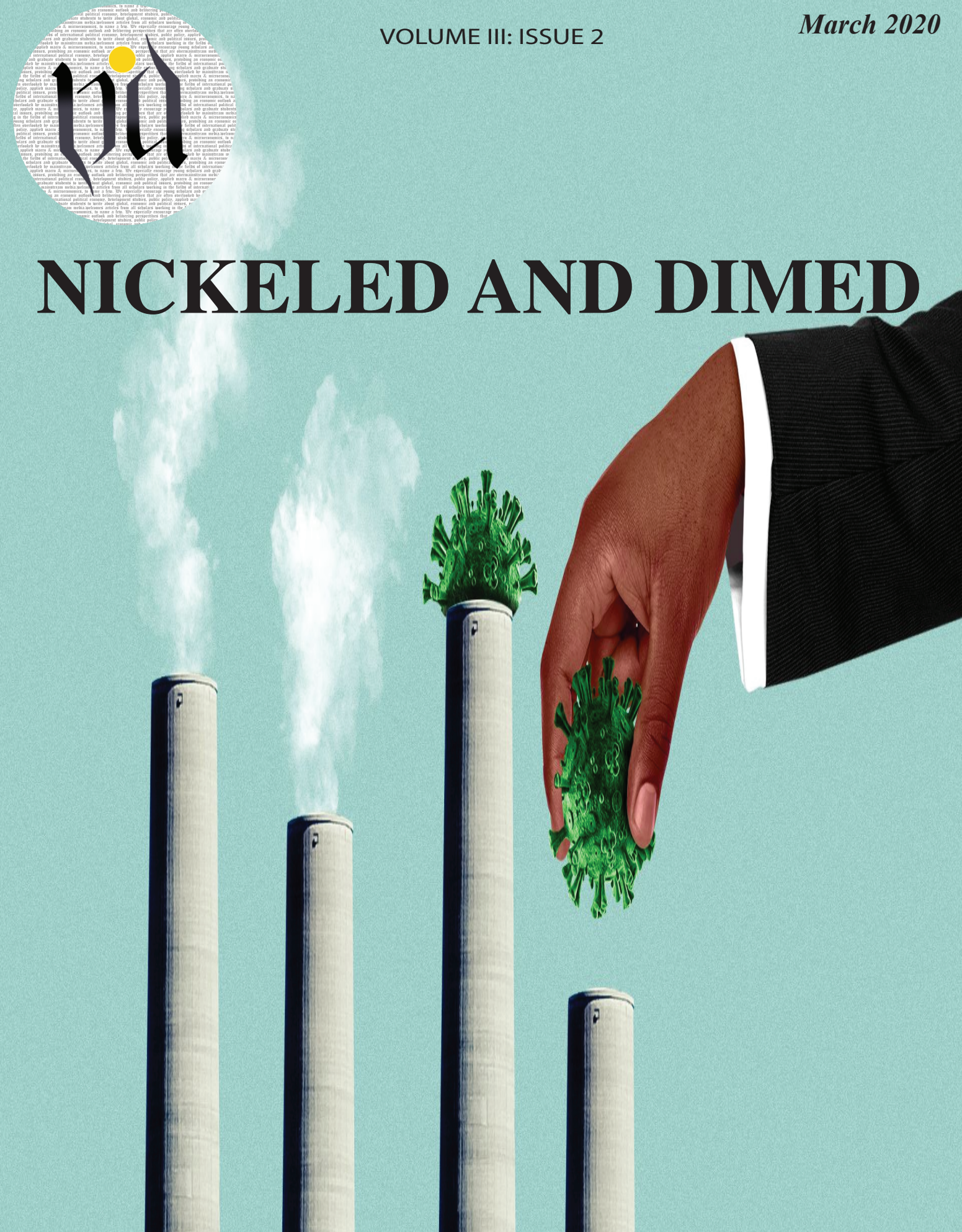


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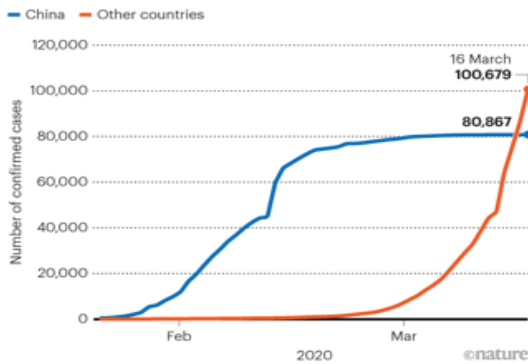


PANDEMIC, LOCKDOWN: CLIMATE CHANGE, IGNORANCE

- *Vanshika Mittal*

RAPID SPREAD

The new coronavirus has infected more than 180,000 people globally. The number of cases outside China continues to escalate.

