

NICKELED & DIMED

Volume VII | November 2022

BROKEN TRUST

UK's Economic Fiasco

UN-MARINATED

Women's Culinary Labour

NAVAL PRIDE

A case for Aircraft Carriers

INDIA'S SOFT POWER

Understanding the use of culture and tradition to extend global influence



Reviewing the Rise of India as a Soft Power

by Sarah Arora

Joseph Nye popularised the term ‘soft power’ in his 1990 book, “Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power”.. In this book, he noted, “when a government convinces other countries to want what it wants, this may be referred to as coercive or soft power, as opposed to hard or command power, which consists of forcing others to do what it desires.” Soft power refers to a country’s ability to achieve its foreign policy goals and priorities using non-coercive ways. Hard power is the capacity to influence the actions of others by compulsion or incentive, whereas soft power focuses more on the capacity to influence the desires of others through attraction. For the sake of this article, we will concentrate on India’s soft powers and its worldwide interaction. India is an enlightened nation with a long legacy of soft power. The concept of soft power is innovative and fundamentally natural, in keeping with India’s rich history as a land of ideas and thinking as well as a facilitator of cultural exchange. Moreover, soft power conveyed a sense of an upright, hovering sphere and dependability, which inspired developing nations around the world once they observed India’s position. In recent years, there has also been a reorientation of foreign policy, with a renewed emphasis on aiding the state’s economic development by pursuing and maintaining strong relations with foreign nations. As a result, the significance of soft power instruments has increased, particularly in terms of culture and values, which, when paired with pacific policies, created a true opportunity to employ soft power. This article recognises that soft power is a wide concept with different interpretations and that India’s soft power resources are too numerous to fit under one umbrella. However, in order to limit its breadth, this article will only focus on key areas of opportunity within the Indian context.



India has a positive image of a pluralistic, non-violent, liberal government with a non-threatening global leadership. Throughout the centuries, India has provided religious and cultural freedom to Jews, Christians, Muslims, and members of various other faiths. India’s history and culture are her bequests to the world, which illustrate the evolution of India’s chronicles, demonstrating how India happily accepted many religions but never lost sight of its own culture and history. India’s worldwide image is rooted in the concept of ‘unity in diversity,’ which is reflective of the vast variety of cultures and civilisations that continue to attract many people from around the globe, and the soft power roots run deep. India’s soft power, which is rooted in her enormous social and civilisational past spanning millennia, displays her goals of secularism, liberalism, and cultural inclusivity, which are more crucial in today’s turbulent society. A concrete experience of south-south collaboration and enduring solidarity with poor nations is an additional component of India’s soft power in a number of global sectors. Gandhian principles of nonviolence, Nehru’s Five Postulates of Panchsheel (Peaceful Coexistence), and the internationally sponsored Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) during the cold war made India a crucial actor in worldwide associations.

India proclaiming its identity

The Modi government has created novel trends in Indian diplomacy by incorporating contemporary soft power aspects. Today, the state utilises India’s soft power assets, such as the diaspora, Yoga, Buddhism, and economic assistance, to achieve diplomatic victories and advance the country’s national goals. Some may argue that it is too soon to determine whether India’s initiatives are having a significant impact on the nation’s foreign policy goals. However, for the first time, a concerted effort is being made to increase India’s brand value abroad. In the future years, this will undoubtedly have substantial results for the conduct of Indian diplomacy and India’s broader position in global affairs. Elements of Indian popular culture, such as music and films, have also garnered a large number of followers in other nations. Indian music and cinema have a presence in international profit earning and have gained popularity outside, particularly in Asia, Europe, and Africa. The growth of soft power is also facilitated by literature. Multiple Indian authors, such as Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai, and Aravind Adiga, have been awarded the Man Booker International Prize. The 2001 Nobel Prize in Literature was awarded to Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul. Such instances embark on the presence of India around the world as a global narrative.

The Shortfall

Despite the fact that India is rich in soft power resources, it lacks an institutional framework to harness soft power and advance its foreign objectives. Moreover, India has performed poorly in terms of components of national appeal due to severe challenges such as corruption, poverty, violence against women, antagonism to commerce, urban pollution, caste prejudice, and gender inequality.

The challenge for the soft power capabilities of India is its complex social system. This is especially true with broad media coverage of rape and violence against women, the conservatism and patriarchy of Indian society, and the practice of arranged marriages. Moreover, religiously motivated pogroms and riots are a significant blemish on the national image of a peaceful and accommodative civilisation. Human rights violations by state authorities also add to this poor image of India, which hinders its soft power. However, the electoral manifesto of the BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party, Indian People’s Party), which has been in power in India since the 2014 elections, demonstrates that members of India’s ruling elite recognise the necessity of employing soft power. This manifesto highlighted the significance of soft power in international relations. In addition, it proclaimed the adoption of a more active form of diplomacy, emphasising the spiritual, cultural, and philosophical components of diplomacy. To conclude, in my opinion, if India wants to restore its national image, it must identify its strengths. Ancient wisdom and spirituality should convince other nations that India can play a key leadership role in the international community.

