



Conflict in Manipur: A Study of Perceptions – Part 2

By Ms. Ashruta Dutta

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Survey Findings Explained:

- Out of 34 respondents all of them was aware of the conflict going on in Manipur.
- Out of 34 respondents 32 respondents were from Northeast India. (17 were from Manipur and 15 were from other states of Northeast India.)
- 27 of the respondents was aware of the Manipur High Court's directive on granting ST status to the Meiteis but 7 of them were unaware of it. According to 30 respondents (88.2%) this is one of the causes for the conflict.
- 27 respondents were aware of the anti-poppy seed cultivation initiative taken by the state government and 7 respondents was not aware of the same.
- 24 respondents thinks that it is also one of the causes which contributed to the erupt of the conflict. And according to the remaining 10 respondents the state governments initiative of anti-poppy cultivation awareness has nothing to do with the ethnic conflict of Manipur.

- 31 respondents heard about the conflict on different social media platforms.
- Out of 34 respondents 31 of them agrees that social media had negative impact on the conflict.
- When asked about Government's role 28 respondents says that it was ineffective. 5 of them says its neutral and 1 says its very effective.
- 50% of the respondents, which is 17 people, believe that the President's rule will not help resolve the conflict. And 41.2% of respondents which is 14 people are uncertain if it will help. Only 8.8% of the respondents which is 3 people, believe that President's rule will help resolve the conflict.
- In the pie chart we can see that around 21 out of 34 respondents favouring a united Manipur with no divisions. About 6 respondents supports State with autonomous regions. Another 6 of them supports division of Manipur in separate states. And 1 of the respondents wants a safe place, mutual respect, safety and inclusion for all three ethnic groups.
- Almost 79.4% of the respondents which is 27 out of 34 respondents agrees that refugees from Myanmar have entered Manipur in the last 2 years.
- The Free Movement Regime (FMR) allows tribal communities living along the Indo-Myanmar border (especially in Manipur, Nagaland and Mizoram) to cross the border without a visa for up to 16 km and stay for 72 hours.
- When asked whether FMR should continue or not majority of the respondents 22 out of 34 respondents believe that FMR between Manipur and Myanmar should not continue. Just a small proportion 12 out of 34 are in favour of continuing the FMR.
- A large majority of the respondents 26 of them believe that the conflict has adversely affected the education and employment of the common people. Nearly one-fourth feel the impact is very adverse. None of the respondents thinks that education and employment was unaffected by the conflict.
- 29 respondents agreed that the conflict very adversely affected the mental health of the people in Manipur and the remaining 5 respondents believes that it adversely affected the mental health of the people in Manipur. None of the respondents thinks that the conflict has not affected the mental health of the people in the State.
- There was a strong presence of youth engagement in socially responsible activities during the conflict. 19 respondents noticed youth efforts directed towards aiding displaced individuals. About 18 respondents observed youth contributions to maintaining and improving community safety. 17 respondents also saw youth organizing awareness campaigns. Only 1 respondent reported not noticing any youth led efforts. And 2 respondents chose the other option.
- As per the graph we can see that maximum respondents agrees that most young people are motivated by a strong desire to protect their community. 20 respondents feel the absence of government action pushes youth to step up and take responsibility.
- Majority identify political issues as a major barrier to have peace in Manipur. 16 respondents identify ethnic issues to be an obstacle to peace in Manipur.
- When asked to share the views on government actions during the conflict, 16 respondents answered that question. They have shown strong public dissatisfaction with both the state as well as central government.

They criticized government's failed policies, actions, perceived bias, failure to address root causes and maintain law and order effectively. Actions like curfew and internet suspensions did not help to improve the situation. According to the respondents, the government escalated rather than resolve the crisis.

- When the respondents were asked that if they ever had the chance to speak to leaders or decision makers, what will they suggest to improve the current situation of Manipur. 17 different responses were received. Key suggestions included establishing clear territorial boundaries between ethnic groups. Many of them also emphasized the need to repatriate illegal immigrants, particularly from Myanmar. Other prominent recommendations received from the respondents includes forming a conflict resolution committee, initiating peace talks between the communities, ensuring fair governance without vote bank politics, and addressing root causes through reconciliation efforts between Meiteis and Kukis. Few of the responses advocated for stronger regulations, eradications of insurgent groups and implementation of NRC to control immigration.