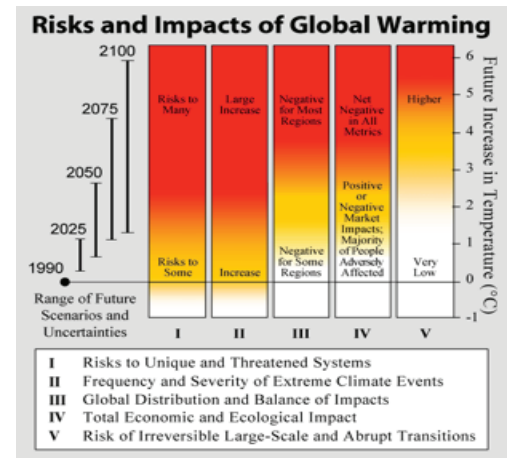


Source - World Health Organization

The declaration by the World Health Organization that saw the coronavirus or the COVID-19 as pandemic caught on a string of reactions by several countries throughout the world. From international travel bans to domestic social distancing - all methods to curb the spread of the virus are being practiced by everyone around the globe. The panic and distress caused by this news and the adoption of preventive policies can be observed irrespective of the number of reported cases in that particular country. Many gatherings and events have been called off including sports matches, cultural festivals, international business conferences and the world is set to go in a temporary lockdown. This was the response received by the COVID-19 within its existence of two months where the current number of reported cases are 118,000 in 114 countries and 4291 people have lost their lives.

This makes one wonder why things went south with climate change? The very first climate emergency declaration took place in December 2016, approximately three years prior to the COVID-19. Climate change that has impacted our food, air, health system, water and environment has an estimated death rate more significant than the virus. It is found to be responsible for an additional 2,50,000 deaths per year through heat stress and a predicted net increase of 5,29,000 adult deaths by 2050 due to reduced food productions. Yet these calculations do not include every aspect of the impact that the climate crisis imposes.

Individuals and environmental agencies across the world are still spending a considerable amount of their funds in convincing people the reality behind climate change despite scientists constantly warning us of its existence. The reaction to coronavirus went on to further prove one thing, i.e., it is not about believing or not believing but about what effects the individuals and the government more directly.



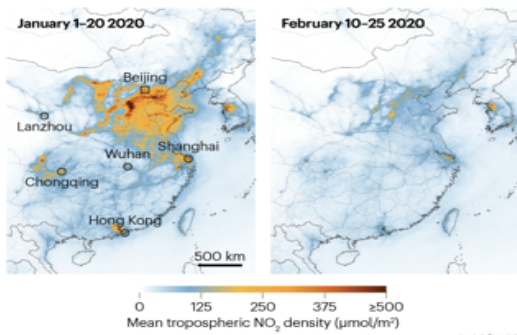
Source- Nature's Crusaders

The first graph shows the number of cases cause by the coronavirus as of 16th March 2020 and the second graph shows the calamities and the impacts of global warming. One of the reasons behind the silence to climate change can be understood by analyzing these graphs.

It can be noted that on one hand, the people affected by the virus are irrespective of their wealth or class, in fact the larger proportion of the reported cases may be belonging to the upper class people due to easy access to medical facilities. On the other hand, however, the second graph clearly mentions how through global warming currently (until 2025), only 'some' people and regions would be adversely affected and we can even anticipate some positive impacts on the markets in the short period. The 'some' here are the people and regions stricken with poverty, those who cannot buy the rights and resources through money and power.

CLEANER AIR

Measures to contain the coronavirus outbreak seem to have reduced nitrogen dioxide pollution across China.



This concept is further supported by critiques who deny the Anthropocene. Anthropocene, a geological epoch that commences the significant impact on earth's climate due to human activities is often critiqued for its nature of 'all humans'. Many researchers and people in academia present the argument that human activities that impact the earth's climate are not related to activities performed by 'all' humans rather specific to only what the capitalists benefit from, for example- mining, fossil fuel exploitation and deforestation on a large scale. Many indigenous groups have proved that it is possible to coexist with the nature in a balanced manner and that consuming to sustain does not harm the environment.

This also makes it easier to understand why the environment has shown a considerable improvement in terms of air quality index or clearer water bodies. NASA air quality researcher Fei Liu said – "This is the first time I have seen

such a dramatic drop-off over such a wide area for a specific event." It is important to understand that it is not the entire human population being under lockdown that has resulted in this but the result of capitalism coming to a halt.

Some might wonder whether it really is necessary to talk about climate change in the middle of a pandemic, where they do not realise that climate change is a bigger crisis than the current COVID-19 threat. The world's response to this threat indicates that it is possible for us to amend our ways in order to survive the climate change but only when there are government efforts to support behavioural change. By the end of the day some experts have reports that reduction in pollution may have even saved more lives than the death toll caused by the deadly virus in China.

CAUSES AND RECOVERY OF THE INDIAN ECONOMY'S SLOWDOWN

- Snehal Sreedhar

From Jan-March 2019 to July- Sep 2019, the Indian economy received a steep fall in its gross domestic product from 8.2% to 4.5%. Reasons for this economic trend seem to encompass many; however, can also be summarized for the purpose of a basic understanding of the situation at hand.

