduced national strategies for transition to a market based economy. By the early twenty first century all the five countries completed the process of nation

building and the transition from central planning though the typology of market based economies varied substantially.

During last two decades, economic gap among the five Central Asian states, which was already significant in 1990, has widened further. According to World Economic Development Indicators database, World Bank, GDP per capita in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in 1990 amounted to 35.6 percent and 41.8 percent of the GDP per capita in Kazakhstan in the same year. In 2011, Kyrgyzstan's GDP per capita was 18.3 percent of that to Kazakhstan's and Tajikistan's was 17.7 percent. Besides it, the combined size of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan's GDP as a portion of the region's GDP dropped from 13 percent in 1990 to 7 percent in 2011. There is no strong evidence to suggest that this trend will reverse in the coming years/decades.

The Central Asian economies remain heavily dependent on very few export items. Aluminium occupies about more than half of Tajikistan's exports. Gold accounts for half of Kyrgyzstan's exports. Oil and gas heavily dominate the exports of Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. This suggests a very critical situation for Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, given the volume of their main export items. Throughout the region, there is widening economic gap which is reflected in the increasing number of labour migrants from Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. According to a report, in 2008, remittances composed 49 percent of GDP in Tajikistan, 27 percent in Kyrgyzstan and 13 percent in Uzbekistan. United Nations World Population Prospects reported in 2010 that the largest population sector in Central Asia was teenagers. But the irony is that the Central Asian countries do not seem to be creating more jobs for these young generation people. This apart, cross-border exchanges among people of the region have become severely problematic due to complicated checkpoint controls, toughened visa requirements etc. Building a peaceful and secure region will require the new generations in Central Asia to develop deeper level of mutual exchanges rather than tighter border controls.



---

### 1.3 Problems of the Region

---

The unexpected demise of the former USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) was undoubtedly one of the most astonishing geo-political events of the twentieth century, comparable only to the collapse of the Ottoman and Habsburg Empires during the First World War. The collapse of the USSR led to the emergence of Central Asia which changed the geo-political map of Asia, literally as well as figuratively. The events that unfolded in Central Asia since then have been conditioned by the following important factors :

- (a) Events unfolded within the Russian Federation and the political choices of its new leaders;
- (b) The strategic doctrine of the US administration, starting from George Bush to Barak Obama;
- (c) The role of China, Iran, Turkey and India;
- (d) Developments in Afghanistan and Pakistan;
- (e) The policies of the European Union towards Central Asia; &
- (f) The role of the countries like Japan and Korea which have a direct impact on the developments in Central Asia.

The geo-strategic location and presence of rich natural resources in Central Asia have attracted countries like Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, India, Japan, Korea and others. The West particularly the US, has substantially increased its influence over these states. Given the geographical proximity, historical links and presence of Russian diasporas in Central Asia, Moscow considers the region vital to its national interests. Despite the fact that Russia is no longer a superpower, still it remains a major player in Central Asia and the world.

Recent trends in Central Asia can be examined from three different perspectives—national, regional and external. The greatest challenge for the region is at the national level. The Republics have only been independent for two



and a half decades and the process of state building is yet to be over. The umbrella protection extended by the former Soviet Union and its legacy has by now disappeared. Nationalism and the growing adherence to Islam are the two important developments that have gained prominence in recent years.

At the regional level, there has been little cooperation among the five Central Asian countries due to lack of trust among leaders of respective countries. Regional disintegration is more likely than countries seeking joint solutions for their shared problems. As far as foreign relations (external factor) are concerned, the Central Asian countries are inexperienced in the field. They are rich in energy resources and therefore external powers have sought to increase their influence in the region. The key external players are Russia, China and the United States who have already spread their influence to a significant level. This apart, Europe, India and Turkey have also taken keen interest in the region.

China will be especially important in the region over the coming decades and the influence of Islamic states too will be a factor to watch. Noted scholar Allen Deletoz foresees the disintegration of the regional notion of Central Asia, linked to declining Russian influence, and he attaches more importance to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, two biggest states in the region. Marlene Laruelle, director of George Washington University's Central Asia Programme believes that the Central Asian regional notion is not sustainable and describes how the five states might each take a different path of development. The moot point is that the fates of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan will be decisive for the development of the region. Should one of these two countries fall into chaos, other countries like Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan would also stumble and the shock waves would be felt throughout the region, including Russia and China. If any one of them were to move towards the establishment of a state based on the rule of law, with more openness for people and business, these positive developments would boost the prospects of their smaller neighbours at least. Therefore, it is likely that in the coming years the region will be even less culturally and socially integrated than

it is today. Thus lack of regional integration will remain a major hindrance to the movement of people and goods.

---

## 1.4 Future Prospects

---

The events in Afghanistan and Pakistan will have direct consequences on Central Asia, particularly on its most fragile states, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Jihadist elements will have safe heavens, who will receive training and combat experience there. These groups will easily flourish in the impoverished areas of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

One future trend could be that Chinese, Russian, Western and Islamic civilizations might clash with each other in Central Asia, just as Samuel Huntington had predicted about two decades ago. At the same time Francis Fukuyama could also be partly right in the sense the democracy appears to be the only model that could take the region forward. Environmental prospects in the region seem to be worrying because drought is likely to increase that could potentially lead to disasters. The partial disappearance of Aral Sea was a disaster in slow motion.

In the economic field, the need to promote some form of economic union among the five republics is not so obvious at present, but integration is of great importance for the region's future. Closer integration among the states would allow for the creation of additional economic advantages for them and would promote economic growth and development. The countries would benefit through focusing on different areas as stated below :

- (a) Uncoordinated usage of water supply and pollution of rivers are serious issues which must be addressed immediately;
- (b) The establishment of economic ties and a common market are the most important steps for the integration of Central Asian states. The countries should focus on creating a framework for the exchange of goods within the region;

- (c) The countries would benefit immensely out of the creation of a common agricultural market. It is important to preserve the traditional economic relationships on the delivery of agricultural products in these countries;
- (d) Together the countries could focus on the efficient use of fuel and energy resources. Central Asia's energy resources potential vastly exceeds those of other states. Efficient use of these resources could become a basis for economic development. There are prospects for the joint use and exporting of minerals and natural resources;
- (e) Establishment of a unified transport system would integrate the region further. In order to benefit from the advantages of its geographical position, the region has to make long-term investments in transport network development, as opposed to short-term investments;
- (f) The Central Asian states should focus on the establishment of modern communication facilities. Communication development is one of the key conditions for the integration of the Central Asian region into the global economy;
- (g) Development of a central bank and the establishment of a monetary union would serve to enhance the trade and economic cooperation of the region;
- (h) The creation of incentives for the rapid development of small and medium sized enterprise is in the interests of all Central Asian countries. Incentives for business development can include allowing for the free flow of capital.

As stated earlier, such integration is advantageous for all states in Central Asia and this could become a factor in speeding up levels of economic development. By establishing a common market, the Central Asian states can participate as equal partners in other economic and trade alliances exert their influence on the current economic and political processes in the world and thus could emerge as a guarantor of political stability in Eurasia.



---

## 1.5 Concluding Note

---

Central Asia is the core region of the Asian continent endowed with valuable untapped resources. In the immediate post Soviet years, all countries of the region faced numerous political, economic and other problems/challenges towards which they framed different strategies according to their need and ability. By the turn of the twentieth century, the Central Asian countries had formulated different strategies to achieve the immediate objectives - political independence and economic self sufficiency.

---

## 1.6 Summary

---

From the mid nineteenth century, up to the end of twentieth century, Central Asia was part of the Russian empire and then the Soviet Union. The five Central Asian countries - Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan - gained independence in true sense of the term after the collapse of the Soviet Union in early 1990s. Since then, all the countries have faced numerous multidimensional challenges not necessarily similar in nature. However, over a period of time, they have successfully managed to move forward and it is expected that through mutual interdependence and cooperation with outside powers like the USA, China, Russia and India, Central Asia would be able to promote much needed political stability and economic development.

---

## 1.7 Sample Questions

---

### Essay Type Questions

1. Give an overview on the problems and prospects of the Central Asian states in the post-Soviet years.
2. Critically examine the important features of the Central Asian states.

### Short Notes

1. Comment in brief on the economics of Central Asia.



2. Briefly examine the role played by Russia and China in Central Asia in recent years.

---

## 1.9 Suggested Reading

---

1. William Shepherd (1923). *Historical Atlas*. New York, Henry Holt & Co.
2. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/102288/Central-Asia>.
3. Peter B. Golden (2011). *Central Asia in World History*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
4. Suchandana Chatterjee, ed. (2014). *Image of the Region in Eurasian Studies*. New Delhi, K.W. Publishers Pvt. Ltd.

---

## **Unit : 2 □ Security and Geo-Strategic Issues in Central Asia**

---

### **Structure**

- 2.0 Objectives**
- 2.1 Introduction**
- 2.2 Geo-strategic Salience of Central Asia**
- 2.3 Involvement of External Powers in Central Asian Matrix**
- 2.4 Concluding Note**
- 2.5 Summary**
- 2.6 Sample Questions**
- 2.7 Suggested Reading**

---

### **2.0 Objectives**

---

Post-Soviet years witnessed the predominance of strategic and security issues in Central Asia. Mainly because of its geographical location and reserves of oil and natural gas in larger volume, Central Asia has drawn attention of major powers across the world at large. The objective of this study content is to focus on the following points :

- Importance of geographical location of Central Asia;
- Security scenario in Central Asia;
- Role of external powers;
- Strategies framed by the Central Asian countries

---

### **2.1 Introduction**

---

The emergence of five Central Asian states after the demise of the former USSR led to a strategic vacuum in the region. Many external powers from within

and outside the region sought to fill this gap. Central Asian states endeavoured to associate themselves with as many foreign powers and multilateral organisations as possible in order to define their new found independence and national identity. Engagements with the United States and European powers were considered to be a way to address their concerns about security and economic issues, in addition to emphasizing their newly acquired sovereignty. At the same time, it was extremely difficult for the Central Asian countries to break their traditional ties with Russia and the rest of the former Soviet Republics. This was due to a number of contextual factors besides the dominant factor of geographical proximity.

---

## 2.2 Geo-strategic Saliency of Central Asia

---

Central Asia is at the centre of the Eurasian landmass and historically the region has played a very important role for the traders and invaders. Central Asia is both a facilitator and inhibitor to outside players intending to realize their strategic ambitions. In geo-strategic terms, the region has been conceptualized as 'Greater Central Asia', a term that includes the five Central Asian states, Afghanistan and the Xinjiang region of China. In its extended geo-strategic construct, the region includes northern parts of Pakistan, the Khorasan province of Iran, Tatarstan in Russia and parts of northern India.

In the early part of twentieth century, Halford Mackinder postulated his 'Heartland Theory' that dealt with the geo-political importance of the Eurasian heartland, bounded by the rivers Volga and Yangtze and the Himalayas in the south and the Arctic Ocean in the north. This theory highlighted the strategic importance of Central Asia. Former US National Security Adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski in his book **The Grand Chessboard**, published in 1997, termed the post-Soviet region as the 'Black Hole'. According to this theory, what happens to the distribution of power on the Eurasian continent will be of decisive importance to America's global primacy. Brzezinski also considered Uzbekistan as the linchpin of Central Asia, least vulnerable to Russian pressure, and its independence being critical to the survival of other Central Asian states.

The geo-strategic importance of Central Asia could be underscored by two

key factors : (a) Central Asia has become important because of the discovery of hydrocarbon reserves; and (b) it has become a major transportation hub for gas and oil pipelines and transportation/ communication corridors connecting China, Russia, Europe and Caucasus region, the Trans-Caspian region and the Indian Ocean. This apart, Afghanistan connects Central Asia and South Asia which is a strategic bridge of great geopolitical significance. Therefore, Central Asia and South Asia are connected geographically and strategically. Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan have common borders with Afghanistan. Afghanistan is the connecting bridge between the Indian subcontinent and resource-rich Central Asia, as well as the corridor to Iran and the Middle East. Thus, stability and peace in Afghanistan are a geostrategic imperative. Therefore, security and economic issues are the two most important components of the Central Asian states engagement with outside powers.

The Central Asian states have joined a number of multilateral security and economic structures promoted by the major powers—US, Russia and China. The objectives of major powers are to promote their own politico-military security and economic agenda and absorb these nations into their direct spheres of influence. In contrast, the goal of Central Asian states is to strike a balance of power and ensure the best deal for themselves through exploiting the rivalry between the major powers. This apart, the Central Asian states consider such multilateral arrangements as the best way to maintain security and stability in the region. All the five states have been following policies that can be termed multi-faceted or multi-directional. The central Asian States consider the preservation of equilibrium between the major powers as the best way to advance their interests. Few scholars have however opined that the political leadership of the five states is looking for regime security rather than national security in its wider sense.

---

### **2.3 Involvement of External Powers in Central Asian Matrix**

---

The United States and the European countries sought to absorb the Central Asian states into their orbit of influence through economic engagement and security cooperation through NATO's 'partnership for Peace Programme'. China



too embarked on a similar path to enhance its strategic presence in Central Asia after having solved boundary issues with Russia and the Central Asian neighbours. By the early 1990s, regional powers like Turkey, Iran and Pakistan were also in the fray in the region. With the end of Boris Yelstin's era and the emergence of assertive Russia under Vladimir Putin, Moscow began reorienting its policy towards Central Asia with a new vigor.

One important strategic event that occurred in Central Asia was the US response to 9/11 terrorist attacks that took the form of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). The war against terrorism brought the United States and NATO closer to Central Asia. Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan granted permission to use their military bases to OEF forces. Other countries provided over-flight and miscellaneous support. Russia, China, India and the Central Asian countries welcomed the US initiative. In order to contain the rise of fundamentalism and terrorism, these countries did not raise any objections to US being granted air bases and logistical facilities in Central Asia.

India was a late starter in the Central Asian region because of the fact that it was too much preoccupied with its internal economic difficulties, particularly after the introduction of economic reforms in the early 1990s. This apart, political instability also prevented India from taking major initiatives in Central Asia. Notwithstanding it, India recognized the importance of Central Asia as an area of strategic importance in conducting its foreign policy. The Annual Report of India's Ministry of Defence recognised Central Asia as an area of vital importance to New Delhi for different reasons : (a) because of geographical proximity; (b) because of historical and cultural factors & (c) because of the common challenges of extremism and terrorism. Prime Minister Mammohan Singh also emphasized on the need to go for constructive engagement with Central Asia. In fact, from India's foreign policy point of view, there is increasing demand for political, economic and defence engagements with Central Asia.

It is important to note that the growth of Indian economy creates an ever growing demand for energy and natural resources to sustain with the present growth pattern. The discovery of large reserves of hydrocarbons and other

resources needed for economic growth makes the Central Asian region immensely attractive for forging a mutually beneficial cooperative relationship. These apart, similarity of views in the fight against terrorism, drug trafficking have further brought the two sides closer to each other. In the strategic field, there has been intense power play between Russia, US, China and other Western countries and India is left with little option but to focus on soft power approach towards the region.

**Role of the US :** Immediately after the dissolution of the former USSR, the US Congress passed a Freedom Support Act (FSA) in 1992 to provide aid to the newly independent nations. In 1999, a 'Silk Road Strategy Act' that was modified in 2006, authorized economic aid, development of transportation and communication links and border controls. The Act also contained riders to promote democracy and create civil societies in Central Asia. The actual aim of the US government was to strengthen its influence in the wake of persisting Russian weakness in Central Asia and elsewhere. Another important objective was to involve the Central Asian states in Euro-Atlantic institutions and to foster their pro-Western orientations. The United States encouraged Central Asians' links with NATO, the European Union and the organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Towards the mid-1990s, the Central Asian nations had joined NATO's Partnership for Peace (PFP) Programme whereby a number of military training exercises were carried out in both the United States and Central Asia.

Engagement with NATO provided a good opportunity before the Central Asian states to modernize their armed forces and their fight against drug trafficking, religious extremism, terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. This apart, Central Asia's engagements with NATO was a counterweight to their relations with Russia. In October 2001, after 9/11 incident, the United States offered to establish military bases in Central Asia to fight the Taliban. Thus the United States was in a position to strengthen its presence and influence in the region to a greater extent, though it did not go uncontested. In July 2005, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) urged all foreign forces to set a timeframe for withdrawal of their bases from the territory of SCO member

states. Kyrgyzstan demanded the vacation of its air base by the US but later on agreed to extend the lease with a manifold increases in the agreed sum.

The United States concentrated in building energy and transport corridors that avoid Russia by going either south or west. Despite several constraints involved in the building of the oil pipeline from Baku (Azerbaijan) to Tbilisi (Georgia) to Ceyhan (Turkey), it was completed in May 2006. The BTC pipeline very well served the purpose and objective of the United States by way of reducing Russia's stronghold on the Central Asian Oil and gas pipeline network by providing an alternative route to Europe. Another US and EU supported proposal for the Nabucco gas pipeline is under examination, with a memorandum of understanding signed on July 13, 2009. Iran is also reportedly on board to sell gas to Europe. Richard Boucher, the US Assistant Secretary of State, on a visit to Kazakhstan in June 2007, convincingly argued that it would be more advantageous to deal with the European buyers, without interference by Russia. American energy officials also visited Turkmenistan and explored the prospects of gas export from the country.

**Role of EU :** As part of its greater engagement with Central Asia, the EU in June 2007 unveiled a new Central Asia Strategy for the period 2007-13 which focused on promoting political dialogue, trade and economic relations and cooperation in a variety of sectors. The programme also sought to promote good governance and democratic norms. The European Commission advised the EU to go for better engagements with the Central Asian countries in order to secure energy resources that are of permanent strategic importance. The European Commission plans to open offices in all the five Central Asian countries in the near future.

**Involvement of Russia :** Boris Yeltsin's years led to the decline of Russian power in Central Asia because of internal dynamics and general withdrawal from the former Soviet republics. Vladimir Putin the next Russian President however rejected Yeltsin's policies and he embarked on the process of regaining its hold on Central Asia and the other former Soviet republics. Russia under Putin joined the Chinese-led SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organisation) and developed its own



security structure—the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO). The CSTO is a well thought out strategy that aims to protect Russia's security, energy and transportation interests. Collective Rapid Reaction Force exercises are carried out to showcase Russia's resolve to protect the southern belt of the CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States). Similarly, the Russian air defence command carries out regular exercises to defend strategic air space over Central Asia. In fact, Russia's keen interests for promoting closer military ties with the Central Asian countries could be seen as an effort to safeguard Russian economic interests and its domination of the Central Asian energy sector.

**The China factor :** China has expanded its presence in Central Asia through trade, energy deals, transport infrastructure, and the gradual widening of scope of the SCO to include both security and economics. In order to make gains in Central Asia, China has been cooperating with Russia though many Chinese scholars view Moscow's presence in the region a threat to Chinese interests. However, the sole objective of Sino-Russian cooperation is guided by the shared objective of offsetting US influence in Central Asia. In fact, the equation between Russia and China is based on complementarities of interests. While China needs Russian arms, technologies and natural resources; Russia needs China to balance the West. In other words, the level of Sino-Russian cooperation in Central Asia is shaped by the approach of the US and West toward the region.

China has to manage its security relationship with Russia in order to protect its vulnerable northern and western flanks. Beijing sees the US presence in Central Asia as a part of a specific policy designed to constrain China's rising economic and military clout. Securing and stabilizing its periphery is central to China's plan for developing its western era. Enhancing its influence in Central Asian Muslim nations also helps China address its security concerns regarding separatist Muslim movements in Xinjiang. Therefore, preventing separatism, extremism and terrorism is China's key security concern. Through SCO, China carries out border management training and joint exercise with Central Asian armies. Beijing therefore supports the current political regimes in neighbouring Central Asia which reciprocate by acknowledging China as a regional power.



China is dependent on Russia and Central Asia's energy reserves to fuel its economic growth. China has built a 988 kilometers long pipeline from Atasu in Kazakhstan to Xinjiang designed to carry 10 million tons of oil annually. It also struck a deal with Kazakhstan, whereby she was granted access to vast reserves to Kazakh oil. China also signed a deal with Turkmenistan to supply 30 billion cubic meters of gas for a thirty year period from 2009 onwards. This development also opened the way for the China National Petroleum Corporation to enter into a production sharing agreement (PSA) to develop Turkmen gas fields.

Chinese activities in the energy sector in Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan have broken Gazprom's domination of Central Asia. The upcoming Chinese-Kazakh pipeline structure will be linked with Iran along the Caspian Sea. Chinese pipeline from Turkmenistan is also being extended across the border to Iran. This will not only reduce China's dependence on energy shipped by sea but will advance the development in Xinjiang. China is also in the process of exploiting the rich hydropower potential of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and is taking help from Kazakhstan to construct electric power stations and then send China electricity through the power grids. What is important to add is that China also controls the headwaters of the two rivers that supply water to Kazakhstan. This apart, under the aegis of the SCO, China has announced \$900 million worth of loans to Central Asian countries, all of them contingent on buying Chinese goods and services. As a result, the Central Asian countries remain worry of their big brother.

**Role of India :** As part of their multi-directional policies, the Central Asian states have been developing their linkages to the south. The governments in Central Asia have been endeavouring to improve ties with New Delhi. Similarly, from India's point of view, Central Asia occupies a very important position keeping in mind the fact that in order to fuel its economic growth and advancement, New Delhi desperately needs uninterrupted supply of oil and natural gas in adequate quantity that could only be met by Central Asia. The Central Asian leaders expressed deep appreciation for India's secular political

model that eschewed religious fundamentalism and expressed the desire for stronger ties with New Delhi.

As things stand now, India's strategic approach towards Central Asia lies in the development of strong ties with all the countries of the to strengthen energy and security ties.

---

## 2.4 Concluding Note

---

All the five countries—Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan—are often defined as passive observers of the rivalry between the major players namely, US, China and Russia in Central Asia. It is in fact similar to that of a conflict of great game between Great Britain and Tsarist Russia about a century ago. In this backdrop, strategic and security issues in Central Asia are of immense significance. All the Central Asian countries will have to work hard to deal with the challenges posed by the presence of external players in view of the fact that the region is endowed with unaccounted reserves of oil and natural gas extremely important from trade and economic points of view.

---

## 2.5 Summary

---

Historically, Central Asia has played a very important role for the traders and invaders. Central Asia is both a facilitator and inhibitor to external players intending to realize their strategic ambitions. In the post-Soviet years, Central Asia gained prominence because of the discovery of hydrocarbon reserves. This apart, Central Asia emerged as a major transportation hub for gas and oil pipeline and transportation/communication corridors connecting China, Russia, Europe and Caucasus region, the Trans-Caspian region and the Indian Ocean.

---

## 2.6 Sample Questions

---

### Essay Type Questions

1. Discuss the key issues involved in Central Asian security and strategic matters.

2. Comment on the geo-strategic salience of Central Asia.
3. Examine the role of external powers in Central Asia in the post-Soviet years.

#### **Short Notes**

1. Write a short note on the involvement of China in the strategic affairs of Central Asia.
2. Briefly discuss India's approach towards Central Asia in recent years.

---

### **2.7 Suggested Reading**

---

1. Alexander Cooley, 2014. *Great Game, Local Rules : The New Great Power Contest in Central Asia*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
2. Nirmala Joshi (ed.) 2010. *Reconnecting India-Central Asia : Emerging Security and Economic Dimensions*. Washington DC. Central Asia Caucasus Institute and the Silk Road Studies.
3. Suchandana Chatterjee (ed.) (2014). *Image of the Region in Eurasian Studies*. New Delhi, K.W. Publishers Pvt. Ltd.
4. Stephen J. Blank (ed.) 2013. *Central Asia after 2014*. United States Army War Colleges.

---

## **Unit : 3 □ Problems of Economic Transition**

---

### **Structure**

#### **3.0 Objectives**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

#### **3.2 Problems/Challenges of Economic Transition**

#### **3.3 Strategies Formulated by the Central Asian States**

#### **3.4 Concluding Note**

#### **3.5 Summary**

#### **3.6 Sample Questions**

#### **3.7 Suggested Reading**

---

### **3.0 Objectives**

---

Central Asian states were physically unprepared to welcome independence in the aftermath of the fall of the former Soviet Union. They faced serious economic problems and challenges but did not have any readymade solutions to deal with them. In this backdrop, the objectives of this study material are as follows :

- To understand the nature of Central Asian economy.
- To identify the problems faced by the states.
- To discuss about the strategies formulated by the Central Asian states.

---

### **3.1 Introduction**

---

Since the late 1990s, Central Asia has emerged as one of the world's fastest growing regions. As far as geographical location of the region is concerned, it is comprised of small landlocked economies with no access to the sea for trade. Hence, its economic prospects are closely linked to international commodity prices. The region is endowed with high priced commodities like oil, gas, cotton and gold with reasonable infrastructure.



**Energy :** Central Asian economies have some of the world's largest energy reserves, which represent a strong basis for economic growth and it is an important source of revenue. It is estimated that Kazakhstan holds 65 years of oil reserves and 300 years of coal reserves. Turkmenistan a leading producer of natural gas holds gas reserves for more than 200 years, according to the present rate of production. Both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have been endowed with rich water reserves whose most abundant potential resource is hydro-electricity.

**Agriculture :** Central Asia has one of the largest arable land areas in the world and produced 25.6 tons of Wheat in 2008 that accounts to 4 percent of world's wheat production. Kazakhstan is the major producer of grain in the region, while cotton is the main export for Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. These countries benefitted immensely from world cotton prices prevailing in the first half of the 1990s. Tajikistan too has a strong potential for cotton production and export base.

**Other Commodities :** Kazakhstan has significant reserves of minerals, iron and steel. Kyrgyzstan exports large quantities of gold. Kumtor goldmine is the eighth largest goldmine in the world. Tajikistan also has potential for aluminum production for export.

---

### **3.2 Problems/Challenges of Economic Transition**

---

Strategically, the region is positioned as a gateway between Europe and Asia and offers extensive potential for trade, investment and growth. All the economies have had a legacy of Soviet oriented socialist economic policies and have embarked on market-oriented reforms, trade openness and boosting private sector development. In the post-Soviet years, by and large, the Central Asian Republics (CARs) witnessed a period of prolonged slow and negative growth and rising incidence of poverty. The transition phase has met with enormous difficulties : disruption in production and marketing relations; end of economic support from the former Soviet Union; a nascent private sector; the lack of capital markets; lack of adequate institutions required for proper functioning of market economy and gaps in infrastructure.

In order to ensure efficient socio-economic development of the region, the Central Asian states went ahead with the creation of regional association. The first step in this direction was the creation of uniform economic space between the Republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan on April 30, 1994. Tajikistan followed suit and joined the group on March 26, 1998. Thus the Central Asian Economic Community (CAEC) came into being.

Another parallel development was the fact that all the Central Asian states became members of the world Trade Organisation (WTO) and they entered free trade zone agreements with China. Beijing is the primary trading partner of all Central Asian countries. Many political parties in Central Asia expressed their desire and faith in a Chinese type authoritarian, nationalist model. The countries suffer from Sino-phobia. Russian influence in the economic affairs is restricted due to a variety of reasons. At the same time, India's influence in the region is also very limited. The United Arab Emirates (UAE), Korea and the South East Asian countries have come to be key partners of the Central Asian countries. USA and European Union's influence in the region is also moderate.

During last three decades, the economic gap among the five Central Asian states, which was already very acute in 1990, widened further. GDP per capita in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in 1990 amounted to 35.6 percent and 41.8 percent of the GDP per capita in Kazakhstan in the same year. In 2011, Kyrgyzstan's GDP per capita was 18.3 percent of that of Kazakhstan. There seems to be no indication to suggest that this trend will reverse in the coming years. Besides it, the Central Asian economies remain heavily dependent on one or two export items. In fact, the widening gap in economic development is reflected in the increasing number of labour migrants from Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. According to one recent report, 208 remittances from migrant labour comprised 49 percent of GDP of Tajikistan, 27 percent of Kyrgyzstan and 13 percent of Uzbekistan. This trend is likely to continue. The discrepancy between energy-rich economies and more vulnerable economies would continue to widen in the coming decades which would have a negative impact on public services such as education and healthcare, as well as labour migration.

### **3.3 Strategies Formulated by the Central Asian States**

Despite having faced the above stated constraints and challenges, Central Asia seems to have turned around during last two decades. Economic growth—driven by high commodity prices of oil and natural gas and their ever growing demand in the world market; increasing inward investment; improved macroeconomic management and development of infrastructure—accelerated to historically unprecedented levels. Oil and gas sector led growth has stimulated the development of services sector and some manufacturing activities resulting in creation of new jobs and the subsequent reduction in poverty.

There have been structural changes in the economies resulting in a shift towards production of industrial goods and minerals. Between 1997 and 2004, the share of industry in GDP rose in Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan and remained constant in Turkmenistan. Among the non-oil producing countries, Tajikistan witnessed a rise in the share of industry in GDP but Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan witnessed a decline. By 2003, Kazakhstan had the largest manufacturing base while Kyrgyzstan had the smallest. The other three Republics fall in between these two extremes.

The industrial recovery in the CARs is closely linked to the performance of manufactured exports that grew about 10 percent per year. Both oil and non-oil exporters had respectable manufactured export growth. While the oil exporting countries' achieved 11 percent target, the non-oil producing Republics achieved 7.8 percent. However, the structure of manufacturing and manufactured exports varies from country to country. Textiles and garments comprise over 80 percent of manufactured exports of Tajikistan and Turkmenistan and about 37 percent of Kyrgyzstan's manufactured exports. Kazakhstan's manufactured exports are primarily dominated by iron and steel with emphasis on chemicals and plastics as well as machinery and transport equipments. In case of Azerbaijan, it is a mix of iron and steel, chemicals and machinery.