Assessing the State's Role in Ensuring the Accessibility of Menstrual Rights

by Aarushi Nandi

Women form over half the population of the world and are still miraculously the 'vulnerable minority'. Multiple problems arise due to this way of thinking but the most widespread, yet the most neglected one is the problem of period poverty. Period poverty refers to the state where a person is unable to access essential commodities to complete a safe and healthy menstrual cycle. In a country where over one third of the Indian menstruating population lives in period poverty, it is astounding to see that even with progressing times, menstrual rights have not been established to protect them and their rights. Menstrual rights as a legal concept is not acknowledged in the country and it has had a devastating impact over the menstruating population. It affects their right to education, right to employment, right to sanitation, right to health, right to not be discriminated against and in some cases right to live with dignity too. This makes menstrual rights an integral human right that deserves and needs to be recognised. Proceed with caution, as this article discusses sensitive matters relating to 'that time of the month', famously known for its controversial relationship with patriarchy.



Menstruation or period, a word that has over five thousand euphemisms in over ten languages, masking a very important and relevant natural phenomenon. Indian society, in particular, has an unusual reluctance to discuss the topic of menstruation in public forums. Although our society hasn't shied away from raising the topic while imposing restrictions on menstruating individuals, there have been scarce comments and measures taken to discuss menstrual rights. It has also not found its much-needed space in the daily conversations of life and in the academic discourses surrounding gender equality and human rights.

However, this topic was brought back to the public's attention by a recent public interest litigation (PIL) filed by law graduate Nikita Gore and law student Vaishnavi Gholave through advocate Vinod Sangvikar in the Bombay High Court. The PIL stated that since the Covid 19 pandemic hit the country, there has been total negligence towards the management of menstrual health. The parties sought better implementation of the Menstrual Hygiene Management National Guidelines, 2015 and asked for sanitary napkins to be declared as an essential commodity and be included in the schedule of the Essential Commodities Act, 1955.

Period poverty is a crippling, unaddressed problem that India has been facing for several years, but what makes it extremely important to discuss it now is the fact that the problem has worsened during the Covid 19 pandemic. Period poverty fundamentally is the problem of menstruating individuals not being able to afford proper, hygienic and safe menstrual products. The average person globally spends around 1,773 dollars on menstrual products throughout their lifetime. The average Indian person spends around 300 rupees every month and almost a lakh throughout their lifetime to access hygienic menstrual products. These numbers clearly depict the sad reality that an essential product such as a sanitary napkin is a luxury for not few but many. In a country like ours where 22.5% of the population belongs to the category that lives on less than 1.90\$ per day, these prices are simply unaffordable. One of the major reasons for this drawback is the loopholes in the state's overarchingly mythical attempts to safeguard the rights of menstruating individuals. The state's apparent 'well implemented' schemes, proved to be a major failure in providing sanitary and safe conditions for menstruating individuals to bleed especially during the lockdown due to the Covid 19 pandemic.

In a recent event in Bihar, a schoolgirl was slammed by the managing director of Bihar Women Development Corporation, Harjot Kaur, on her request of supplying sanitary napkins to school girls for free or for subsidised rates. The sheer necessity of the product was replaced by taunts of free goods. This instance perfectly shows the 'enthusiasm' of the state officials and the government in maintaining a healthy standard of sanitation and protecting and upholding menstrual rights. Even though the centre has managed to execute a few programs like the MHM scheme, it has two inherent faults. Firstly, the execution and secondly, the target group for the schemes. In regard to the execution, the poor management and implementation of the schemes are particularly a hindrance. The problem with the execution aspect is twofold, firstly the lack of availability and access to menstrual products and secondly, the lack of availability of sanitary conditions. Only 42% of Indian women use sanitary napkins, while 62% use cloth, sawdust, ash, grass and other unsafe materials.

Moreover, The schemes that are offered by the government unfortunately only cover girls within the age group of 10 – 19. Additionally, these schemes are only offered to girls that attend government-funded schools. This restricted supply of such essential necessities limits the opportunities for all women to be able to equally access menstrual products. Further, the schemes don't cover girls that don't attend schools and women above the age of 19. The schemes elicit such notions that these excluded categories of women are either not 'worthy' of being protected or somehow are assumed to magically receive the necessary menstrual products by simple god's grace. The second fold problem is the lack of availability of sanitary conditions. According to a recent report by Water Aid, 732 million people in India do not have access to a toilet, out of which 355 million women and girls live in households without toilets. Lack of access to toilets and handwashing facilities poses multiple problems. Firstly, they do not have access to clean water to wash their absorbents, if they use reusable materials such as cloth. Secondly, they do not have access to a private facility to change their menstrual absorbents as frequently as they should in order to maintain safe and hygienic conditions. Furthermore, these unsanitary conditions not only pose a challenge while these individuals are menstruating but pose a threat to their health in the future as well. Lack of access to appropriate menstrual hygiene is the 5th biggest killer of women in the world. That is, globally almost 800,000 women die due to it. In India, 70% of reproductive health problems are attributed to poor menstrual hygiene. Additionally, nearly 60,000 cases of cervical cancer deaths are reported every year in India, nearly two-thirds of which are due to poor menstrual hygiene. Further, the static condition of these schemes is another matter of concern. There have been no updates or special concessions made to accommodate the changing circumstances. The increasing income inequality and inflation during the pandemic – made it even more difficult and impossible for people to resort to sanitary, safe and healthy methods to menstruate.