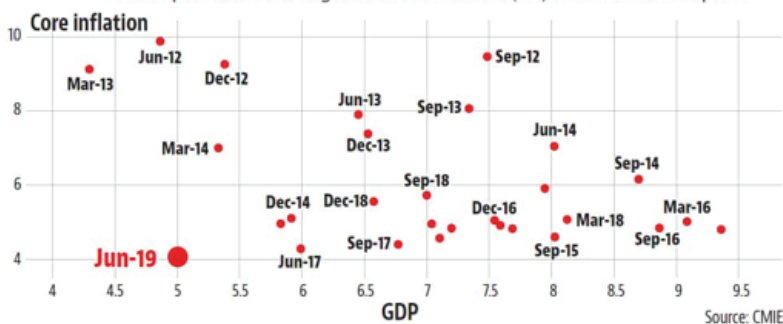
One of the major reasons talked about by the experts is the “contractionary” effect of policies such as demonetization and GST, done to “clean” the economy. Prof. R Nagraj, an economist at the Indira Gandhi Institute for Development Research points that pre-demonetization level of GDP constituting the involvement of the informal/unorganized sector, employing up to 90% of the total workforce, ran on cash transactions only with Rs.1000 and Rs. 500 making up 86.4% of the total currency in circulation. The policy shock also did not fulfill its aim to reduce dependency on cash money and switch to digital transactions. The GST, which was implemented to improve India’s tax collection system, also contributed to financial problems of the governments and the sharing of revenue between the centre and the states.

Demand-driven slowdown

There is evidence to suggest that the current economic slowdown is due to weakness in aggregate demand rather than supply side problems

CHART 1 Current slowdown has come at much lower inflation levels than in 2012-13

Scatter plot shows annual growth in core inflation (CPI) & GDP at constant prices



Source: CMIE

laid a strong focus on reforms. There need to be more focus given to Research and Development sector that will boost private consumption and create demand in the economy which will help in reducing the gap between our exports and imports and hence reduce the current account deficit. Hence, privatization policies should also come into the picture in driving demand. On the topic of tax reforms, there should also be a system of giving incentives to honest taxpayers to boost private consumption. When it comes to agriculture, a popular occupation in India, there should be more ease provided to evade transactions costs as the farmer’s produce is sold. Improvement in higher education, which also majorly contributes the R&D sector, should be given importance to enhance productivity. Measures should be taken to also avoid problems of inequality of “access” to justice and women safety that continue to aid to the slowdown.

NITI Ayog, the think tank of the Government of India gives hope along the lines of recovery for India to jump back on its path to progress. The sustainable development goals like SDG-8 aims to improve women participation and unemployment conditions. SDG-9 focuses on industrial innovation and infrastructure. Various examples of schemes like Gram Sadak Yojana, Swatchh Bharat, and many other schemes concerning digital transformation, strengthening intellectual property regime and improving infrastructure in cities, especially in terms of waste management techniques are now functioning as a result of improvement in R&D. The government is also planning to improve economic growth along with improving carbon neutrality, with climate change also being one of its focusing challenges to deal with. India, thus, continues to struggle with its challenging targets as a developing country which makes its growth rate all the more competitive compared to that of the developed countries, giving hope for its current slowdown to terminate soon.

Next comes the role of the inflation targeting procedure under the RBI’s monetary policy, which pays more attention to inflation targeting rather than the dual mandate role comprising both inflation and price path targeting. This causes problems of “stack-flation” which explains how liquidity and unemployment problems aren’t taken care of, popularly theorized by C. Rangarajan, as a result of poor monetary policy targeting by the Central Bank. There is also the “triple balance sheet” problem explaining the management concerning the books of corporates, banks and the government and how it becomes difficult to manage fiscal policy with all three increasing combined pressure on it.

There is also the problem of “bad lending” in the economy taken up by banks, which lead to their insolvency, as risky businesses increase and create economic inefficiency. The Insolvency and Bankruptcy code of 2016, which aims to protect the interests of small investors at a time of insolvency, continues with the process of “bad lending”, and is recognized to be a long term solution rather than a short term one. The McKinsey report shows how more than 50 percent of the 23,000 unlisted companies comprise GSMES are in no position to serve their debts. This adds to the problem of unsecured loans that increase risks in the economy. Therefore, there has to be more caution in dealing with lending by banks.

Coming to the paths of recovery, leaders and experts remain hopeful that this economic shock is not permanent and that India will rise up again on its path to achieving economic growth and progress. Their views and suggestions for the Indian economy include making improvements in structural reforms like how the telecommunication sector boomed under the Atal Bihari Vajpaayee regime because he

WIDENING DEFICIT PRESENTS A BLEAK PICTURE

The current account deficit this fiscal year is likely to be the highest in six years.