Conclusion:

The survey findings shows that the respondents strongly criticize both the state and the central government for not being able to resolve the conflict. They perceive that suspension of internet services, imposition of curfew has not helped prevent the conflict from escalating. Misinformation spread through social media worsened the scenario. An important observation made from this research is the overwhelming consensus among respondents on the adverse impacts on mental health, education and employment.

As highlighted by the respondents, the refugee influx, drug related concerns and demographic issues must be addressed with both humanitarian sensitivity and strategic foresight. It is no longer merely a regional issue -it's an issue of national significance. The porous Indo-Myanmar border, the Free Movement Regime (FMR), and the rising transnational narcotics trade and insurgent activities underline the fact that Manipur is a critical frontier of geopolitical risk.

It is important to note here that many youths from Manipur while bearing the brunt of the conflict, have contributed to peacebuilding efforts through relief efforts and awareness drives in different parts of the state. To conclude, it may be said that resolution of conflict in Manipur will need sustained attention and sensitive governance and a multi-pronged approach that looks beyond ethnic rivalry.

Great Nicobar Project is a Trade Game-Changer for India

By Dr. Seshadri Chari

The author is former editor of 'Organiser'. He is General Secretary of FINS.

We have several laws to protect the identity of the tribal communities. There is no need to shelve strategically important projects and infrastructure development schemes in Nicobar.

It is surprising that the strategic islands of Andaman, Car Nicobar, and Great Nicobar have not been developed all these years into ports and military bases to enhance trade and security in India's maritime zone. Nicobar offers excellent connectivity to at least five countries to the east—Myanmar, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka—as well as Indian ports on the eastern coast.

Some islands in Nicobar and Lakshadweep are out of bounds for outsiders, as these are inhabited by tribes that have not had any contact with the outside world. The scenic Barren Island is also out of bounds, as it is the only active volcano in India. There can be no two opinions as far as the need to protect the privacy of the tribes inhabiting some of these islands. There are reports of earlier attempts to establish contact with them and draw them into the civilisational mainstream, which were unsuccessful.

Rules and regulations were made considering their resistance and respecting their right to continue with their unique lifestyle. The Andaman and Nicobar Islands (Protection of Aboriginal Tribes) Regulation, 1956, designates tribal reserves and restricts entry for outsiders. The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, provides a legal framework against exploitation, while the Forest Rights Act, 2006, recognises their land rights. The Ministry of Home Affairs has put in place several restrictions and announced specific policies for the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) such as the Jarawas and Shompen.

So, several laws and restrictions are already available to protect and preserve the identity of the tribal communities. In this scenario, there is hardly any need to shelve strategically important projects and infrastructure development schemes that will boost trade and commerce, tourism and maritime economy, and connectivity.

Tap into the Malacca Strait

Out of the 10 busiest container terminal ports in the world, six are in China, and one each in Singapore, Malaysia, South Korea, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). These account for as much as 60 to 70 per cent of the 20-foot and 40-foot (1 TEU and 2 TEU) containers transshipment. Apparently, nearly all these container terminals and other ports in Asia and the Indian subcontinent, as well as in China and the Far East, depend on the shipping lanes through the Malacca Strait, which accounts for nearly \$3.5 trillion in global trade.

The Strait of Malacca is also an important maritime highway for the stakeholders of Indo-Pacific as it connects the Indian and Pacific Oceans. For the Quad and the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF), this sea lane of communication, accounting for nearly 60 per cent of the global GDP, becomes the lifeline to trade, commerce, and connectivity. There is no reason why India should not have a technologically equipped, functional, state-of-the-art port in Nicobar to tap into the trade happening through its precincts.

Besides the economic uplift, a port facility in Nicobar and on other islands in the Indian Ocean can help India resolve other challenges too. By virtue of the gigantic number of ships—about 90,000—passing through a narrow Strait, the sea lanes of communication and the ports have become choke points in the Indian Ocean. Interestingly, in spite of the vast expanse of the sea, ships follow a designated route guided by navigation software, GPS, and Electronic Charting System (ECS), very much like the flight path in the sky. This often results in ships cruising very close and colliding due to massive waves, ocean currents, or simply not following the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea (COLREGS).