However, it is not all grim. Even though there are no proper, established laws that ensure people their menstrual rights, recent judgements passed by various high courts, sort of try to mend the lacuna. The Karnataka High court recently issued a statement emphasizing the government's role to ensure the correct implementation of the SUCHI scheme. The Sabrimala judgment was another judgment that assisted in linking discrimination against menstruating women to infringing on her right to equality and right to live with dignity. The courts are slowly but surely leading the way to destigmatize the concept of menstruation. However, the enormous gap that is present due to the mis-implementation of schemes and lack of established laws, the menstrual rights of people in India are in extreme danger. Violation of menstrual rights not only infringes on their rights to access menstrual products and hygiene facilities but also contravenes their legally recognised rights to education, employment, to live life with dignity, to gender equality and to not be discriminated against. In order to combat heinous practices like menstrual exile that are deeply rooted in backward and unscientific reasoning, legally binding laws that enforce the practice of and maintenance of menstrual rights in all spheres of life and ensure the right to bleed safely, openly and proudly for all menstruating individuals.

The UK's Economic Policy Failure

by Meghna Sudeep

The United Kingdom under Prime Minister Liz Truss announced the worst policy decisions under their “Growth Plan” to overcome the economic recession and here’s why:



The United Kingdom is currently witnessing a period of economic and political turmoil, with Prime Minister Liz Truss resigning after 45 days of being in office. This move was spearheaded by the extreme tax policy changes that were introduced on September 23rd by the Finance Minister, Kwasi Kwarteng, as part of the Growth Plan, a structured proposition to tackle the high energy prices and inflation plaguing the UK economy. Due to the energy crisis caused by the war in Ukraine, as well as the supply chain disruption caused by both the pandemic and Brexit, the United Kingdom saw a period of rising costs that resulted in a higher cost of living. In July of this year, inflation was at 10.1%, the highest it has been in the last 40 years. In order to tackle this, midway through June, the Bank of England raised its interest rate by 0.25 percentage points to 1.25%. Later again, on August 4, the interest rate was increased by 50 basis points, from 1.25 percent to 1.75 percent. By doing this, the Central Bank aimed at increasing savings and spending, theoretically resulting in lower pricing and fewer severe product shortages.

Fiscal Policy, however, seemed to be directed in the exact opposite direction. The Growth Plan, announced by the Truss Government two weeks after the Queen died, aimed at boosting economic growth, which seemed beneficial enough until one got into the details. The Plan projected a 2.5% trend rate of growth and stated that through sustainable growth, higher wages and better opportunities could be provided along with sustainable funding for public services. In order to achieve this, the corporation tax increase was cancelled, maintaining the rate at 19% along with an abolishment of the highest rate of income tax for the rich. This “mini-budget,” as it is also called, proposed the largest tax cuts the UK had seen in fifty years, with an estimated cost of 45 billion pounds over five years. It also announced a rise in national insurance costs and in an effort to encourage more property purchases, Kwarteng and Truss’ plan also lowered the stamp tax, a fee on land sales in England and Northern Ireland.

The Government felt that these tax cuts would encourage businesses to invest more and encourage more people to enter the labour market, thus improving the supply potential of the economy. In reality, this could not be further from the truth. These measures would have resulted in increased consumer demand, hence raising prices and causing higher inflation. This is the exact opposite of what a government should aim to do during an inflationary crisis. These policies put more money in the hands of the people instead of reducing the money that is in circulation. Investors and analysts all voiced their fear on the increased inflation the package could cause and the escalation of the Treasury’s debt.

Global markets reacted to these set of policy decisions by selling off UK-backed assets. Bond investors were alarmed by the lack of fiscal restraints and the package’s potential for inflation. They started to sell their British assets, including bonds and other holdings denominated in pounds, since they viewed the tax cuts as absurd and risky. This caused the pound to drop to its lowest-ever value versus the dollar— \$1.03, before beginning to rise later that same week. It was the first time since 1985 that the pound fell under \$1.11. The so-called “Trussonomics” new economic strategy was flatly rejected by investors. Apart from the immediate market troubles the UK was going through as a result of this policy announcement, economists also noticed how these policy changes were directed towards benefiting the rich and harming the everyday citizen in the long term. Since the Government planned to make up for the lack of revenue from the taxes through public borrowing, an increasing public debt was inevitable, putting the burden on the people themselves. This would end up widening inequality, with more benefits handed out to the rich. The tax cuts would end up putting money in the hands of the wealthy and increase burdens on the bottom half of society, with energy bills doubling and mortgage costs rising.

The UK Government made these policy pronouncements without waiting for an impartial evaluation of the \$48 billion yearly tax reduction from the nation’s budget watchdog. Bond prices fell, driving up borrowing costs, causing havoc on the housing market, and bringing pension funds dangerously close to bankruptcy. The Government experienced extreme disapproval and scrutiny after the “mini-budget” was announced, with the financial market erupting into chaos and the International Monetary Fund issuing a rebuke for their decision. The UK central bank announced that it would print £65 billion to buy government bonds from September end to October 14 to essentially protect the economy from the effects of the Truss growth plan after verbal assurances by the UK Treasury and Bank of England failed to convince the public.

However, eventually, Truss inevitably decided to reverse her position on business taxes, sacking her Finance Minister who announced them. She resigned a couple of days later as faith in the Government had fallen to an all-time low. The mini-budget was detrimental to her rule and an economic failure. Her policies, if implemented, would have inflicted harm on the British economy and been dangerous to their citizens who are already reeling under an economic recession. There will likely be a recession all winter long. Even before Truss wreaked havoc on the financial markets, policymakers were faced with difficult decisions. Now that the government’s reputation has been damaged, they are in an even worse situation. The policy decisions taken by the Conservative Party under Liz Truss proved to be a massive blow to their legitimacy. The UK had once again taken up a decision of self-harm, similar to the Brexit situation in 2016, that ended up sabotaging businesses and investments. The United Kingdom needs to pull up their socks and focus on inflation-curling, investment-inducing policies along with increased capital productivity and technological research.