Since the late 1990s, an upturn in agriculture was visible in the non-oil exporting countries of the region—particularly Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan—



arising mainly out of agricultural reforms along with high world prices for cotton and wheat. With regard to agricultural reforms, Kyrgyzstan focused on privatization of collective farms. Prices and quantity controls were largely removed, public monopolies dismantled and public investment in the irrigation system was increased. Uzbekistan, however, introduced limited agricultural reform. In order to strengthen food security, small garden plots to grow fruits and vegetables were granted to peasants in the early 1990s through Presidential Decree. Towards the late 1990s, privatization took the form of replacing agricultural cooperatives- 'shirkats'-with individual farmers who receive land leases which are conditional on using the land in accordance with state orders. State controls remains pervasive in Uzbekistan in the areas of agricultural purchasing, pricing, subsidies and distribution.

There are however severe institutional constraints to future growth in Central Asia that need to be addressed. The list includes : a nascent private manufacturing sector with little or no exposure to international markets; under-developed banking and financial systems; a lack of modern technology and export marketing support institutions; inefficient regional energy market; high transport and transit costs due to land-locked geographical conditions and backdated transportation system; the lack of legal and regulatory system for a market economy and so on.

The breach of existing interstate relations is still common throughout Central Asia, which causes significant damage to the economies of these countries. Even reorientation of external economic links to the world market could not improve the situation in production because of keen competition at the world market.

Poverty is a common problem of the Central Asian countries. The income gap between rich and poor, characterized by social stratification, remains very high and continues to grow further. For instance in Kazakhstan, before the beginning of the transit period, the gap was four times in cash income between the richest 10 percent of the population and the poorest 10 percent. In 1998, this difference exceeded tenfold. 10 percent of the richest layer of the population received 27



percent of income, while 10 percent of the poorest population received only 2.3 percent of income.

One of the key effects of poverty is environmental degradation, which could be observed both in rural areas and in cities of the sub-region. Due to poor living standards and rapid population growth, governments of Central Asian countries have been forced to compromise with the quality of environment in order to satisfy growing needs of the society. Resources are being used indiscriminately to satisfy needs of the present generation without taking into account the future needs. Natural resource depletion contributes to impoverishment of the population. This is a very urgent problem that needs utmost attention from the Central Asian governments as well as international financial institutions by working out appropriate political instruments.

However, despite constraints, the Central Asian countries have been trying their best to perform. During 2000-2002, Turkmenistan achieved one of the highest economic growth rates in the world. The growth of gross domestic production in 2000 was 118.6 percent and in the years 2001, it went up to 120.4 percent. Gas extraction grew 2.3 folds during 2000-2002, oil 1.3 times, power generation 1.2 times. Besides, the main targets of agriculture, textile industry, and transport communication development outlined in the programme were considerably exceeded. Turkmenistan is the only country in Central Asia, where for more than 10 years, economic reforms took better shape. Economic potential of non-governmental sector also increased while taking into account environmental safety measures.

Agriculture sector in Kazakhstan is growing slowly. 44 percent of its total population lives in rural areas and agriculture makes only 9 percent input in GDP. Grain production dropped from 30 million tons in 1992 to 6.5 million tons in 1998, a sharp 20 percent fall per year. During the period from 1998 to 2002, grain production however increased by 46 percent on an average. The cattle population decreased from 9 million in 1992 to 3.9 million in 1998.

In Kyrgyzstan, during reforms implementation period, GDP declined significantly that caused destabilization of its economy. The state investment activity was reduced to nil. It is noteworthy to mention that over the years the ratio of the state and private sectors of economy changed significantly. During the period from 1999 till 2003, the share of state economy declined from 17.3 percent to 14.9 percent, and in contrast the share of private sector increased from 82.7 percent to 85.1 percent. The fact is that agricultural production in Kyrgyzstan is highly dependent on unstable climate conditions and therefore the outcome is conjectural.

In Tajikistan, the scenario is different from the rest of the four republics. The problem of poverty has been accelerated by external debt which impedes economic growth, reduces financing of social sphere and leads to deficiency of investments. Tajikistan was incurred a significant external debt of around US\$ 873.7 million that makes 42 percent of its GNP.

Again the case of Uzbekistan is different from rest of the Central Asian republics. Primarily it is an agriculture based economy. It occupies the fourth position in the production of raw cotton, though gradually it declined.

Central Asia is a landlocked region. It is surrounded by some of the world's fastest growing economies namely Russia, China and India. Keeping in mind this fact, the Central Asian policy makers have embarked on a number of initiatives. The Central Asia-China gas pipeline launched in 2003 is the first pipeline to bring Central Asian natural gas to China. The pipeline connects Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and China. Since independence, multilateral bodies and regional organizations have been active in promoting corridors which would boost economic cooperation in the region along with international trade and foreign investment. Asian Development Bank provided grant to upgrade one of the main transport arteries of the region, linking Kyrgyzstan with China and other Central Asian countries. This apart, the European Union's Transport Corridor linking Europe-Caucasus-Central Asia was launched in 1993.

FDI can play an important role in increasing both labour productivity and export performance through the import of technology, know-how and managerial expertise coupled with policies designed to facilitate the transfer of knowledge and technology between firms. It is important to note that FDI in Central Asia rose significantly over the years. The region has increasingly become the recipient of foreign investment from a number of countries including Russia and China. Inward investment flows are primarily on natural resources, but not exclusively. In Kazakhstan, other sectors such as construction, financial services, metallurgy and agribusiness have also become targets for FDI.

In a nut shell, having gained independence in 1991, the Central Asian countries had to confront three major shocks : (i) the dissolution of the Soviet Union; (ii) the end of centrally planned command economic structures; and (iii) hyperinflation. As a result of these developments, throughout the 1990s the Central Asian countries experienced a significant economic downturn and faced major challenges to their competitiveness. Labour productivity, based on gross output—computed as gross domestic product over the number of people employed—declined by about 30 percent between 1992 and 2000. Since 2000 however GDP per employees across Central Asia has surged dramatically from an average of US\$ 859 in 2000 to US\$ 1410 in 2008. These figures show how the region turned around once it recovered from the shocks. It also reflects a significant reallocation of labour resources across the region, away from manufacturing sector towards the services sector on the one hand and toward agriculture on the other.

---

### **3.4 Concluding Note**

---

Finally, strategically located between East Asia and Europe and South Asia and Russia, Central Asia is rich in resources and faces tremendous opportunities, yet to be explored to its full potential. Since the outset of their transition to a market economy, the countries of the region have made visible progress toward decentralizing their economies, creating market institutions, expanding international links and intensifying efforts to diversify and increase production and trade. Due



to good macroeconomic management, high commodity prices and strong foreign inflows, the region enjoyed near double digit growth on average during 2001-07. Then the global economic crisis took a toll on Central Asia, with average growth for the region declined from 5.7 percent in 2008 to 1.2 percent in 2009.

However, two important energy exporters—Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan—have successfully weathered the global downturn reasonably well owing to limited linkages to international markets, long-term energy contracts, and supportive government policies. Then as the global demand for energy increased again, economies of these countries got a major boost. But the non energy exporters like Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan faced deteriorating living standards largely as a result of a sharp drop in remittances from and trade with Russia. Experts however predict that with a major boost to reform, economic potential of Central Asia can be developed more rapidly in the years to come by.

---

### **3.5 Summary**

---

All the five Central Asian states of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are still struggling with the process of transition to market economies. Once the process is completed, Central Asia could become a key trade and transit hub for Russia, China, India and the European Union that would also boost regional economic development.

---

### **3.6 Sample Questions**

---

#### **Essay Type**

1. Examine the process of economic transition in Central Asia in the post-Soviet years.
2. Comment on the strategies formulated by the Central Asian states to promote socio-economic development of the region.

#### **Short Type**

1. Briefly comment on the agricultural reforms introduced by Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan since late 1990s.



2. What do you mean by the term 'economic gap' in respect of Central Asia?

---

### 3.7 Suggested Reading

---

1. Boris Z. Rumer. 1006. 1996 *Central Asia in Transition : Dilemmas of Political and Economic Development*. Armonk, New York, M.E. Sharpe.
2. Pauline Jones Luong. 2004. *The Transformation of Central Asia : States and Societies from Soviet Rule to Independence*. London, Cornell University Press.
3. Millennium Development Goals Report : Turkmenistan (2003) UNDP p.7.
4. Muradov, Bakhodyr & Ilkhamov, Alishar (2014 Oct) Uzbekistan's Cotton Sector : Financial flows & Distribution of Resources, Open Society Foundation, p.11.

---

## **Unit : 4 □ Islam and Democracy in Central Asia**

---

### **Structure**

- 4.0 Objectives**
- 4.1 Introduction**
- 4.2 Role of Politics in Islam**
- 4.3 Equation between Islam and Democracy in Central Asia**
- 4.4 Concluding Note**
- 4.5 Summary**
- 4.6 Sample Questions**
- 4.7 Suggested Reading**

---

### **4.0 Objectives**

---

The debate about democracy in Muslim societies has acquired an edge in recent years. Francis Fukuyama, the noted scholar, argued that the fundamental versions of Islam have been dominant in recent years that make the Muslim societies particularly resistant to modernity and democracy. Indonesian Islamist intellectual Mohammad Siddiq Al-Jawi states that 'Muslim community will evaluate democracy from the perspective of the Islamic faith' and will find that 'democratic freedoms are in sharp conflict with the freedoms found in Islam'. In this backdrop, the objective of this study is to focus on the following :

- To examine the status of democracy in Central Asia;
- To assess the nature of Islam in the region ;
- To understand the relations between Islam and democracy ;

---

### **4.1 Introduction**

---

The tragedy of 9/11 and its aftermath focused the world's attention on Muslim politics. The New York episode provoked a number of hard questions about Islam

and the Muslim world. The then US President George W Bush described the attack on the World Trade Centre as an attack on human freedom that demonstrated a clash between militant intolerant Islam and the values of liberal societies, and between democracy and authoritarian regimes. This raised certain fundamental questions about the compatibility of Islam with democracy. In this backdrop, Zoya Hassan tries to find out answer of a pertinent question : 'Is democracy the exception rather than the norm in Muslim societies?' The Asian, experience suggests that democracy can indeed work in different settings. According to Hasan, 'The success of India's democracy with a large Muslim population who are among its most enthusiastic participants shows that it can work, provided there is an emphasis on pluralism and equality'.

What is important to note is that competitive and party-based elections are not a common feature of the politics of the Muslim world. Consequently, the dominant view is that the socio-political ethos of Islam as a religion of Muslim societies is responsible for this institutional deficit which prevents these societies from opting for democracy as a form of government. This perception has become more prominent in the context of the global war on terror in the post 9/11 period.

---

## **4.2 Role of Politics in Islam**

---

In order to understand the equation between Islam and democracy, one has to ponder over the role of politics in Islam. 'Politics' is a subjective word, means many things to many people. The common definition of politics is the ability to achieve common good for the mankind. Since Islam as a religion pays great attention upon governance of peoples' lives, politics is already deeply rooted in its fundamental bases; though one can argue that the governance of religion is only for individual aspects of life which should not be mixed up with the governance of the community and states. Such argument is however unacceptable because of the fact that in Islam the well being of the Islamic community is very fundamental. From the very beginning, politics and governance has always played a major role. Within the framework of Quran, the Islamic definition of politics gives careful consideration to good organization around the principles of public

interest. In Arabic literature, Islam means a way of life. The very purpose of Islamic state is to remove 'evil' and to establish 'good', according to the laws of ALLAH expressed through Prophet Muhammad. The Islamic state must be based upon the idea of justice. The fundamental basis of the Islamic State of Republic should be based on Quran and therefore any form of tribalism or nationalism should be strongly condemned and be prevented. Thus, it can be safely stated that Islam is compatible with the concept of modern understanding of politics and statehood.

Many theorists, immediately after the end of the cold war, came out with the idea of triumph of liberalism. The apparent victory of the liberal-capitalist ideology over Communism created a social, political and economic vacuum in those societies which were governed by socialist principles. Western liberal-capitalist model filled the vacuum created by the demise of the former USSR. Muslim world however did not accept any such theoretical justification which led to the emergence of the theory of 'clash of civilizations.' Many thinkers in the West denounced Islam as an obstacle to democracy. Analysis concerning the establishment of totalitarians system were completely denounced by the Muslims as baseless. It is in this backdrop, the write up would focus on the nature of relations between Islam and democracy in Central Asia.

In response to the Western ideological expansion, the Islamic World came out with the novel idea of 'democracy' which is rooted in the Quran. The definition of western form of democracy essentially focuses on the ideas of government- 'of the people', 'by the people' and 'for the people' which came to be rejected by the Islamic movement because it goes against the fundamental basis of Islamic order of society. In the perception of the West, government is subordinated and subjugated to the people. The people have the right to remove the government from power if it desires so. The western concept of democracy puts the will of the people before the will of God. In Islam, the will of God gets the primary status, the creator and protector of everything. According to Islam, the human beings fulfill their aims and objectives only through serving God. The prophet represents the will of God and therefore he is above the people. This however does not imply that Islam is opposed to democracy and rule of law.



The Arabic word 'Islam' refers to submission to the will of God, though there is much disagreement within Islam about what that will is. In the post-9/11 period, there has been much debate in the West about whether Islamic and Western values are inherently in conflict, more particularly whether Islam is inherently hostile to democracy. In *The Clash of Civilization and the Remaking of World Order*, Samuel P. Huntington writes, "Muslims agree that a basic difference exists between their culture and Western culture". Huntington suggests that this 'basic difference' will lead to a violent clash with the Western civilization. According to him, "The underlying problem for the West is not Islamic fundamentalism. It is Islam."

In Central Asia, Islamic revival was triggered by Mikhail Gorbachev's policy of glasnost in the late 1980s which was designed to address a completely different set of problems in the Soviet Union. Soon, however, glasnost became an officially endorsed policy instrument for expression of religious grievances. This eventually brought about a qualitative change in the orientation of the Soviet government toward religion. Central Asian Muslims demanded a fair share of religious freedom. The first series of Islamic protests in Central Asia occurred in December 1988 when spontaneous demonstrations of Uzbek students broke out in the Capital Tashkent. Some participants were reported to have raised green banners and read Koranic verses during the demonstrations. Immediately thereafter, a second public protest was carried out by Muslims in Tashkent to demand the resignation of the head mufti of the Religious Board of Central Asia and Kazakhstan, Shamsidin Babakhanov, who was accused of gross violation of Islamic codes of conduct. Babakhanov's resignation put an end to nearly four decades of hereditary rule of the board by Babakhanov's family.

---

### **4.3 Equation between Islam and Democracy in Central Asia**

---

With regard to democratic environment in the region, it could be stated that Central Asia is one of the world's most repressive regions. In fact, the region shows the least inclination towards democratization. The point is that the Central Asian countries are different from each other in many respects but none can be

labeled a democracy or even claim to have made substantial progress towards democratic practices. In 2007, the European Union adopted a strategy to promote democracy, human rights, rule of law and good governance in Central Asia. The EU initiated several projects focusing on good governance, parliamentary reform, capacity building for political parties etc., but so far the results have been discouraging. Other democracy promoters like UNDP also undertook a major initiative in exercising democracy promotion in the region with no suitable outcome. However, the 2010 changes in Kyrgyzstan offered a window of opportunity towards promoting democratic values in the country whereby it could easily be differentiated from rest of Central Asia. In this backdrop, in order to have a fair assessment on the democratic environment, rather than studying Central Asia in general, it would be necessary to focus on each one of the five countries separately.

**Kazakhstan** has gone through a period of steep economic growth due to oil and gas exports, but very little has been done to build genuine democracy. Kazakhstan is by and large dependent on its president, Nursultan Nazarbayev. Over the last few years, Nazarbayev has mostly been concerned with enhancing his country's image by securing the chairmanship of Organization of the Islamic Conference in 2011. Kazakhstan's democratic prospects look bright in comparison with Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. Freedom House labeled the two countries as being among the nine 'worst of worst' countries in the world. **Uzbekistan** has since inception developed itself as a police state led by President Islam Karimov. The country has problematic relations with all of its neighbours and has not been able to overcome its negative image following the 2005 Andijan events in which hundreds of protesters were killed. In **Turkmenistan**, President Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov has created his own powerbase since he took control following the sudden death of President Saparmurat Niyazov in December 2006. Things have not changed much since then. One positive development is that even though the country lacks any independent civil society or political opposition, the President undertook an important step by allowing opposition candidates for the presidential election held in February 2013. Despite this development, Turkmenistan

remains one of the most isolated and repressive countries in the world, at par with Chad and North Korea.

**Kyrgyzstan** experienced a second regime change in 2010 after the first one in 2005 when President Aşkar Akayev was removed by Kurmanbek Bakiyev in what has been described as a coup rather than a genuine popular revolt. When President Bakiyev turned authoritarian and was removed in April 2010 following popular protests, it was expected that a free civil society had emerged in a democratic set up. However, the ethnic violence in June 2010 in the south of the country impeded this development and rivalries between political parties became acute that threatened the already fragile state. Despite these setbacks the constitution was amended and Kyrgyzstan emerged, at least on paper, a parliamentary democracy.

**Tajikistan** is led by authoritarian President Emomali Rahmon who took power on the back of an initiative to end the civil war in 1997. The country does have a genuine opposition party—the Islamic Renaissance Party—in parliament. Nonetheless tensions over the growth of Islam are rising in Tajikistan and the government has adopted a hardline approach towards different forms of opposition. This apart, the country is characterized by wide spread corruption as well as severe security threats. Corruption at the highest level has made its foundation shaky.

In fact, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are the two poorest countries of the region and they offer limited space for long-term democratization. Kazakhstan occasionally seems inclined to take small steps towards a more open society. External powers like US, EU and India can play an important role towards promoting and strengthening democracy in the region. The moot point is that democracy is seen by the leaders of Central Asia as a direct threat to their existence. The notion of democracy is at odds with the vested interests of the elites. They see democracy as a challenge to their position. Therefore, rather than focusing on democracy, the Central Asian leaders argue, focus should be on the threat to terrorism and radical Islam. Researchers however argue that Central Asia should also focus on the modern concept of security that includes poverty, lack of opportunity for the new



generation and inter-state tension that seem to be the foremost threat to the stability of the states. In other words, the biggest threats to the Central Asian people are the regimes themselves, which suppress the people and choose regime security over state and human security.

---

#### **4.4 Concluding Note**

---

The Central Asian regimes have developed most of the institutions of democracy but lack democratic practice. For instance, the legal system is strong in black and white but in reality it is rarely implemented. These states are actually facade democracies. Parliament and a Judiciary with a basic division of power exist merely on paper. Institutions such as political parties and civil society have been created basically to satisfy western powers and give civilians a feeling of state building. The elites, in order to serve their own socio-political interests, have often played an important role in embedding Islam in politics.

---

#### **4.5 Summary**

---

On the whole, the prospects for democratization in Central Asia are dim and security risks caused by instability are on the rise. Engagement of external powers with Central Asian societies is a better choice than sanctions and isolation. Pointed support towards democratization, promotion of human rights and increased people to people contact are need of the hour. Central Asia cannot be discarded as unfertile soil for democracy. Islam could play a very constructive role in this respect.

---

#### **4.6 Sample Questions**

---

##### **Essay Type Question**

1. Discuss the role of Islam in Central Asian politics.
2. Critically examine the linkage between Islam and Democracy in Central Asia.



### Short Type

1. Briefly comment on the socio-political ethos of Islam.
2. Comment on the statement : "Democracy is the exception rather than norm in Muslim societies".
3. What is the meaning of Islam?

---

### 4.7 Suggested Reading

---

1. Zoya Hassan (ed.). 2007, *Democracy in Muslim Societies : The Asian Experience*. Los Angeles, Sage Publications.
2. Surya Narain Yadav. 2010. *Post-Soviet Dynamics of Central Asia*. New Delhi, Jnanada Prakashan.

1. Briefly comment on the socio-political class of Islam.
2. Comment on the statement: "Democracy is the exception rather than the rule in Muslim societies."
3. What is the meaning of Islam?

---

#### 4.7 Suggested Reading

---

1. Aziz Hassan (ed), 2007, *Democracy in Muslim Societies*, The Asian
2. *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 2007, 19(1), 1-15.
3. *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 2007, 19(1), 1-15.

# **Paper-VIII**

**Politics & Society in Asia : Select Regions**

## **Module – III**

### **Asia Pacific**

- Unit 1 The concept of the Asia Pacific Region and its significance in International Relations**
- Unit 2 Authoritarianism, Civil-Military Relations and Prospects of Democratization in Select Pacific Countries—Indonesia, Philippines and South Korea**
- Unit 3 Political Economy of Asia Pacific Region**
- Unit 4 Ethnic Problems in the Asia Pacific Region**

## Paper VIII

Politics & Society in Asia: Select Regions

### Module - III

#### Asia Pacific

- Unit 1: The concept of the Asia Pacific Region and its significance in International Relations
- Unit 2: Authoritarianism (Taiwan, Korea) and Aspects of Democratization in Select Asian Countries—Indonesia, Philippines and South Korea
- Unit 3: Political Economy of Asia Pacific Region
- Unit 4: Ethnic Problems in the Asia Pacific Region



# Module-III

## Asia Pacific

---

### Unit : 1 □ The concept of the Asia Pacific Region and its significance in International Relations

---

#### Structure

#### 1.0 Objectives

#### 1.1 The concept of the Asia Pacific

#### 1.2 Basic features of the Asia Pacific

#### 1.3 Political Systems

#### 1.4 Economic Systems

#### 1.5 Social & Cultural Systems

#### 1.6 Significance of the Asia Pacific in International Relations

#### 1.7 Points to Remember

#### 1.8 Sample Questions

#### 1.9 Suggested Reading

---

#### 1.0 Objectives

---

The present unit seeks to understand :

- The concept of the Asia Pacific.
- The essential features of the region of the Asia Pacific.
- A broad variety of political systems ranging from democratic to authoritarian as exists in the region yet retaining a subtle balance.
- The significance of the Asia Pacific in global affairs.

---

## 1.1 The Concept of the Asia Pacific

---

The term Asia Pacific indicates a geographical area located mostly around the Western Pacific Ocean. It entails a number of areas like East Asia, South Asia, South East Asia and Oceania. It seems that over a period of time the concept has expanded to include Russia and some parts of the America, more to say, it includes some countries of the America that are located in the eastern coast of the Pacific Ocean. This claim is substantiated by the fact that the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation, the APEC, includes member-countries of Canada, Peru, Chile, Mexico, Russia and the United States. To a certain extent it justifies the fact that Asia Pacific is more functional rather than mere geographical entities. But Asia Pacific is seen as a construct. In fact, there is a view that all regions whether East Asia or West Asia, Central Asia or South Asia are constructs. Such constructs are created by states to suit their own purposes and promote certain interests. Thus such constructs are neither strictly geographical nor rigid; perhaps they may become more functional and even notional depending on the context and objectives for which they are being conceived and applied.

Asia Pacific as a region highlights the attempt to link Asia, precisely East Asia with the wider Pacific Region. It has been often realized that East Asia, or the Far East is limited geographically because it does not involve the Americas particularly the United States. In this context Asia Pacific is a construct that allows the United States to get involved in the matters of Asia. Given the fact that the United States cannot establish itself as an Asian state because of its geographical position, it needs to justify its non-receding interest in the region. The idea of the Asia Pacific gives the United States the avenue to remain involved with the affairs of Asia despite being a Pacific country. It is therefore evident that the construct of the Asia Pacific is supported by the United States because it is an enabling concept for that country. Some other Pacific countries like Canada, Australia, and New Zealand support the construct of the Asia Pacific because they have some interests in the Asian continent but at a lesser intensity than the United States. Similarly scholars feel that Japan's interest and support for the idea of the

Asia Pacific is because of its close relationship with the United States. Yet a more interesting explanation brings forward the fact that Japan would prefer multilateralisation of East Asian affairs that could help diffuse some unforeseen US-Japan relationship in the wider regional settings.

The concept of the Asia Pacific has been juxtaposed against other existing or evolving constructs that has challenged the strategy of bridging Asia with the Pacific particularly the United States. It is understood that the Pacific Region will give no special reference to entire Asia; the regions that have been clubbed under the evolving construct of the Pacific Rim include the countries of Northeast and East Asia, Oceania and the Americas. Similarly, the construct of East Asia gives no space to the Pacific countries. The concept of East Asia was conceived in the late 1980s by Malaysia under the leadership of one of the most prominent Prime Ministers Mahathir Mohammed and furthered as a proposal for *East Asia Economic Group* (EAEG) in 1990. The concept of East Asia proposed an order bereft of western influence especially that of the United States. Although the proposal of the EAEG did not materialize, the 1997 economic crisis provided a scope to revitalize the Asian remedy to economic calamities like the Asian Crisis. The ASEAN + 3 (Japan, China and South Korea) was formed to instill economic confidence in the regional order of Asia. Subsequently in 2005, the East Asian Summit emerged with the inaugural summit in Kuala Lumpur. The East Asian Summit apart from being reflective of the economic health of the region is also reflective of the growing self-identity in East Asia. Thus, the strengthening of Asian identity through institutions like ASEAN, the EAS could be juxtaposed against the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation reiterate the construct of Asia Pacific under the garb of economic cooperation. This amply makes it clear that regional institutions and agencies play a prominent role in strengthening regional identity and strengthen the cause of such regional constructs like East Asia, Pacific Rim or the Asia Pacific.

At present times Pacific Asia would include East Asia and some powers of the Pacific like the United States, Australia, Canada and New Zealand. East Asia is sub-divided into North East Asia and South East Asia. North East Asia includes



China (including Hong Kong) Taiwan (claimed by China), Japan, South Korea, North Korea, Russia (Eastern part of Russia, adjacent to the Pacific) and Mongolia. Southeast Asia includes Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand, Singapore and Vietnam. These countries are institutionally clubbed into the *Association of South East Asian Nations* (ASEAN); East Timor though adjacent to Indonesia is not a part of the ASEAN. All the islands of South Pacific are considered a part of the Asia Pacific; these independent or self — governing island countries along with the two major countries of the South Pacific—Australia and New Zealand have formed the *Pacific Island Forum*. Going by the membership of the APEC, some Pacific seaboard countries of Latin America like Mexico, Chile and Peru are part of the Asia Pacific. At present, India is also considered as an emerging player in the Asia Pacific because of her critical position in South Asia, its emerging economy and its pivotal position in the Indian Ocean littorals.

---

## 1.2 Basic Features of the Asia Pacific

---

The Asia Pacific covers roughly 2.8 billion hectares of land approximately 22 percent of the global land area. This region covers a wide spectrum of climatic conditions from the northern temperate and boreal through the range of tropical and subtropical zones and back to temperate. The geographical features range from the high plateaus and mountains of Pakistan to the west and extending to the island countries of North Asia and the South Pacific; besides the Asia Pacific region incorporates conditions of moist tropical to arid and semiarid desert. As would be expected by this geography, the human and social dimensions of the Asia Pacific Region are equally diverse. The Asia Pacific Region included a total of 820 million hectares of forest and wooded lands, or approximately 16 percent of the global total. The approximate population of the region is more than 4.4 billion as calculated in 201, constituting 61% of the world's population. Economically, the region is expected to continue with its upward movement in terms of GDP growth though the basic thrust is on Asia's economic performance wherein a steady growth rate of 5.5% is predicted. The population number and



quality of the major powers of the Asia Pacific China, India, Japan, Russia, and the U.S stand to be transformed significantly. Impending changes will directly affect the ability of these states of argument power and extend influence internationally. Apart from the basic introduction to this region, it must be understood that Asia Pacific is a diverse region and unlike the European Union that despite its diversity, has some basic similarity in terms of political systems, economic systems, social and cultural systems and the underlying values. In order to understand the diversity of the Asia Pacific, it is necessary to look at these features.

---

### **1.3 Political Systems**

---

Asia Pacific encompasses a broad variety of political systems ranging from democratic to authoritarian the entire spectrum between the two extremes consists of a subtle balancing of both democratic and authoritarian trends. This is evident in the major powers of the Asia Pacific. For instance the United States, Japan and India are considered as liberal democratic states. China on the other hand is a communist system; however now far from the ideology, the state derives its legitimacy from nationalism and a strong drive towards economic growth. The state maintains its statist orientation under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party and is generally perceived to be authoritarian by the liberal orders; the Chinese state has other explanations for this. Even within the liberal order, if we consider Canada, Australia and New Zealand, along with India, they are all parliamentary systems and are thus different from the United States. However Canada and Australia are similar because they are all federations whereas India claims to be a Union of States. Several states of North East Asia and Southeast Asia also project themselves as liberal orders; some of them have undergone democratization in the contemporary times. For instance, while the countries of North East Asia like South Korea and Taiwan have begun democratization in the 1980s, some countries of South East Asia like Indonesia and Myanmar have undergone democratization in the late 1990s. With the end of the Soviet Union, it is understood that the state has undergone certain degree of

democratization yet the system retains some amount of authoritarian trends. Under the present leadership of President Putin, there may be some amount of strengthening of the authoritarian trends. Again it seems that North Korea is a state that has continued to remain an authoritarian system in the contemporary period. Otherwise reforms in communist countries like Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos have not ushered in complete liberal practices. Such has been the case in several South East Asian countries because they are in some cases ruled by single party or single-party dominated coalitions as has been the case in Singapore, Malaysia. In other instances they are ruled by dominant leaders with authoritarian dispositions even in monarchical systems or even in apparently democratic system like in Brunei, Indonesia, and Philippines. In some cases ethnic issues have become entangled with the political system complicating the politics and putting the stability in duress as had been the case in the Pacific Islands of Solomon Islands or Fiji. The various political systems of the Asia Pacific need to be understood in the light of the principles that guide them and the state practices that are prevalent in reality. Essentially declaring of democratic principles or democratization does not necessary mean that it is transformed into effective governance and day to day activities of the administration.