In 2021, a container ship, Zephyr Lumos, collided with the bulker, Galapagos, off the port of Muar in the Strait of Malacca, badly damaging the Galapagos and resulting in a huge oil spill. Ships in the Strait are also victims of piracy. A port of call at Nicobar would be of great help to the shipping industry. In May 2011, when Somali pirates attacked the Chinese-owned MV Full City in the Arabian Sea, about 450 nautical miles west of Karwar, the Indian Navy successfully thwarted the piracy attempt with no collateral damage.

A game-changer for India

From a defence and strategic perspective, defence facilities in Nicobar and nearby islands will be a great counterbalance to the military bases around India built by global power contestants. China has established maritime reconnaissance and electronic intelligence surveillance stations on Great Coco Island, located on the border of the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea, just 50 km away from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. This should be a compelling reason for developing our military and naval bases in the Indian Ocean. The central government's initiative to build a shipyard and a dual-use airport (military-civilian) in Campbell Bay to compete with China is a laudable initiative.

The Union government's Rs 72,000 crore project to develop a container port at Galathea Bay, a greenfield airport, and infrastructure to support military bases will not only provide a strategic edge to Indian defence forces but also add to the trade and economic volume. The government is also reported to be upgrading the Andaman and Nicobar Command (the only tri-service command), expanding the INS Baaz and Kohassa airstrips to facilitate operations of fighter jets and surveillance aircraft, and building new jetties and logistics hubs to improve naval operations.

Meanwhile, the government should also improve the condition of the much-neglected Car Nicobar's Mus Port. Located 150 nautical miles from Sri Vijaya Puram and strategically positioned near the vital Ten Degree Channel, it can play a crucial role in assisting stranded merchant ships, the Navy, and Coast Guard vessels.

The strategic location of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and their proximity to several eastern ports will be a game-changer for India in the maritime zone and increase New Delhi's dominance in Indo-Pacific.

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India and the Information Warfare–Arbitrating its Way Through the Western Gaze Amidst the Trade and Geopolitical Conflicts

By Gargi Gothe

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India has come to the centre of world politics after Operation Sindoor which not only gave a befitting response to the ghastly terror attack in Pahalgam but also established India as one of the most militarily equipped and prepared countries on the global stage. Once a 'third world country' and still known as the 'exotic land of snake charmers' by some in the West, India climbed its way up the economic ladder, now becoming the fourth largest, forging strong strategic and military alliances, manufacturing some of the most sophisticated weapon's systems and steadily establishing itself as one of the global leaders. These advances, however, destabilize many core beliefs of leaders in the West, even threaten the already existing colonial gaze through which most of the Western world has viewed India and its progress till now.

Simply put the 'Western gaze' can be described as an intellectual, ethical privileged vantage point from which the Western countries have often viewed the world, seldom acknowledging their challenges or even their accomplishments. India, currently has come to the CenterStage of this colonial gaze, overthrowing its role as a subject and asserting its influence globally amidst the conflict with Pakistan, and the ongoing tensions with the US over trade tariffs.

Western Media: Disseminating Information or Forming Perceptions?

Operation Sindoor also saw a burst of misinformation and disinformation not just coming from India's adversaries but also the Western media propagating and promoting false narratives to suit local civilian sensibilities, thereby keeping their viewers titillated and, on their toes, - debating and anticipating further action. Thus started the information warfare where manipulation was key, and keeping the countries engaged in conflict was necessary for the narrative to thrive. What started as a reckless dissemination of information by the Western media without factchecking, led to a series of calculated attacks on Indian claims, thus challenging the integrity and legitimacy of the information shared by the Indian Armed Forces. Pakistan and China though orchestrated this disinformation campaign; one cannot deny the role of Western media in promulgating falsity over facts.

While the border disputes between India, and its hostile neighbours remains at the epicentre, keeping India engaged with the two; this information warfare plays a vital role in shaping, reshaping, and reimagining India's identity and global perception, especially when the nation has a century and half long colonial baggage to discard from its back.

