

Global India

INTER-LINKING INDIAN DIASPORA

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by PANKAJ SHARMA

When Hindu minorities in Bangla Desh faced grave hostilities, Prime Minister Narendra Modi was under tremendous pressure to deal with the neighbouring country strongly. He was criticised not only by the Opposition but by his own colleagues in the Bhartiya Janata Party for not taking strong steps to safeguard the interest of Hindus in Bangla Desh. A few of BJP MPs even went up to suggest that Modi must adopt the similar steps which Indira Gandhi undertook in 1971. His merely talking to Muhammad Yunus, the interim chief of the Government of Bangla Desh was being seen inadequate.

But Modi decided to ignore these voices. He took a deliberate deci-

sion to keep his calm and not use any kind of force. He rather tried to build a global opinion on the issue using the backchannels of diplomacy. Modi's strategy proved more sensible and effective and Bangla Desh is now perceived as a nation playing in the hands of unacceptable fundamentalist elements.

India's evolving approach to the use of force in international relations reflects a significant shift under Modi's regime for last ten years. India is a rising power and its decisions on the use of force could have profound implications for regional stability in South Asia and they can also affect the broader geopolitical landscape of the Indo-Pacific. India's military strategy has transformed a lot at strategic, conventional and sub-conventional levels.

In today's world geopolitical

flashpoints dominate headlines. It is more pertinent than ever that why and how states use force. It is no more a driving feature of international politics to resort to force in the pursuit of national interests. The timing, purpose and consequences of such actions have to be assessed properly before taking any step. Therefore, a steady approach by PM Modi in dealing with the situation in Bangla Desh has been a very wise decision as use of force could set off a cycle of unpleasant countermoves with real-life consequences. Any sensible leader realises that force is not the primary but the ultimate tool in inter-state interactions.

New Delhi's resorts to actual use or inclination of using force matters significantly for the conflict dynamics in Southern Asia which has a history of territorial disputes and is home to three contiguous

nuclear weapons powers in the world. At a systemic level also India's behaviour on use of force provide food to the anxieties concerning how rising powers relate to the system of international law. This is an era where nationalism and populism are driving domestic politics around the world. Thus, use of force and the toughness of national character it reflects has become a central feature of how leaders compete for domestic legitimacy. This could have been the most ticklish dimension in Modi's mind while dealing with Bangla Desh.

You may recall how the Modi government's official utterances on India's inclination to use nuclear weapons in India's defence have seen significant uptick by Modi's statement that India has not developed weapons for Diwali after the India-Pakistan crisis in February

2019 and in the run up to the 2019 general elections. Special operations against militants operating from Myanmar in 2015 and land and air vectors against Pakistan as a punishment to the latter's proxy wars in Kashmir had attracted mixed global reactions. On the China border also, when during the Galwan crisis of 2020 New Delhi resorted to the proactive use of military forces, a controversy was created internationally as well as nationally.

Historically, India's hesitance to use force was partly rooted in moral considerations. Under Modi, this approach has diminished. The current ruling dispensation wants to celebrate India's emergence as a 'hard state'. It is in sharp contrast with the past emphasis on restraint and moralism. India has now started championing the use of force as a legitimate tool to secure India's vital interests.

The use of force has become an important tool for domestic political legitimacy for Modi. Opinion polls consistently show that military actions have bolstered Modi's image as a decisive leader. Strategic use of force for electoral gains has attracted severe criticism also. It has been perceived as a clear departure from the past, where military actions were less explicitly tied to political popularity. Though it would be simplistic to ascribe Modi's electoral success merely to his aggressive policies, the correlation between assertive military actions and voter support is evident. In this scenario, the way India dealt with Bangla Desh during the recent crisis has been surprising to many. More so because Modi has been trying very hard to redefine India's image as a "soft state" to one that is unapologetically willing to use force to secure its national interests.

India's rise has significantly bolstered its ability to use force and manage its consequences. India's economic and military ascent provides it with the resources to pursue national interests and absorb potential repercussions. Despite that India's approach in Bangla Desh affairs has been so sophisticated. Though there still are various reasons of provocation, Modi Government's overall dealing with our next-door neighbour seems quite mature.