---

## 1.4 Economic Systems

---

Most of the economic systems in the Asia Pacific are capitalist in nature and the communist states have undergone reforms and have embarked on a journey of market socialism. The two major capitalist economies in the Asia Pacific included the United States and Japan. The region is home to the *Newly Industrialised Countries* (NICs) also then known as the Asian Tigers. These were four in number—Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan. Some of these NICs have followed the Japanese model of the economic development. The United States is said to be the largest GDP (in current prices) slightly edging over China. Both the US and the Japanese economies have a strong and advanced industrial base but the US has a strong agricultural base also. The Japanese capitalist economy is more state-controlled than the United States. Japanese trade thus is projected

as protectionist despite its liberal orientation. This is evident in the agriculture sector wherein Japan restricts agricultural imports in order to protect rural society, even though this may imply that Japanese consumers pay higher prices for their agricultural product. In contrast irrespective of its protectionist inclinations, the US maintains its basic liberal orientation in the case of international trade. Other middle range capitalist economies like Canada, Australia are inspired by the US liberal economic order; New Zealand though a smaller sized economy also follows the US example. India is identified as an upcoming economy that is undergoing reforms in the recent but its liberalization process has been under state surveillance. It has its own share of economic problems that has hindered her smooth economic rise. The country is yet to expand her industrial base and still depends on the agricultural sector for her growth and earnings. China is now accepted not only a major Asian economy, but also a global one. China's GDP in terms of *Purchasing Power Parity* (PPP) of recent has crossed that of the United States. It is an excellent example of market socialism undertaken in the post-Soviet era by the Chinese state under the continuous leadership of the Chinese Communist Party. At present, the Chinese economy is characterised by the presence of a prominent private sector, a contracting but effective state sector and also a large peasant-based subsistence production sector. China faces challenges of quick economic development like environmental issues, pressure of natural resources, challenge of ageing human factor to mention some of them. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia had undergone a radical transformation, moving from a centrally planned economy to a globally integrated market economy. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia had undergone a radical transformation, moving from a centrally planned economy to a globally integrated market economy. Corruption, administrative mismanagement have led to slow economic growth though Russia was labeled as a high-income economy by the World Bank in 2013 and the second in economic performance amongst the G20, countries, the projected growth rate for 2014 is just about 1%. At present the country faces a serious economic crisis with the Russian Ruble plummeting down.



In South East Asia some of the countries have developed following the capitalist trajectory until hit by the Asian financial crisis of the 1990s. Of the Southeast economies, the most advanced economy is Singapore with the highest standards of living in the region. It is still known as a hub of international finance as much a hub of transshipment. Four other economies that followed the capitalist trajectory were Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines but their exports mostly concentrated on agricultural production and some mineral resources. By the 1980s, the economies were doing remarkable well because of investments, but they took a major hit in the Asian economic meltdown, in the order of intensity—Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia. The recovery has been very slow and steady. In comparison the states that have undertaken reforms are the three communist states of Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos and also Myanmar. Traditionally these countries have been identified as third world economies with large subsistence sectors and agricultural produce led export sectors. However with the reforms in these countries but reforms have allowed the private sectors function slowly and with great caution so as not to completely uninstall the dominant economic system. In contrast to the countries that have taken steps towards the reforms of their economy, however limited they maybe, North Korea continues to be an unreformed industrialised, centralized, command economy of the old communist version. In fact with the kind of political leadership that is in power, reforms towards liberalization are a far cry from reality. The Pacific Island economies are small and with an abundance of mineral resources, the economies have remained dependent on subsistence economies. Some exceptions are Hawai'i and Guam that have relatively developed economies. Most of the economies of the Pacific Island depend on their natural resources including the marine ones and their production base is also determined these resources. Despite of the diversity of the economies in terms of their strength and performance, the Asia Pacific has emerged on the global scenario and replaced Europe. The combined GDP of the APEC countries is approximately around 21 trillion dollars which is more than half of the world GDP. Besides Thus the significance of the Asia Pacific as an economic power zone is being realized.



---

## 1.5 Social and Cultural Systems

---

The characteristics of the population in the Asia Pacific societies are determined by two things—first, by the nature and level advancement of the economy of the countries and second, by the ethnic composition of individual societies. As such, societies in the Asia Pacific are as diverse as the political and economic systems. The spectrum is broad and varied from advance urbanized societies with small rural population to large agriculture-based rural population with small urban elite confined to the cities. The first type would include, the United States, Japan, Canada, South Korea, Taiwan and Australia while the other kind would include countries like Bangladesh, Vietnam, Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia. Between these two extremes are several countries of the Asia Pacific who are developing and could not be confined to the typical archetype of the Third World. Instead they are more often known as the developing countries. Varied amongst themselves, these countries are characterised by a substantial peasant base along with emerging middle class depending on the extent of industrialization of the economy. Expansion of the industrial base leads to the establishment of a working class. Urbanisation attracts the rural population to migrate to the cities irrespective of the kind of employment scope that cities generate; it may lead to the creation of slums in the cities. Subsequently, a large lower middle class exists alongside a moderate middle class in cities of the developing countries. Such has been the case in countries like Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines, China and India.

Multi-ethnicity and multiculturalism marks the societies of the Asia Pacific. Again here, there are two dimensions to it, first, the issue of immigrant societies and second, the existence of minority population in several societies of the Asia Pacific. Immigrant societies like the United States, Canada and Australia are essentially multicultural because they have been home to different communities and races from other parts of the world especially Asia. However in New Zealand, the population is divided between immigrants from Europe and the local population of Maoris and Pacific Islanders. Demographic homogeneity is an

oxymoron in the sense that no country can have a complete homogeneous population. In any case, considering the composition of the majority population of various countries, Japan and both the Koreas are considered homogeneous societies. China has a majority of Han Chinese population while Muslims, Tibetans, and a number of ethnic groups in some provinces of the country constitute minority population. Interestingly Chinese are spread throughout South East Asia; in some places they are present in majority like in Singapore while in Indonesia, Malaysia and in Thailand they are known as ethnic minority. Interestingly, in Thailand, majority of the Thai are of Chinese origin but now they are known as Thais. Myanmar is home of several ethnic groups who are not only different from the lowland Burmese, they are also different from each other and strive to protect and maintain their identity. The differences between the Vietnamese and the hill people are not so stark. Indonesia is home to the majority Javanese but there are almost 300 indigenous ethnic minority groups that include Sundanese, Madurese, Bugis, Malay, Minangkabau. In certain portion of Southeast Asia Indians are also a minority but not a major group as the Chinese; they are present in Malaysia, and in Myanmar. In contrast people of Indian origin are present in almost all the countries of South Asia. So also in some of the Pacific Islands especially in the Fiji islands wherein the simmering tension between the indigenous Fijians and the Fijians of the Indian origin affect the politics of the country. In case of the Pacific Islands like the Solomon Islands or Papua New Guinea, the peace and stability depends upon the relationship between the several tribal groups of these countries.

When one looks at the cultural systems of the Asia Pacific, it is easy to relate them to the demographic plurality of the societies. Here cultural systems do not imply referring to living styles and patterns of various communities, rather it implies the values that underline the various societies of this region. The vast region of the Asia Pacific is a melting pot of a number of cultural systems inherited from various civilizations over a period of time. These contributing civilisations include both the Western and the Oriental, the Islamic and the Hindu civilisational influence. In terms of specific civilisational influences, as Huntington

had identified, the Western, Sinic, Japanese, Islamic, Indian, even the Russian Orthodox civilisational influences are to be noticed. However the presumption of clashes between these civilisations is not necessary. In the Asia Pacific, countries like the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand may seem to be home to the western civilisation and culture but the fact is that Western civilisation has been pervasive in large parts of the Asia Pacific —Latin America, South East Asia. This has been through imperialism in history and through the spread of technology, market and western values in the contemporary times; globalization has just hastened the process. At present western ideas some more in consonance with US social values and ideas but they are based on the some of the basic tenets of Enlightenment like the rationality, scientific and secular outlook. This largely underlines the beliefs like the separation of the secular and the religious, the personal and the public and the belief in the rule of law, equality and liberty. Thus all the systems influenced by the Western values basically cater to the liberal democratic order that is preciously promoted and defended by the United States and the other western orders of the Asia Pacific.

On the other hand perhaps the Oriental civilisational influences would include the Sinic, the Japanese and the Indian influences. Herein it is necessary to understand that Japan's influence had been conditioned and curtailed by its image as an imperial power. Though as an imperial power, Japan reached as far as South East Asia and the Indian subcontinent, but its cultural influence based on Shintoism seemed to be limited to Korea and Taiwan. In contrast the Sinic values and the Indic values based on Taoism, Confucianism and Hinduism, Buddhism respectively have had far more prominent influence on several countries of the Asia Pacific mostly East Asia and South East Asia. All these civilisational influences share a common perspective in integrating the whole life rather than creating spaces like the private and the public. Moreover these cultures are basically conservative because they do not encourage questioning and systemic changes.

Islam also has enormous cultural influence in the region. Asia Pacific is home to the country with largest Muslim population country—Indonesia; in Malaysai



Muslims are majority, so to in the island country of Brunei. In other some other states of the region, Muslims are a minority in some of the Asian states of the Asia Pacific—Thailand, Myanmar, the Philippines, Cambodia and China. In the western orders of the Asia Pacific they have become a minority because of immigration, Islam bears a similarity with the Oriental value systems in believing in approach but deviates because Islam believes in integrating every aspect of life with religion, even politics. However a certain section of Islam believers have become more radicalized and that has had an effect on politics. Thus in Muslim-majority countries like Indonesia and Malaysia there is a drive to establish Islamic states and some identity based movements are fuelled by radical Islamic ideas like in Thailand. Yet large sections of Islamic populations are liberal in accepting that Islam needs to accept plurality and accept other religions, values and cultural systems.

Not discounting the vast range of diversity evident in the political, economic, and socio-cultural systems of the Asia Pacific, there are some basic commonalities like the preference for democratic liberal values though the intensity and nature may differ from system of system. Again though capitalist mode of development has been accepted by a number of Asia Pacific economies, their nature differs. However what seems to have become a common feature and concern for the Asia Pacific is the continued interest and involvement of the United States in this region. As mentioned before, the entire construct of the Asia Pacific is propelled on US strategic interests in the region. The US involvement in the region makes the intra-state of the other major players even more relevant. Yet the question that remains is whether the contemporary international relations of the Asia Pacific is becoming more state centric making the regional organisations weak platforms for negotiations and communication? Perhaps one way to figure this is to understand the significance of the Asia Pacific in international relations.

---

## **1.6 Significance of the Asia Pacific in International Relations**

---

The significance of the Asia Pacific in global affairs is becoming increasingly evident. Since the end of the second world war some parts of the Asia Pacific



became increasingly relevant for Cold war politics namely bloc politics. This significance of the Asia Pacific in world politics has been in consonance with the fact that the present Asia Pacific is organized after the Westphalia Model. Yet the history of the Asia Pacific (especially Asia) is previous to the modern Westphalia system. In earliest times, states were predated by kingdoms, but some kingdoms developed into empires and civilisations that spread their influence over large areas of their neighbourhood. Such great civilisations include the Chinese civilisations, the Indian civilisation and in a limited form the Japanese civilization. Thus interstate relationship in these regions largely moved along the lines of the influence of these large empires on the neighbouring regions and the paying of tributes by the subsidiaries to them. Chinese influence was largely cultural and civilisational and not essentially political. Therefore the influence of the Chinese civilisation spread to Japan, Korea, Vietnam and other parts of South East Asia. During the same period, Japan as a civilisation did not perhaps match up Chinese influence and remained largely confined to its borders. The Indic influence spread to South East Asia; yet the Chinese influence were clearly evident. The term Indo-China covering the mainland South East Asia is reflective of both the influences on the region. Yet it needs to be mentioned that at no point of time during the earlier periods did any one of these major states have complete influence over entire South East Asia. Moreover the ancient kingdoms of the South East Asia, in its international relations employed a form of the 'Mandala' theory that confined its major interstate relations within the neighbourhood and did not spread beyond a point. The spread of Islam to the Asia Pacific was limited mostly to the coastal areas through trade in South East Asia and there were no Islamic empires in the region.

The introduction of western powers did not imply an immediate change of the international affairs of the region because the primary interests of the Europeans were trade and missionary work. One of the best ways of penetration without engaging in full scale political control was through the establishment of trading companies; in this way, European powers gained access to various countries of the Asia Pacific—Portugal got access to Indonesia, Malaysia and China (Macau).

Spain's access was limited to the Philippines and later Netherlands outdid Portugal and got access to Indonesia and Japan. The French and the British were interested in both the Far East and the Indian subcontinent. In the nineteenth century European interests moved towards acquisition of territory making international relations more competitive and prone to conflict. In Northeast Asia the western powers were gaining concessions in China and sooner various countries established their spheres of influences in different parts of the country—Hong Kong and the Yangtze Valley (Britain), Yunnan (France), Shantung Peninsula (Germany). Even Russia gained parts of Central Asia and Northern Manchuria became a Russian sphere of influence. The impact of western powers on Japan was somewhat different in the sense that they were not only able to resist competition of the western powers, by the nineteenth century Japan was in a position to compete with Russia and expand its influence on the neighbouring regions especially Korea and Japan. Subsequently Japan's rise as an ambitious power drew in into the Pacific war theatre in the 1930s and 1940s and identified it as an imperial state.

South East Asia during the nineteenth century was home to intense imperial competition between Britain, France, Netherlands, Spain, the US, and Japan as the only Asian imperial power. In fact Japan offered its own brand of Asian identity under the banner of East Asian Co-prosperity Sphere and in many cases Japanese occupation worked as a platform for the advancement of independence. As the majority states became independent the region was soon immersed in Cold War. Around the same time the struggle between the nationalists and the communists in the China led to the victory of the latter and the birth of the Republic of China which was seen as a serious threat by the United States which had established a post-war relationship with Japan.

The period from late 1940s to 1980s is the period of Cold War politics that affected the international politics of the Asia Pacific. The war between the two Koreas brought China into direct confrontation with the western powers. In particular US protection of Taiwan became a source of constant irritation between the United States & China. The PRC saw US support and protection of Taiwan

as unwarranted interference in the Chinese civil war. From the Chinese perspective, the United States was attempting "encirclement" of China. Subsequently the Vietnam War became a contending ground between the major powers—China, Soviet Union, and the US. The US took the full benefit of the emerging Sino-Soviet conflict and used the dynamics of power politics resulting in a strange alliance between the United States and China and the between the Soviet Union and Vietnam. Against this background, ASEAN emerged as a response to the perceived communist threat spreading in South East Asia; this later evolved into a successful regional organisation incorporating all the member states of the region.

In the 1970s and the 1980s in South East Asia the Vietnam War attained new dimensions by involving Cambodia. In North East Asia, an evolving rapprochement between the US and China led to a solution of the Taiwan crisis through the "One China" principle declared in the Shanghai Communiqué. This also had implications for Japan; the country developed economically and looked forward to playing an international role encouraged by the US. However Japan's relationship with the neighbourhood remained complicated forcing the country to be cautious about its military role. As a successful economy, there was an increased opportunity for Japan to use aid as a tool of economic diplomacy. As a member of the G7, Japan's used its economic success to grow its relationship with South East Asia. Its economic success was used as a model for inspiring economic growth in the countries of South East Asia and other countries of the Asia Pacific. The result was the emergence of the Asian Tigers—South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore which experienced high growth rate based on high scale industrialization and high scale government support for export led growth strategy. On the other hand countries like North Korea, Myanmar experienced low growth rate as much as politically they remained authoritarian states bereft of democratic space.

In the 1970s and the 1980s, regionalism evolved in South East Asia, yet issues of colonialism and the challenges of post colonial orders challenged the security and stability of different states of the region. In the 1970s East Timor was



forcefully occupied by the Indonesian forces and became independent in the 1990s after a long independence struggle. On the other hand, as a result of the post colonial will, many groups within South East Asian states saw themselves as separate nations and continue to struggle for their own rights and space in the mainstream. This in turn challenged the peace and internal security of the states.

Since the 1990s the international order has undergone change and one of the most important developments is the emergence of Asia as a region of economic power and political salience. Asia along with the United States makes Asia Pacific an emerging player in global politics. The vital component in the region, prominence in international politics is the economic prowess it displays and the development potential it carries. Steady economic development (GDP predicted to grow at a 5% average in 2015-2016) coupled with the absence of any major wars of Cold War dimensions increases the possibility of the region sustaining its position as an important player in international relations. Much of this economic growth, peace and stability are pegged on China while other significant Asian states like, Japan, India and the Pacific state of Australia have their share of contributions. Even North Korea with all its negative image and nuclear arsenal will remain an important state for the overall peace and stability of the region. China's present stature in Asia and its implications for international politics is not only a concern for the Asian neighbours but a serious concern for the United States. In fact, US attention towards the Asia is largely China-focused. A huge array of US literature continues to strive to understand the dynamics of China as an Asian giant, perhaps a threshold global power.

China's assertive position regarding its territorial and maritime disputes underlined with its military preparedness is not only a concern for the US but also intimidates the Asian countries especially the neighbours like Japan, India and some of the South East Asian countries. Its fearful and unsure neighbours of China scurrying for some form of reassurance from the United States and thus US finds some traditional friends in Asia in so far as the strategic balance of the region is concerned. The present US administration has designed a strategy for the



Asia Pacific—the Strategic Pivot Strategy. It recognises the need to build a strong relationship with the countries of Asia Pacific at every level possible and through various channels. Thus the US continues to push hard for economic integration of the Asian and Pacific economic through the APEC. Another arrangement, the *Trans-Pacific Partnership* (TPP) aims to bring together economies from across the Pacific—developed and developing alike—into a single trading community. As the countries of South East Asia have not shown much interest in the TPP a separate arrangement has been designed to engage with the ASEAN through the ASEAN expanded Economic Engagement (ASEAN E3). Besides, the US has also launched the *Lower Mekong Initiative* in order to reduce the gap between the ASEAN states of that region.

An emergent dimension of contemporary Asia Pacific is the question of the security of the maritime domain. The peace and security of the Pacific waters will hold key to the strategic balance of the region. Concepts like the Indo Pacific and the Indian Ocean Rim are increasingly relevant for the peace and security of the region involving regional and extra regional players. Prominent maritime disputes like the South China Sea and the East China Sea are a challenge to such peace and security. In this case the position and military potential of the disputants are of serious concern; China happens to be involved in both the major maritime disputes. Yet one cannot lose sight of the fact that the Asia Pacific Rim is also threatened by an array of non-traditional security threats like the piracy, terrorism, environmental degradation, natural calamities, and health hazards that forces even disputants to come on board together. The quest for energy resources and other natural resources including maritime ones is related to the security of the maritime domain. In fact the two energy hungry economies of Asia—China and India make them inevitable competitors but the United States and Japan are also in need for energy resources and are thus constantly worried about any serious trouble in the international waters. It will also hamper international trade that involves countries beyond this region. Countries of other continents also keep a watchful eye on the developments of the Asia Pacific making the region crucial to contemporary international politics.

---

## 1.7 Points to Remember

---

- Pacific Asia would include East Asia and some powers of the Pacific like the United States, Australia, Canada and New Zealand. East Asia is subdivided into North East Asia and South East Asia.
- Asia Pacific is a construct/term conceived and popularized in international relations and particularly in area studies primarily by the United States and later used in area studies by many other countries.
- The region is not only diverse in terms of geographical terrain, climatic conditions and demography; it is also diverse in political systems, economic systems, ethnic profiles and even the value systems of the region.
- Yet there are attempts at forging regional identity through regional institutions like the ASEAN, APEC.
- Prior to the contemporary Westphalia state system the history of interstate relationship showed strong contacts with the neighbouring region; most influences were civilisational —Chinese, Indian.
- The region has been witness to more than one Cold War conflict that began from the 1940s and continued till the 1990s; yet during the same period there were attempts to build regional identity like the ASEAN.
- The rise of the Asia Pacific as a prominent region is largely straddled on the economic growth of countries like China, Japan and the Asian Tigers. The US is trying its best integrate these large Asian economies with that of the Pacific ones through the APCE.
- In recent times the strategic significance of the Asia Pacific region has become more conspicuous with the growing significance of the maritime domain that features prolonged maritime disputes involving major states of the Asia Pacific. Yet there is ample scope for cooperation in dealing with non-traditional threats of the region.

---

## 1.8 Sample Questions

---

### Essay Type Questions

1. What are the basic considerations to keep in mind while introducing the Asia Pacific as a region?
2. Write in details about the basic features of the Asia Pacific.
3. How do you account for the continuing significance of the Asia Pacific as a region in International Relations?

### Short Questions

1. Analyse the nature of political system in the Asia Pacific.
2. Explain the economic system of the Asia Pacific region.

### Very Short Questions

1. Discuss the influence of politics of religion in the Asia Pacific region.
2. What are the major objectives of ASEAN ?

---

## 1.9 Suggested Readings

---

1. Vera Simone, *The Asian Pacific : Political and Economic Development in a Global Context*, Pearson, 2000
2. Giovanna Maria Dora Dore, et. al, *Incomplete Democracies in the Asia-Pacific : Evidence from Indonesia, Korea, the Philippines and Thailand*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.
3. Vinod K. Aggarwal, *The Political Economy of the Asia Pacific*, Springer, 2011.
4. Tanweer Fazal, *Minority Nationalisms in South Asia*, Routledge, 2013
5. Rajat Ganguly and Ian Macduff, *Ethnic Conflict and Secessionism in South and Southeast Asia : Causes, Dynamics, Solutions*, Sage Publications 2003.

6. Michael Edward Brown and Rajat Ganguly, *Government Policies and Ethnic Relations in the Pacific*, MIT Press, 1997.
7. Jocelyn Linnekin, Lin Poyer, *Cultural Identity and Ethnicity in the Pacific*, University of Hawaii, 1990.
8. Paul Pickard and W. Jeffry Burroughs, *Narrative and Multiplicity in Constructing Ethnic Identity*, Temple University Press, 2000.
9. Douglas S. Massey, "The New Immigration and Ethnicity in the US", *Population and Development Review*, Vol. 21, No. 3, September 1995, pp. 631-652.
10. J. Jupp, "Immigration and Ethnicity" *Australian Cultural History : The Journal of History of Culture in Australia*, Vol 27, No, 2, 2009, pp. 157-166.
11. Jupp, J 2009, 'Immigrant settlement, ethnic relations and multiculturalism in Australia', in John Highly, John Nieuwenhuysen with Stine Neerup (ed.), *Nations of Immigrants : Australia and the USA Compared*, Edward Elgar Publishing, Cheltenham, UK, pp. 147-159.



---

## **Unit : 2 □ Authoritarianism, Civil-Military Relations and Prospects of Democratisation in Select Pacific Countries—Indonesia, Philippines and South Korea**

---

### **Structure**

#### **2.0 Objectives**

#### **2.1 Authoritarianism and Civil-Military relationship in the Asia Pacific**

#### **2.2 Indonesia**

#### **2.3 The Philippines**

#### **2.4 South Korea**

#### **2.5 Points to Remember**

#### **2.6 Sample Questions**

#### **2.7 Suggested Reading**

---

### **2.0 Objectives**

---

The present chapter highlights on the following :

- The relationship between authoritarianism of the civil and military in the Asia Pacific.
- The reasons for the existence of long serving dictatorship in Indonesia.
- The combined role of the Armed Forces (APP) & civil Government in Philippines.
- The commendable economic progress made in Korea in the early years with largest military rule system—its gradual transition towards democratization.

---

## 2.1 Authoritarianism and Civil Military Relationship in the Asia Pacific

---

The discussion on authoritarianism and civil military relationship in the Asia Pacific is primarily premised on the general understanding that liberal democratic state orders are the general norm. Liberal democratic states presuppose (deeply) entrenched liberal, democratic values and believe in the primacy of a civilian government that is well in control of the polity. However the case of civilian governments and authoritarian ones need not be a zero-sum-game in the sense that even civilian governments may show trends of authoritarianism, as has been the case in some states of the Asia Pacific. The idea of 'Asian Values' espoused by leaders of the East like the erstwhile Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir bin Mohammed, has underscored the basic ethos of the development dictatorships of the Asia Pacific—Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore to name a few. However, these have been equated to authoritarianism in the Western orders because the East Asian democracies differ from their rather romanticized democratic ideals that celebrate individual liberty against government interventions. Many of the regimes in the Asia Pacific would prioritize the system to the individual and consider development of the community more important than individual gains and individual space. It has been widely argued that free market development precedes democracy and civil rights, as indeed it did in the West. But the point of difference had been expressed by the former Prime Minister of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew when he stated that he does not believe that democracy necessarily leads to development because what a country needs to develop is discipline more than democracy.

Since the Asian crisis that hit some of the Asia Pacific, the role of the Asian values and development dictatorships in their ability to sustain economic growth and development has been severely criticised in favour of good governance; the late nineties saw the toppling of development dictatorships like in Indonesia and the tottering of the Malaysian pseudo-democratic order. Yet there are questions regarding the ability of some of the non-democratic regimes to sustain and

develop economically irrespective of severe criticisms regarding its standards of governance and the ability to provide its basic democratic space characteristic of liberal regimes. For example countries like China, Vietnam, Singapore and North Korea escaped the effects of the economic meltdown and continued to maintain their regimented political order. In fact China embraced elements of market capitalism and has emerged as one of the most profound economies of the region. On the other hand Singapore long emerged as one of the Asian Tigers under strong regimented governments and continues to be a leading economy of the region without altering its political orientation. Of recent Myanmar has embarked on a journey towards democratisation and embracing market reforms but has a long way to go. It only leaves North Korea as the only non-capitalist totalitarian regime. Again in some of these countries the military has substantial influence and continue to have their say irrespective of political reforms, like in Myanmar, China, Indonesia and Thailand. Thus the question of civil-military relationship becomes relevant to the viability of political stability.

Several studies have focused on the elements of military's role in the Asia Pacific, most of them try to understand why and how the military continues to actively involved in the political regimes of the day. The military have been powerful actors in many of the autocracies of the region, but they differed to the extent to which roles were cast. While in countries like the Philippines the government was formally led by the civilians, in Myanmar, Thailand and South Korea, they were more directly involved. However, Indonesia for long was ruled by a civil-military coalition. It has been observed that in case of military led governments or mixed governments, civilians has to push to make space for themselves; in civilian led governments the civilian governments had been constantly working to prevent military impositions, make ways into domains strictly reserved for the army like the defence policies, the national security issues in order to prevent military adventurism and losing ground to them. Seemingly the threat of military interventions into the civilian political space always loomed large. The question that now receives attention is whether in the post democratic



transitions the civil-military relationship confine the military to its restricted role under the watchful eyes of the civilian government(s).

Over the last two decades, some countries of the Asia Pacific have undergone democratisation during the third wave of democratisation. These countries include South Korea in Northeast and Indonesia, the Philippines in Southeast Asia. Civil military relationship in the emerging democracies in the Asia Pacific especially East Asia is characterised by overlapping as well as shared competencies and areas of contestations in responsibilities, and informal networking between the civilian elites and military officers. In these democracies the military had been a powerful actor and played a critical role in decision making as a shareholder in an elite coalition system. As a result the military had pervasive influence over not only defense matters but other issues too that included not only police work & developmental issues but also nation building. In many cases the authoritarian leadership relied on the military coercion to guarantee security of their regime and thwart the opposition. Thus in most of these countries the military imagined themselves as nation builders and warrantors of regime survival and general guarantors of the security and stability of the country. Thus military continued to hold stakes whether in civilian authoritarianism (Philippines), in military authoritarianism (South Korea) or in civilianized military rule (Indonesia). These three emergent democracies will be discussed in detail in the following part of the present section.

---

## **2.2 Indonesia**

---

The military made an important contribution towards the nationalist movement of Indonesia by struggling against Dutch colonialism and earning its place in the nation building process of the country. Following two decades of civilian rule which had its weaknesses first under a phase of parliamentary democracy and Guided Democracy under Sukarno, the self proclaimed New Order regime set in gradually a military dominated political regime under the leadership of General Suharto from 1967-1998. Especially since the 1970s the military remained only second to the President not only dominating the defense and security related



decision making, but also in civilian administration. This was institutionalized by the concept of *dwifungsi* (dual function) and *kekeryaan* (the practice of promoting active military personnel to non-military duties). These gave military access to policy centers, decision making and administrative activities at all the levels of state bureaucracy.

In the late 1970s differences between Suharto and the military began to grow wherein Suharto encouraged promotion, patronage and internal divisions within the military to create divisions and ensure his predominance in leadership. Within the parliamentary system Suharto successfully managed to circumscribe the military power by promoting Golkar the political party initially established for joint domination by the military and bureaucratic domination; they were being played against each other. With the partial civilianization of politics through the Golkar, military became even more dependent on Suharto to survive in politics. Corruption began to increase as the military became rent-seeking in order to gain access into cushy positions in politics. This ultimately made the military corrupt and involved in illicit activities. Military factionalism further strengthened Suharto's position as an arbitrator while he used them for repressing all forms of political oppositions and dissents—trade union, students, religious groups and media.