The More the Merrier: Why India May Need Another Aircraft Carrier

by Sashank Rajaram

Introduction: 2nd September 2022 would forever be etched in Indian history as a day of great pride and celebration. After nearly 25 years, India finally commissioned its first indigenously built aircraft carrier—INS Vikrant. Named after its illustrious predecessor, the reincarnated Vikrant is the first among the Indian government's flagship Indigenous Aircraft Carrier (IAC) project which aims to promote domestic manufacturing of the behemoth vessels. Designed by the Navy's Warship Design Bureau and built by the Cochin Shipyard Ltd., INS Vikrant is 212m long with a displacement of 42800MT. The aircraft carrier boasts 2300 compartments including rooms that can accommodate its 1700 crews. Powered by four gas turbines, besides eight power generators producing 24MW of power, Vikrant has a cruise speed of 28knots. While the idea to build an aircraft carrier was conceived in 1989, it was only in 1999 under Prime Minister Bajpayee that the design for INS Vikrant finally took off. Though one could question the inordinate delay, the commissioning of INS Vikrant has thrown the spotlight on the Indian Navy and raised the question of whether India needs another aircraft carrier given the changing geopolitical scenario.



Before exploring the necessity of a new aircraft carrier, it is important to go back to the past for a better context. One of the most enduring debates in naval warfare is the one between aircraft carriers (ACs) and submarines. It began during WWII when the Allied forces focused on ACs and the Axis powers, particularly Germany, developed the Undersea Boats (U-Boats) that later came to be known as submarines. A larger part of the debate revolved around the aspect of sea control and sea denial. While countries with ACs were able to conduct operations in far-off regions, submarines – with their stealth and torpedoes that could sink naval vessels – were regarded as the perfect counter to prevent any naval aggression. Even after the war, the West followed the American doctrine and expanded its AC inventory. In contrast, the East bloc, led by the Soviet Union, invested heavily in sea denial and built a large armada of super silent submarines. However, apart from the ideological aspect, there was also an element of cost considerations that stood behind these debates. The Soviets quickly realised that they could not afford large, competent machinery with the richer West and hence, found deterrence and tactical balance through sea denial. And the trade-off was not a terrible one either. For example, during the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War, the US 7th Fleet Taskforce, led by USS Enterprise – the world's biggest AC (then) and the first nuclear-powered one – sailed towards the Bay of Bengal in aid of Pakistan. At the same time, intelligence reports had come in that the British Navy led by HMS Eagle was also closing in on India's territorial waters from the West. While the stated agenda was to 'secure the interests of American and British nationals in Chittagong', it was explicit that both the navies would coordinate a pincer attack to intimidate India. Sensing the imminent threat, New Delhi sent an SOS to Moscow. The Red Navy responded by dispatching 16 Naval units and 6 nuclear-powered submarines from Vladivostok to block the advancement of the USS Enterprise, thus proving that an advanced submarine was as good a match as an AC.

But when it comes to India, though the country's military revolved around Soviet equipment, it caught the 'carrier bug' early. In 1942 at the height of WWII, the British Royal Navy commissioned a bunch of majestic class ACs. However, as the war ended, the project could not be fully realised due to post-war budget constraints. One such vessel whose construction was put on hold was HMS Hercules. Sensing an opportunity, the Indian government purchased the incomplete carrier. The construction was completed in 1961 and was named INS Vikrant. Becoming the only Asian country to own an AC then – particularly as a former colony that had recently gained independence – sealed the deal and put an end to the ACs v/s submarine debate in the Indian Navy for a long time. Yet, the threats posed by submarines were not completely nullified. For example, during the Indo-Pak war of 1965, a seven-ship task force led by Pakistan's PNS Babur got close to the city of Dwarka in Gujarat with obvious religious messaging. Termed 'Operation Dwarka', the Pakistani forces continued to fire unopposed for 48 hours before retreating. Though there were no casualties on the Indian side, the attack showcased the country's naval vulnerability despite possessing an AC. Though rejected by the Indian Navy, one popular opinion was that the Indian Navy was wary of PNS Ghazi – the only submarine on the subcontinent then – and it did not wish to engage it in an all-out battle. However, despite the tensions revolving around ACs and submarines, India always believed in the might of the AC and so always looked at ways to have an AC—be it the INS Viraat, INS Vikramaditya or the recently commissioned INS Vikrant. But now, with the rise of China, there has been a growing demand among defence experts for other ACs to protect India's long coastline. But with the enormous cost and time involved in building one, there are a lot of variables that need to be considered.

Ashely J. Tellis, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, believes that to answer whether an AC is required or not, a country must determine its geopolitical objectives and define them geographically. If its sphere of influence is within 1000km of its territorial borders, Tellis believes that an AC is not required for military operations. For context, if India wishes to increase its presence in and around Karachi and Gwadar, then a new AC is unnecessary as a shore-based aircraft would do the job of surveillance, attack, and defence just as effectively as an AC. However, if geopolitical interests extend beyond 1000km, towards East Africa, Southeast Asia, etc., then a new AC would become necessary as it would provide a mobile military base.