Conflict Dynamics between Bangla Desh and India

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CHANGING WORLD AND INDIA'S SECURITY

by Bayar Palak

In recent years, India has embarked on a journey to modernize its defence forces, aiming to bolster its capabilities in response to evolving geopolitical challenges. This endeavour is marked by significant advancements in technology, strategic partnerships, and extensive procurement plans. This trend is expected to gain pace with continuity in the government.

India has prioritized the integration of cutting-edge technologies, such as artificial intelligence, unmanned systems, and cyber capabilities, into its defence framework. These advancements aim to enhance operational efficiency and effectiveness across all branches of the military.

Let's take a look at some of the important areas of advancement:

Indigenous Manufacturing: The "Make in India" initiative has gained momentum in defence production, fostering domestic manufacturing capabilities through partnerships with global defence majors and incentivising local innovation. Projects like the Tejas fighter aircraft and Arjun tanks highlight India's commitment to self-reliance in defence.

Nuclear Capabilities: India

continues to strengthen its nuclear deterrence capabilities, focusing on both land- and sea-based delivery systems. The strengthening



The Cabinet Committee on Security has already approved several major defence deals to strengthen the armed forces. Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) will upgrade Su-30MKI fighter jets, incorporating new radars, mission control systems, and weapon systems.



undersea leg of the nuclear triad with the addition of more Arihant-class ballistic-missile nuclear submarines, as well as longer range missiles to be fired from them, show India's commitment to maintaining a credible nuclear deterrence.

Rafale Fighter Jets: The acquisition of Rafale jets from France has been a cornerstone of India's air defence strategy, enhancing its aerial combat

capabilities significantly.

India and France have commenced negotiations for 26 Rafale (Marine), or Rafale (M), fighter jets. On completion of which the Rafale (M) deal will see the Indian Navy operate these aircraft from its two aircraft carriers- INS Vikrant and INS Vikramaditya.

S-400 Air Defence System: India's procurement of the S-400 Triumf missile defence system from Russia represents a crucial step in bolstering its air defence capabilities against evolving regional threats. India has already received three squadrons of the S-400 missile systems and will receive the last two S-400 missile squadrons from Russia by 2026

Naval Modernization: The Indian Navy's modernization efforts include the induction of advanced submarines, surface vessels, and another Vikrant-like aircraft carrier. Deal for procurement of six advanced conventional submarines is in advanced stages under P-75I while India has also initiated talks with Naval Group of France for acquiring three additional Scorpene-class submarines.

Future Projects: India's defence pipeline includes upcoming deals for advanced fighter jets, naval helicopters, and artillery systems.

The Cabinet Committee on Security has already approved

several major defence deals to strengthen the armed forces. Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) will upgrade Su-30MKI fighter jets, incorporating new radars, mission control systems, and weapon systems. The Indian Navy will acquire over 220 extended-range BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles. Additionally, a licence manufacture of GE-414 engines in India is in the pipeline which will power the LCA-MK2 fighters meanwhile Larsen & Toubro (L&T) will produce high-powered radars and air-defence guns. These investments aim to enhance defence capabilities and promote self-reliance in defence manufacturing.

Cyber and Space Domains: In a first the chief of defence staff, General Anil Chauhan, released India's first joint doctrine for cyberspace operations, acknowledging that cyberspace has emerged as a crucial and challenging domain in modern warfare. With the emergence of cyberwarfare and space capabilities, India is actively enhancing its defensive and offensive capabilities in these domains to safeguard national interests.

As upcoming deals materialize and indigenous innovation flourishes, India's journey towards self-reliance and strategic autonomy in defence remains a focal point of its national security strategy.

3 Million Foreigners took Dip In Mahakumbh

by Gill Bureau

Among the 660 million devotees who visited Prayagraj in India's Uttar Pradesh province for the Maha Kumbh, approximately 3 million were foreigners from around 70 countries.