During the *reformasi* (whereby Indonesia became democratic as fallout of the Asian crisis), the army had played a rather reserved role in using force against the anti-Suharto forces. This was instrumental in his forceful resignation. In the post-Suharto period since interim President Habibie, there has been demand for the gradual withdrawal of the military from politics and the increasing civilian control over them. However, Post-Suharto efforts to assert civilian control over the military and return it 'to the barracks' have enjoyed only mixed success. The military still continue to be a powerful player and successful civilian control is yet to be established. On the one hand, the 'dual-function' or the *dwifungsi* doctrine has been repudiated, also military representation in the legislatures and civilian bureaucracy has been abolished and the police have been removed from military control. On the other, the military has successfully resisted demands to dismantle

its territorial structure or to limit the scope of its business activities, which are critical for its funding, as the official defence budget is generally understood to cover only about a third of its total spending. Former President and former general Yudhoyono enjoyed a reputation as a military reformer, but his record in the military's division for social and political affairs and minister under Wahid and Megawati does not vouch unequivocally for his reformist credentials. There are several reasons for the inability to establish civilian control over the Indonesian Army even after *reformasi*. First is the involvement of the army in bringing about the downfall of Suharto making them party in deciding the post-Suharto leadership. Second, is the deep fragmentation and instability of the leadership in post democratic Indonesia that required the leaders to take constant support from the army; for instance, President Habibie or President Megawati Sukarnoputri never antagonized the army for need of their support. Third, the rise of radical religious forces and separatist challenges that plagued the country required the army to handle the security situation though at times it gave them license to create critical conditions like in East Timor. Fourth is the ability of the army to resist structural reforms that would harm their core interests; for instance, the military put up fierce opposition towards plans to reform the territorial command structure, and tried to circumvent government initiatives to take control of military businesses. In this context, the new President Joko Widodo is the first head of the state from both outside the military and the existing political elite to get the responsibility of running the country. Whether he can impose reforms that will further abate army's role in Indonesian politics is to be seen.

---

### **2.3 The Philippines**

---

In comparison to Indonesia the army's rôle in nation building in the Philippines has been less accentuated. The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) historically have been controlled by the Congress, the President, and the local oligarchs who exerted their influence over their appointments so as to use them as bargaining chips for political competition. Notwithstanding the fact that in Philippines the government has been more or less a civilian one, the army

considered itself the vanguard of the modern state ensuring security first against Communist subversion and later against the separatist movement in Southern Philippines. As the United States by means of its 1952 Defense Treaty provided for security against external aggression, the (AFP) focused basically on internal security, insurgency; consequently, it structured and trained itself on counter insurgency operations mostly. In context of the communist armed insurgency in the post-independence period, the army was involved in various political and social activities including decision making. Subsequently in the 1950s the army got involved in mushrooming joint civic-military projects wherein military officers were appointed in civilian posts of the government. The 1972 Martial Law further empowered the military. The political empowerment of the military continued to expand during Marcos regime as he became involved in military appointments. In a queer partnership with the AFP President Marcos recruited his relatives and friends to military posts which gave the army further way into governance. It encouraged factionalism, corruption and favouritism eroded military professionalism and the army failed to focus on counter insurgency.

After the failed coup of General Ramos, and the uprising, the Aquino administration (braving several military coups) and its successor the Ramos administration concentrated on reinstating military professionalism. Both these regimes tried to establish liberal democratic order and establish civilian control over the military, mostly trying to swing AFP's orientation towards external security. It involved modernization of the army and equipments that was done mostly by the Ramos administration. Yet in 2001, the co-option of the AFP by the succeeding Gloria Macpagal Arroyo regime in order to serve the movement of the opponent Estrada supporters converted her into a mere figurehead. The Arroyo administration undid the achievements created by her predecessor government and found it expedient to link the counter insurgency campaign with the country's development plans and policies. This move enabled the AFP to participate in the formulation of the national security policy, and to be a key player in 21st century Philippine politics. Another aspect of the renewed military civil administration alliance in the Philippines was the renewal of the US Philippines security



relationship which was done under US pressure; this further empowered the military and proved to be a critical component of the partnership between Arroyo administration and the AFP. It paved the way for the Philippines army to tread into civilian administrative domains.

AFP's increasing involvement with the civilian administration has converted it into the dominant partner in the partnership to the extent that a senior military official commented that, the Philippine military has evolved into an institution which no longer subordinates itself unconditionally to its commander-in-chief. However the army has stopped short of a takeover from the civilian government because of a number of factors. First, because the army is aware that it will be unable to draw an alternative, viable framework of governance and national development. Second, the AFP is aware that the resistance power of the civil society and the civilian opposition in the Philippines will make it difficult for them to rule. Third, the attempt of a military take-over will annoy its most important and perhaps the only strategic ally the US—that the army would not like to risk. Thus it is prudent for the AFP to continue with the partnership with the civilian government. The present President Benigno Aquino III had mentioned in his electoral campaign to reduce the dominance of the army in civilian matters but during his tenure, he has stressed on the modernization of the military with a hope that the army will eliminate all forms of insurgent threats. Yet, with the rise of maritime disputes in the South China Sea, territorial defense has become increasingly important. Subsequently, the AFP's shift from internal security to territorial defense has gained momentum with the ascendancy of Benigno Aquino III to the Philippine presidency. This is supplemented by the drive towards modernization of the AFP. The underlying argument is that modernization of the army will arrest its involvement in the domestic politics of the country. So is the attempt to again orient the AFP towards territorial security; but so long internal threats remain, the army's involvement will not become totally oriented towards territorial security. To that extent the army will have some interest in the civilian administration. Moreover the army that has begun to believe that it is indispensable to the civilian government not as a subordinate but as a superior



partner, it will be an uphill task for Aquino Administration to restore civilian control over the military. Particularly so, because, insurgency in that country, has proven to be resilient in the past and the enormous resources involved in modernizing the ill-equipped AFP is not available with the government.

---

## 2.4 South Korea

---

The direct involvement of the army in Korean politics and government is especially concentrated within the period of 1961-1988. The involvement began in 1961 with the military intervention through a coup under the leadership of General Park Chung Hee. He came to power through the coup that usurped power from the Democrat Party, result of the 19<sup>th</sup> Revolution in 1960 against anti-communist dictatorship of Ree Syng Man. Later General Hee marginalized the ruling military junta and institutionalized a quasi-civilian presidency (Yushin System) with a strong military backup; the 1963 constitution endorsed this government. The Korean state under this regime made commendable economic progress but also became the largest military rule system; it resembled a garrison state. The country had a huge defense budget; almost 16 percent of the population joined the army. General Chung Lee recruited ex army generals at government positions and appointed army personnel to important administrative jobs including state enterprises and foreign policy. Subsequently jobs at the army proved to be the single most channel of upward mobility. The Yushin dictatorship was one of the most repressive leading to pro-democratic movements. The democratization movement of the early 1970s was different from that of the past since it became an all-out struggle against dictatorship against the repressive Yushin system.

The assassination of Park Chung Hee was the result of the inevitable collision between the Park regime and the democratization movement which was preceded by years of confrontations and escalated tension between both parties under the Yushin system. General Chun was assassinated. After the Gwangju Popular Uprising neo-military forces elected their coup leader General Chun Doo Hwan

as the President of South Korea under the Yushin Constitution. He was the commander of the Defense Security Command who seized power in May 1980. He headed the Hanahoe or the Group One which was appointed to key positions within the security apparatus in during the closing years of the Park dictatorship. Unlike the Park regime, this was not a one-man dictatorship but a collective leadership of the Hanahoe faction. Duties were divided wherein the active members took control of the key military units and intelligence agencies while the retired members took over other vital positions like the Presidential secretariat, the ruling Democratic Justice and the general intelligence service. President Chun's regime continued to function under General Park's 1963 Constitution and after a stint of seven years the military found it necessary to establish a new Constitution in 1987 in order to ensure political stability. This was necessary in the face of the major demonstrations that were taking place when General Chun before his resignation, nominated Roh Tae Woo as his successor.

Given a momentum for changing the movement for democracy turned into a massive popular uprising for democratization and it actually turned into a massive popular uprising in 1987 which was the June Democratic Uprising. The government under Roh Tae Woo resisted from imposing martial law so to prevent further antagonising the popular sentiment and moved on to political reforms. Subsequently the 1987 Constitution facilitated direct Presidential elections which Tae Woo won because of a split opposition. The aim was to democratize the military system to establish a quasi-civilian system as against direct institutional involvement of the military. This change was possible because unlike the militaries of Southeast Asia or even Latin America, the army of South Korea did not have uninhibited access to the various governmental resources—financial, institutional or technological. Moreover there were evident divisions between the have and the have-nots within the army in the sense that there were senior members of the army who did not get benefits like the Hanahoe faction. As a result there was not much united military stand against the opposition movement that took place in the 1987, In the end democratization movement forces lost the

presidential election which was the founding election for the first President after democratization. In conclusion the democratization movement successfully brought about a democratic transition in South Korea through the June Democratic Uprising but failed to take the initiative in establishing a democratic government. Rather it provided an opportunity for remnants of the past dictatorial regime to come back to power legitimately. After democratization the conservative forces behind the Roh Tae Woo regime could return to power once more by winning over a prominent politician from a former democratic opposition party to their side. The result was the emergence of the Kim Young Sam.

After ten years from the democratic transition in 1987 Kim Dae Jung was elected. President of South Korea in the presidential election held in December 1997. The Kim Dae Jung government was a very meaningful event because it was the first regime change by election brought about by a democratic opposition party. The difference with the 1987 elections was that candidature of Roh Tae Woo was on nomination by the Chun Doo Hwan. He could win because candidates from democratic opposition parties were divided. In this sense the democratic transition of 1987 was only a formal one. In contrast, the substantial transition to democracy came after a decade with the victory of the democratic opposition party in the 1997 presidential election. The Kim Dae Jung government and its successor government led by President Roh Moo Hyun had undertaken a number of initiatives towards democratic reforms-removing corruption, curtailing authoritarian practices and promoting human rights. Despite the progress of political democracy South Korean democracy is now faced with socio economic challenge; South Korean society is confronted with serious regional disparities and social conflicts. Since the financial crisis in 1997 in particular, the effect of economic growth has polarized. Such disparities and conflicts are further aggravated by the fact that unlike western countries, South Korea does not have a solid social welfare system and that is causing a great amount of dissatisfaction and discontentment amongst the people. Thus globalization while unleashing rapid economic growth is also pressures on democracy in terms of equitable growth and social security.



---

## 2.5 Points to Remember

---

- Various political regimes in the Asia Pacific show that civilian governments and authoritarian ones need not be a zero-sum-game in the sense that even civilian governments may show trends of authoritarianism. Likewise authoritarian governments may adopt certain limited liberal measures so as to ward off opposing forces.
- The concept of Asian Values that prioritize the system to the individual, underscore the development dictatorships of the Asia Pacific. However this has been equated to authoritarianism by western countries.
- The Asian Economic Crisis questioned development dictatorship in favour of good governance bringing several long serving dictatorships like Indonesia. Yet there are cases of apparently illiberal political systems that have not only survived the economic crisis but are showing high rates of economic growth post economic reforms.
- The military have been powerful actors in many of the autocracies of the region, but they differed to the extent to which roles were cast; while in countries like the Philippines the government was formally led by the civilians, in Myanmar, Thailand and South Korea, they were more directly involved, Indonesia for long was ruled by a civil-military coalition.
- The military had pervasive influence over not only defense matters but other issues too that included, police work, developmental issues but also nation building. In most of these countries the military imagined themselves as nation builders and warrantors of regime survival and general guarantors of the security and stability of the country.
- Civil military relationship in the emerging democracies of this region is characterised by overlapping as well as shared competencies and areas of contestations in responsibilities, and informal networking between the civilian elites and military officers. Such countries include—Indonesia, the Philippines and South Korea.



---

## 2.6 Sample Questions

---

### Essay Type Questions

1. Explain the causes of political authoritarianism in the region with the help of suitable examples.
2. Account for the growth of military involvement in politics in the regions. Use Indonesia and the Philippines as examples to substantiate your points.
3. What is the future of new democracies like the Philippines in the region? Justify your position.

### Short Questions

1. Explain the relationship between military and non military powers in the Asia Pacific.
2. Discuss the role played by Military in most of the countries of the Asia Pacific.

### Very Short Questions

1. Write a short note on 'Asian Values'.
2. Write a short note on Golden Party.

---

## 2.7 Suggested Readings

---

1. Vera Simone, *The Asian Pacific : Political and Economic Development in a Global Context*, Pearson, 2000
2. Giovanna Maria Dora Dore, et. al, *Incomplete Democracies in the Asia-Pacific : Evidence from Indonesia, Korea, the Philippines and Thailand*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.
3. Vinod K. Aggarwal, *The Political Economy of the Asia Pacific*, Springer, 2011.

4. Tanweer Fazal, *Minority Nationalisms in South Asia*, Routledge, 2013.
5. Rajat Ganguly and Ian Macduff, *Ethnic Conflict and Secessionism in South and Southeast Asia : Causes, Dynamics, Solutions*, Sage Publications 2003.
6. Michael Edward Brown and Rajat Ganguly, *Government Policies and Ethnic Relations in the Pacific*, MIT Press, 1997.
7. Jocelyn Linnekin, Lin Poyer, *Cultural Identity and Ethnicity in the Pacific*, University of Hawaii, 1990.
8. Paul Pickard and W. Jeffry Burroughs, *Narrative and Multiplicity in Constructing Ethnic Identity*, Temple University Press, 2000.
9. Douglas S. Massey, "The New Immigration and Ethnicity in the US", *Population and Development Review*, Vol. 21, No. 3, September 1995, pp. 631-652.
10. J. Jupp, "Immigration and Ethnicity" *Australian Cultural History : The Journal of History of Culture in Australia*, Vol 27, No, 2, 2009, pp. 157-166.
11. Jupp, J 2009, 'Immigrant settlement, ethnic relations and multiculturalism in Australia', in John Highly, John Nieuwenhuysen with Stine Neerup (ed.), *Nations of Immigrants : Australia and the USA Compared*, Edward Elgar Publishing, Cheltenham, UK, pp. 147-159.

---

## **Unit : 3 □ Political Economy of the Asia Pacific**

---

### **Structure**

#### **3.0 Objectives**

#### **3.1 Asia Pacific as a Vibrant Economic Region**

#### **3.2 Reasons behind the Economic Orientation**

#### **3.3 Challenge of Economic Growth**

#### **3.4 Points to Remember**

#### **3.5 Sample Questions**

#### **3.6 Suggested Reading**

---

### **3.0 Objectives**

---

The present study helps us to know

- How far various economies of the Asia Pacific with their distinct characteristics may or may not complement their political beliefs
- How the economic orientations of the states are conditional by its historical experiences.
- How far ASEAN succeeded in reducing the gap between the developed & developing countries of the region?

---

### **3.1 Asia Pacific as a Vibrant Economic Region**

---

Asia Pacific as an economic region has been viewed as a vibrant economic region. Some would however like to point out that Asia Pacific as a single economic category is a misnomer because beneath this rubric lies varied forms of economies with their individual characteristics that may or may not complement the political systems. Alongside there are regional variations in terms of economic

orientations and political beliefs. For instance, in North America and Australasia there has been much enthusiasm in adopting the neo-liberal agenda that is associated with the "Washington consensus" that emphasises on deregulation, privatization and market oriented reforms. In contrast most of the East Asian economies have retained the role of the state as an important player in the economic development of the countries. Even if there has been some liberalization, the state has remained central to the economic reforms. It sends a subtle message that East Asia has no preference for neo-liberal economic ideas. Very interestingly, such countries like China, Vietnam have been achieving remarkable economic growth under the stewardship of the state, Notwithstanding the economic slowdowns, the growth of the US economy still confounds the pessimists and Japan that began from a war-ravaged state has shown remarkable growth. Especially the 'development state' pioneered by Japan, that featured close cooperation between state agencies and business elites planned right from the beginnings of the post-war reconstruction, has become a successful model of non-western economic development; it occurred within the context of a form of 'soft authoritarianism' with the primacy of the state in almost all the aspects of governance.

---

### **3.2 Reasons behind the Economic Orientation**

---

The economic orientation of these economies can be traced back to historical contexts of colonialism and the complicated geopolitical dynamics of the post war years, the Cold War. The introduction of the capitalist order, structures and relations introduced a sense of insecurity within the feudal ruling elite. The matter of fact was that with colonial expansion the breakdown of older social orders and the downfall of the political elites that dominated them was ultimately a function of economic change. The transformative impact of integration into an expanding global capitalist economy was to a large extent responsible for the growing distance from liberal or neoliberal orientation. During the Cold War the confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union profoundly affected the wider geopolitics East Asia, subsequently, not only the development of



individual East Asian countries, the dynamics of the region as a whole were reflective of the emerging Cold War geopolitics. On the one hand, East Asia was internally divided along ideological lines, making the prospects for any overall regional identity and organization impossible. On the other, the political and economic development of the countries of the region was decisively shaped by this wider geopolitical context, encouraging the sort of state-led development and authoritarian politics that is such a distinctive a feature of the region's post-war trajectory.

Overall the economic health shows that the rate of inflation is relatively low, despite rise in prices of commodity and fuel. Inflation in developing Asia-Pacific countries as a whole is projected at 4.8 per cent in 2014 against 5.0 per cent last year. The investments have been moderately increasing and trade steadily rising. The countries of Asia and the Pacific have a track record of success in international trade and foreign direct investment, which has been nurtured by global and regional production networks and global value chains, and supportive trade and transport connectively. Since the 1994 Bogor Goals were set, trade barriers have continued to decrease, with average tariffs lower in all of the sub-regions of the Asia Pacific. Moreover, despite some protectionist sentiments in some parts of the region, the APEC economies adhere to their *World Trade Organization* (WTO) obligations; a number of development distatorships are now inducted in the WTO—China in 2001, Vietnam in 2007. Asia-Pacific's economic dynamism, is driven primarily by individual economies, is expected to further intensity if the region effectively exploits its complementarities and diversity. Regionalism and integration is thus a very important component of the region—regional economic organisations have become important for the ASEAN and more reflective of the Asia Pacific economic regionalism—APEC.

---

### **3.3 Challenges of Economic Growth**

---

At present the economies of the region are experiencing subdued economic growth, and facing challenges to strong sustained economic growth. Structural constraints and lack of investment space are the primary reasons identified by the

*United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)*. The developing economies are predicted to have an average growth rate below 6 percent hovering somewhere around 5.8 percent. Trade-driven East and North-East Asia is expected to grow moderately at 4.1 percent in 2014 against 4.2 percent in 2013. Despite geographical challenges, Pacific island developing economies are projected to show a comparative growth at 4.9 per cent against 4.0 per cent last year. Growth forecast in South and South-West Asia is predicted to grow from 3.9 per cent in 2013 to 4.7 per cent in 2014. South-East Asia's economy is predicted to grow slower at 4.6 per cent from 4.9 per cent last year. Some of the prominent economies of the Asia-Pacific show a slowdown than the previous year. China, India, Indonesia and the Russian Federation are projected to grow at 7.5, 5.5, 5.4 and 0.3 per cent, respectively, in 2014, compared to 7.7, 4.7, 5.8 and 1.3 per cent, respectively, in 2013. The two most growing and competing economies of the region namely China and the United States are not only related to each other, but also related to the overall health of the economy. There are apprehensions that the rising interest rates in the United States will reduce the consumer capacity of the US consumers, this will affect the Chinese economy that is highly dependent on exports, especially to the United States. In fact, China's high investment rate continues to build export capacity that may become idle if there is a serious recession in the United States. Both the countries are also aware of the trade related differences they have in terms of the increasing trade deficit wherein the US trade lobbies are increasingly questioning the benefits of free trade for the U.S., particularly with countries specializing in low-cost exports. An assortment of conditions are being attached to trade to stop the flow of cheap Chinese goods. Chinese enterprises and exporters have expressed great concerns over all kinds of technical barriers and other safeguard measures particularly against China's exports.

In this context, APEC as a vehicle of economic integration could help address the trade anomalies between the major economies as well as provide the other countries to get comparative advantage through trade. One must take note of the

fact that originally, the APEC was designed as a community-building institution for general socio-economic cooperation, not an institution for trade negotiations. However, strengthening trade flows has always been an important part of its agenda. In this context, the Bogor Vision is extremely important as it aimed at voluntary and concerted process of liberalization rather than on the basis of binding commitments. To this day, this continues to be the accepted basis of APEC cooperation. Establishing a Free Trade Area is an essential precondition for the success of APEC as a regional economic community. Towards this direction, in 2006, the APEC leadership adopted a *Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific* (FTAAP) would be the most effective means for achieving the Bogor Goals. However it has argued that, the full benefits of an FTAAP cannot be realized without robust infrastructure to connect our region more efficiently. Unfortunately it has been realized that the current level of infrastructure investment in the region is inhibiting economic growth. The most important point is that a FTAAP would obviously require a different kind of APEC process, one involving formal negotiations and binding rather than voluntary commitments. *The Asia Business Advisory Council* (ABAC) has suggested certain concrete steps towards the realization of FTAAP such as developing a roadmap and conducting analytical work, building on the work done by APEC, ABAC and PECC, and recognizing the *Trans Pacific Partnership* (TPP), *Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership* (RCEP) and *Pacific Alliance* (PA) as important building blocks towards an FTAAP. All these would be made possible if there is political will for a regional trade agreement is forthcoming. In this case, APEC could take lessons from the community building process within ASEAN. This regional group is not only earnestly progressing towards trade liberalization but also addressing the development gaps between its developed members the (ASEAN-6) and the Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam (CLMV) countries through the systematic Initiative for ASEAN Intergration (IAI) and the *National Development Gap* (NDG) processes. For the Asia Pacific, if not the economic community, the APEC must get a FTAAP in place to sustain the economic dynamism for the region; that seems to move at quite a sluggish pace with the failure of the *Early Voluntary*



*Sectoral Liberalization* (EVSL) and the snail-paced progress of the Bogor Goals. Meanwhile there is a tendency to encourage plurilateral trading agreements not China-ASEAN (CAFTA), ASEAN-Japan, ASEAN-Korea, and Chile-New-Zealand-Singapore-Brunei (TPSEP), to name a few. There is a need to link these PTAs because, they are seen as a fundamental departure from the original APEC vision. A multiplicity of preferential trading agreements in the Asia-Pacific region gives rise to complex patterns of preference, discrimination and exclusion, and is a recipe for fragmentation of regional markets and trading relationship, thereby denying APEC economies and their businesses the full efficiencies region.

---

### **3.4 Points to Remember**

---

- The concept of an Asia Pacific economy is a misnomer because within the region, there are various economies of the Asia Pacific which have their own characteristics and may or may not complement their political beliefs.
- In overall it seems that economies of North America and Australasia have been much enthusiastic in adopting the neo-liberal agenda pursuing trade liberalization. The economies of East Asia in contrast have retained the role of the state in their economic development. Some of these states have done remarkably well under the supervision of the state—Vietnam, China and Japan.
- Much of the economic orientation(s) of the states have been conditioned by its historical experiences. Colonialism conditioned a natural distance from liberal ideas. Subsequently the Cold War shaped the political economic context of East Asia, encouraging the sort of state-led development and authoritarian politics that is such a distinctive a feature of the region's post-war trajectory.
- At present, Asia Pacific is considered to be a vibrant economic region but the growth is subdued and restrained due to structural constraints and inadequate investment. In order to overcome this, multilateral trade



arrangements seem to be necessary. The basic dynamics of multilateral trading arrangements seem to be deregulation and gradual intergration.

- The Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation is the multilateral trading arrangement that hopes to give benefit to the bigger economies like the United States and China as well as the smaller and developing economies on the basis of comparative advantage in trade.
- APEC is yet to attain its goal of integration of regional trade but the establishment and the successful functioning of the Free Trade Area of the Asia Pacific, i.e. the FTAAP is a stepping stone towards achieving a liberal multilateral trading system. Meanwhile ASEAN has set an example in achieving certain objectives in reducing the development gaps between the developed and developing countries of that region.

---

### 3.5 Sample Questions

---

#### Essay Type Questions

1. Discuss the emerging importance of the Asia Pacific as a regional political economy.
2. Analyse the nature of economy in Asia Pacific region.
3. Explain the constraints that has challenged the economic development of the Asia Pacific region.

#### Short Questions

1. Discuss the role of APEC in the region.
2. What is Trans Pacific Partnership?

#### Very Short Questions

1. Write short notes on WTO.
2. What do you mean by FTAAP ?

### 3.6 Suggested Readings

---

1. Vera Simone, *The Asian Pacific : Political and Economic Development in a Global Context*, Pearson, 2000
2. Giovanna Maria Dora Dore, et. al, *Incomplete Democracies in the Asia-Pacific : Evidence from Indonesia, Korea, the Philippines and Thailand*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.
3. Vinod K. Aggarwal, *The Political Economy of the Asia Pacific*, Springer, 2011.
4. Tanweer Fazal, *Minority Nationalisms in South Asia*, Routledge, 2013
5. Rajat Ganguly and Ian Macduff, *Ethnic Conflict and Secessionism in South and Southeast Asia : Causes, Dynamics, Solutions*, Sage Publications 2003.
6. Michael Edward Brown and Rajat Ganguly, *Government Policies and Ethnic Relations in the Pacific*, MIT Press, 1997.
7. Jocelyn Linnekin, Lin Poyer, *Cultural Identity and Ethnicity in the Pacific*, University of Hawaii, 1990.
8. Paul Pickard and W. Jeffry Burroughs, *Narrative and Multiplicity in Constructing Ethnic Identity*, Temple University Press, 2000.
9. Douglas S. Massey, "The New Immigration and Ethnicity in the US", *Population and Development Review*, Vol. 21, No. 3, September 1995, pp. 631-652.
10. J. Jupp, "Immigration and Ethnicity" *Australian Cultural History : The Journal of History of Culture in Australia*, Vol 27, No. 2, 2009, pp. 157-166.
11. Jupp, J 2009, 'Immigrant settlement, ethnic relations and multiculturalism in Australia', in John Highly, John Nieuwenhuysen with Stine Neerup (ed.), *Nations of Immigrants : Australia and the USA Compared*, Edward Elgar Publishing, Cheltenham, UK, pp. 147-159.

---

## **Unit : 4 □ Ethnic Problems in Asia—Pacific Region**

---

### **Structure**

#### **4.0 Objectives**

#### **4.1 Ethnicity in the Asia Pacific**

#### **4.2 Ethnicity in South Asia**

#### **4.3 Ethnic issues in South East Asia**

#### **4.4 Pacific Islands**

#### **4.5 Points to Remember**

#### **4.5 Sample Questions**

#### **4.6 Suggested Reading**

---

### **4.0 Objectives**

---

The study seeks to analyse the following :

- How ethnic groups around the Asia Pacific strives to retain their identity?
  - How the various dynamics of inter-ethnic relationship further complicates the situation and may lead to political instability?
  - How the political and Social systems in South Asia respond to country ethnic conflicts?
  - How the politics and economy propelled on the praxis of ethnicity in the Pacific Islands?
- 

### **4.1 Ethnicity in the Asia Pacific**

---

The question of ethnicity in the Asia Pacific is a rather complex one for the simple reasons that it covers both Asia and the Pacific. The nature of ethnicity and related dynamics of Asia are not exactly similar to that of the Pacific. Yet they

bear similarity in the fact that both Asia and the Pacific region are home to a number of ethnic communities and groups ; most of them are not only conscious of their identity; they often strive to create their own space within the mainstream social milieu of the country. The drive for self-conscious existence along the lines of Anderson's imagined communities sometimes have converted into politically conscious movement for gaining some territorial space also. Often these activities are associated with ethno nationalism. There are other angles to the question of ethnicity wherein it has been noticed (and therefore argued) that most of the societies with discrete ethnic segments, with dissimilar and antithetical cultural values and political goals will create such pressures that attempts at responsive, democratic, or alliance-based government will tend to degenerate into political instability and disintegration. Such has been the case in several countries of South and Southeast Asia—Malaysia, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Fiji to name some of them. Besides, the people of the Pacific communities are not only aware of their cultural distinctiveness; they continue to maintain it. The issue of migration is closely linked with the issue of ethnic identity in various countries of the Asia Pacific like the United States and Australia. Each of these areas deserves separate attention but for the purview of this discussion, a synoptic overview of these areas will be provided.

---

## 4.2 Ethnicity in South Asia

---

Ethnic heterogeneity is the most common feature of the demographic profiles of South Asia. Populations are divided along language, religion, caste, race, and tribal affiliations. Inter racial relationships tend to be competitive in some cases & can even be conflict-prone. Consequently, political and social systems have become adapted to this complex demographic maze and institutional strategies have been used to counter and curtail ethnic conflicts that pose a challenge to the internal security of a country. Some western scholars like the Tatu Vanhanen have tried to devise ways to figure out which of the countries of South Asia are ethnically more(or most) heterogeneous. Taking into account racial, national/linguistic, and old religious divisions, it has been found that India is ethnically the



most heterogeneous South Asian country (EH 128). For Afghanistan and Bhutan, EH is 90, for Nepal 60, Sri Lanka 57, and Pakistan 55. Bangladesh is ethnically the most homogeneous country (EH only 19). The parameters of ethnic heterogeneity vary on the basis of different parameters.