	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18*	2018-19 (projections)		
Average Brent crude prices (\$/barrel)	107.6	86.5	47.5	49	57.6	65	70	75
Current account deficit (% of GDP)	-1.7	-1.3	-1.1	-0.7	-1.8	-2.4	-2.6	-2.9
Overall balance of payments (\$ billion)	15.6	61.4	179	21.6	32.6	-2.2	-9.7	-17.1

*Estimates

Graphic by Subrata Jana/Mint

Source: Kotak Institutional Equities

INDIA'S DIASPORA POLICY

-Madhav Grover



Source - NZEdge.com

The term 'Diaspora' is derived from the Greek word 'diaspeirein' which means dispersion, it is commonly used for people coming from a particular country having a common origin, but are residents or even citizens of another country. The government of India defined the term as 'a generic term to describe the people who migrated from territories that are currently within the borders of the Republic of India. It also refers to their descendants'. India also categorises its diaspora into three broad categories- Non-Resident Indian (NRI), Persons of Indian Origin (PIO), and Overseas Citizen of India (OCI). The PIO category was later merged into OCI category in 2015, where a person holding an OCI status is not an Indian and enjoys a lifelong-multiple entry Indian visa. An individual with an NRI status is an Indian citizen who stays out of the country 240 days or more in a financial year. The individuals claiming any one of these statuses are important for India's diaspora policy.

The government engages with diaspora with a double edged approach with one side providing non-residents counsellor service, outreach and protection. The other side encouraging diaspora to contribute in India's growth through investment, trade and philanthropy.

India's Foreign Policy has various key components and reasons for why it engages with its 30 million Indian diaspora which are given as follows:

Soft power and cultural aspect

The aspect of soft power is very important for a country like India as it has seen through many years of development the aspects of it growing abroad. This is primarily due to the spread of religion, culture and spirituality going across borders. The spread of Yoga and Bollywood and their propagation by the Indian Diaspora has helped India culminate its soft power and use Indian diaspora as an effective asset. The Indian diaspora propagating the cultural aspects and values of India abroad has helped India increase its soft power. There are ethnically Indian people who have also held key positions such as PM Leo Varadkar of Ireland and FM Rishi Sunak and HM Priti Patel of UK. Indian diaspora have been top executives in the biggest companies such as Satya Nadella of Microsoft and Sundar Pichai of Google. The Indian diaspora holding such high positions in politics and corporations has helped India exceed in its soft power.

Economic aspect

The Indian state also benefits economically due to remittances worth US\$ 79 billion (2018) being received by its diaspora abroad. The diaspora living abroad are also seen as agents which bring in investment, industrial development, tourism and trade. The FDI received from diaspora is highly encouraged as they are seen as long term investment rather than short term. The government pushes India as a brand to various investors abroad in order to get them on board in investing with the biggest agents propagating it being the diaspora. This aspect is hugely important as India looks to become a developed nation with a larger GDP and economic growth. People from Indian diaspora have been top executives in the biggest companies such.

Political and lobbying aspect

The diaspora is also seen to be very politically active on various countries across the world which has been of advantage to India. The diaspora diplomacy has helped India build bridges when we see the linkages of the Malayali community in UAE to Gujrati community in UK and US. This has helped India to engage diaspora to lobby for key deals such as the Indo-US Nuclear Deal. the diaspora also helps shape India's image as unified democracy with shared values with various other nations which help shape international relations. Another important example of diaspora engagement politically is the Howdy Modi and Namaste Trump events which took place to make relations between India and US stronger and also try to lobby American Government's stance to be neutral and positive while looking at controversial developments such as the removal of Article 370 for Kashmir and the CAA.

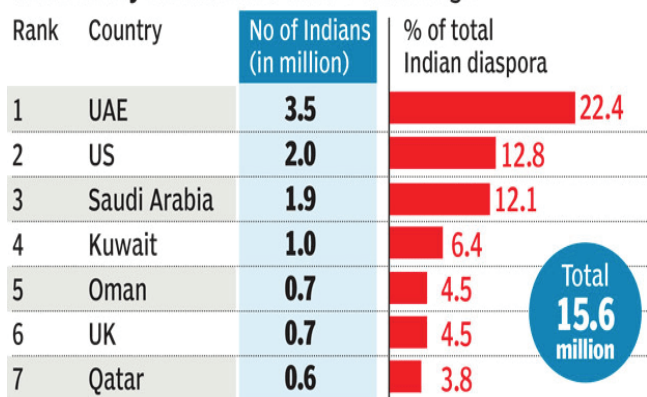
In order to understand the recent changes in Indian Diaspora policy we will be looking upon the key stages of evolution of Indian Diaspora Policy.