Interestingly, the type of aircraft on an AC is also equally relevant. As Tellis says, the Indian marine aircraft such as the TEJAS and Hawk Mk 132 are small, manpower intensive and pack too little firepower. For example, the 45 MiG-29K aircraft that the Indian Navy operates provides a very narrow range, and subsequently limited combat capabilities. Their inadequate time station (the time one spends on air) also makes them maintenance heavy. In short, the aircraft that India currently operates gives too little bang for too much buck. On a side note, Tellis also points out that to be a potent force, an AC needs to be in the 65-ton category. A larger AC will be able to house close to 40-50 aircraft, allowing it to conduct attack operations.

That is where the Navy is currently working. Having realised the constraints that obstruct growth potential, preparations for building the next indigenous aircraft carrier – INS Vishal – have already started. However, the journey is not going to be easy. With an estimated cost of about ₹50,000 crores, the defence ministry would need to decide whether it can spend money again to build a third AC. But military logic cannot be expressed purely in monetary terms.

During the Kargil War, India's then flagship AC INS Viraat played a critical role by enforcing a blockade against Pakistan. It was then that the Navy recognised the importance of INS Viraat's companions. Speaking to the Economic Times, former commodore Srikant Kensur comments, "Considering our maritime interest requirement for power projection apart from maintenance considerations, we need at least three, preferably four or more aircraft carriers. So, if you want to have one aircraft carrier on either seaboard, then you need to have at least three aircraft carriers. So that, as and when required, at least two of them are operational all the time."

Moreover, defence experts believe one should also take into consideration the rising geopolitical tensions when considering upgrading the Navy's capabilities. In the recent past, the Indian Ocean Region with all its oil production hubs, trade routes, and choke points has emerged as one of the most strategically significant zones in the world. So, to maintain sovereignty and grab maritime opportunities, India would like to gain dominance in the region which wouldn't be plausible without a powerful Navy.

Smooth Sailing: Notwithstanding the arguments for another AC, there are also some evident disadvantages. Due to their mammoth size, ACs can be tracked quite easily via GPS. Also, with the advancement of nuclear-powered submarines, cruise missiles including nuclear-capable ones can be fired too. This makes any investment in an AC vulnerable and potentially risky. That being said, the huge capital cost to build such a massive vessel at home as well as the shifting political emphasis has rarely given India the luxury of having 2 fully operational ACs. The new Vikrant, however, could change that. With such a long coastline and troublesome neighbours, India may require a fleet of AC to project itself as a potent force. As globalising maritime trade extends itself over maritime geopolitics, India inevitably requires infrastructures to sustain it. As policymakers deliberate over the cost and benefit of building a new AC, one must remember that a "good navy is a provocation to war; it is the surest guarantee of peace."

Understanding the Macroeconomic Link from the lens of the Corona pandemic

by Ojus Sharma

The year 2020, in spite of its initial aspiring economic prospects, infested with COVID-19 had tumbled down into an economic dip. This unheralded biological phenomenon aka the coronavirus which is claimed to spread through direct human contact (respiratory droplets) has forced nations to their knees by necessitating the severing of any economic movements that involved direct contact among human beings. Thus the nature of this crisis could be described as a biological pandemic-induced economic crisis.

Nations were put in a place to choose between life and livelihood (economic stability at the cost of endangering life). Most economies with deep-rooted globalisation, being heavily dependent on foreign trade ties, exports and imports were forced to lock down their borders either to control the inherent spread like China or to protect themselves from being further infected or both. The pandemic has also affected several aspects of the national economies. For example, most physical labour-intensive industries were rendered completely or partially unfunctional leaving millions of their working members unemployed. In numbers, statistica has estimated about 23.52% of labour workforce were left unemployed during the initial months (April-Jun 2020) of the pandemic in India. Similarly, the transportations and logistics industry saw a critical drop in consumption. The volume of transactions of the Inland logistics players in India had seen a 10-15% drop during the financial year. Likewise, medical systems are struggling with insufficient manpower and infrastructure to support the unexpected surge in the volume of infected cases. Head of the IMF, Kristalina Georgieva has said the world faced (in 2020) the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s. The world economy (a simple aggregation of all national economies) is noted to be on the verge of or at the initial stages of a global crisis relatively bigger than the 2009 crisis. A stage similar to the Great Depression of the 1930s resulting from the Keynesian downward spiral is not very far, which cannot be revived without the injection of enormous external monetary aid. It is necessary to comprehend the economic aspect and consequences of the pandemic at an individualistic (micro) level to account for all the economic changes and then devise an action plan at a macro level to temporarily dampen and resolve the problem permanently.



The need to study the link between micro and macroeconomics arises from the need to identify the fallacies in executing actions on the basis of a general/conventional understanding of the link between aggregates(global economy) and its components(human beings) as a solution for the problem at hand(pandemic). The conventional understanding is that 'the aggregate is the sum of all the parts. But the primary article differs from the said perspective and goes on to prescribe a philosophical concept – systemism which says that the aggregate shall be understood in the form of systems. A system is more than the mere sum of its components but rather also includes the present and prospective relations between such components and respective products created out of such relations. A comparative study of this incongruity between systemism and conventional understanding in the pandemic scenario shall help us prove how the revival of particular systems or components shall help us revive the global economy (aggregate). The authors in the primary text establish various compositional fallacies in a conventional perspective that might occur while studying the link between micro and macroeconomics. They are as follows:-