For instance though in Afghanistan, Afghans are said to be homogenous, the tribe, language, and religious sect divide the population into many territorially separate groups. Pashtuns dominate some parts while other tribes and sects like the Tajiks, the Hazaras, the Uzbeks and Turkmen dominate different parts of Afghanistan. Though the majority are Muslims, Sunni Muslims, but Hazaras and a part of Tajiks are Shiite Muslims. In the racially homogenous country of Bangladesh, homogeneity is based on linguistics and culture, and Bengalis are the dominant race. Bengali is the dominant language (99%). Muslims constitute a large majority of the population (88%) and Hindus constitute the most significant religious minority. The tribal hill peoples of the Chittagong Hill Tract (1%) are separated from the Bengali Muslims by race, language, and religion. Bhutan is both racially, linguistically, and religiously divided country. Constituting approximately (70%) of the population the Mongoloids or Indo-Mongoloids are the two major ethno-linguistic groups of the native Bhutanese (the Drukpas). Sarchops in eastern Bhutan are the earliest inhabitants migrated from north-east India and north Burma. So they are Indo-Mongoloids. The Ngalongs migrating from Tibet brought Buddhism with them. They became the rulers subduing the Sarchops and integrating them through conversion of Buddhism and inter-marriages. The Ngalongs speak Dzongkha, a dialect of the Tibetan, and the Sarchops speak several different dialects of non-Tibetan origin. The Nepali-speaking minority lives in the six southern districts. They are mixed Caucasoids and by religion Hindus. They started to settle in southern Bhutan in significant numbers after about 1880. Although Pakistan is considered a racially homogenous (Caucasoids) country and religiously nearly homogeneous country, languages divide the population of Pakistan into five major ethnic groups : Punjabis (48%), Sindhis, Pashtuns, Baluchs, and Mujahirs. Each of them, except Mujahirs (Urdu-speaking refugees from India after the 1947 partition), occupies a separate

territory. Islam is the dominant religion (97%), but there are small Hindu and Christian minorities. India's population is divided by race, language, religion, caste, and tribe into numerous and partly overlapping ethnic groups. Racially the population is divided into, Negritos, Proto-Australoids, Mongoloids (further subdivided into Palau-Mongoloids and Tibeto Mongoloids), the Mediterraneans, the Western Brachycephals (further sub divided into Alpinism and the Dinarics). Language divides the Indian population into many large and small territorially concentrated minorities. Although Hindi (30%) is designed as the official language, it is prevalent in some Indian states; other regional languages are also popular. Although India is home to other religious communities like Buddhism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, the most important religious communities are the Hindus (83%) and the Muslim minority (11%). Caste divides the Hindu population into thousands of endogamous caste groups. The members of the Scheduled Castes are separated from the caste Hindus by their "untouchability," and they constitute approximately 16 percent of the population. Besides, there are several tribal groups in different parts of the country. The Scheduled Tribes constitute approximately 8 percent of the population.

The nature of ethnic cleavages differs from country to country, but they have caused serious problems of various kinds in all countries, including ethnic discrimination, communal riots, separatist movements, rebellions, terrorism, and civil wars. Scholars find South Asia as one of the few regions of the world experiencing ethnic dissonance. At least three countries of this region—India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka have been facing critical ethnic challenges since their independence. In fact Pakistan broke up because of internal ethnic feud and Bangladesh was born by means of external intervention. India has the highest number of ethnic movements in this region because of the complex social fabric that cuts across language, caste, and religion. Now the role of state and administrative institutions in mitigating the demands for separate identity and space expressed through ethno nationalism depends on the ability of such institutions to adapt to the growing demands and reason out with what seems at ethnic nepotisms. It could be assumed that democratic institutions providing

representation to all important groups are better adapted to satisfy the requirements to ethnic nepotism that autocratic institutions based on the dominance of one particular group. However, that does not explain the number and intensity of the ethnic secessionist challenges in India where both the state structure and the political system has evolved in response to the social fabric of the country.

The matter of fact is that ethnic movements in South Asia are conditioned by the historical legacies of the pre-colonial states and societies; they continue to exert their influence on the contemporary ethnic groups, directly or indirectly, on their demands and struggles. For instance, the claims of pre-colonial Tamil separatists of the existence of Tamil rule at least in Northern Sri Lanka provided them the legitimacy for a claim over that part and creation of separate Tamil Eelam. On a similar line but based on a different historical basis, the Sinhalese claim to an uninterrupted occupation of the land for as long as twenty five centuries underpins their determination to resist partition demanded by what they regard a group of immigrants with at best a claim to having a tributary Tamil state. In addition, the pre-colonial tribal or feudal structure of some of these societies has also been one source of conflict between contemporary states of South Asia and such ethnic groups who feel that their traditional autonomy and privileges, and exclusive claim to material resources. This is grounded on the assumption that the undisturbed power, were being taken away from them either by the state or the immigrants from other areas and states and belonging to other ethnic groups. This provokes resistance and the drive for autonomy or independence. The post colonial state structure has only further aggravated this demand premised on a sense of overall deprivation (social, economic and political) that reifies the apprehension of internal colonialism. As a reaction to this perception of internal colonialism, some of the deprived ethnic groups and regions are stirred by the same consciousness and concepts of nationalism, self-determination. This does not look justified in the eyes of the state, they usually tended to treat ethnic stirring as law and order problems and frequently viewed ethno-nationalism amounting treachery or disloyalty to existing state and thus opted for coercive-repressive responses to it.



---

### 4.3 Ethnicity in South East Asia

---

Ethnic issues in South East Asia are complicated and varied. In terms of ethnic composition, South East Asia bears a similarity with South Asia because of its heterogeneity; the region is characterised by enormous ethnic, cultural and religious diversity. Some scholars like Gerard Clarke make a distinction between ethnic minorities and indigenous people though he mentions that ethnic minorities are again categorized on the basis of ethnicity (culture) and language and on the basis of religion. Indigenous people are the descendants of the earliest known inhabitants of a territory. Ethnic minorities in contrast are generally settler populations with more recent links to a territory (often stretching back hundreds of years), who share a common identity with groups in at least one other country. In the Philippines, for instance, the Moro Muslims of Mindanao are considered an ethnic minority, with strong bonds to religious and cultural communities in the neighbouring states of Malaysia and Indonesia. In Malaysia, distinctions are drawn between the Orang Asli, the original aborigines of peninsular Malaysia and the Dayaks in the Eastern Malaysian states of Sabah and Sarawak, who share a common ethnic identity with groups in Kalimantan, the Indonesian-controlled territory on the island of Borneo. Notwithstanding this distinction often governments collapse the two into the generic term of ethnic minorities, such has been case in Vietnam where the indigenous *Khmers* are not recognised as different from the majority *Kinhs*. In fact, in mainland Southeast Asia, many ethnic minorities are closely associated through cultural or linguistic affinities with groups (minorities or majorities) in other states and are thus seen as 'foreigners' to varying extents by governments and dominant populations alike. Such has been the situation for the *Hmong* in Southern China, Vietnam, Laos and Thailand, the *Chams* of Vietnam and Cambodia and the *Nagas* in Myanmar. These people are regarded by states as ethnic minorities, distinct from the dominant majority ethnic groups and smaller groups officially regarded as autochthonous (indigenous), even where they are autochthonous to a specific part of the national territory. Again distinction between ethno-linguistic and religious minorities is also clear, although again there is considerable overlap. In other cases, religious



identity overlaps considerably with ethnic and/or linguistic identity, for instance the Moro Muslims of the Southern Philippines. In certain cases the state has tried to suppress religious identity by subsuming them with majority identities thus instigating the drive to protect the identity. That has been the case in some Communist states of Southeast Asia like Vietnam where the denial of religious freedom to the Buddhists have led to a religious activism. Distinct religious tensions have also been noticeable in Indonesia in the post independent period.

Throughout South East Asia, the ethnic Chinese are better off economically than the majority or dominant population and in many cases they are well organized both socially and politically. In Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore and to a lesser extent in the Philippines, Vietnam and Thailand, Chinese are more assimilated, and they dominate the private sector. Consequently, they have benefited enormously from the economic growth of recent decades. Yet inspite of their economic fortune, the Chinese have suffered politically and culturally. In Indonesia and Malaysia expecially, economic success has led to resentment on the part of majority populations, often leading to violence, and attempts by governments to curb their relative economic power. As policy manifestations governments devised policies to distinguish Chinese from the majority *Pribumi* in Indonesia or *Bumiputra* in Malaysia, have a strong cultural resonance. Further the resentment against the Chinese in Indonesia has again become overt and many Chinese people were killed and their businesses looted in late 1997 and in 1998 after the severe economic downturn throughout South East Asia.

The process of nation building remains incomplete because, in many cases, governments continue to face significant dilemmas in building stable nation-states. Post colonial states treaded along the lines of colonial policies thus institutionalising ethnic tensions. In such cases, ethnic and cultural diversity has traditionally been seen as a threat to national unity and to social cohesion, and post-independence governments have sought to weld from this diversity a uniform national identity. Such has been the problem of assimilating the ethnic minorities of Myanmar, Indonesia, Thailand, and Combodia. At least in three cases the movements have become largely militarized to the level of insurgency in

Thailand, in Myanmar and until recently in the Philippines and not to mention, the Papua ethnic low intensity conflict. Their activities create are suspect of terrorism and have created the ground for external intervention in certain cases as in the Philippines. There is a growing opinion that to contain the tide of growing ethnic violence and associated terrorist activities not only through military and police action, but through promoting development that benefits ethnic minorities and indigenous communities. Fortunately, since the 80s and 90s some of the governments of Southeast Asia have become more democratic and are expected to become more sensitive to the plight of minority groups. Economic growth, coupled with the expansion of the activities of the civil society has resulted in the emergence of organisations that represent or support ethnic minorities or indigenous people. Nonetheless, the 'globalisation' of economic, political and social structures continues to assume societies as homogenous units and to marginalise minority groups. In this context, civil society actors alike still have a lot to do as they strive to redefine the nation-state to accommodate the region's ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples.

---

#### **4.4 Pacific Islands**

---

Pacific Islands is a vast oceanic region; it covers all the islands ranging from the Arctic to South America and inclusive of Oceania where a number of inhabited islands are located. Especially in the Oceania, the region basically has three groups of islands—Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia. Here it is necessary to clarify that there are many other islands located within the boundaries of the Pacific Ocean that are not considered part of Oceania. But the point of demography and ethnic plurality the islands of the Oceania are extremely relevant.

In understanding the ethnic disposition of the region the three groups of islands are critical, Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia. Melanesia consists of the island of New Guinea, the Bismarck and Louisiade archipelagos, the Admisatly Islands, and Bougainville Island (which make up the independent state of Maluku, Papua New Guinea), the Solomon Islands, the Santa Cruz Islands

(part of the Solomon Islands), New Caledonia and Loyalty Islands, Vanuatu (formerly New Hebrides), Fiji, Norfolk Island, and various smaller islands. Micronesia consists of the islands of Kiribati, Nauru, the Marianas (Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands), the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Palau, and the Federated States of Micronesia (Yap, Chuuk, Pohnpei, and Kosrae, all in the Caroline Islands). Polynesia consists of a triangle that is bound by the Hawaiian Island(s) in the north, New Zealand in the west, and Easter Island in the east. The rest of Polynesia comprises Samoan islands (American Samoa and Samoa), the Cook Islands, French Polynesia (Tahiti and The Society Islands, Marquesas Islands, Austral Islands, and The Tuamotu Archipelago), Niue Island, Tokelau and Tuvalu, Tonga, Wallis and Futuna, and Pitcairn Island. On the basis of the language spoken, the ethnic groups are divided into, the Austronesian Languages, the Aboriginal Languages Group and the Papuan Languages Group. Austronesian languages include the Oceanian languages, numbering about 2.3 million, who occupy Polynesia, Micronesia, and most of the smaller islands of Melanesia. The Papuan languages include about 7 million, and reside on the island of New Guinea and a few of the smaller islands of Melanesia located off the northeast coast of New Guinea. In Australia, the inhabitants of these islands are known as South Sea Islander, in neighbouring New Zealand they are known as Pacific Islanders. In the United States the people of Hawaii, Guam and Samoa are known as the Native Hawaiians, Guamanians or Chamorro and the Samoans respectively; The rest of the Pacific Islands dwellers known as Other Pacific Islanders. A substantial number of Pacific Islands' people live in these continents. The relationship between these non European outsiders and the mainland residents are also a widely researched topic and the governments of Australia, New Zealand and the United States respectively have made several legal and social steps to ensure their protection and position in that country.

One also must make a mental note of the fact that, geographical location of the islands also created situations where societies have remained isolated and even within a single the group of islands like the Melanesians or the Polynesians, the inter-ethnic contacts were limited. Supra ethnic entities were very limited barring



a few exceptions like Fiji, Tonga and Samoa. As such most of the Oceania region comprises of post colonial societies. The colonial lineage of every island state ensured that every state had to go through nationalist struggle, self-determination protectorate, and trusteeship, (either or all of these) that is deeply entrenched in their present day systems. Colonialism has introduced modern means of life in all aspects of existence yet the process of adaptation of these ethnic communities have not been complete, on the contrary they have become catalysts in the certain cases of conflicts manifesting in the political spheres. Yet not all the conflicts have their roots in the colonial legacy; inter-group animosities relating to long historical relations of subjugation and domination have continued to the present times. However colonial legacy is a determinant factor in post colonial conflicts especially where territorial boundaries were determined without paying any heed to the sentiments of the indigenous communities. Consequently Samoans are located as different political constituencies between the American Samoa and Western Samoa, Bougainvilleans are located more in Papua New Guinea and not in the Solomon Islands. Again the West Papuans who actually belong to the Melanesian Group are settled in Irian Jaya in Indonesia, thanks to the Dutch colony. Conflation of ethnic diversities in nation building projects inherited from colonialism hardly could modify the traditional sense of ethnicity. On the contrary, it sowed the seeds of future ethnic tensions between communities. Alongside the modification of the legal, political and ideational structure not only caused discontent within the native population, but also was one of the cause of tension between communities on issues like land ownership and farming rights. Subsequently politics and economy almost all in the Pacific Islands had been propelled on the praxis of ethnicity. This ethnic consciousness is based on racial identity, religious beliefs and practices, languages, kinship and historical ties reinforced by geographical insularity in certain cases.

Such deeply rooted primordial ethnic ties have been responsible for the resurgence of ethnic nationalisms bringing to the forefront the priority of traditional allegiance and values. Ethnic nationalisms may be coterminous with the national boundaries of a state or sections or parts of it. This is more a



possibility wherein more than one ethnic group lives in a state. The question nationalist feeling in the case of the Pacific Islands are not based on an ideology rather on common racial, cultural and linguistic ties. However like elsewhere in the world states have been defined as political entities rather than a cultural entities. However in the Pacific Islands, there has been rarely a case where secessionism has actually created a state of post independence period. A desire to succeed through ethnic distinctiveness may have gained grounds as a movement, but it has not lead to the dismemberment of existing states. The argument has been that nationalisms based on ethnic consciousness is not possible neither desirable because with the many nationalisms found with liberated nationalism, there would be no nation with the capacity of operating the state apparatus.

However there are countries within this region like Fiji that have seen protracted unrest and instability due to strained ethnic relationship that has affected the political future of the country. Struggles between Fijian people and Fijians of Indian origin has been the result of the colonial policy of bringing Indians as labourers as sugarcane plantation workers. The coup of the 1980s increased the insecurity of the Indian Fijian immigration leading to mass emigration and putting the Fiji economy into difficulty. The nation continued to face political crisis with frequent power changes and only in 2014 it had its first democratically elected government. The most protracted identity conflict is associated with the question of Bougainville. Bougainvilleans find themselves akin with the ethnicity of the Solomon Islands rather than the Papua New Guinea. Complicated further by land (especially the Panguna Copper Mines) and mining issues the Bougainvillean movement has gained revolutionary dimensions. A civil war ensued in the 1990s between the rebels and the New Papua Guinea Government wherein the relationship between the two countries of Solomon Islands and New Guinea deteriorated. Meanwhile the New Zealand brokered Autonomous Bougainville Government was established in 2000 but largely ignored by the popular leadership of the movement. There has been a split within the movement by those acquiring the support of the Western countries and the popular self proclaimed king Francis Ona. However, according to the peace

accord signed in 2001, the Bougainvilleans had been promised a referendum on independence from PNG within the next few years. As of January 2015, it has not been held.

Some scholars like Graham Hassall are of the opinion that the movement for apparent secessionism is actually the reflection of the group's disaffection with the state rather than actual desire to secede. It also raises the issue of the kind of rights and advantages the state provides for these groups and the degree of their own democratisation. It is perhaps true that most of the states of the Pacific Island and Oceania region have attained a level democracy but it is not that there is a single model of democracy that will help or cater to the needs of the various ethnic entities and groups. The matter of fact is that most of these societies are rural and a western model of democracy superimposed on traditional governing bodies may not be able to strike the right balance. For instance when the traditional authority and legal systems coexist with modern systems, dilemma may rise on which one to prioritise; there is always a chance of clash of perspectives on particular issues like land rights and land ownership. Largely contested issues include warfare and reconciliation, i.e. conflict management, minority rights, the question of striking development and conflict and associated with the resource extraction. It is perhaps high time to realize that there are various dimensions to the ethnic issue and conflicts in the Oceania region, resolution to which will require the recognition of the ethnic groups. This needs looking beyond the western stereotypes of democratic governance tempered with the incorporation of traditional values. Since resources are scarce in many of these small islands, the governments must also be in a position to ensure egalitarian distribution. Over and above, the leadership in these island countries should not allow the tradition notions of distinctiveness to dilute national unity.

In the Asia Pacific the major immigrant societies are located in the United States, in Australia and also in New Zealand. Locating the question of ethnicity and identity is an issue that has been discussed time and again. In the United States there is a slowly growing concern about the assimilation of the non-European and non-Hispanic immigrant communities into that Euro-American

culture that has evolved through several years of immigration. In addition there is a concern that the steady flow of immigrants is creating economic and societal pressures. Immigration to the United States can be divided into three phases—first phase is termed as the classic era (1901-1930), the second phase is known as the *long hiatus* (1931-1970) in response to restrictive domestic laws and third phase is the new regime that starts from the 1970 and continues till recent. During the first two periods the drive towards assimilation was steered by concepts like the melting pot thought, there were counter discourses of ethnic prejudice and discrimination and the economic struggle of immigrants both as a collective and in individual capacity. One of the basic reasons for immigration was the scope of economic opportunities that became even more evident after the Second World War. While the world wars restricted the movements of the Europeans, the flow of migrant workforce from Central America continued especially in Mexico. During the Cold War migration was from West Europe while the East Europe remained shut from the capitalist world. The third phase, new regime migration saw a major influx of Asian migrants partly because of the amendment of the domestic legislation and partly because of the US failure in the Vietnam wars wherein Cambodian, Laotian and Hmong refugees moved into the United States. Thus the third and present phase of immigration also known as the new regime of immigration was marked by the huge immigration from Asia and Latin America. In this context, the question of identity and ethnic identity becomes very relevant.

The first two generations of immigration saw a large number of disparate groups from Europe-Italians, Poles, Czechs and Russians, Hungarians and Lithuanians settle in the United States, they were not only different from earlier migrants from Western Europe but also different from each other in terms of their language, culture, rate of literacy etc. Over the years they got assimilated as generations continued to stay and intermarriage was common. The assimilation of the first two generation has been relatively easier. but what is feared that the assimilation of the third phase and new regime immigration is never likely to be completely successful because there is a continuous flow of migrants of non-



European origins. Consequently a lot of social stratification has taken place within these immigrant communities and a sense of ethnic lineage is present in certain groups and generations. It is apprehended that continuous migration not only produces a complex fragmented and often conflicting sense of ethnicity, it may not yield economic benefits as expected by migrants. It created further room for tension and animosity within the communities. Assimilation will of the new generation immigrants are further challenging because of the slowing of the US economy. Dissatisfaction may create further disaffection against the US system and the new generation of non-European Americans will try to find solace and quest for justice. In the contemporary US society new generation migrants not only stick together and unified through language and culture, they are even confined geographically to certain areas, regions, and localities. Moreover, it is important to remember that assimilation of homogenous ethnic entities were easier as with the European migrants, but with the heterogeneous Asian groups divided along the lines of culture, language and religion, the fragmentation of the migrant society will be an additional challenge for the US socio-political system.

Australia is one of the countries that actively seek immigrant workers as well as settlers. What began in Sydney as a penal colony for the British after the loss of the United States, soon expanded into other settlements with the discovery of gold. This led to a fresh flow of immigrants from Europeans, North Americans and the Chinese. In response the White Australia policy controlled the formation of national identity by excluding people seen as too different. Officially it lasted from 1890s to the 1950s, but the elements of the policy survived until the 1970s. As the effects of the policy began to wear down the number of non-European migrants increased. In this case, the immigration policies were to achieve the individual assimilation of non-British immigrants and renounce their distinct cultures and lifestyles. Moreover, the task of creating bridges between new arrivals and mainstream communities and facilitating social engagement of migrants was largely left to ethnic organizations and bureaucracy. The subsequent introduction of multiculturalism was part of the recognition that the idea of assimilation is sociologically unrealistic. It was in response to the fact over the



years the increasing number of refugees from different parts of the world started moving in. The many events of the century caused many people to come to Australia for work or refuge. Australia's diversity really flourished in the 20th century. It does not necessarily imply that migration led to the loss of previous cultural identity in its entirety yet to sustain in a new country migrants have to make adjustments, learn new skills, and even retrain themselves in many socio-economic and political aspects of life. Marking a disjuncture from the British lineage of pushing for an ethnically homogenous nation Keating articulated that Australia is multicultural nation in Asia, signaling multiculturalism as an integral and essential characteristic of contemporary national identity. The current political debate has witnessed bouncing back of identity and citizenship issues of essentializing identities by expanding the scope of citizenship via recognized ethno religious identities. This is in context of the fact there is a growing concern and perhaps opposition to increasing high levels of immigration from Asia. In addition all the governments have been concerned about asylum seekers most of whom travel unauthorized and illegally. There are mandatory detention provisions for the unauthorized arrivals. Still there have been trial resettlement programmes of Sudanese refugees escaping civil war.

Immigration is also now geared to the needs of the Australian labour market; 68% of all arrivals now come under the skilled migrant category of the permanent immigration program. In 2011-12, India (29,018) and China (25,509) were ahead of Australia's traditional source country for permanent migrants, the United Kingdom. India and China also fill the top two places in the temporary migration program. There is also the debate about guest workers. There are also concern about the discourse of ethnic distinctiveness especially in terms of ethno religious identity. Ethnic distinctions can be employed in a positive and culturally creative ways or in a negative and destructive spirit—the concern about growing Islamic fundamentalism. This has been reified by the recent terrorist attacks within the country. Australian citizenship developed as a social construction, rather than a formal political or legal category. Howard administration had reignited the identity debate talking about Australian values and legacies of the past, through

this the fondness for the imperial legacies and connections, shared by a large number of Australians is revived. Subsequently, Australian multiculturalism that sought to accommodate various ethnic and ethno religious communities is also being questioned. This is having a complicated effect on the social fabric. The various minority communities not only want a guarantee of the protection of their identity, they also want a recognition and existence of their contribution to the larger project of nationhood. The majority seems to be more inclined to get an overt commitment for Australia displayed through abandoning of their heritage. For the minority, it's a question of cultural rights and not the prerogative of the majority to give a verdict that would result in the loss of minority cultural values alongside the rights to inherit the same. The ethnic communities have but little option to negotiate their cultural identity with mainstream ones—there is a need to look beyond the sense of victimhood and denial and renegotiate their identity so as to strike a balance between traditional Australian values and their contemporary counterparts.

---

#### **4.5 Points to Remember**

---

- Ethnicity in the Asia Pacific is complex and varied. Different groups and communities spanning around Asia and the Pacific are self-conscious and strive to maintain their identity.
- The drive for maintaining identity is not only confined to the mind in the form of imagination, consciousness, as theorized in imagined communities but also manifests in the movement towards gaining physical ground. These activities give birth to ethno-nationalism.
- Ethnicity is complicated because the various dynamics in inter-ethnic relationship may create such pressures that attempts at responsive, democratic, or alliance-based government will tend to degenerate into political instability and disintegration.
- The issues of ethnicity are also associated with immigration; it has several effects on immigrant societies like the United States and Australia. Other

regions that need separate attention are South Asia, South East Asia, and the Oceania region.

- In South Asia populations are divided along the lines of language, religion, caste, race, and/or tribal affiliations. Inter racial relationship(s) tend to be cometicative in some cases, conflict-prone. Political and social systems have to respond to counter ethnic conflicts that pose a challenge to the internal security of a country. Some scholars and researchers find South Asia as one of the few regions of the world experiencing ethnic dissonance.
- Like South Asia, South East Asia is characterised by enormous ethnic, cultural and religious diversity. But here a distinction is made between ethnic minorities and indigenous people, but the ethnic minorities are again categorized on the basis of ethnicity (culture) and language and on the basis or religion.
- In South East Asia, the process of nation building remains incomplete, as ethnic and cultural diversity has traditionally been seen as a threat to national unity and to social cohesion. Post-independence governments have sought to weld from this diversity a uniform national identity.
- In the Pacific Island, Oceania region, the three groups of islands of Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia are critical for understanding the ethnic disposition of the region.
- Politics and economy of almost all the Pacific Islands had been propelled on the praxis of ethnicity. The ethnic consciousness is based on racial identity, religious beliefs and practices, language, kinship and historical ties reinforced by geographical insularity in certain cases.
- Immigrant communities from Asia are a source of concern to the immigrant societies of both the United States and Australia. In United States the continuous entry of non-European and non-Hispanic migrants are seen as challenges to social assimilation. In Autstalia the challenge of



assimilation is also a concern and the country has become stricter about refugees. Now the policy of multiculturalism is being questioned.

---

## 4.6 Sample Questions

---

### Essay Type Questions

1. Provide an idea of the ethnic characteristics of South and South East Asia.
2. Explain how the politics and economy of the Pacific Islands are all rooted in the praxis of ethnicity.

### Short Questions

1. What are the present challenges of the immigrant societies like the United States and Australia?
2. Discuss how the population of Afghanistan is composed.

### Very Short Questions

1. Write a short note on Oceania.
2. What do you mean by new regime of immigration in the region ?

---

## 4.7 Suggested Readings

---

1. Vera Simone, *The Asia Pacific : Political and Economic Development in a Global Context*, Pearson, 2000
2. Giovanna Maria Dora Dore, et. al, *Incomplete Democracies in the Asia-Pacific : Evidence from Indonesia, Korea, the Philippines and Thailand*, Palgrave, Macmillan, 2014.
3. Vinod K. Aggarwal, *The Political Economy of the Asia Pacific*, Springer, 2011.
4. Tanweer Fazal, *Minority Nationalisms in South Asia*, Routledge, 2013

5. Rajat Ganguly and Ian Macduff, *Ethnic Conflict and Secessionism in South and Southeast Asia : Causes, Dynamics, Solutions*, Sage Publications 2003.
6. Michael Edward Brown and Rajat Ganguly, *Government Policies and Ethnic Relations in the Pacific*, MIT Press, 1997.
7. Jocelyn Linnekin, Lin Poyer, *Cultural Identity and Ethnicity in the Pacific*, University of Hawaii, 1990.
8. Paul Pickard and W. Jeffry Burroughs, *Narrative and Multiplicity in Constructing Ethnic Identity*, Temple University Press, 2000.
9. Douglas S. Massey, "The New Immigration and Ethnicity in the US", *Population and Development Review*, Vol. 21, No. 3, September 1995, pp. 631-652.
10. J. Jupp, "Immigration and Ethnicity" *Australian Cultural History : The Journal of History of Culture in Australia*, Vol 27, No, 2, 2009, pp. 157-166.
11. Jupp, J 2009, 'Immigrant settlement, ethnic relations and multiculturalism in Australia', in John Highly, John Nicuwenhuysen with Stine Neerup (ed.), *Nations of Immigrants : Australia and the USA Compared*, Edward Elgar Publishing, Cheltenham, UK, pp. 147-159.





# **Paper-VIII**

**Politics & Society in Asia : Select Regions**

## **Module – IV**

### **South East Asia**

- Unit 1 State & Civil Society in South East Asia : An Overview**
- Unit 2 Issues relating to the Chinese Immigrants in South East Asia : Case Studies of Malaysia and Singapore**
- Unit 3 Society, Culture & Politics in Thailand & Myanmar**
- Unit 4 Globalisation & Culture in South East Asia in the Post Cold War Era**

# Table 1

Summary of Results in the 1980s

## Module - 1

### South East Asia

- 1. The first module of the course is designed to provide a general overview of the region and its history.
- 2. The second module focuses on the political and economic development of the region.
- 3. The third module examines the social and cultural aspects of the region.
- 4. The fourth module discusses the environmental issues and challenges facing the region.
- 5. The fifth module explores the role of the region in the global economy.

# Module-IV

## South East Asia

---

### Unit : 1 □ State and Civil Society in South East Asia : An Overview

---

#### Structure

#### 1.0 Objectives

#### 1.1 Introduction

#### 1.2 State and Civil Society in South East Asia : An Overview

##### 1.2.1 The nature of States in South East Asia

##### 1.2.2 Civil Society in South East Asia

#### 1.3 Sample Questions

#### 1.4 Suggested Reading

---

### 1.0 Objectives

---

The present text traces :

- The evolution of the states in the region, starting from the colonial period.
  - The civil society groups & movements in South East Asia, along with the challenges that are being faced by them.
  - The effects of globalization on civil society in the region.
- 

### 1.1 Introduction

---

This chapter studies the nature of state in South East Asia, its chief characteristics, its evolution from the colonial period to the globalized world and the challenges that it is facing from different quarters. Secondly, this chapter also deals with the civil society movements that have taken shape over the years in the region.