Trade, Tariffs, and Economic Colonialism

Trade being one of the strongest pillars of any country's economy, it comes as no surprise that the country most successful in establishing and sustaining itself in the global market, would also have strong international partnerships and alliances, be technologically advanced, and ultimately exert global influence. India's exports, over the years have once again grown steadily, with an upward trajectory, thanks to its indigenous manufacturing and vast supply chain. India traded with most of the world for more than 2000 years; incidentally which also lured European colonies to India- something they systematically exploited and later destroyed, now witnesses a steady growth, once again. Thus, India's economy far from "dead", has ascended in the last few years. While it would be unwisely optimistic to say that the nation has solved all challenges like inflation, poverty, and unemployment, but to address it as a "dead economy" is blatant refusal to acknowledge its growing economic prowess in areas like the country's robust exports, a thriving service and IT industry, and its domestic market. Whether it is the recent stand of the US President on tariffs on Indian goods as an attempt to dissuade India from importing Russian oil, or him playing the 'peacemaker', claiming to end major kinetic conflicts in the world, one cannot ignore but see the stark colonial mindset taking form, attempting to establish a 'civilized' world order- one that only acknowledges and gives credence to the supremacy of the West. One can see the "White Man's Burden" manifesting and disparaging multilateral relations in favour of bilateralism and unilateralism. This shift in approach prioritizes coercion through economic sanctions over dialogue and collective decision-making.

The domineering stance of the US President against India makes this even more evident and brings back parallels from history when the British levied heavy taxes on Indian industries. As India emerges to become the economic powerhouse racing to become the third largest, it is apparent that the West, crippled with its colonial mindset attempts to assume monopoly in the global market, asserting its hegemony by thumping erratic claims and attempting to force India's hand. This 'imperialistic offensive', far from seeking global partnerships and cooperation, uses tariff as a weapon to further subjugate and restrict trade. This 'Neocolonialism' (coined by Jean Paul Sartre in the 1960s and later popularized by Kwame Nkrumah) is a modern, subtle form of imperialistic approach through which the West attempts to exert control and influence over the developing countries, and their culture, trade, even internal politics. The 'weaponization' of trade through punitive sanctions has an impact that echoes beyond economics and trade and splinter the possibilities of potential partnerships. The current use restrictive trade policies to marginalize growing economies and challenge their economic sovereignty disproportionately favours the West, while also destabilizing the global economic order.

The attempts to restore Western dominance over the world often by ‘othering’ and intimidating countries and cultures echoes the very ideals of colonialism. Such inconsistent, and sporadic outbursts of show of strength no matter how impressive on the domestic front for the US, not only threaten public perceptions of its bilateral relations with India but also question its sustainability. While the US President’s hegemonic stance on immigration, trade, and foreign policy not just continues to divide cultures, but also jeopardizes the new world order that attempts to fine balance national security, economic prosperity, and international relations.

India’s Stance on Western Hegemony

The Indian economy will certainly bear the heat of the current ‘Trade War’, even impede Indian exports to the US but it also gives India an opportunity to pitch competitive prices for its products in the wider international market. What makes this period crucial for India is how it fine balances its ability to self-sustain by not just boosting indigenous manufacturing but also securing a strong marketplace for these goods on the domestic front. Imposing tariff as a punitive measure not only attempts to subvert India’s global economic presence but also stretches the fine threads of foreign trade policy between India and the US. The unequivocal voice of the government and its ministers, however, echoes a clear, unnegotiable stance against foreign hegemony and intervention, and India’s international relations, national security, and its internal matters. The role of media in disseminating facts and deconstructing the ‘Western gaze’ here becomes vital. Intelligence in the form of information also becomes key to retaliating geopolitical tensions and leveraging the nation’s preparedness to deflect disinformation.

The task of building a progressive India envisioned by generations of able leaders and advisors the nation has seen, also has an invisible battle to fight- that of narratives woven by its enemies, only to be reinforced by the West. Navigating through this mirage of misled public perceptions and misplaced loyalties, is the real challenge for India if it must turn the tables on the ‘Western gaze’ and have an upper hand in deciding how India wants to be perceived. Whether it was to isolate India to impede its nuclear program in the past or to levy unreasonably heavy tariffs as a deterrence now, the West has habitually attempted to assert its supremacy and monopoly in the global context.