Colonial period

The British who colonised the Indian subcontinent abolished slavery in 1833, as consequence many of their colonies were in constant need of labour. The demand of which was met by an indentured labour migration system from India to other colonies. During the British rule, many Indians were sent to the neighbouring colonies particularly in southeast Asia as plantation workers which over time settled there. The British started exporting labour for plantation to Mauritius, Trinidad, Fiji, Natal and Suriname from states of United provinces

(modern day U.P. and Bihar) in 1834. The French and Dutch also followed this trend and sent labour to countries in Africa. According to Historian Brij V. Lal, by the time this indenture system was abolished more than one and a half million Indians were already situated outside India in parts of Africa, Asia and the Caribbean islands. Around this time merchants, traders and businessmen also moved from Gujrat, Sindh, Kerala and Tamil Nadu settling in British colonies.

Home away from home: Where Indians go



Source - GKtoday

Nehruvian era to pre 1991

The post-independence view of Nehru’s government was looking upon the diaspora through the lens of the non-alignment movement. The administrations at the time disassociated with the diaspora seeing them as a burden. This can be seen with the government not helping the 300,000 persecuted Indians in Burma (1964) and 70,000 in Uganda (1972). The cold war years brewed a lot of suspicion towards the west which led to disruption in any kind of formulation of a diaspora policy. After independence, Indians favoured going to United Kingdom due to India being a commonwealth nation. The US under President Johnson saw relaxation of emigration laws with the Hart-Celler Act in 1965 leading to an increase in Indian Migration to North America. Canada also became a destination for highly qualified migrants through introduction of the points system in 1968. The Gulf oil boom in the 1970’s also saw skilled and semi-skilled workers moving in large population from primarily south India to the region.

Post 1991 to modern era

The financial crisis in 1990’s resulted in the economic liberalisation policy in 1991, and led India to finally see the need of engagement with the diaspora effectively. This was important as India needed steady flow of currency which it lacked. The time period also saw software boom in the US facilitating the H1B temporary workers visa program. High skilled English speaking Indian workers going to west were often employed in IT sector in US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. The engagement with the Indian diaspora increased extensively under the Vajpayee administration promoted the diaspora to develop mutually beneficial linkages. The Pravasi Bhartiya Divas and Ministry of Overseas Indians Affairs was started by his government. The initiatives such as Know India Program (KIP), Study India Program (SIP) and Tracing the Roots schemes engaged many young Indians abroad to their motherland.

Current era

The previous 6 years under Modi administration has seen a very proactive approach towards Indian Diaspora. The government has launched various initiatives and have tried to reach out to all sections of the Indian diaspora abroad. The government has introduced initiatives such as Pravasi Kaushal Vikas Yojna (PKVY) to institutionalise the skill development of emigrant workers abroad. The government also introduced the scholarship programme for diaspora children (SPDC) giving 100 scholarships per annum to NRI and OCI students for undergraduate courses. The minimum referral wages (MRW) program and E-Migrate system has been implemented for various workers abroad especially in the gulf keeping in mind economic viability and security of these individuals. The Madad Portal has been started to address speedy and timely action to grievances put forth by diaspora abroad. The Representation of the people (amendment) 2017 was introduced to also facilitate NRI’s participation in the electoral process through the provision of proxy voting. The diaspora policy under the current government can be seen as dynamic and inclusive of various parts of the diaspora population. Prime Minister Modi had even addressed Indian Diaspora as ‘Rashtradoots’ and ‘Agents of Change’ addressing them all over the world from Madison Square Garden, New York to Kigali, Rwanda. The government has been proactively pushing for diaspora to be salesman of brand India, as their contribution increase in the development story of India.

Challenges

The Indian diaspora policy has been facing various challenges such as rising incidence of hate speech and crimes against Indians. The hard line ideas and radicalism is sometimes pushed by diaspora abroad without realising that certain sections might bear the brunt of it. There is aspect of adverse laws abroad especially in the Gulf which can be against the interests of Indian diaspora where they can put the government in an awkward position to help them. There is also the fear of losing jobs and educational opportunities due to stricter rules and increasing anti-globalisation sentiments especially in the US with regard to the H-1B visa issue. The problem also corresponds to brain drain, remittances used for terror financing such as Khalistan and free Kashmir movement etc. at home. The NRI’s also lose out on economic opportunities as the E-Migrate scheme and Minimum Referral Scheme developed to protect them and encourages industries to hire labour from Pakistan and Bangladesh rather than India.

Way Forward

The Indian government should look upon more schemes like VAJRA, where a rotation program of top engineers, doctors, scientist etc. who are NRI’s can be facilitated through the public sector on short term basis. The government should also look upon making relevant changes in economic policy which encourages diaspora to further invest in the country. The current government should engage state governments while engaging with countries which have diaspora belonging to those nations i.e. kerala government officials following state visit to UAE. The government should also avoid only engaging with diaspora from certain states and social and economic class and move towards engaging with all. India can also look upon opening a separate ministry of state level department for NRI affairs.

TRUMP'S AFGHAN PEACE DEAL : WHAT IT MEANS FOR AFGHANISTAN?