---

## 1.2 State and Civil Society in South East Asia : An Overview

---

### 1.2.1 The Nature of States in South East Asia

Apart from Thailand, all the countries of South East Asia have experienced colonial rule. It was in the sixteenth century that the Europeans established their first footprints on the South East Asian soil. Like in many other parts of the world, South East Asia soon became a battlefield for the European powers to establish their colonial hegemony. In the year 1511, the Sultanate of Malacca was colonized by Portugal. By the year 1641, for the Dutch East India Company, the city of Batavia, that is, the present day Jakarta, became the main trading point. Spain got interested in the Philippines and its colonization began from 1560s onwards. On the other hand, for the British East India Company, Singapore remained the most important trading port. The first region that the British started colonizing in South East Asia was Penang. With the British occupying Malaya, Burma and the Borneo territories, France colonizing the Indo-China region and the Dutch and the Portuguese occupying the East Indies and the Portuguese Timor respectively, and as a result, by the second decade of the twentieth century, almost all the entire region was reeling under European colonial rule. After the Second World War, when the decolonization process was in full sway worldwide, the colonies of this region also started emerging as independent States. Indonesia was decolonized in 1945, Philippines in 1946, Burma in 1948, the Indochina States in 1954, Malaya in 1957, Brunei in 1983, Singapore, Sabah and Sarawak in 1963. It is to be noted that Malaya, Singapore, Sabah and Sarawak together formed the Federation of Malaysia in 1963 and unfortunately, Singapore left the Federation of Malaysia in 1965.

Despite the continued legacy of the colonial rule, the South East Asian states have more or less been successful in establishing their 'relative resilience'. Barring the comparatively lower economic development of the Indo-China region, these states, such as Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore, have been architects of the East Asian miracle. Not only have these been successful in establishing economic growth, but also have maintained an appreciable degree of political



stability. On the economic front, the strategies of 'export-oriented economic diversification' and embracing of the dynamics of open economy, from their very inception have proved to be the prime driver of their economic growth. In the political arena, the political elite have been able to transform their character and strategies with changing times. From a phase of fragile or weak legitimacy, applying authoritarian means to attain power and to continue remaining in power, it has moved to a period of applying mild authoritarian rule and bureaucratic control and democratic procedures. The democratic legitimacy of the ruling elite of the region in the post-colonial period is a product of effectively balancing both these tendencies towards authoritarianism and moderate pluralism. Another characteristic feature of the South East Asian states is that, they have been able to maintain their historical continuity, because their geographical borders have existed since pre-colonial days and are not a product of the colonization process.

The characteristics of the states in South East Asia have varied from country to country and from time to time. For instance, in Burma we find that the state has been used as an instrument of domination by the majority ethnic group, that is, the Burmans on the minority groups, such as the Shan, Kachin, Chin and Karen. Such a State, where the ethnic majority dominates, has been termed the 'ethnocratic state'. In countries such as Singapore, the state has adopted a 'corporatist' and pragmatic approach whereby the loyalty to the state is of paramount importance, rather than the loyalty to the race, culture or ethnic community. The bureaucrats and the technocrats are trained in impersonally promoting the interests of the State in Singapore.

Again, in countries such as Thailand, the state has been accused of promoting differential degree of economic and social development in its core and peripheral areas, suppressing weaker ethnic communities. Finally, Malaysia provides the example of such a model of state, which has been trying to reach the goal of 'racial restructuring' under the aegis of the New Economic Policy, since 1971, after gaining from the experience of racial riots of 1969. Presently, the discriminatory policy of the Bumiputras against the non-Malay communities (mainly Indians) still exists in spite of Malaysian government's initiation of

National Development Policy (NDP) since 1991, followed by the New Vision Policy. Even then, the dominance of the Bumiputras on the state and the Malay-Chinese skirmishes continue to remain. Thus the fact remains that Malaysia, as a democratic state has not yet been able to become ethnically- neutral in practice, in spite of its inclusive growth approach.

The South East Asian states, after achieving independence, were extremely weak states, with marked ethnic divisions in the society, definite separatist tendencies of some of those ethnic groups, lack of infrastructure and internal communication, a single country federated into many parts and provinces, the threat of Communism looming large over them and low economic development. All these factors, initially contributed towards the adoption of authoritarian means by the ruling elites of these states, as it was felt that the western model of plural liberalism would not suit these countries. So, for fulfilling the economic necessity, countering the Chinese threat and managing the ethnic differences, etc were prime rationale for flourishing of the authoritarian regimes in South East Asian region.

There was also a lack of unity and we- feeling among the states of South East Asia. It was often found that law and order problem makers of a country found safe haven in another. For instance, when the Muslim separatists were creating trouble for the Malaysian government, the government started persecuting them and these separatists fled the country and found support in Southern Thailand. Also, the members of the Communist Party of Malaya, found a safe haven in Thailand as well. Likewise, after the unification of Vietnam, the Communist leadership of this country introduced socialist transformation mainly in the Southern part of Vietnam. This process of socialist transformation made other communities like Chinese and Khmer uncomfortable to stay in Vietnam. As a result, a large number of Chinese and Khmer have taken shelter in nearby states of China, Thailand, and other parts of Southeast Asia.

The countries of South East Asia often experienced many separatist movements over the years waged by different organizations, such as the Darul Islam, Aceh Merdeka and Organisasi Papua Merdeka in Indonesia, Le Ligue de Resistance Meo in Laos, Moro National Liberation Front and Moro Islamic

Liberation Front in Philippines and the Barisan Nasional Pembebasan Patan in Thailand, to name a few. As these states were weak, but at the same time strategically important, they have always attracted international attention and sometimes undue interference in their internal affairs. For example, Great Britain found itself concerned over and embroiled in Malaysia during the Malayan emergency period. The United States also had a stake, particularly for checking the progress of Communism in some of the countries of the region, during the Cold War period, such as in Vietnam, with which it was involved in a protracted war and also in Cambodia and Laos. The United States, also had 'tied' Philippines with itself as far as economic dependence of the latter on the former was concerned, stretching well beyond the period of decolonization. The chaos of Burma too invited international gaze on itself, with some countries supporting the military junta regime and some others imposing economic and other sanctions on the country, owing to human rights abuse by the state. Perhaps this is why, the states of this region have collectively realized the value of non-interference and the importance of maintaining sanctity of their sovereignty. As a regional grouping thus, the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), which was established in 1967, has made it obligatory to adhere to the idea of non-interference and to sign the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC), which is particularly significant for foreign players engaging with countries of the region.

The South East Asian region, like any other region of the world is plagued by internal conflict, such as the Thai-Cambodia border problems which flared up recently, primarily because of the Preah Vihear temple, the problem between Myanmar and Thailand over the continued presence of Myanmar's refugees in Thailand, the dispute between Indonesia and Malaysia over gaining territorial sovereignty in the Ambalat block of the Celebes Sea seabed, the row between Malaysia and Singapore over the issue of water-sharing, and perhaps most importantly, the South China Sea dispute in which several countries such as, Vietnam, Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia, Indonesia, China, and India are involved, claiming their sovereignty, or right to peacefully engage in oil extraction, particularly from Spratly and Paracel islands. The prime reason behind the outbreak of this dispute remains the strategic importance of this area. Unfortunately,



this dispute has revealed the lack of unity among members of the ASEAN. For instance, while Thailand is friendly towards China on this issue, Vietnam is staunchly anti- China. However, by and large, the ASEAN has proved to be relatively more successful than the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), to maintain a better and congenial environment of cooperation and mutual understanding among themselves in order to prosper the region more cohesively.

### **1.2.2 Civil Society in South East Asia**

In South East Asia, societies have traditionally believed in the concept of 'Devaraja' or God- King, that is, the King is a person who is ordained by the God Himself or he is an embodiment of God for guiding His children on earth. This idea legitimized the position of the King to an extent that made it problematic to question the deeds and intent of the King. It was generally believed that the King, being God Himself, can do no wrong. This made it possible to conceal several instances of injustice and exploitation behind the veil of legitimacy by divine royalty. This also severely affected the formation of civil society groups in the pre- colonial days besides creating a considerable social and psychological distance between the ruler and the ruled. It would not be possible to find the western pattern of civil society in South East Asian countries, particularly because these societies have followed a completely different trajectory to development and adhered to a dissimilar set of social values and norms as compared to the western societies.

The colonial period, despite all the repression and exploitation, did succeed in bringing in the factors for giving birth the idea of civil society groups and movements, such as bringing in western education, making possible the flow of commodities and ideas across boundaries, making use of the press, providing encouragement to emigration and immigration of people across borders, particularly as cheap labor for the East India Company and other colonial powers. All these factors contributed towards the circulation of idea that the infallibility of the authority can be challenged, as and when necessary.



After the decolonization process, when these countries emerged independent, it became difficult for the civil society groups to exhibit their existence, on account of various internal socio-political factors. In fact, it is evident that in the 1950s and 1960s, most of these countries had ruling regimes which were military-backed or were under the spell of advancing wave of Communism, which severely restricted the growth of civil society by suppressing their voices against the then existing government. For example, Burma, Thailand, Indonesia, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, Malaysia were the ample instances of such countries with precarious conditions. In fact, this trend continued even in the 1970s and 1980s. An example can be cited in this context that President Marcos of Philippines, during his tenure resorted to hard-core authoritarianism and imposition of martial law, which throttled the voice of civil society in every sphere of its activity. However, this time the garb of divine legitimacy was of no help to Marcos and the ruling regime was pulled down in the mid-1980s, particularly owing to activities and strong protest movements organized by the civil society in the Philippines.

Parallel to this, civil society groups started growing in other countries of the region, such as in Malaysia, Singapore, Laos and the like during 1990s. There was not only a phenomenal proliferation of Non-Governmental Organizations throughout the region but also, there grew an increasing level of national and international networking among these organizations. The civil society continued to consolidate itself with the increasing number of organized students' movement, women's movement, environmental and human rights movement, such as the Environmental Protection Society of Malaysia (EPSM), the Wahana Lingkungan Hidup (WALHI) in Indonesia working in the environment sector and the Society Against Family Violence (SAVE) in Singapore, to name a few successful groups.

However, despite greater democratization in the region over the years, challenges to the civil society groups continued unabated. For instance, Malaysia banned a civil society movement of Al-Arqam, and in 2005, several human rights activists in the region were arrested under the Special Security Laws. Again, in 2012, just before the visit of US President Barack Obama to attend the ASEAN

Summit in Phnom Penh, groups of women staged a protest against the repressive measures and human rights abuses of the Cambodian government. The government in turn, retaliated by banning the protests and arresting some of the women activists and treated their activities as anti-national. Moreover, in the same year in Cambodia, a leading environmental activist was killed and this event sent severe shock-waves throughout the country.

Meanwhile, the process of Globalization and Liberalization had created a severe impact in the political structure of all the countries of South East Asia. Along with the advent of this new global environment, the process of democratization became the core demand of the common people, which was hitherto neglected by the ruling elites of these countries. This public and international pressure forced many countries of South East Asia to accept the inevitability of instituting their demands for democratic reforms. As a result, some of the South East Asian countries have undergone several regime changes at very fast paces on the one hand, and creating problems for these civil rights groups to adapt and consolidate themselves on the other. For instance, in Cambodia, changes have taken place from an isolationist posture to hard-core authoritarianism and centralized command structure to neo-liberalism in the course of Globalization. Cambodia remains an example to be cited with, where it has faced genocide and protracted civil war which have hampered the growth of civil society movements by dismantling local communities and groups. Moreover, many of these Southeast Asian countries have opted for economic reforms, such as *Doi Moi* in Vietnam, *New Economic Mechanism* in Laos and these reforms, coupled with Globalization are not only opening up the borders, but also opening up the opportunities for organizational pluralism. However, on the one hand, foreign-based NGOs are helping in training, financing and infrastructure-building of the local NGOs, on the other hand, they are being criticized as instruments of foreign interference into local issues. At another level, there has been greater politicization of the civil society groups, which are now no longer fundamentally challenging the state or the ruling regime, but instead, working as a kind of mediator between the state

and its people, as was evident in Timor-Leste and the Aceh conflict mediation in Indonesia. In Philippines too, the Bantay Ceasefire Watch in Mindanao provides an example of a successful civil society movement, which contributed significantly to the mobilization and empowerment of the peripheral people in the society, thereby bringing in hopes of sustainable peace and development in the region.

Effects of globalization also, gave birth to greater civil society mobilization in the region. Rural communities and their societal structures are being disrupted by the policies of forceful land eviction, in many Southeast Asian countries, such as Cambodia, to allow the projects of big Multi National Companies. These are stirring up civil society groups and significantly, at the forefront of these activities are groups of women. Interestingly enough, with an ever-growing scope of governmental activities, most of the regimes are now realizing the importance of co-opting the NGOs and Civil Society Organizations (CSO) in their societal and economic goals. These groups not only act as a channel of communication between the ruling regimes and the local people, but also help to channelize the demands and grievances of the communities, thereby acting as a safety-valve for the government. For instance, Singaporean Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong encouraged the thriving of civil society groups for effective development and local-level political participation. As a result of this, Town Councils and Community Development Councils were established in Singapore. Even semi-democratic regimes are gradually engaging with the civil society groups. In Thailand, the civil society groups have proved to be strong enough to make their voices heard in the corridors of power on very important issues such as, during the drafting of the Constitution in 1997, many of the demands of civil society groups had to be incorporated, even by the government of military junta. Or for that matter, the civil society groups of Thailand were vociferous against the electoral frauds and against military coups, which were destabilizing the basic fabric of their society. But the centralized or command economy of the Indo-China states have restricted the proliferation of civil society groups since these societies and economies are being mostly directed by the government itself. As a



result, the potential of the civil society groups to play a meaningful role in the socio-economic domain of these countries is largely limited. However, the Association of South East Asian Nations, as an organization has been supporting the growth of civil society groups and movements in the region, and has founded important groups like, ASEAN Grassroots People's Assembly, ASEAN Civil Society Conference, ASEAN People's Forum and the Forum for Democracy and Cooperation, etc. The haze crisis in South East Asia brought the members of ASEAN to seek various international and foreign institutions, and NGOs' for aid, advice and funding. In Indonesia, the relationship between Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and the state machinery has always shared a history of bitter relations. In the past, there has been little love lost between Indonesia's NGOs and Suharto's "New-Order" government, which traditionally spurned nongovernmental involvement in domestic and political matters. These NGOs on some environmental issues have categorically supported the rights of individuals and communities against the state and powerful interests and claimed to be the supporters of worker's rights for their criticism of governmental policies, and frequently pressured the Suharto government for greater political pluralism. The Indonesian officials, who treated these activities as "political activities", never accepted these activities of the NGOs. However, owing to international pressure and acknowledging the real need for pollution control and protection of environment, the Indonesian government in 1978 established the Ministry for Development Supervision and the Environment. The prime purpose of this Ministry was to promote the idea of an efficient, economically and environmentally sound development environment that would utilize and manage resources for sustainable development and improve the quality of the life. Unfortunately, this Ministry failed to perform its desired functions due to the non-cooperative outlook of the Suharto government and this resulted in a number of environmental NGOs mushrooming all over Indonesia. Among the NGOs, within Indonesia's domestic scene, SKEPHI (Sekretariat Kerjasama Palestarian Hutan Indonesia) and WAHLI (Wahana Lingkungan Hidup Indonesia) are the most important.



Established in 1980, WAHLI was a Jakarta based network of local and regional NGOs located throughout the Indonesian archipelago. This NGO, an umbrella group for a number of NGOs, gained a reputation for balancing advocacy and objective analysis in the 1980s, and it frequently put pressure on the Suharto government for larger political transparency. WAHLI's most dramatic challenge to Indonesia's President Suharto's development policies came in December 1988, when this NGO led a suit against PT Inti Indorayon Utama Ltd., a pulp and rayon factory based on northern Sumatra and backed by Suharto's eldest son, along with several government ministers for compensation for damages caused by the factory's unchecked pollution and deforestation of the surrounding area. Although, the WAHLI lost the suit against the government, this event represented a moral victory for the NGOs and the environmentalists of Indonesia. Even in allowing the suit to proceed, the Indonesian courts had acknowledged for the first time that an agency could represent the environment, or a community, that was not the central government itself. In fact, the WAHLI practically laid the ground work for future victories for the environment and the Indonesian people.

Based on such background, the haze episodes in 1997 and 1998 brought many NGOs together and pressed (mainly by WAHLI) the Suharto government to police its own regulations. Activists in Kalimantan and elsewhere exposed the more flagrant violators and played a key role in delivering immediate relief measures, including the distribution of face masks and first aid for respiratory complaints. The outcry of various NGOs (mainly the WAHLI group) against the Suharto government and the exposure of corruption of military personnel (in 1980, 24 out of 34 local companies engaged in the timber business) in timber companies and Suharto's sons involvement in the International Timber Cooperation of Indonesia (34% share) was a categorical reason behind the fall of the Suharto's rule in 1998. Thus, the orchestration of NGOs and other interest groups in Indonesia posed a severe challenge to every aspect of ASEAN's character and modalities. The pressure from NGOs influenced the ASEAN members to take a major step

towards institutionalizing a regional environmental policy, and the establishment of an ASEAN Cooperation Plan on Trans boundary Pollution, was no doubt a major achievement of the NGOs in the South East Asian region.

On 19 June 1998, the Fourth ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on the haze took place at Singapore. In this meeting, the ASEAN members finally accepted the role of NGOs in preventing the trans boundary haze pollution. Thus, acceptance of the role of the NGOs of the height of the haze crises considerably empowered the communities most suffered or threatened by forest fires to take up necessary preventive steps free from interference of the state machinery and from private interests. However, the acceptance of the positive role of NGOs also poses an additional problem for the newly enlarged ASEAN. The group presently incorporates states in which civil society is either underdeveloped (as in the case of Laos) or states dominated by elites who contest or reject outright the legitimacy of autonomous agencies in civil society (as in the case of Cambodia, Vietnam and Myanmar). If ASEAN modalities are to be modified to recognize NGOs as an essential actor within the domestic and regional policy community, a major divide might crop up between the old and new ASEAN states in future. In spite of this positive outlook, the countries of South East Asia have still to walk a long path of democratization before they can achieve an environment of peaceful cooperation with the government.

---

### **1.3 Sample Questions**

---

#### **Essay Type Questions**

1. Discuss critically, the significance of civil society movements in South East Asia.
2. What do you think are the limitations that the civil society groups are facing in the region?

#### **Short-Answer Type Questions**

1. Highlight a few salient features of the nature of states in South East Asia.

2. What do you think are the effects of globalization on civil society groups in the region?

### Very Short Questions

1. State the impact of separatist movements waged by different organization in South East Asia.
2. Write a short note on WALHI.

---

### 1.4 Suggested Readings

---

1. David Brown, *The state and ethnic politics in South East Asia*, Routledge, London, 1994.
2. Leek Hock Guan (ed.), *Civil Society in South East Asia*, Institute of South East Asian Studies, Singapore, 2004.
3. Gabi Waibel, Judith Ehlert and Hart Nadav Feuer (eds.), *Southeast Asia and the Civil Society Gaze: Scoping a Contested Concept in Cambodia and Vietnam*, Routledge, London, 2013.
4. Michele Ford (ed.), *Social Activism in South East Asia*, Taylor Francis Ltd., United Kingdom, 2012.
5. Pierre P. Lizze, "Civil Society and Regional Security: Tensions and Potentials in Post-Crisis South East Asia, *Contemporary South East Asia*, Vol.22, No.3, December 2000.

---

## **Unit : 2 □ Issue relating to the Chinese Immigrants in South East Asia : Case Studies of Malaysia and Singapore**

---

### **Structure**

#### **2.0 Objectives**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

#### **2.2 Issue Relating to the Chinese Immigrants in South East Asia : Case Studies of Malaysia and Singapore**

##### **2.2.1 Chinese Immigration in Malaysia**

##### **2.2.2 Racial Riots and the New Economic Policy**

##### **2.2.3 Malaysia in the aftermath of the New Economic Policy**

##### **2.2.4 The Chinese in Singapore**

#### **2.3 Sample Questions**

#### **2.4 Suggested Reading**

---

### **2.0 Objectives**

---

The present chapters helps us :

- To study the process of advent of Chinese in the region.
- To analyze the conditions of the Chinese in Malaysia & Singapore.
- To evaluate the impact of several government policies such as the New Economic Policy & the National Development Policy on the racial matrix of the region.

---

### **2.1 Introduction**

---

In the annals of South East Asian history, this region was always dominated by extra- regional and colonial powers for centuries together. As a result, the



demographic configuration of most of the countries of South East Asia changes its socio-economic dynamics time and again. In this context, Malaysia and Singapore are not exceptions at all. In Malaysia, the Chinese over the years remain nearly two-fifth of the total population, whereas in Singapore, the Chinese represent nearly four-fifth of the total population.

---

## **2.2 Issue Relating to the Chinese Immigrants in South East Asia : Case Studies of Malaysia and Singapore**

---

### **2.2.1 Chinese Immigration in Malaysia**

It is true that the Chinese immigration to the Southeast Asian region dates back to the pre- colonial days, but, the actual momentum picked up only during the colonial period, particularly to areas such as, the Malaya region which was experiencing the British rule. Before the colonial period, the Chinese did have trading contacts with the region, but it was largely of a limited nature. Even when, the Dutch settled in Malaya, they did not follow a policy of encouraging immigration of foreigners. It was only after the British started settling in the peninsula from 1786 onwards, that the influx of foreigners, such as the Chinese and the Indians was encouraged. The rationale behind such an encouragement was that the British needed cheap labor for the construction of railways in the peninsula, which the British needed for the smooth transportation of the raw materials that they procured from the region. Cheap labor was also required in the plantation sector that was being set up by them in the newly established colonies. The people of China, who immigrated to this region, were particularly the natives of Kwantung, Kwangsi and Fukien region. Over- population and lack of economic opportunities in these regions were major factors that forced them to migrate to the neighboring Malaysian region, which was similar to China in climatic conditions. The assumption that the British encouraged immigration of foreigners can be substantiated by the fact that between 1909 and 1940, nearly sixteen million Chinese and Indians arrived in Malaya. It is also said, that there was a definite role played by Koxinga, the anti- Manchu pirate behind the immigration of Chinese to this region. Once, Koxinga landed on the shore of Fukien, primarily to refuel his stocks and also to humiliate the Manchu government. The people of

the region were also against the Manchu dynasty. The Manchu government, reacted by cutting the supply lines of Koxinga in the region by forcefully driving away people of the region to about thirty miles deep on the coasts of Kwantung, Fukien and Chekiang. But in this zone, intentionally the villages were burnt and the crops were shed by the government. This ruthless treatment met out to the people by the Manchu dynasty forced the victims to flee to Malaysia for their survival and better livelihood.

When the people started emigrating from China, the Manchu government was largely indifferent towards them. Even when the Chinese were being slaughtered by some of the colonial governments in the Southeast region, such as, by the Dutch in Batavia in 1740, the Manchu dynasty was least interested in demanding justice for them. The major reason behind this apathetic attitude was that in China, it was generally believed that the living beings should protect and look after the spirits of their ancestors, and should never leave their native places. Despite this prevalent custom, those who emigrated, were mostly considered to be inferior and thus, were relegated in their social status. However, the Chinese who landed in the Southeast Asian region proved to be the most hard- working and dedicated race in pursuit of greener pastures. The Chinese slowly started dominating the economic sphere in Malaysia, particularly the industrial and plantation sectors, such as in the tin industry, the sugar plantations and the rubber estates, whereas the Bhumiputras or the sons of the soil were mostly concentrated in the traditional agricultural sectors. Interestingly enough, it would be wrong to assume that the Chinese, who arrived in Malaysia, were a homogeneous group. They comprised several linguistic and regional groups, such as, Chaozhou, Fujian, Guangdong, Hainan, Kejiá, Fuzhou, and Guangxi. The British colonization had a direct impact on the socio- economic and political sectors of Malaysia. From an economy which was heavily dependent on subsistence agriculture, it was rapidly converted into an export- oriented economy for the benefit of the colonizers. It is to be noted in this context that before the advent of the British in Malaysia, tin and timber remained a natural product used by the indigenous people in nominal and traditional ways as a means of their daily livelihood. However, with reference to rubber plantations, it was exclusively initiated by the British rulers for their own economic prosperity. Thus, tin and rubber remained the two main pillars of

the Malayan economy during the entire period of British colonial domination. As a result, tin, rubber and timber were products that were exported by them to the outside world. With the unwillingness of the Malays to leave their traditional agricultural occupation, the European colonizers made use of the immigrant Chinese and Indians as effective labor force in the new sectors. The colonizers too, welcomed the compartmentalization of society along racial – occupational lines with minimum mutual interaction. The Chinese were favored as the most enterprising community. Thus the colonial education policy too, was shaped in such a manner to accrue the maximum advantage to the Chinese and Indians and minimum to the Malays. Thus immediately after independence, in terms of household incomes, administrative and managerial workers, dentists, architects, engineers, accountants and the like, the Chinese made up the majority of the total numbers.

The division of the society along racial lines became so prominent that several political parties cropped up during the decolonization period in Malaysia, each attempting to defend the best interests of their respective community. This resulted in the formation of the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) and the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) for the Chinese, the United Malays National Organization (UMNO) and the Partai Islam (PAS) for the Malays, and the Malayan Indian Congress (MIC) for Indians were established as a platform for each community. The British continued to follow the 'divide and rule' policy to keep these political parties divided on racial lines, so as not to allow any united rebellion against the British. Thus, when they formulated the 'Malayan Union' Plan, the Malayan aristocracy was infuriated as this Plan did not give the hegemonic political power to the Malays. Instead, it favored the multi- ethnic bourgeoisie class, aimed to strip the Malayan Sultans of their powers and privileges and wanted to open up the Malayan citizenship to non- Malays as well. In fact, as a mark of protest against the Malayan Union Plan; the UMNO was formed in March 1946 to safeguard Malayan interests. This was followed by the Malayan Federation proposal which wanted to pacify the Malays by putting forth a huge challenge to the Chinese citizenship rights in Malaysia. This triggered the strengthening of the Malayan Communist Party which was set up in 1930s in the aftermath of the Great Depression, for safeguarding the interests of the working



class, particularly the Chinese class. Gradually it emerged to be a very strong political force, with even an organized armed wing during the Second World War. Another political faction which was formed in 1947 to protect the Chinese commercial interests was the Malayan Chinese Association. This group was formed as a parallel organization to the MCP. The MCA had the encouragement of British government behind their activities as an analogous bourgeoisie commercial association of the Chinese. The Chinese businessmen had earlier tried to form organizations such as, the Straits Chinese British Association and the Chinese Chambers of Commerce, but their dreams got a concrete shape with the establishment of the MCA. The economic disparity mainly between the Bumiputras and the Chinese within the Malaysian society is clearly evident from the Table below :

**Table-1**  
**Incidence of Poverty in Peninsular Malaysia (%), 1957 and 1970**

Year	1957	1970
<b>Community</b>		
<b>Malay</b>		
All household	70.5	65.9
Rural households	74.9	70.3
Urban households	32.7	38.8
<b>Chinese</b>		
All households	27.4	27.5
Rural households	25.2	24.6
Urban households	29.4	30.5
<b>Indian</b>		
All households	35.7	40.2
Rural households	44.8	31.8
Urban households	31.5	44.9

Source : Y. Ikemoto, "Income Distribution in Malaysia: 1957-80", *The Developing Economics*, Vol. XXIII, No. 4, 1985, pp.347-67.



The complexity of the poverty problem arising from the above table clearly displays that the bulk of the poor consisted of Malays, compared to the non-Malays. During the years 1957 to 1970, there was a reduction in the incidence of poverty among the Malays, although they remained at the bottom of the ladder. In 1970, 65.9 percent of the Malays were poor, compared to only 27.5 and 40.2 percent of the Chinese and Indians respectively. Besides, poverty incidence was more serious in the rural than in the urban areas. Furthermore, in 1970, the average monthly per capita income of the Chinese community approximated M 68 dollars, whereas that of the Indians and the Malays approximated M 57 and M 34 dollars respectively.