- 1. Simplistic fallacy:** The fallacy is where the aggregate is seen as a sum of its components in ignorance of the relations and the positions taken by its components. In the present context, it is factual knowledge that the virus spreads through direct human contact, so the conventional solution would be to make every individual avoid any direct contact(blanket regulation of the microeconomic behaviour of all components to influence a desired result in the macro level) until a cure is invented. But the fallacy here is, though complete isolation could help restrict the virus spread, the components who make the aggregate(the nation, world) are humans who depend on various simple as well as nuanced factors for subsistence like food, shelter, clothing etc. These factors are not a part of any particular component but rather products of the combined efforts of several individuals who share an organised relationship(factory, office etc). Thus these factors cannot be produced and distributed in absence of human contact. Therefore the contact can only be reduced to the extent of the factors which don't substantially affect the subsistence of the beings in the short term. Even this option is categorised only on the basis of priority of the relationship they share with other members and the position held in the aggregate. For example, police, defence, and the judiciary are some of the essential factors that cannot be dispersed entirely but can only be regulated to restrict the spread.
- 2. Static fallacy:** This fallacy is where the study of aggregates misses out on predicting or accounting for any novelties that could be generated via the relationship shared by components in addition to ignoring the existence of a relationship between the components. Thus it could be said this fallacy is built on the previous fallacy. In the process of blanket regulation of the microeconomic behaviours of individuals without considering the relationships shared between them, we also tend to miss out on activities performed as a part of the relationship that could create novel products that could resolve the problem. To elaborate, the functions of pharmaceutical companies and research organisations – who are a set of individuals in an organised relationship with an object and the ability to produce vaccines (a permanent solution to the virus) in appropriate circumstances shall be ignored if the conventional methods of containment are followed.
- 3. Dogmatic fallacy:** This fallacy is where the study of aggregates is again restricted to the mere study of its components where any complexities that could occur due to/in the process of their aggregation are ignored. Here such complexities are assumed as superficial and negligible residuals of the individual components. But in reality, the complexities are nuanced, yet have the ability to influence major changes in the economy.

For example, we could consider the nuanced macroeconomic concept of the Keynesian multiplier. In the circular flow of income, an injection of funds would imply greater than multiple increases in national income resulting from an increase in aggregate demand. That is, an injection of funds by the state through financial institutions would mean increased loanable funds to local businesses which in turn would increase the money spent on business activities. This would mean increased income to the employees and workers who either save or consume from the economy which would increase the aggregate demand and this circle repeats to multiply the value of funds in the economy multiple times more than the initial injection. The state could even innovate and direct/invest the injected funds to specific industries or types of businesses (MSME etc) which would have an effect of direct flourishing of the said industry in addition to the multiplier effect. This phenomenon cannot be particularly pinned to a single component in the system but rather can only be attributed to the harmonious working of various sectors in the economy(aggregate). Thus the article emphasises how the revival of the global economy is dependent on the revival of particular systems (out of all other components). Thus its ideal for nations and international organisations to consider the above-mentioned strategies while devising the action plan for reviving the global economy (aggregate) in place of implementing blanket regulations in accordance with the conventional understanding of the micro-macro link.

Women's Culinary Labour: Encouraged Only When Unpaid?

by Aadya Chaturvedi

In the popular Bollywood film English Vinglish, the protagonist is told by her male friend, a chef, that cooking is an art. She responds by asking, “Why is it that when men cook, it’s art, but when women cook, it is a duty, a task they are just expected to perform?” These sentiments are echoed by Deborah Harris and Patti Giuffre in their book which revolves around a startling yet seldom-explored paradox: how is it that even though cooking has historically been characterized as a woman’s domain, professional and commercial kitchens are dominated by men and female chefs are scarcely seen in these positions. This discourse was recently reignited after a tweet by Burger King UK received criticism for subverting a sexist remark in order to advertise its scholarship for female chefs; it said, “Women belong in the Kitchen,” and followed it up with “if they want to, of course.” It then went on to list the abysmally low statistics of female labour force participation in the culinary industry, wherein only 20% of chefs in the UK were female. In the same year, the overall female labour force participation rate (FLFPR) of India was 20.3%, and the culinary industry is likely to be a reflection of the same rates.

While the percentage of women chefs in India was pegged at approximately 10-15% in 2018, the marginal female participation in this field is fraught with more complexities than just a generally low FLFPR. These complexities stem from the paradoxical exclusion of women from a field, which, when supplanted into the domestic sphere, falls squarely on women’s shoulders. The very structure of the gastronomic field is founded on undermining domestic, ‘feminine’ cooking in order to legitimize the training and skills of the professional chef in the commercial restaurant kitchen. Harris and Giuffre have analysed this dichotomy, in which a gendered distinction is made between a cook, who cooks a nourishing meal to sustain her family, and a chef who innovates and exercises his artistry to prepare refined dishes for his patrons. Through this cultural method of evading the perceived threat of feminization looming over a lucrative field, the image of a professional chef is masculinized, by both restaurants and food critics, and female culinary talent is successfully relegated to the domestic sphere. This article explores the discrepancy between the two spheres and the treatment of women’s cooking in both. It does this through academic studies of the reasons behind the low number of female chefs and their real-world applications.