"There was an overwhelming feeling of oneness," said Ana from Mexico City, while Lolly from California, US, described her experience at the Maha Kumbh as "better than I had imagined". As the Maha Kumbh 2025 comes to an end on Wednesday, it is a good time to see what memories the millions of foreigners who took part in the ancient Hindu event are taking back with them.

Though Indians are generally used to crowds, colours, commotion and energy, for visitors from abroad, this was a never-before-like experience. What was common in their reactions was how they were touched by the generosity of Indians and how comfortable they felt despite the crowd of people around them.

As per the estimate of the Government of Uttar Pradesh, During 45 days of Kumbh, which ended with Mahasivratri's Amrut Snaan, more than 660 million devotees took a dip at the holy Triveni Sangam, the confluence of Ganga, Yamuna and

the mythical Saraswati.

The first and the foremost sense that hits people, be they from India or abroad, is the crowd and the associated energy that comes with the millions. The Kumbh Mela at Prayagraj would have set a world record as the largest peaceful congregation of people.

"There is this overwhelming feeling of oneness," Ana from Mexico told Indian news agency PTI. She is travelling as part of a group of travellers from countries, including the US, Colombia, Chile and Italy. "For all of us, the biggest and most beautiful thing we have witnessed is the kindness of people and their beautiful acts of generosity to strangers," she said, adding that, "The biggest takeaway is the love and devotion Indians have for everything and everyone." Ramon, a fellow Mexican who has been to India earlier, said the experience was "better than expected, despite the excessively large crowd". "There was no problem security-wise," he added.

Generally, for people travelling abroad, security is a big concern. That too if they are to be part of a large gathering. But it is the kindness of Indians and their acts of generosity that most foreign visitors to the Maha Kumbh kept on highlighting. Jose, a Spanish devotee at the Maha Kumbh, told news agency ANI that he was on a spiritual trip with his friends from

Spain, Brazil and Portugal. "I took the holy dip and I enjoyed it very much. I am very lucky," said Jose.

Many who visited the Maha Kumbh said it was like a primer to understanding India and Indians. Christine, a Russian visitor at the Maha Kumbh, said the "real India and the real power of India, its people" are visible here. She said she couldn't even begin to explain the "vibe of the place". "I am shaking because of the vibe of the people of this holy place," she told ANI. Avigail from Austria said, "This is a once in a lifetime experience... I have started understanding the people of India."

The Ministry of External Affairs and the UP government had in January expected that around 1.5 million foreigners would be participating in Maha Kumbh 2025. But Minister of Tourism and Culture Gajendra Singh Shekhawat soon doubled the number to 3 million, seeing the excitement surrounding the Kumbh Mela. "We expected about 1.5 million people (foreign tourists) would be visiting Maha Kumbh. But seeing the response and the inflow, we have revised our estimation, which is double our initial estimate," Shekhawat said.

On February 1, a 118-strong foreign delegation, including diplomats and their spouses, took a dip at the Sangam. "When you see so many people engrossed in spirituality here at the confluence

of the rivers Ganga, Yamuna, and Saraswati, one feels a strange power," said Colombia's Ambassador Victor Hugo Echeverri Jaramillo. Diana Alipova, the wife of the Russian Ambassador to India, was impressed with the safety, organisation, and cleanliness at the Maha Kumbh, according to an IANS report.

Lolly from California, US, who was travelling to the Maha Kumbh as part of a multi-country group, spoke of how she felt absolutely comfortable amid the crowd of devotees. "It was overwhelming in the best way possible. I didn't expect it to be so comfortable with so many people around. It was better than anything I had imagined," she told PTI. "Everyone has been willing to offer something," Lolly said, echoing Ana from Mexico, who said that she was surprised by the acts of kindness from strangers. Ana said "magical things happen in India", and turn unplanned trips into beautiful visits. "Just being in this land is holy and divine. I feel blessed," she summed up her experience.

It is for the first time in the history of Kumbh that such a huge number of foreigners came to India to participate in a religious event. Religious tourism by foreigners will have a different dimension in years to come and has a potential to reshape the tourism industry in India.