**Table-2**  
**Percentage Distribution of Households by Income and Race in**  
**Peninsular Malaysia, 1970**

Monthly income range (\$)	Malays	Chinese	Indians	Other
1-99	40.3	8.3	11.6	25.0
100-199	33.7	25.0	39.3	12.5
200-399	18.3	38.0	31.3	12.5
400-699	5.3	17.0	10.7	12.5
700-1499	2.0	9.2	5.3	12.5
1500-2999	0.4	2.2	0.9	12.5
3000 or more	Negligible	0.3	0.9	12.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

**Source:** *Mid-term Review of the Second Malaysia Plan: 1971-75*, Government Printer, Kuala Lumpur, 1973, p.3.

Besides this, Table : 2 shown above clearly exhibits that in 1970, as much as 40.3 percent of Malay households in Peninsular Malaysia had a monthly income of less than M 100 dollars, whereas 74 percent had a monthly income of less than M 200 dollars. Among the Chinese community, only 8.3 percent of all households

had a monthly income of less than M 100 dollars and 33.3 percent had a monthly income of less than M 200 dollars. Likewise, in the Indian community, only 11.6 percent had a monthly income of less than M 100 dollars, and 50.9 percent had a monthly income of less than M 200 dollars. This weak economic condition of the Malays as compared to that of the Chinese, Indians and other foreigners was mainly due to their poor participation in the industrial and commercial sectors. Further, with respect to average income, the inequality was clearly evident among different communities in 1970 with the position of Malays remaining the most subdued

### **2.2.2 Racial Riots and the New Economic Policy**

After the British left Malaysia in 1957, the new government of Malaysia, under the aegis of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), continued to develop its economy by investing in primary commodity exports with some diversification into import-substitution industry. This new country, following the World Bank advice, encouraged the investment of foreign capital in the country. To make such investment alluring, the Malaysian government concentrated heavily in infrastructural projects (i.e. improved transport, land clearance schemes), subsidies or tariff protection schemes and, as a result, the local industries were mere offshoots of industrial establishments in the developed economies and their growth was determined by foreign markets, foreign investments, foreign technology and foreign experts. This type of industrialization, however, did not transform the local economy, since it did not possess its own strength or momentum. So, in the 1960s, the main obstruction was not the economic growth of Malaysia, but the fact that the distribution of the benefits was disorderly managed and the poor people, mainly the Malays, were getting poorer. Further, while the Malaysian Constitution did stress that the socio-economic development of the Malays was to be promoted, active government intervention in the economy to help the Malays was not properly implemented. Thus, growing inequality in the distribution of wealth largely increased gaps

between and among the rural and urban areas, races, classes and racial groups. These resulted in interclass and inter-ethnic tensions in the social structure of Malaysia. The weak economic condition of the Malays, in consort with the notable economic imbalance between the Malays and the Chinese was unsatisfactory for the Malays. As a result, strong criticism of the government's *laissez-faire* approach emerged from the Malays. For the Malays, the continuation of the colonial *laissez-faire* economic policy by the Alliance Government after independence in 1957 had only ensured the growth of the Chinese economic interests, but had failed to remove the plight of the Malays. In the opinion of the Malays, the Alliance Government was too friendly to Chinese interests and they felt that the government should speed up the upward mobility of the Malays in education, employment and economy to keep them abreast with the non-Malays. Besides this, after Malaysia gained independence in 1957, it was found that managing the pluralism in Malaysian society was emerging as the biggest challenge. The government was run by the Alliance. The Alliance was dominated by the Malay party, United Malays National Organization (UMNO), the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA), and the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC). The opposition was predominantly made up of the Chinese Democratic Action Party (DAP). Each political party had sworn to mobilize support along racial communal lines during several previous elections (for example, in 1959 and 1964).

What made the situation explosive was the fact that the frustration was almost equally evident within the Chinese ethnic group. The Chinese community also felt that the government was doing too much for the Malays and felt distressed. From their perspective, they felt that the government was biased towards the Malays, and this made them more vocal in criticizing the "Malay special rights" (Art.153 of the 1957 Constitution). The rising tension came to a peak with racial riots on 13 May, 1969. This racial riot continued for several days and claimed a number of lives. Officially, 196 people were dead, 9143 arrested and 753 buildings were



damaged. It was felt that the deep-seated suspicion in the minds of Chinese and Malays against each other was the prime reason behind the racial riots. The suspicion stemmed from a kind of insecurity of the Malays about their decreasing political and economic clout because of the emerging political opposition groups and gradual strengthening of the Chinese economic conditions in the socio-economic fabric of Malaysia. The Chinese too feared that their way of life, their culture, and their freedom was being jeopardized by the Malay majority.

It appeared that the racial riots marked a major turning point in Malaysia's development policy as they paved the way for the advent of affirmative action policies in favour of the Malays. It was also realized by the government that political stability and national unity were contingent upon the elimination of poverty among the ethnic Malays who constituted the major electoral base of the government. This resulted in the introduction of NEP in 1971, in the context of the Second Malaysia Plan (1970-75), as part of the 20 years Perspective Plan (1970-90). There were two specific objectives of the NEP: (a) Eradicating poverty by raising income levels and increasing employment opportunities for all Malaysians, irrespective of race, (b) Accelerating the process of restructuring Malaysian society to correct economic imbalance, so as to reduce and eventually eliminate the identification of race with economic function. The approach of the NEP to overcome the perceived socio-economic imbalances in society was by giving preferential treatment to the Malays and other indigenous people. The ultimate aim of the NEP was to achieve national unity and to foster nation-building. In effect, the NEP placed more emphasis on the underplayed feature of "Malay" economic advancement. In other words, the goal of the NEP was redistribution of wealth in favour of the Malays, so that ultimately the Chinese could not monopolize economic power.

The main target of social restructuring under the NEP demanded a rise in Bumiputras participation in the ownership and management of the corporate sector of the economy from 2.4 percent in 1970 to 30 percent by 1990. The non-



Malay [Chinese 27.2 percent, Indian 1: 1 percent in 1970] participation was to grow at the targeted rates of 12 percent per year to cover 40 percent of the share capital by 1990, and the share of foreign investors would fall from 63.3 percent to 30 percent during the same period. This kind of social reconstruction aimed through NEP was entrenched into the Second Malaysia Plan (1971-75), the main objective of which was to create "a viable and thriving Malay industrial and commercial community" and to accelerate the employment of Malays and the other indigenous people at all levels of manufacturing in tune with the racial composition of the population. To achieve these objectives, the NEP displayed restructuring of society at three levels: first, to increase the share of Bumiputra employment in the modern industrial sectors, secondly, to increase the Bumiputra share of corporate ownership and thirdly, to increase the number of Bumiputra entrepreneurs and managerial control.

The New Economic Policy did help in uplifting the economic condition of the Bumiputras. However, it was also alleged that the policy was bringing in nepotism and corruption in the Malaysian polity and society in various ways. For instance, the poverty alleviation programs that were adopted, was specifically targeted towards the Bumiputras below the poverty line, despite the fact that it was supposed to be race-neutral. Several agencies, such as the MARA (Council of Trust for the Indigenous People) and Bank Negara were established, specifically to give easy credit to Malay entrepreneurs. Even in high-income generating job sectors, only the Malay people were encouraged. The Chinese knew that they did not have much political clout to influence the policy decisions. So, they had to adapt to the changing situation accordingly. However, the fact that affected Chinese the most was the growing importance on the Malay as the medium of instruction and intensification of Islamization in educational institutions, particularly in higher education. This can be gauged from the fact that in 1970, Malay enrolment in degree courses was 39.7 percent and Chinese enrolment was 49.2 percent. But in 1988, we find, the enrolment of the Malays increased to 63

percent, whereas the Chinese enrolment dipped to 29 percent. Even, the Chinese effort to set up the Merdeka University with Mandarin as the medium of instruction was thwarted by the Malaysian government with the UMNO as the dominant party. "Between 1970 and 1977 Malays gained 68 percent of the 162000 newly created jobs and by 1979-80 they comprised 93 percent of the new employees."

### 2.2.3 Malaysia in the aftermath of New Economic Policy

The New Economic Policy continued to be operational till 1990. The New Economic Policy was soon replaced by the National Development Policy. The National Development Policy formed the core element of the Second Outline Perspective Plan in Malaysia. It was decided that the run period of the NDP would be ten years that is exactly half the run period of NEP so that an appraisal can be made after a shorter time frame. The NDP was formulated with the vision 2020 in mind. Vision 2020 was aimed at the achievement of national unity as the ultimate goal, correcting social and economic imbalances, ensuring political stability and economic growth. The NDP continued to uphold the basic premises and strategies of NEP. Apart from the stated goals of NEP, NDP aimed to; **firstly**, shift the focus of the anti-poverty strategy towards eradication of hardcore poverty and relative poverty as well. **Secondly**, to focus on employment and the rapid development of an active Bumiputra Commercial and Industrial Community (BCIC) as a more effective strategy to increase the meaningful participation of Bumiputra in the modern sectors of the economy. **Thirdly**, to rely more on the private sector to create greater opportunities for growth. **Fourthly**, emphasized more on Human Resources Development in the social structure of the entire country. In short, like the NEP, the NDP continued the policy of protective discrimination in favor of the Bumiputra in tune with Article 153 of the 1957 constitution of Malaysia which gives special treatment to Bumiputra. Though NDP talks of making efforts to increase the Bumiputra ownership in the society,

unlike the NEP, no particular time frame was mentioned to attain the equity restructuring target of at least 30 percent.

To sum up, not only the Malaysian Constitution, but also the subsequent governmental policies in Malaysia have always favored the Bumiputra and attempted to increase the participation of the sons of soil in important sectors such as commercial and industrial sectors to counter the growing economic hegemony of the Chinese. The Chinese and Indian immigrants were favored by the British as colonizers, simply because, they proved to be the more disciplined and dynamic labor class. To undo the effects of colonization, the Bumiputra were favored by the government right since the attainment of independence in 1957, which continued more aggressively after the 1969 racial riots. The economic predominance of the Chinese in various sectors is still very much present even after the NEP and NDP, but the positive effects of the NEP and NDP on the Bumiputra are too glaring to be missed out.

#### **2.2.4 The Chinese in Singapore**

Singapore was an important colony of the British Empire. It was founded in 1819 by Sir Stamford Raffles. Sir Raffles was the erstwhile Lieutenant of Java before it was reinstated to Holland. When the British acquired Singapore, it was an island mainly of swampy jungles. Raffles' concept of a port open to the traders of all nations, without restrictions, helped in its rapid growth and it soon outstripped Malacca and Penang and became the living commercial and strategic port of Southeast Asia in the nineteenth century.

In 1824 the British East India Company also acquired Malacca from the Dutch by exchanging it for a British trading post in Sumatra. The three British Settlements- Penang, Singapore and Malacca - were administered from 1826 as the "Straits Settlements"; and where each of these three states was administered as crown colonies due to their strategic and first trade entrepot advantages. Britain



became increasingly involved in the social and political affairs of the neighbouring native Malay states. There was great economic development during the 19th century; first in tin mining, for which the labour was mainly provided by Chinese immigrants (who worked harder than the Malays), and later in rubber plantations. The plantation labour came largely from southern India. The mixture of races produced some difficulties, particularly owing to the vast numbers of Chinese, who now comprise more than three quarters that of Singapore.

The first major documented influx of Chinese in the Strait Settlement of Singapore was around 1878 from nearby Malacca and Riau island regions, which were then reeling under the Dutch colonialism. But even before that, there was a substantial presence of local Chinese in Singapore. In 1866, out of hundred and seventy eight schooners, barques, brigs, junks and ships registered under the Act of Parliament belonging to Singapore, the local Chinese owned hundred and twenty, whereas only fifty eight were owned together by the Europeans, Indians and Malays. However, the actual momentum of Chinese immigration in Singapore picked up during the rule of the British. The British, as the ruler of Malaysia and Singapore, encouraged Chinese immigration into the region for cheap and efficient labor for their own economic prosperity. Also, for tapping the full potentials of trade and for augmenting the development of Singapore as the entrepot to the region, the British needed the Chinese labourer. With the development of Singapore as the global entrepot centre of the region, Chinese firms started taking full advantage of the sea and the modern European technology. There were established direct trading vessels between Singapore and Shanghai in mainland China and thus giving an opportunity to establish networks between the Chinese in the mainland and the Chinese born in Singapore. The Chinese penetration in Singapore over the years will be evident from the Table given below :



**Table-1**  
**Chinese Immigration in Singapore**

Year	Total Population ( According to Census Reports)	Total Number of Chinese
1821	4724	1159
1823	10683	3317
1830	16834	6555
1850	52886	27988
1860	81734	50043
1931	567453	421821
1941	769216	599659

**Source :** Victor Purcell, *The Chinese in Malaya*, Oxford University Press, London, 1967.

With the influx of the Chinese in the archipelago, there cropped up severe law and order and societal problems in the initial days. There emerged dreaded secret societies, such as, 'Thian Thi Hui'. These secret societies are a direct by-product of Chinese culture. These societies have existed in China for many centuries. Initially, they started as religious or self-help associations, but later they became anti-dynastic groups and ultimately they degenerated into criminal organizations. The other problems that emerged with the arrival of Chinese were the manifold increase in opium production and consumption. In fact, it was estimated that half the revenue that the British derived from the archipelago was from opium and there also emerged the trouble of trafficking in Chinese women and girls.

The Chinese who have immigrated into Singapore were not a monolithic group. It comprises mainly Hokkien, Teochew and Cantonese Chinese, who make up about 78 percent of the population, whereas the Malays comprise less than 15 percent of the total population and the rest were Indians and other communities. The *Baba* Chinese made up the greatest number of Chinese in Singapore followed by Hokkiens. The Hokkien merchants mainly migrated during the upheavals of

the Taiping Rebellion in the 1850s. Right from the very beginning, the administration of Singapore, under the tutelage of the British administrators, was concerned about creating a growth-driven economy and using the racial plurality as an advantage and not an impediment for the Singaporeans. For ensuring an equal treatment to all the races, it adopted four official languages-Malay, Mandarin, Tamil and English. However, to counter the numerical and socio-economic hegemony of the Chinese, the Malays like in Malaysia, were ensured special constitutional position in Singapore as well. The Malays, unlike the other races, also obtained free education in Singapore. In 1950s there were concerted efforts to promote the Malayan language as the national language, however, in the aftermath of Singapore's separation from Malaysia in 1965, English was promoted as the common language for official and other formal uses, for example as medium of instruction in schools to promote racial unity and integrity.

Chinese free schools were mainly set up since the 1850s, however modern bilingual schools gradually started to be set up by end-nineteenth century through the help of local-born Chinese because the main problem that the Chinese immigrants and traders were facing was the lack of social respectability. The Chinese realized that what they needed was western education and eventually getting into the administrative jobs of the British. This coincided with the need of the British to recruit officials and interpreters. The Chinese diligently grabbed the opportunities and moved up the social ladder. On the other hand, the Straits Chinese monopolized the opium trade and opium farms even in faraway shores, going well beyond Thailand, Vietnam and China. This fetched huge revenue for the government besides, tin and rubber trade.

After the separation of Singapore from Malaysia, Singapore emerged as a separate independent state in 1965. However, in spite of this new independent identity, the Chinese immigration for work continued unabated in Singapore. The only difference being moving beyond the areas from which traditionally immigrants have arrived from China to Singapore, that is from Fujian and

Guandong region, immigration are also registered from Sichuan, Shanghai, Hunan, Zhejiang, Beijing, etc in contemporary times. To counter the growing spread of western culture and beliefs, the new government stressed on the Asian Values and started campaigning in 1978 to promote the Confucian values of discipline and reverence towards authority and in 1982 campaign was launched to uphold the Mandarin language. Perpetuation of the Singaporean unity of all races was promoted as the National Ideology, particularly under the leadership of Lee Kuan Yew, who asked the new immigrants to assimilate in the social fabric of Singapore. It is a fact that Islam in fanatic forms were never tolerated and endorsed by the Singapore government and over the years the administrators of Singapore are paying more obeisances to the Singaporean state rather than the ethnic affiliation. This unique configuration of ethnic understanding made the present Singapore as one of the prime attractive, cosmopolitan, and unique commercial focal point of reference in emerging global order.

---

## **2.3 Sample Questions**

---

### **Essay Type Questions**

1. Critically analyze the New Economic Policy of Malaysia.
2. Discuss the situation at Singapore after its separation from Malaysia.

### **Short-Answer Type Questions**

1. Discuss the Chinese- Bumiputra dichotomy in Malaysia.
2. Analyze the situation in Malaysia in the aftermath of the New Economic Policy.

### **Very Short Questions**

1. What is the role of IBRD in Malaysia ?
2. Write a short note on Chinese in Singapore.

---

## 2.4 Suggested Readings

---

1. Victor Purcell, *The Chinese in Malaya*, Oxford University Press, London, 1967.
2. T. H. Silcock, *The Economy of Malaya*, Malaya Publishing House Limited, Singapore, 1954.
3. David Brown, *The state and ethnic politics in South East Asia*, Routledge, London, 1994.
4. Kalyani Bandopadhyay, *Political Economy of Non-Alignment: Indonesia and Malaysia*, South Asian Publishers, New Delhi, 1970.
5. K. S. Sandhu and A. Mani (eds.), *Indian Communities in Southeast Asia*, Institute of South East Asian Studies, Singapore, 1993.
6. Tridib Chakraborti, "Democracy and Development in Malaysia : A Case-Study of Malaysian Indiana," In Anjali Ghosh et al (eds.), *Nationalism Democracy Development : Threats & Challenges in the Global Future*, ASIHSS programme, Department of International Relations, Jadavpur University, Kolkata, 2007.
7. Tridib Chakraborti, "Minority underclass : Negating a Sociological Truism in Malaysia", in Lipi Ghosh and Ramkrishna Chatterjee (eds.), *Indian Diaspora in Asian and Pacific region : Culture, People Interaction*, Rawat Publications, Jaipur and New Delhi, 2004.



---

## Unit : 3 □ Society, Culture and Politics in Thailand and Myanmar

---

### Structure

#### 3.0 Objectives

#### 3.1 Introduction

#### 3.2 Society, Culture and Politics in Thailand and Myanmar

##### 3.2.1 The Political scenario of Thailand

##### 3.2.2 Thai Society and Culture

##### 3.2.3 Society and Culture of Myanmar

##### 3.2.4 Politics in Myanmar

#### 3.3 Sample Questions

#### 3.4 Suggested Reading

---

### 3.0 Objectives

---

The objectives of the present unit are :

- To give us a basic idea of the prevalent societal structures, cultural norms & influences of these countries.
- To let us know a brief history of their political condition.

---

### 3.1 Introduction

---

Thailand, or *The Land of a Thousand Smiles*, is officially known as the Kingdom of Thailand or Muang Thai or Prathet Thai, with Bangkok as its capital. Its currency is Baht, and the country has an area of 513,115 square kilometer, with population of over 67, 07,000. The main languages used in Thailand are Thai, Lao, Chinese, English and Malay. There are mainly three religions practised in the

country, namely, Theravada Buddhism, Islam and Christianity. Theravada Buddhists are predominant in the entire society, comprising about 95% of the population, whereas Muslims are about 4% of the total population. Thailand was previously known as Siam, and the founding date of the Kingdom of Siam is generally believed to be 1238 A.D. It experienced the Sukhotai period and then the Ayutthaya period before the establishment of Absolute Monarchy in 1870. But the Absolute Monarchy was overthrown by the People's Party in 1932 and the country became a constitutional monarchy.

Myanmar, officially the Union of Myanmar, was previously known as Burma. It is known as the "rice bowl of the Far East". Its territory spreads over an area of 6, 76,553 square kilometer with Kyat as its currency. It has a population of over 54,164,262 as of July 2014

## THAILAND

---

### 3.2 Society, Culture and Politics in Thailand and Myanmar

---

#### 3.2.1 The Political Scenario of Thailand

The decades of 1930s and 1940s were the periods of uncertainty and political turmoil with the Royalists, Nationalists and the Leftists getting embroiled in the tussle for the establishment of political power. In 1948, the Kingdom of Siam was renamed as the Kingdom of Thailand. In 1957, the military dictatorship in the kingdom commenced with the coup of Sarit. However, pressure started mounting on the military government as it started losing the popularity among the masses because of its high handedness and autocratic rule. The culmination of this growing dissent was the 1973 mass uprising against the military government, led particularly by the Communist Party. In 1974, there was a bloody military coup and the government was taken over by the military. By mid-1980s, the kingdom was consolidating its democratization process as in 1988 there was a democratic election, but suddenly in 1991, military junta overthrew the government of Chatchai, which was elected by the people of the Kingdom.

Amidst growing dissent against the military junta, the Peoples Constitution of Thailand was proclaimed on 11 October 1997. Efforts towards democratization once again started and in 2001, Thaksin Shinawatra's Thai Rak Thai Party won the General Elections. In 2005 again, Thaksin's party achieved its second landslide election victory. However, nepotism and corruption started plaguing Thaksin's government in its second term particularly after the Ratchada real estate deal of 2003 started coming to light and the People's Alliance for Democratic movement started assembling by early 2006. On 19 September 2006, military coup again occurs which toppled the Thaksin government, abrogated the Peoples Constitution of Thailand, outlawed the TRT party of Thaksin and banned its executives from contesting elections for next five years. In 2007, the military Junta drafted a new Constitution. On 21 October 2008, the Supreme Court sentenced Thaksin for a two year imprisonment for abuse of power particularly for the real estate deal. On 15 December of the same year, Abhisit Vejjajiva of the Democratic Party was elected as the Prime Minister of Thailand and Thaksin fled from the country. On 11 April 2009, pro-Thaksin demonstrators, calling themselves Red Shirt demonstrators, disrupted the ASEAN conference that was underway in Pattaya. The conference had to be cancelled and Prime Minister Abhisit had to declare an Emergency to allow for the safe exit of the delegates of the conference. Meanwhile in 2011, Thailand started getting embroiled in a border dispute with Cambodia, as both the countries were claiming their sovereignty over the Preah Vihear Promontory located on their borders.

On the domestic front, Thailand held its next General Election on 3 July, 2011. Yingluck Shinawatra, the sister of former Prime Minister, Thaksin Shinawatra, became the Prime Minister. The border problem could be resolved only in late 2013, when in the month of November, The International Court of Justice remarked that a 1962 ruling gave Cambodia sovereignty over the Preah Vihear Promontory and Thailand must withdraw its armed forces from the border. By end 2013 itself, domestic pressure started mounting against Yingluck's government. As a result, once again the Kingdom fell in the grips of political

turmoil when, mass demonstrations began against Yingluck's government. The opposition resigned from Parliament, Yingluck Shinawatra dissolved the lower house of the Parliament and an Emergency Security Law was invoked on 25 November, 2013, in order to reduce further animosity at the domestic level. On 25 August, 2014, Thailand's Junta leader General Prayuth Chan-ocha' became the next Prime Minister, but the entire political environment has not yet been pacified.

### 3.2.2 Thai Society and Culture

The Thai society and culture has been influenced hugely by the Chinese and Indian Culture. Theravada Buddhism perhaps wields the maximum influence in the Thai Society. Classical Thai paintings have almost always been influenced by the mural paintings that are most commonly found in Buddhist temples. These paintings mostly depict the events in the life of Lord Buddha. Thai architecture mostly centers around monuments, pagodas and temples and for their construction wood, stucco, lacquer work are very common. Chinese porcelain is also an oft-used item in Thai architecture. Parallel to it, we find Indian influence on their literature, when we observe how their epic, the Ramakian, is modeled on the Indian epic, the Ramayana. We see similar characters in both these literary pieces, such as the Hanuman. Very much similar to the 'Namaste' of Indians, the Thai people used 'Wai' to greet each other. As a mark of showing respect, they fold their palms together in a prayer – like manner. Their society is essentially hierarchic in nature and they have been taught to display reverence to the hierarchy. This is why the Royal family of the Thailand enjoys much respect from all quarters of the Thai society. The 'Wat' holds a very prominent position in the Thai society. A 'wat' is a Buddhist temple and Monastery combined together, and has traditionally been places for receiving and completing education, performing religious rites, social ceremonies and like. The Thai language is known as 'Phasa Thai'. These are predominantly monosyllable words and the alphabets have been created by the King Ramkhamhaeng the Great in 1283. It is said that the Sanskrit and Pali influence on these alphabets are explicitly displayed. But like the



Chinese language, the Thai words too have different tones. The same word with different tones may mean different objects.

The society of Thailand is not at all homogeneous in character. The society and culture of the Northern Thailand is influenced greatly by the Burmese culture as Thailand shares its boundaries with Myanmar and Laos towards its North. In Western Thailand we find a kind of society which is quite isolated from the rest of the country by the large mountain range. However, the concentration of ethnic Thai majority is found in the central part of Thailand which has the greatest population density in the country and the capital of Thailand, Bangkok is situated in this region. The fact remains that within Thailand, the North and the Northeastern region of the country suffer from low economic development. The per capita income of the people of the region is comparatively low than the people residing in the other parts of the country. Two-thirds of the population of the country is made up of ethnic Thai groups and the remaining one-third is made up of Chinese, Vietnamese, Khmer, Hmong and others. In the Southern part of the country, the Islam factor remains very prominent. Therefore, beyond the overall similar tendencies in the Thai culture there is no one particular model that can be followed as the demographic composition of the country varies to a large extent owing to geographic conditions.

### MYANMAR

Myanmar's population is equivalent to 0.74 percent of the total world population. The population density in Myanmar is eighty people per square kilometer and thirty five percent of the total population is living in urban areas. The languages that are used are mainly Burmese, Karen and Shan. About eighty nine percent of the population is Theravada Buddhists. Christians comprise about four percent of the total population with predominantly Baptist Christians. Muslims and Hindus make up four and two percent of the population respectively and about one percent of the population is Animists. The hill tribes are mainly Animists. The population ratio of various ethnic communities in Myanmar is as follows :

**Table-1**  
**Ethnic Communities in Myanmar**

Serial Numbers	Communities	Percentage of the Total Population
1	Bamar	68.00
2	Shan	9.00
3	Kayin	7.00
4	Rakhine	3.50
5	Chinese	2.50
6	Mon	2.00
7	Kachin	1.50
8	Indians	1.25
9	Kayah	0.75
10	Other Groups	4.50

**Source :** Morten B. Pederson, Emily Rudland and Ronald James May (eds.), *Burma Myanmar: strong regime, weak state?*, Crawford House, Belair, 2000.

### 3.2.3 Society and Culture of Myanmar

In Myanmar, there exist more than one hundred thirty five different ethnic communities, with each having its own culture, history and language. The majority Burman (Bamar) ethnic group makes up about two-thirds of the total population and more or less controls the military and the government. The minority ethnic nationalities of the remaining one-third population live mainly in the resource-rich border areas and hills of Burma, although many have been forcibly displaced from their homeland by the military-backed government and seized their land for development projects and resource exploitation. As a result, millions of people from these minority groups have become internally displaced people (IDPs) within Burma, or refugees in neighbouring countries. The seven largest minority nationalities in Burma are the Chin, the Kachin, the Karenni (sometimes called Kayah), the Karen (sometimes called Kayin), the Mon, the Rakhine, and the Shan. Burma is divided into seven states, each named after these

seven ethnic nationalities, and seven regions (formerly called divisions), which are mainly populated by the Bamar (Burmans). The Rohingya people are not recognized by the Myanmar government as an ethnic nationality of Burma, and thus they suffer from some of the most horrible bigotry and human rights abuses of all the people of Burma. It is estimated that the Rohingya population of Burma is nearly two million, living mainly in Rakhine State, and a large portion live as refugees in neighbouring countries mainly in Bangladesh.

The Mon Kingdom and the Pyu Kingdom that were found in Burma in the first millennium and they popularized the religion of Buddhism in the country. But the original population of Burma was mainly Animists. There was an influx of Hindu and Muslim population in the country during the colonial period, particularly in Rangoon (presently Yangon) region. Christianity is largely restricted to the ethnic non-Buddhist communities, such as, the Karen, the Kachin and the Chin. These communities have consistently resisted the rule of the military junta and the Karens have involved themselves in one of the protracted civil wars against the government. However, in January 2004, the Karen National Union agreed to end hostilities against the military government. An important aspect of the Myanmar's society that has taken enormous proportions in the recent years is the conflict between Rakhine Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims. Rakhine region towards Bangladesh is Muslim-dominated and the two communities have got embroiled in serious skirmishes that has attracted international gaze in the country.

Drawing from belief in the significance of '*Karma*' prevalent in Hinduism, the people of Myanmar have a similar belief in '*hpon*', that is, one's past deeds shape his present life. The society of Myanmar has most significantly been influenced by the Buddhist culture, rituals and belief. Societal and cultural influences from India and China are very much present in the daily lives of the common people in Myanmar. '*Mingalaba*' is the name of the greeting of the traditional Burmese people and the Thingyan Water Festival is their most important festival, which is celebrated around April every year. The festival is celebrated with the belief that water washes away all the sins. Apart from this,



Kachin Manaw, Ananda Pagoda, Htamane, Kakku Pagoda, Elephant Dance and Hot Air Balloon festivals are celebrated with much grandeur. The people of Myanmar also celebrate Diwali like the Indians. Indian and Chinese dishes are quite popular in Myanmar. Chinese products have made much headway in challenging the indigenous products of daily use. There is also a growing enthusiasm among the local people to learn Chinese and Indian languages.

### **3.2.4 Policies in Myanmar**

King Anawrahta founded the first unified state of Burma in 1057 in Pagan and Theravada Buddhism was adopted by him. Over the years, Burma experienced the Mongol dynasty, the Toungoo dynasty and the Konbaung dynasty. Following this, the British started conquering Burma in 1824 and the first Anglo- Burmese War broke out. At the end of the War, the Treaty of Yandabo was concluded by which the Arakan coastal strip was ceded to the British. Lower Burma was annexed in 1852 following the second Anglo- Burmese War. The conquering of Burma was completed in 1886 after the British captured Mandalay and made Burma a province of British India. Burma remained a part of British India till 1937, before British separated Burma from India and made it a separate colony. During the period of Second World War, in 1942, Japan (who was in the group of the opponents of Great Britain) invaded and occupied the British colony.

However, in 1945 the British managed to liberate Burma from Japanese occupation. The British in their efforts towards liberating Burma got immense help at the local level from Aung San, who was the leader of the Anti- Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL). But, unfortunately in 1947, Aung San along with six members of his interim government was assassinated by U Saw. U Saw was his nationalist rival. Subsequently, U Nu, who was the Foreign Minister in the interim government, was asked to Head the AFPFL and the government. Burma acquired independence on 4 January 1948 and U Nu became the first Prime Minister. During the final years of the decade of 1950s, there was a split in the ruling AFPFL and a caretaker government led by Ne Win, the Army Chief, was established. In the 1960 general elections, U Nu's party won a landslide victory



but in 1962, Ne Win staged a military coup and ousted U Nu's faction from power.