At the outset, there are barriers to women’s entry into restaurant kitchens. Firstly, they are rarely placed in positions of authority regardless of how well-trained or educated they may be since it has traditionally been difficult for male subordinates to take orders from a female boss. Further, at the entry-level, female chefs are subjected to much harder initiation rituals by their colleagues and seniors, the majority of whom are male and are conditioned to question the competence of their female counterparts for tasks that they would expect their own female family members to perform smoothly. The key issue here seems to be that with a female-coded work description, i.e., cooking, male chefs feel the need to distinguish their technical superiority and financial viability. This only adds to the general level of sexist undertones that already persist in the behaviour meted out to women in any field of work. Several accounts from an Indian context highlight how the ability of female chefs is repeatedly and publicly probed in the kitchen, for tasks as basic as cutting an onion, when none of their male counterparts is similarly interrogated. This appears in sharp contrast to the rampant stereotype prevailing in India where girls must be adept at making perfectly round rotis. An inverted form of this suspicion appears in repeated offers of help made by male chefs to their female colleagues and superiors. Parallels can be drawn from this behaviour to Indian time-use statistics which point to a mere 6.1% of men that help with activities like cooking in a domestic setting. Of course, this has to do with the fact that a higher percentage of men engage in paid employment which leaves them with no time to assist with unpaid domestic activities. However, these parallels support the inference that even on a level-playing field, i.e., a restaurant kitchen, where both the male and female chefs are employed for the same purpose, the work environment differs starkly for both. As soon as a skill is picked up from a domestic, unpaid, unvalued setting and placed in a commercial, highly competitive, and professional environment, it is the female employee’s competence that comes into question. It is required, necessary, and presumed in one sphere and precarious, questionable, and open to ridicule in another. The purpose behind emphasizing this domestic-professional dichotomy is to expose the double standards that exist in the culinary industry, as well as the paradoxical reasoning that serves only to reinforce the home-public divide to suppress female engagement in paid employment. The focus on the culinary industry is an ideal tool to achieve the above.

Another layer inhibiting the progress of female chefs is the additional work they have to put in to achieve the same milestones as their male counterparts or even to be taken seriously in the kitchen. Firstly, they are held to a higher standard of behaviour, under which they cannot afford to succumb to the pressures of the high-strung, tense environment of the restaurant kitchen. Research has found that there exists a gendered leadership double standard, whereby terse words or instructions would be considered mere assertiveness when coming from a male head chef, but the same behaviour would not be well received when coming from a female. She would subsequently be branded as harsh and angry unless she smooths her instructions with politeness and a pleasant demeanour. Further, she cannot risk confirming the stereotype that views women as less professional and more emotional or weak. Thus, female chefs must constantly be conscious of their colleagues’ perception of them, and mere professional competence is not always sufficient. These constant pressures are part of the very institutional mechanism of the restaurant industry, with the time-bound, high-tension atmosphere being a part and parcel, but distinct expectations of acceptable reactions from male and female chefs. The cumulative import of such conditions creates unfavourable working conditions for women in commercial kitchens and discourages them from continuing.

The role of the primary caregiver that is socially imposed on women is another key inhibiting factor in women’s professional progress in commercial kitchens. Domestic responsibilities, most of which are shouldered solely by women, create a double burden, i.e., a strained division of time between paid and unpaid work. Women have a statistically lower chance of being promoted or even hired due to apprehensions that such responsibilities will interfere with their professional performance. This becomes especially relevant in a time-consuming job like that of a chef, where the working hours are longer than those at normal desk jobs. Furthermore, the culinary field, by virtue of being both male-dominated and demanding complete dedication, is not conducive to the growth of female chefs who are constantly compelled to “balance” work and family. This issue remains without a resolution because the implementation of policies favourable to female employees is hindered by their reluctance to accept them. The reason for the above is that if they begin to avail the policies put in place to ensure they can better fulfil both professional and societal obligations, it will greatly affect their colleagues’ perception of them. As already discussed, their competence is always in question, and if any preferential treatment is shown to them, they will be viewed as not having earned their position in the kitchen, and studies have shown that this is a key obstacle in the acceptance of concessions. It then becomes part of a continuing project on the part of female chefs to prove their merit to a peer group that is blind to merit and discriminates based purely on gender.

Social aversion to women’s engagement in paid employment, though diminished in modern times, still operates in most professional environments. When it comes to female chefs, a plethora of small businesses operating from home is now a booming industry. But in competitive spaces like restaurant kitchens, much is left to be desired to bring women to par when merit takes a backseat due to misogyny. This issue has a profound bearing on matters of policy as well since the execution of women-friendly policies considerably alters the power dynamics of a restaurant kitchen and may lead to the emergence of even more deterrents than those that already exist and constantly depress women’s participation in this industry.

Does India Need to Work Towards an Environment Taxation System?

By Archisha Tiwari

India's Union Government recently approved its Nationally Determined Contributions but India's green sector is barely getting the annual financing it needs. To bridge the lacuna the paper attempts to demonstrate the need for India to increase its accountability and work towards a revenue-neutral environmental taxation system that is both punitive and incentivised. This leads to incorporation of the externalities into the economic model of demand and supply. Having ratified the Paris Climate Accords, India is bound to submit its Nationally Determined Contributions (hereafter NDCs) to showcase its short-term and long-term goals and efforts towards mitigating climate change. Recently in August 2022, the Union Cabinet of India approved India's updated NDC for the period 2021-30 that reaffirms many of the targets set out by Narendra Modi at the 26th session of the Conference of Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

One of the targets is transitioning to cleaner energy and achieving about 50% cumulative electric power from non-fossil fuel-based energy resources by 2030 which follows the main commitment towards reducing Emissions Intensity of its Gross Domestic Product by 45% by 2030. While these targets are updated, they're not entirely new and it is to be noted that India's green sector is getting only 25% of the annual financing it needs to meet its energy transition goals. There is a disconnect between the targets being reaffirmed and the reality India is faced with. This article attempts to propose imposition of a structural environment tax or a green tax to bridge the gap and make the system of environment financing more regulated and efficient.