- Samarth Gupta

On February 29, the United States signed a peace deal with Taliban which aims at pulling out US troops from Afghanistan and America's longest war. Afghanistan's constitutional government did not take part in these negotiations and the peace deal is more like a blueprint for America's withdrawal from Afghanistan rather than ensuring that a power-sharing mechanism is established in the nation. This has been further cemented by the fact that the United States is adhering to its schedule of pulling out the troops despite no effort from Taliban to minimise the violence against Afghan security forces. Moreover, the stability of the constitutional government is already in jeopardy as both Abdullah Abdullah and Ashraf Ghani have declared themselves as Presidents and also held their swearing in ceremonies on 9th March separately. Hence, with minimal prospects of an intra-Afghan peace deal the proposed peace plan is an attempt made by President Trump to strengthen his re-election bid ahead of his Presidential campaign. He would most likely highlight his success as President in calling the troops back home.



Source - Vox.com

“the proposed peace plan is an attempt made by Trump to strengthen his re-election bid ahead of his campaign”

Taliban on the other hand managed favourable terms out of this deal. With Afghan government not participating in the negotiations the one principal adversary of Taliban was absent from these talks. Moreover, hard targets have been imposed by Taliban upon the US troop reduction as according to the deal the United States will pull its troops out of Afghanistan in next 14 months. The US will also have to reduce its troops in Afghanistan from 12000 to 8600 within 135 days of the signing of the deal. In return the United States has asked the Taliban to cease its attacks on US and coalition troops, not to provide sanctuary to Al-Qaeda and ISIS, ‘reduce violence’ against Afghan security forces and come to the negotiating table with the republican government of Afghanistan.

While Taliban has stopped attacks against US and coalition troops and has halted the campaign of suicide bombings, the violence against Afghan government troops show no sign of diminishing as pointed out by Mark Esper, the secretary of defence. Moreover, with vague targets being set for Taliban's reduction of attacks against government troops gives Taliban a license to still carry out attacks against government troops. Hence, it is clear that through this deal President Trump and his peace envoy Zalmay Khalizad have tried to negotiate an acceptable exit from the war.

As far as an intra-Afghan dialogue and negotiation is concerned- the prospects right now appear to be quite dim. Firstly, with Abdullah Abdullah and Ashraf Ghani declaring themselves presidents separately, there is a confusion regarding who holds power in Kabul. Secondly, intra-Afghan dialogue is dependent upon the exchange of 5000 taliban fighters being held prisoners by Afghan security forces against 1000 government troops being held prisoners by Taliban. But this agreement has not been able to reach fruition due to Ashraf Ghani's refusal to go ahead with it. According to him this was not a promise that the United States could make without consulting the Afghan government and he is not ready to release any prisoners before the start of intra-Afghan negotiations. This stance of President Ghani conveys that the initial confidence building measure between the Taliban and the Afghan government hasn't taken place which is essential for starting intra-Afghan talks.

Hence, this entire process of negotiating a peace deal and recalling US troops from Afghanistan demonstrates the urgency and the desperation with which the Trump administration has negotiated with the Taliban. The United States chose to finalise the peace process amidst a political crisis in Kabul and not involve Afghan government in the negotiation process. This has been done by the Trump administration in the light of the US Presidential election which is scheduled for later this year. The urgency is further evident from the fact that the United States has started pulling out its troops despite no sign of Taliban and Afghan government coming on the negotiation table and minimising violence towards each other. Hence, if the current trend continues and the United States pulls its troops out of Afghanistan without ensuring an institutional structure for power sharing; the violence in Afghanistan is bound to increase and there will be no peace in Afghanistan after this so-called peace deal.

CLEANING OUT THE WAR CHEST

Looking into the role of Campaign Funds in US elections

- Advaita Singh

US Presidential elections are not only a lengthy but an expensive affair. Millions are spent as campaign funds in this battle for the white house. Time and again, the importance of campaign funding and donations in the success of a candidate has been emphasized. Often a causal relationship is implied between campaign finance and political success, but does such a relationship exist?

Money features in the election process because massive funds are required to spend on Advertising. Of the money raised in a Presidential campaign, most of it is spent on advertising and marketing the candidate (other expenses include logistics, travel, salaries etc). While money may not decide the winner, it was observed in the previous election that campaign funds were important for winning the party primaries. In the 2016 election, both Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump raised more money than their fellow candidates. Actively participating in primaries and campaigns requires money especially because it is a rather long and grueling process. Cory Booker (Democrat) after dropping out of this year's presidential race said in a statement to New York Times, "Our campaign has reached the point where we need more money to scale up and continue building a campaign that can win — money we don't have".

This need for money arises because advertising is expensive. The very system of a democratic election demands popularity and visibility from candidates. To get the word out on a country-wide scale in an efficient and attractive method is certainly a task, which is why most candidates come equipped with a war chest. Powerful ideas only do well in a democracy as long as the people know what those ideas are.