From 1962 to 2011, for forty nine years, Burma was ruled by the military junta. Ne Win dominated the government from 1962 to 1988, as the President and even after relinquishing the post, he continued to wield substantial influence over the government. Ne Win, during his tenure, introduced the 'Burmese Way To Socialism', by which he nationalized the economy of the country and established an one- party ruled state with Socialist Programme Party as the single political party of the state. In the meantime, in 1974, he proclaimed a new Constitution and established a People's Assembly as its head accompanied by other military leaders. In 1981, Ne Win relinquished his post and San Yu, another retired military general, became the President. Ne Win continued to exert extensive authority as the Chairman of the ruling Socialist Programme Party. Particularly from 1988, the simmering anti- government feelings flared up into major riots and severe demonstrations started against the political legitimacy of the then military junta. To counter such law and order problems, the ruling junta formed the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) which started arresting demonstrators and keeping them for long as political prisoners. Even the leader of the main opposition party, Aung San Suu Kyi of the National League for Democracy (NLD) was put under house arrest. She is the daughter of assassinated nationalist leader Aung San.

In the general elections held in 1990, the NLD registered a landslide victory, but the government ignored the verdict of the people and continued with their military rule. In 1992, Than Shwe became the Chairman of the SLORC. In 1997, Burma was admitted to the ASEAN and the SLORC was renamed as the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC). The process towards democratization started in August 2003, when Khin Nyunt became the Prime Minister and he proposed to hold a Convention in 2004 for drafting a new Constitution. However, during this long period of the rule of military junta, international sanctioned was imposed mainly by the Western countries for the establishment of democratic government. In the meantime, hostilities between the government and the ethnic

groups such as the Karen, the Kachin and the Shan rebel groups acutely flared up, which led to the continuance of international sanctions against Burma. International pressure towards speeding up the democratization process kept mounting day by day, as Aung San Suu Kyi was on and off kept in house arrest for long durations and demonstrators and NLD leaders were kept as political prisoners. So, when in May 2004, the Convention for drafting the new Constitution began, it was boycotted by the NLD as Aung San Suu Kyi continued to remain under house arrest at that time.

The military junta has always been accused not only in the domestic front, but also in the international arena for abusing the rights of the people of Myanmar, such as by the International Committee of the Red Cross. The United States also put forth a resolution in January 2007 at the United Nations Security Council, urging Burma to stop torturing and harassing the opposition groups and leaders. But the resolution died an unfortunate death as China and Russia vetoed it. By mid 2008, the proposed new Constitution was revealed by the government, but it banned the opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi from holding office. Aung San Suu Kyi continued to remain under house arrest, but started talking to the military leaders. In the General Elections conducted in 2010, the main military-backed party, the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) claimed a landslide victory, but the opposition leaders were not ready to accept this verdict. Meanwhile, Aung San Suu Kyi was freed from house arrest immediately after the result of the election. In March 2011, Thein Sein was appointed as the new Prime Minister of the country. He tried to bring in some democratic reforms by freeing political prisoners and allowing trade unions and peaceful demonstrations, re-registering of NLD as a political party and competing in the elections and abolishing the censorship on the media, particularly print media. Though all these in helped in improving face of Myanmar in the international arena, Western countries such as the United States, still extends some sanctions on the country, as it believes that the human rights abuse is still very much present in this country. Thus, the present Myanmar government has now embarked on the road of democratization.

---

### 3.3 Sample Questions

---

#### Essay Type Questions

1. Discuss the political scenario in Thailand.
2. Illustrate the present political situation in Myanmar.

#### Short-Answer Type Questions

1. Give a brief overview of the Thai society.
2. Critically analyze the rule of military junta in Myanmar.

#### Very Short Questions

1. Which country is known as the 'rice bowl of the Far East' & why?
2. Write a short note on the role of 'Wat' in a Thai society.

---

### 3.4 Suggested Readings

---

1. Morten B. Pederson, Emily Rudland and Ronald James May (eds.), *Burma Myanmar: strong regime, weak state?*, Crawford House, Belair, 2000.
2. Juliane Schober, *Modern Buddhist Conjunctures in Myanmar: Cultural Narratives, Colonial Legacies and Civil Society*, University of Hawai'i Press, Honolulu, 2011.
3. David I. Steinberg, *Burma : The State of Myanmar*, George University Press, Washington, D.C, 2001
4. Wendell Blanchard, *Thailand, Its People, Its Society, Its Culture*, HRAF Press, Connecticut, 1966
5. Arne Kislenko, *Culture and Customs of Thailand*, Greenwood Publishing Group, California, 2004.
6. Pasuk Phongpaichit and Christopher John Baker, *Thailand: Economics and Politics*, OUP, London, 2002.

---

## **Unit : 4 □ Globalization and Culture in South East Asia in the Post Cold War Era**

---

### **Structure**

#### **4.0 Objectives**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

#### **4.2 Globalization and Culture in South East in the Post Cold War Era**

##### **4.2.1 Asian Values Debate**

##### **4.2.2 Growth of Islamic Fundamentalism in South East Asia**

##### **4.2.3 Struggle between Democracy and Authoritarian Rule**

##### **4.2.4 Alternative Discourses of South East Asia**

#### **4.3 Sample Questions**

#### **4.4 Suggested Reading**

---

### **1.0 Objectives**

---

The main objectives are :

- To give us an analysis of the effect that the drawing of globalization had on the cultures & values of South East Asian countries.
  - To give us an idea about the Asian Value Debate.
  - To highlight the major challenges that have cropped up in the era of globalization in the countries of South east Asia.
- 

### **4.1 Introduction**

---

The advent of globalization in South East Asia, particularly in the 1990s, brought with itself unbound flows of information, goods, capital, technology, cultures and values at the macro or the international level and tectonic changes at



the micro or local level too. It also brought unmatched economic interdependence, cross border capital movements and rapid technology transfer between the countries of South East Asia. Moreover, on the one hand, there grew substantial pressure on nation-states in South East Asia to conform to the western model of rule of law, stress on accountability and transparency. On the other hand, there grew several problems which were essentially intercontinental in nature, such as ethnic unrest, organized crime networks, large scale migration and the issue of displaced persons, etc. But in this context, our topic of analysis would be the emergence of an essentially western- dominated international culture as a direct effect of globalization in these traditional societies of South East Asia. The effort towards generalization of the western culture, through the instruments of globalization, has aroused concern about the erosion of national identity and traditional values in many South East Asian countries. It has been found that gradually villagers in these countries have initiated to leave their indigenous identity behind and are more attracted towards their national culture and customs to reach for a global identity.

---

## **4.2 Globalization and culture in South East in the Post cold war Era**

---

### **4.2.1 Asian Values Debate**

The countries of South East Asia are not at all a homogeneous group, and have considerable differences of opinion when it comes to the question of how much the forces of globalization will be allowed to permeate their societies, particularly in the cultural sector. For example, some countries are deeply sensitive to films and music from Hollywood, while the others are not. Chinese films are welcomed in Thailand, but not in Malaysia. Similarly, except in Singapore, various attempts have been made with reference to policies and programs to reactivate national culture and identity with reference to globalization. Serious efforts have been initiated to strengthen national symbols and identity such as Buddhism, Islam, Confucian values, national flags, monarchy, armed forces, socialist ideology, meritocracy, etc.

Some have argued that there has been a revival of traditional values as a result of the uncertainties of social change and as cultures rub up against each other in the era of globalization. Whilst education, democracy and development may reflect a superficial Westernization, they can lead to a rediscovery of indigenous values, as cultural backlash. The more popular liberal view is that this process results in a dilution of cultural differences and the breakdown of traditional values and institutions as the volume of shared experiences and behavior increases sharply. As a generalized consequence of modernization- industrialization, urbanization, education, democratization—this is undeniable, East Asian leaders have sought to exploit the opportunities of this environment whilst resisting the globalizing culture which accompanies this process. This resulted in the debates on the Asian Values. The debate on this concept has been originated after Samuel. P. Huntington's book titled *The Clash of Civilizations*. In the early 1990s, the concept of Asian values has been advanced by various Asian political leaders, most notably Lee Kuan Yew and Mahathir Mohammed, who argued that certain Asian cultural values were the root of Asia's remarkable post- war success. These leaders maintained that in the political sphere, "Asian Values" supported the paternalistic brand of authoritarian government that they both practiced, while in the economic sphere these values supported a work ethic, savings, education and other practices conducive to economic growth. The Asian values are a kind of defense against Western way of life. It covers five ethics such as, humanity, righteousness, propriety, wisdom and faithfulness. These values are said to include work, good education, family-centeredness and gratitude or comprise culture, tradition, moral order, religion and way of thoughts. Also "Asian Values" believe in duties, rather than rights. They also viewed that the Western model is not easily exportable and not necessarily desirable. They pointed out that drugs, gangs, guns, endemic violent crime, unsafe streets and increased divorce rates have clearly made a sharp decline in family values in the Western world. However, some have interpreted the "Asian Values" as a philosophical and cultural alternative to Western approaches to questions of government, civil liberties, economic management and human rights. The idea in a brief account is

that there is an Asian way of doing things. By definition, the "Asian Values" differs from the Western way and denies the West any monopoly on the one right approach to the important issues.

Many in the West have been severely reluctant to accept the notion of a different but equally valid set of values. At the extreme, they have seen no basis for an alternative viewpoint to Western thinking on the important question of what constitutes good governance and how best to protect human rights. They have considered these issues as universal; they have argued the solutions must also be universal. Thus, they have sought to promote Western liberal democracy and the protection of human rights through binding law as the goal to which countries, societies, and peoples should universally aspire. It is therefore around these two issues that the "Asian Values" Vs. "Western Values" debate has been most intense. For many in the Asian countries, the approach of the West is arrogant, provocative and basically another form of colonialism. Many in the West worry that "Asian Values" are a cover for oppressive governments. The situation has been aggravated by public and sometimes acrimonious exchanges between governments. The result has been undesirable friction between the countries involved. This has made it difficult for them to work together to address the perceived differences with both sides believing that they have nothing to learn from the other. For example, take the human rights issue. Human rights are universal, but cultural values differ. There is no one single approach to good governance or the protection of human liberties. This might come as a surprise to many from the West, who often take for granted that Western style democracy is what everyone should aspire to and that political, social and economic progress is measured in those terms. But others are not ready to see things in that manner. Just as Western commentators and politicians also expressed worry about human rights loopholes in Asian or other countries, so too from an Asian perspective there can be doubts about whether Western countries always deliver on good governance and social and economic freedom for their people in theory, but not in practice. Besides this, some Western scholars argue that the "Asian Values" remained the key factor of



the 1997 Financial Crisis. They argue that "Asian Values" created improper characters of economic and political patterns. They also argued that "Asian Values" hindered independent thinking and creativity and fostered authoritarian regime- for example, dictatorial governments in places such as China, Vietnam and Myanmar. Thus, we see that the debate on "Asian Values" have clearly emerged in the context of globalization. However, "Asian Values" in all their diversity have played a role in shaping the economic and political institutions in Asia, and have given Asian societies a very separate degree of social order than the developed countries of the West.

#### **4.2.2 Growth of Islamic Fundamentalism in Southeast Asia**

The emergence of Islamic fundamentalism has been treated as a major threat to the countries of Southeast Asia, which has taken challenging proportions particularly with the growth of the New World Order. Islam is said to have first arrived in the region in the fourteenth century by way of India. By the time it was introduced in areas of the region presently known as Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand, Islam got infused with elements of Indian Sufi mysticism. The result was that Islam had to adapt itself to the entrenched Hindu Buddhist traditions already in the region. Thus, the brand of Islam that was founded in Southeast Asia was essentially moderate in nature.

However, in recent years the growth of Islamic fundamentalism or radicalism and its connection with various terrorist groups has emerged as a major political factor in South East Asia and invited external intervention like in the Philippines where the US started its operation against the Abu Sayyaf group. Leaders of Malaysia and Indonesia have already started to seriously ponder over the issue. It would be wise for them to rein in disruptive forces by restoring liberalism and tolerance, which were the hallmark of their societies. Islamic fundamentalism is not new in South East Asia. There have been instances earlier. An example is the Padri Movement of Indonesia. Islamic fundamentalism also appeared in Kelantan, North Malaysia and Southern Thailand. Today, the entire northern states are under the political control of Islamic fundamentalist parties. Its appearance in Indonesia



has been only in the recent past and especially after President Suharto's fall. The Jemaah Islamiyah of Indonesia, which is the most important Islamic terrorist organization in Southeast Asia, has links with the Al Qaeda but also has very important indigenous roots, which can be traced back to the Darul Islam of the 1940s. Similarly, Islamic fundamentalism has been too prominent in the Christian state of the Philippines, where Western tourists are being held hostages, by the extremist separatist, Abu Sayyaf, a splinter group of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). This Abu Sayyaf group is believed to have received millions of pesos in ransom, which they have used to buy weapons, and have linked up with the Al Qaeda. In the wake of September 11, thousands of Philippines troops and hundreds of American soldiers were deployed in the Southern island of Basilan, where the separatists were holding hostages. After several months of training and assistance, the Americans withdrew. However, the Abu Sayyaf continues to plague the South. The group was responsible for bomb attacks in the MILF and against the government which took place in February 15, 2003. Two hundreds, most rebel forces, died in the firefight, in which the military overran the rebel's stronghold in the Southern Philippine province of Cotabato.

However, the moot question is why Islamic communities in Southeast Asia, long known for tolerance and liberalism, fell prey to the West Asian brand of Islamic fundamentalism ? There is no doubt that Saudi and Gulf State's money have largely accelerated their fundamentalist activities. But regional economic disparities within the states remain an important reason behind their upsurge. It is from these economically backward regions that there has been a large outflow of young people to theological seminars in Pakistan and Saudi Arabia in the last 10-15 years. It has largely flourished because it became a tool in electoral politics in many countries of South East Asian. Therefore, the growth of transnational radical Islam and Islamic resurgence in South East Asia have converted Islam into a force of radical and violent revisionism and has greatly changed the image of Islam in South East Asia as a moderate and constructive force, as well as created political instability and regional chaos.

### 4.2.3 Struggle between Democracy and Authoritarian Rule

The struggle between democracy and authoritarian rule in South East Asia has emerged as a major threat in the region specifically after the dawning of globalization and liberalization. The political structure of most of the South East Asian countries are followed either military rule, or quasi- democratic system or party dictatorship. Since the mid-1980's, the process of democratization has been appeared a major political force in Southeast Asia. The arguments that were made by the authoritarian regimes in this region have been that there was a connection between their high speed economic growth and their authoritarian political systems. The establishment of quasi-democratic structures in place of military rule, never altered the entire structure of the political system be is transparency, accountability and the rule of law. It also failed to protect minority rights within its so-called democratic structure. The outbreak of racial violence in March 2001 at Petaling Jaya Selantan squatter settlement between Indians and Malays had sent severe shock waves in the entire **Malaysia** and had put a big question mark about the hitherto pluralist structure of the Malaysian society. In the Philippines the struggle between Catholics and Muslims, which refueled perceptions of local alienation and deprivation by majority on minority, in Singapore the domination of People's Action Party in its so-called democratic institutions (e.g. a strong central bureaucracy and management of the political affairs through tricky means of conciliation and consensus-building, efficient manipulation of judiciary, the press etc.), clearly exhibited the absence of common democratic norms that are deeply prevalent in the Western democratic model. In **Myanmar**, the domination of ethnic Myanmarese on various ethnic indigenous communities through autocratic means, clearly and forcefully legitimize the existence of autocratic military junta. The Burmese military, though physically in control, has been morally bankrupt and fighting for survival, and thus unlikely to take the initiative in democratization. Although history is not always a reliable guide, the political system transformations in Burma and Indonesia, in the past, and presently in Cambodia, Laos, and again in **Indonesia** (after the fall of Suharto in 1996) have

been abrupt and severely violent. In Cambodia, after the peace keeping operation in 1993, democracy becomes an ongoing "war", rather than producing a national consensus on the path ahead. There may not be regular violent clashes, as they were previously. But unless there is more reconciliation between victors, runners-up and indeed the opposition, society and polity remain overall divided and this clearly obstructs national development of consensus and the process of democratization. In **Thailand**, after its long history of military rule, in 1992, the May events resulted in the fall of the Suchinda military dictatorship and started of the process which has since 'seen two powerful handovers of power from one parliamentary coalition to another.'

The process of globalization, which accelerated since early 1990s, clearly generated the new wave of democratization and amply signaled many weaknesses of the authoritarian state. Among them - the absence of democratic norms and institutions and reliance on economic performance to sustain political legitimacy - are most important reasons. Although the importance of authoritarian ideology lost its momentum in the context of new global order, in its place the democratic revolution also unfortunately lost its stream in the last few years. In most of the South East Asian, the novelty of free elections, party competition, and separation of powers has worn off, to reveal several sources of discontent associated with the model of democracy after which insurgent elites patterned their systems of governance after ejecting authoritarian rule. Further, in South East Asian region, there is doubt whether the protection of the interests of minorities, be it ethnic, racial or religious, can be safeguarded under democracy, which by definition is the rule of the majority. It is not at all clear, for instance, if democratic rule has been an advance over authoritarian rule for the Muslims in Thailand, where a Thai majority holds sway. It is amply clear that 11 years of democracy has not resulted in significant political and economic gains for the Muslim in the Southern Philippines. So, the authoritarian regimes in South East Asia did not have a much worse record in terms of assuring minority rights than the democratic government. The debate between democracy and authoritarian rule and the debate within



democracies of the South East Asian countries have been convulsive in the regional politics of South East Asia. Besides this, with respect to other member states, the impact of the financial crisis of 1997 in Indonesia is of great consequence to other ASEAN members and to the nature of the association itself. The political reform in Indonesia as the 'positive' impact of the economic crisis had given new expectation for Indonesia as a democratic state. Furthermore, it is a fact that no universal values of democracy should be applied to all countries, and it seems that some ASEAN countries have become more democratic than others. Consequently, this may cause tensions between ASEAN members.

#### **4.2.4 Alternative Discourses of Southeast Asia**

The countries of South East Asia and especially the ASEAN members have faced diverse challenges since its establishment in 1967. From the time of its inception to the end of the cold war, ASEAN's main preoccupation has been with challenges to its security in terms of military threats. With the end of the cold war, as the military confrontation subsided, the challenges appear to come from other fronts, notably in the aspects of economic growth and cooperation. The East Asian Financial crisis was probably one of the greatest challenges faced by Southeast Asian countries. With the financial crisis, confidence in the Asian economic miracle has been severely shaken. Serious doubts have since cropped up in the region about the 'benefits' of rapid globalisation and economic interdependence. Globalization, which had been a significant phenomena in this region, has been blamed for exacerbating the contagious spread of the financial crisis from one country to the entire region.

The effects of globalization are multifarious. The economic, political and security environment of South East Asian region has been shaped by globalization, so much so that it has become the framework on which business, the economy and government relations operate. Besides its nominal positive effects, globalization has also exhibited negative effects, as reflected in the contagion effect of the financial crisis. Therefore, the question now arises, whether any alternative model



against existing world order would be possible? The New World Order's (NWO) ideological and economic agendas are globalized laissez-faire capitalism, behind under the rhetoric of "free-trade" and "increased competitiveness". The so-called free trade treaties are not about trade, but about opening up the world's economic resources and labour pools to unregulated exploitation by the multinationals. The NWO's political and economic agendas are the removal of the state's importance in society and democracy. The main vehicle of the propaganda branch of the NWO is the global mass media with ownership increasingly centralized in a small number of corporate agencies. These news pool, entertainment and propaganda vendors provide a highly biased and selective interpretation of world events, aligned with interests and agendas of the NWO. However, the countries of Southeast Asia firmly believe that this NWO is :

- (i) Inherently socially amoral. Its only imperatives are the expansion of corporate power, the accumulation of poor's wealth and the establishment of a global political system that expedites those objectives;
- (ii) It is expansionist in character
- (iii) It is inherently anti-democratic in nature;
- (iv) It flatly opposes national sovereignty and clearly promotes unaccountable internationalism.

As against this New World Order, the leaders of South East Asian countries in February 2000, at the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development held in Bangkok, categorically demanded a 'New Global Order'. In this meeting, Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong, demanded that UNCTAD should produce a programme to shape more equitable trade and development policies at a time, when free trade and liberalization has been suffering a backlash from countries and groups left out of its benefits. Like Goh Chok Tong, the Malaysian Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohammed firmly demanded that developing countries should be allowed to participate in the global decision-making process in order to manage the pace and direction of liberalization and globalization.

In August 1996, at Manila, the countries of South East Asia in a meeting titled "Southeast Asia Beyond the year 2000 : A Statement of Vision," firmly pronounced the region's future path and endorsed certain principles as an alternative discourse in the context of New World Order. It emphasized for a "community building" mindset, which is a process of creating a new state of mind. It prescribed "a human agenda", which should be elevated to the top in the regional governments, individual and collective priorities and that successful implementation of 'a human agenda' should be considered the principle of achievements on the road to building a South East Asian Community in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These countries prescribed certain principles and they are :

- (i) Peace at all levels - international, regional and domestic;
- (ii) Physical and material well being - which means open market mechanism as an instruments of efficiency and distribution, without state intervention except where it is necessary to ensure fair play and to protect those who can't protect themselves. To achieve these agendas, it requires freedom of movement of goods and services, capital and labour, information and technology across the political boundaries within and outside the region;
- (iii) Need to protect the family institution;
- (iv) Need to safeguard and to enhance the dignity of the human person by the rule of law, traditional values, education and employment;
- (v) Need for strengthening the spirit of local community;
- (vi) Need for more just, equal, tolerant and caring societies;
- (vii) To promote greater social equity;
- (viii) Need to create harmony between man and nature;
- (ix) Imperative for generating "cultural synergy";
- (x) Need for an open mind.

Although, these concepts look rather utopian in nature, but these are the general outlooks of the South East Asian in the context of New World Order.

## CONCLUSION

The countries of South East Asia in the last four decades, through its regional organization i.e. ASEAN, have not only survived but have developed into an important force internationally. The existence of ASEAN has no doubt played a crucial role in strengthening regional peace and security and to protect the culture in South East Asia. ASEAN realizes that there are some differences between its members and in many aspects of life. However, these differences should not restrict the willingness of all ASEAN members to cooperate to achieve common goals based on the ASEAN fundamental principles. The countries of South East Asia, did suffer the 1997 Financial crises, but ultimately they prevailed on it. Moreover, their common difficulties and struggles have strengthened cooperation, solidarity and cultural cohesiveness.

In the context of new global order, the countries of South East Asia have responded by striving ever harder to remain attractive to foreign investors, without losing their culture in the context of globalization. Up to now, these trends can be seen as positive, in the context of expanding positive sum response to globalization. Besides this, the countries of South East Asia, through the ASEAN have recognized early on the growing world of interdependence. To this end, it set out to create linkages with other countries and regions, both with the developed and developing world. In other words, ASEAN's response to global challenges has come not through national assertiveness, as countries might normally have reacted in the past, but by initiating greater regional integration and cooperation. Whether this new form of cohesiveness among the countries of South East Asia qualifies as a distinct paradigm apart from the dominant Western (US led) model on the one hand, and different from traditional South-South Cooperation, on the other, remains to be clearly observed.

---

### 4.3 Sample Questions

---

#### Essay Type Questions

1. Is it true that the forces of globalization have brought greater democratization in the region? Explain.



2. Analyze critically the struggle between democratic and authoritarian forces in the region.

### Short-Answer Type Questions

1. Clearly analyze the Asian Values Debate.
2. How far do you think that the growth of Islamic fundamentalism in the region is a direct outfit of globalization?

### Very Short Questions

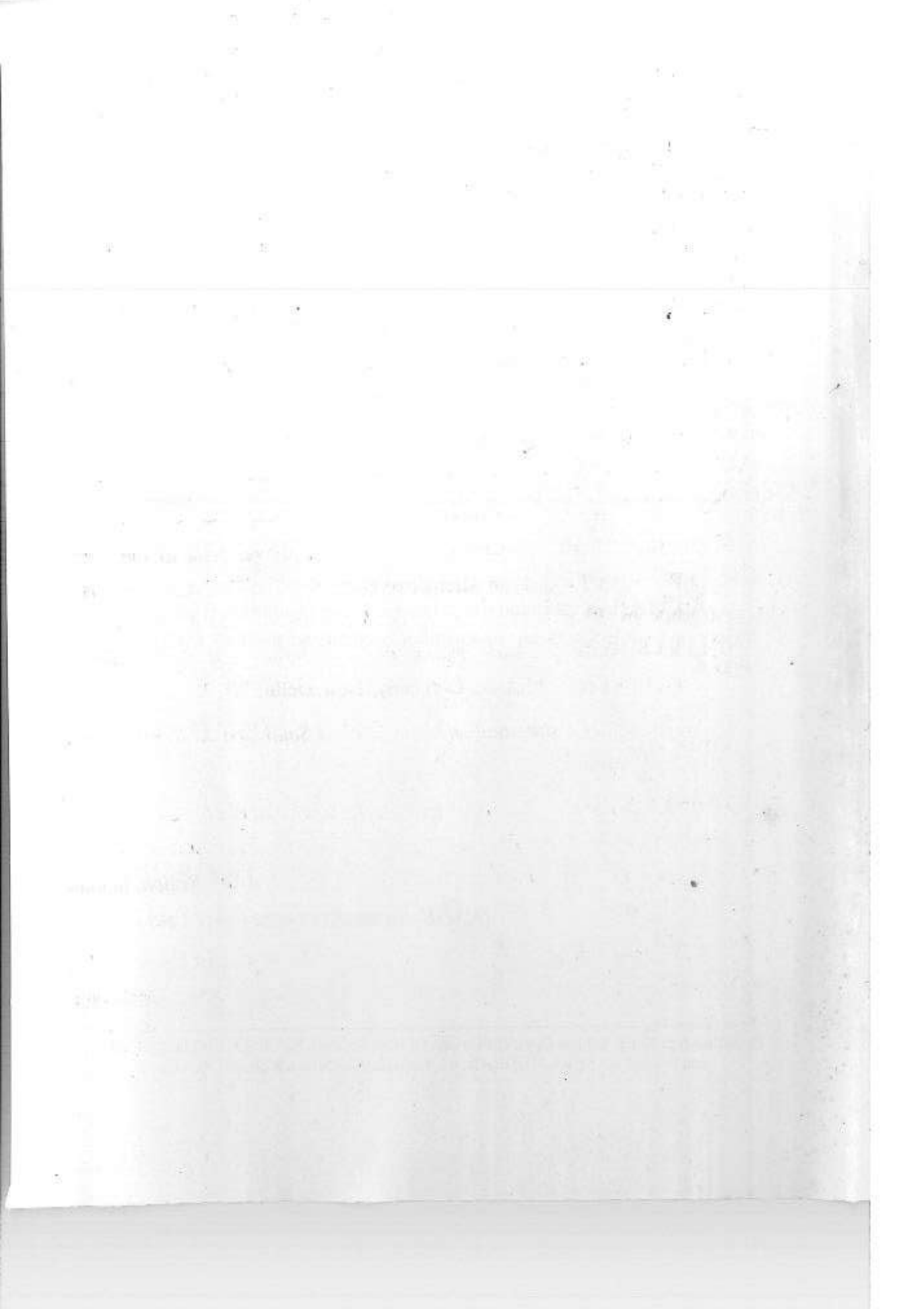
1. What was the major crisis faced by the South East Asian countries with the advent of globalization in the region.
2. Write a short note on 'New Global Order'.

---

### 4.4 Suggested Readings

---

1. Tridib Chakraborti, "Emerging Threats in Southeast Asia in the Post-Cold War Era : Towards an Alternative Discourse," in Partha Pratim Basu, Purushottam Bhattacharya, Rochona Das, Anjali Ghosh and Kanak Chandra Sarkar(eds.), *State, Nation and Democracy: Alternative Global Futures*, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 2007.
2. David Brown, *The state and ethnic politics in Southeast Asia*, Routledge, London, 1994.
3. Tridib Chakraborti, "Terrorism and the ASEAN States: A Classificatory and Perspective Analysis," in Omprakash Mishra and Sucheta Ghosh (eds.), *Terrorism and low Intensity Conflict in South Asian Region*, Manak Publications Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 2003.
4. Globalization and the new Realities, Selected Speeches of Dr. Mahathir Mohammed, Pelanduk Publications (M) Sdn. Bhd, Selangor, Malaysia, 2002.



মানুষের জ্ঞান ও ভাবকে বইয়ের মধ্যে সঞ্চিত করিবার যে একটা প্রচুর সুবিধা আছে, সে কথা কেহই অস্বীকার করিতে পারে না। কিন্তু সেই সুবিধার দ্বারা মনের স্বাভাবিক শক্তিকে একেবারে আচ্ছন্ন করিয়া ফেলিলে বুদ্ধিকে বাবু করিয়া তোলা হয়।

—রবীন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুর

ভারতের একটা mission আছে, একটা গৌরবময় ভবিষ্যৎ আছে; সেই ভবিষ্যৎ ভারতের উত্তরাধিকারী আমরাই। নূতন ভারতের মুক্তির ইতিহাস আমরাই রচনা করছি এবং করব। এই বিশ্বাস আছে বলেই আমরা সব দুঃখ কষ্ট সহ্য করতে পারি, অশ্রুকারময় বর্তমানকে অগ্রাহ্য করতে পারি, বাস্তবের নিষ্ঠুর সত্যগুলি আদর্শের কঠিন আঘাতে ধূলিসাৎ করতে পারি।

—সুভাষচন্দ্র বসু

Any system of education which ignores Indian conditions, requirements, history and sociology is too unscientific to commend itself to any rational support.

—Subhas Chandra Bose

Price : Rs. 225.00

(NSOU-র ছাত্রছাত্রীদের কাছে বিক্রয়ের জন্য নয়)

Published by : Netaji Subhas Open University, DD-26, Sector-I, Salt Lake, Kolkata-700 064  
and Printed at : SEVA MUDRAN, 43, Kailash Bose Street, Kolkata-700 006