In an economic structure, externalities refer to consequences that affect persons and entities like the environment. In terms of negative externalities, it is usually an additional cost of production that the rest of the society has to bear, not the producers. Economists and policymakers wish to incorporate these costs and make the producers liable by adding it to the supply curve. This is done through the application of a Pigovian tax that aims to eliminate the externality associated with production. Internalizing the harm caused to the environment is supposed to reduce the said pollution but in practicality, it comes with many caveats. Firstly, if the cost of eliminating one more unit of production equals the cost of incurring the tax of it, then the producers would be inclined to invest in greener practices but if the cost of elimination increases then they would not invest and would rather prefer paying taxes as a more profitable option. This is especially true if the cost of production and profits incurred is very high. Moreover, if the tax framework allows the tax paid on pollution to be a deductible expenditure on other tax schemes, then this incentive would be an offset. One needs to ensure that the taxes on pollution come with a punitive undertone, and they should also be revenue neutral.

George P Shultz and Gary Becker argue for a revenue-neutral carbon tax which entails the government not deriving any revenue from the taxes or using the revenue for any public sector expansion. The tax revenue should instead be used to support renewable energy by methods like providing direct tax cuts to renewable energy investors or research. This ensures that there is some benefit to the environment through its inclusion in the supply and through taxation and not just waiving off the deep harm caused to the environment because the producer paid the taxes.

India does not have a single policy governing green taxes or a uniform system of even carbon taxation across the country to curb carbon emissions. There has been an attempt by the Government to alleviate the harm caused by this externality through the Indian Clean Environment Cess (formerly, the Clean Energy Cess) that has been levied on coal and its derivatives through Section 83 of the Finance Act, 2010. The Cess' purpose is to finance and promote clean energy initiatives, funding research in the area of clean energy or for any related purpose. Back in 2010 when it was introduced, a research associate at The Energy and Resources Institute of India had mentioned that this was the peaking of the negotiation formula of 'polluter pays.' But this was in 2010.

In the present year, though India has made certain progress when it comes to clean energy, it is nowhere close to its goals, and this is cemented by the fact that India ranks at the bottom in the outcome-oriented 2022 Environment Performance Index. India has also increased the use and dependence on black carbon and there is no transparency in the process, i.e., if the taxes are being levied and if they are, then where the revenue is going?

As Ipshita Chaturvedi writes, India's green tax package currently consists of ad-hoc legislation at the national and state level. There is no clear policy brief underlining the policy rationale of such initiatives. She also suggests that rather than just focusing on making the polluter pay, tax incentives may encourage people positively to adopt greener practices. It has been recommended by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy in the past that having direct cash benefits for environmental compliance would be more efficient. The need of the hour is to make a proper structure of an environmental taxation system in India that involves both punitive and beneficial provisions to incite people to invest and adapt to cleaner forms of energy. The policy and tax collection and revenue allocation structure should be transparent to ensure that the funds are allocated to the desired places. It is only then that India might climb the indexes and move towards achieving the Nationally Determined Contributions that it has set out to do.



A space for young scholars to put forth their work in the form of well-researched articles on issues relating to politics, law, IR, foreign policy, economics, finance and a lot more. The forum provides a wide range of perspectives which are often overlooked by mainstream media. If you wish to submit any articles, refer to the author's guidelines at - <https://nickeledanddimed.com> and email your article to cnes.ju@gmail.com

OTHER INITIATIVES

SAMVAAD: A student-run discussion forum initiated by the Centre for New Economics Studies. The forum seeks to promote active public engagement by distinguished scholars who have expertise in areas of law, economics and other social studies, presenting an interdisciplinary perspective.

CONVERSATIONS IN DEVELOPMENT STUDIES: The student-run publication is an in-house, peer-review journal of OP Jindal Global University which aims to promote a variety of perspectives from different scholars over a stated theme.

INFOSPHERE: Being the centre's latest research platform, InfoSphere offers a space for a fact-based, objective analysis on some of the most contemporary issues of economic and social policy concern in South Asia.

INTERLINKED: The Inter-Linked podcast series aims to hold nuanced conversations on the interdisciplinary nature of the problems that are plaguing the world today.

AZAAD AWAAZ: This monthly magazine (Patrika) aims to focus on the marginalized sections whose voices are often muted in the cacophony of flashy mainstream media discourse.

SWABHIMAAN: The premise of Swabhimaan is based on the themes of Gender and Entrepreneurship but is not limited to the conventional meanings they are commonly perceived as.

VISUAL STORYBOARD: Visual Storyboards are an experimental method for visually archiving our research team's fieldwork, with a more exclusive focus on studying the lives and livelihoods of unsecured workers and communities across India.

SOCIAL MEDIA



EDITORIAL TEAM



Ashika Thomas: Associate Editor
Cluster Lead, Environment & Social
Issues



Anirudh Bhaskaran: Cluster Head
Public Policy



Ishani Sharma: Associate Editor
Cluster Lead, International Relations



Shreeya Bhayana: Cluster Lead
Legal Studies, History & Culture



Hemang Sharma: Cluster Lead
Economics and Finance



Sashank Rajaram: Cluster Lead
Gender & Society



Ojus Sharma: Cluster Lead
Economics and Finance



Amisha Singh: Cluster Lead
Legal Studies