Source - The Silicon Valley Voice

“Thus, the fundamental principles of democracy in conjunction with the existence of paid advertising, forces any individual hoping to win the election to have the dough ready.”

Statistics say that in more than 90% of the races, top-spending candidates win (for the 2000-2016 cycles). However, this does not imply a causal relationship between money and political success. It certainly implies correlation, but causation cannot be determined because of issues of omitted variable biases and reverse causality. In the case of reverse causality, it is possible that we have our directions mixed up - candidates with higher chances of winning are able to raise more money and end up spending more. There can be omitted variables like the charm of the candidate; charming candidates can convince people to donate and voters to vote for them.

Campaign funds and political success have sort of a cyclic relationship. Once a candidate has established himself/herself and gained some popularity, they will begin receiving donations that allow them to spend money on advertising to boost their popularity that further attracts donations. Everyone loves to bet on the winning horse. Hence, even though this is a very simplified model, it is prevalent in the way people choose to donate. In many cases, campaign funds and political success tend to fuel each other.

This election season reinforces the lack of causality in money and political success. Democratic candidate Micheal Bloomberg spent 935 million US dollars in his campaign before dropping out on 4th of March, 2020. Had the causal relationship between money and success existed, then certainly Bloomberg was there in the race to stay. The current front-runner for the Democratic nomination, Joe Biden, raced to the top against the cash crunch of his campaign in February. By the end of February, Joe Biden was the 6th highest spender in the Democratic race. Towards the end of February, he was trying to conserve as much cash as possible. Despite the low spending, the candidate performed exceedingly well in the South Carolina Primary and on Super Tuesday putting him straight to the top in the climb for nominations. Even now, his spending is much lesser than Bernie Sanders, his opponent in the race.

It is clear that money and political success do not have a causal relationship. It seems money can only aid success, not cause it. There is a correlation between the two; money is an important ingredient for success as seen in the number of campaigns that fail due to lack of money. But if anything, the current Democratic nomination race has shown the limited role money plays in a Presidential election.

OPPORTUNITIES IN SPACE

Mr. Ankit Bhateja and AVM (Dr) Arjun Subramaniam (Retd.)

-Vanshika Shah

Space has always provoked humankind's curiosity. It is in the modern times that the boundless mysteries of the universe have also attracted the attention of economists and business people. Theories about space tourism, space capitalisation, asteroid mining, etc have emerged and rigorous attempts are being made to commodify the unknown. Along the same theories about commoditization of space, I had a conversation with Mr Ankit Bhatejha (AB) and AVM (Dr) Arjun Subramaniam (Retd.) (AS) who not only provided clearer insights but pointed out future prospects in the domain of space. Mr Ankit Bhateja is the Founder and Director of Xovian Aerospace, a manufacturing company that provides low-cost sustainable solutions in satellite fabrication. AVM (Dr) Arjun Subramaniam (Retd.) is a fighter pilot who recently retired from the Indian Air Force after 36 years in uniform.

Q. How have we evolved in terms of the way we understand space? In comparison to the 1955 Space Race, keeping in mind the current scenario, do you think that there is a possibility of countries going into a space race again?

(AB): When we talk about the Cold war, the significance of space was from a strategic point of view, where one country wanted to depict that they are way ahead in terms of technology. They wanted to showcase to the world that they were superior. That was the mind set back then. There was no viable business in space and therefore there was no monetization of space at that time. After the Cold war the two focused on developing basic technology that they needed for nation building, which were limited to satellites for weather forecasting, communication, and earth observation.

In the 2000s both these countries realized that they must use satellite technology not only for gathering information but also to explore space. They already had facilities such as radio, telecommunication, satellite television and therefore they wanted to advance into a program that delved into aspects of space exploration. This is when they launched missions such as the Voyager Program.

Talking about 2020, it is no more like being in a space race. Now it is the companies who have commercialized space to scale up their own business and the economy. After 2010 a few companies, mostly in the US and UK got the idea to commercialize space. We were seeing companies coming up with new satellites to supply data for developing the internet or improving maritime communication. Various other commercial applications of space technology have emerged.

Q. Is the main goal of space commodification to showcase power? Would countries use space technology as a weapon in war?

AB: Obviously these things represent 'being more powerful' but the main goal is to create deterrence: deterrence and gaining strategic advantage.

AS : There is a difference between militarization of space and weaponization of space. We are now in a phase which is called militarization of space which means how do you use space for military use. We are still far away from weaponization of space. Weaponization of space means you need to deploy weapons in space which is not easy. Having said that, recently Trump has set up a new space command.

AB: Even India has.

AS: Yes, but I don't think mankind is ready for war in space, at least in the next ten years. In fact, there is a treaty that forbids weaponizing space but no one can really stop a great power.

Q. What are the prospects for private companies in India? Is the government supportive of new ventures in space?

AB: In India we are at an initial stage where there are very few start ups in this field. There are private companies but most of them are vendors to the Indian space agency who supply components or parts of the satellite. Even companies like Godrej develops the vehicle to transport the PSLV (Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle) from one place to another.

AS: Right now ISRO has a virtual monopoly. ISRO has demonstrated a lot of performance, but for the next leap to take place we need more private companies in this field. The only problem is that investments are huge and the private companies would require government support.

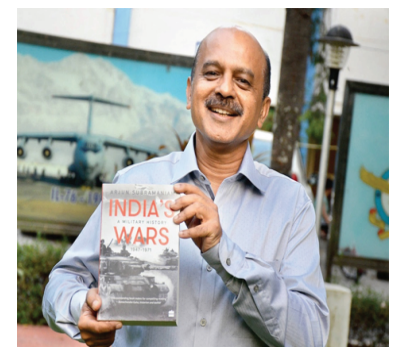
AB: The department of space directly comes under the surveillance of the President's office. There is a genuine problem that hinders the government's decision making capability. There are three types of companies- firstly, indirect space. Indirect space means that they are just taking the space base data and processing it. The government does not have any problem with such companies and they are working well. Secondly - companies that have their hardware in space but are not of critical nature. Thirdly- companies who have hardware of critical nature such as rockets. The reason I am saying that start ups building rockets are of critical nature is because suppose if the government starts funding these start ups, they would ask for test facilities. If during the test, there is a blast and all the facilities get blown up, it will take another 2-3 years to develop it back again. Who will be responsible for the lag in time caused in the Indian space program?

AS: Exactly, the government should be able to protect innovation. There is high risk involved in this area. I don't see the Indian government supporting any private ventures in the near future in these sort of high risk areas.

AB: We recently got a chance to meet the ISRO chairman and he said that the government would not support such startups due to the risk involved.



Mr. Ankit Bhateja



AVM (Dr) Arjun Subramaniam (Retd.)

LOSS IN THE TIME OF A PANDEMIC

- Prerna Vij

As a flurry of statistics pour in from every corner of the world and the numbers rise every second, you keep trying to consume all of the information, trying to keep the people and things around you sane. Classes and grades burden you but the inevitability of the pandemic has yet to hit the rest of you – the you that had planned to go to your dream summer school or the you that has had to suddenly lose their independence as you move back home.

Loss in such times represents an interesting conundrum. We are losing- money, time, people, resources; the list is endless. We are all losing in some way or the other but the arguably the biggest ‘loss’ is the one that the society is inevitably going to face is the structural changes that are bound to happen. To understand this, we need to understand why the idea of loss has suddenly become this important given the current context.



Source - HuffPost Life

“ The only argument that seems sound enough to me is one that ties the loss of structure to an identity of sorts ”

The idea is not only that the lives that are being given up are factored into the ‘loss’, the process has become manifold. There has been a general realisation- and in this sense the generality of this becomes extremely important because it represents a whole. The general realisation that the culmination of everyone coming together and fighting a common enemy is possible, only one has to lose the boundaries that were created and cultivated for several centuries. You have to lose the hierarchy and power you were born into because as much as we want to believe in these structures, the fact boils down to one simple aspect- you are also a statistical number in the end. This is not a philosophical argument trying to portray the inevitability of death or that you don’t matter- I am in no position to make those arguments. The only argument that seems sound enough to me is one that ties the loss of structure to an identity of sorts. What do you do when your conversations revolved around complaining about classes? What do you do about the comrades’ that were built around hating the same mess food? What do you do when a certain routine is disrupted without an end date? There are innumerable questions all with personal contexts. Especially questions that are centred around the creation of identity with the place that you occupy in the economy. When suddenly your party planning ventures blow up because people cannot physically interact with each other? Or the Airline lays you off? What do you do then, you have lost that aspect of identity which was essential to you. You spend years and years studying but the exam gets postponed. It is a loss, a loss so large in magnitude that it pushes you to change lanes, or maybe buy a new car.

In this abstraction of understanding loss, we can pretend that things would go back to normal. That the summer we envisioned would still be there, that we may no longer have to worry about this temporary hiccup- brushing the loss as something which is tangibly altering you but only for the time being. Invariably, the pandemic at hand has the power and capacity to change existing structures yet the loss of that structure itself is what is scary. As economies around the world turn towards socialism to explain the loopholes in the hierarchal power structures that have prevailed for the longest time, you can just about imagine a world out of the ‘normative’. It is this loss, the loss of power, that makes this pandemic so different from the emergencies that the world has faced before. Never before has the world come together without the usual diplomatic interventions and held hands(figuratively) against a single force. No single entity holds the answer to this crisis, and this powerlessness in the powerful, the elite is probably the start of the revolution that Marx predicted long ago. Since economies fell and people have managed to survive, have managed to thrive. I may sound idealistic but this loss of capitalistic systems and power structures maybe the class consciousness that we were waiting since such a long time.

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