While the conflicts continue, India negotiates for itself, with its strategic relations witnessing a certain repositioning. What is also required is to go beyond the doctrine of diplomacy and establish solid economic groundwork to absorb the external shocks of the aftermath of these sanctions. While the superstructure of the world economy continues to be ruled by the West, emerging economies like India can strengthen its domestic market and internal reforms; and continue to align its foreign policy that is multilateral and dialogue driven. Thus, India choosing to either go offensive or defensive in combating any national security threat without bowing to any external pressure or the fear of antagonizing the West, certainly gives India a strategic advantage to maintain its international relations and internal security. This autonomy keeps India in the race to strategically arbitrate both policies and perceptions as it navigates its way through the Western pride and prejudice.

From Deckplates to Think Tanks: Holding a Compass in a Spinning World

By Commodore (Dr) Johnson Odakkal, Indian Navy (Retd)

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From deckplates to think tanks, I have seen power in motion. At sea, it moves with the steel of hulls and the rhythm of deployments. In classrooms and strategy rooms, it moves with ideas, models, and narratives. Both are real, both shape our world, and both demand a steady hand on the compass.

In 2025, that compass seems to be spinning wildly. Alliances fracture, blocs consolidate, technologies redefine sovereignty, and entire regions are rewriting their place on the global chart. For a world conditioned by familiar coordinates of power, the sudden tilts of this multipolar order feel disorienting. How then does one navigate? The answer lies in bringing together lived experience, historical memory, and critical thinking — in calibrating a compass that can hold steady even as the gyro spins.

Lessons on Power in Motion

My first education in geopolitics was not in lecture halls or policy papers but on the deckplates of naval ships. There, in the humid winds of the Indian Ocean and the sharp chill of northern seas, I learned that global politics is not an abstraction. It is convoy escorts, maritime patrols, and port visits that signal presence, deterrence, or solidarity.

Maritime chokepoints taught me this viscerally. The Strait of Hormuz, where a narrow passage carries a fifth of the world's oil. The Malacca Strait, lifeline of Asian trade. Bab el-Mandeb, gateway to the Red Sea. Each chokepoint is a reminder that sovereignty and security are not theoretical - they are exercised by hulls in the water, radar on watch, and sailors at their stations.

From the deckplates, one sees power in motion. A fleet maneuver is not just tactical; it is a message in steel. A port call is not just logistics; it is diplomacy with flags and uniforms. A naval exercise is not just practice; it is assurance to partners and warning to rivals. These early lessons have never left me. They taught me that strategy is experienced before it is theorized.

The Horizon of 2025: New Fleet Formations

Looking across today's horizon, I see familiar patterns, fleets forming, converging, colliding, but in very different seas.

China's flagship sails high. At the Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit in Tianjin this year, Beijing pushed for a yuan-denominated energy corridor, an SCO development bank, and greater technological integration through the BeiDou satellite system. Alongside Russia, Iran, and North Korea — the so-called CRINKs — China is building a bloc that challenges the dominance of Western-led institutions. The imagery is striking Xi, Putin, and Kim sharing a stage at Beijing's military parade. A choreographed reminder that authoritarian powers are no longer shy of being seen together.

The U.S. and India collide in contested waters. Despite being called natural allies, 2025 has seen frictions: Washington's steep tariffs on Indian imports, India's strategic autonomy in energy sourcing, and the balancing act of being in Quad exercises while engaging with BRICS expansion. Like ships maneuvering too close in narrow seas, these collisions do not mean hostility, but they underscore the difficulty of coordination when priorities diverge.

Europe arms itself into a new battle group. After decades of relying on transatlantic guarantees, the European Union has turbocharged its defense posture with an €800 billion plan. The message is that Europe is no longer content to be a dependent convoy; it seeks to steam ahead as an independent task force.

Technology fleets dominate the new sea lanes. AI systems, digital sovereignty, and energy technologies are the new carriers and destroyers. Control over data flows and algorithmic governance is fast becoming as decisive as naval dominance once was in the Indian Ocean. Technology giants increasingly resemble digital sovereigns — not just tools of states but actors shaping public discourse and strategic choices.

These new “fleet formations” reveal the reality of 2025: multipolarity is not theoretical anymore. The world’s task forces are assembled, but their rules of navigation are not yet agreed.

On to Seminar Rooms: Thinking About Power

If the deckplates taught me what power looks like in motion, the seminar rooms and think tanks taught me what power looks like on paper. War games, strategy models, policy briefs — all attempt to capture the motion of power in diagrams, projections, and scenarios.

Yet here, an epistemic perspective is useful: Who decides what counts as authoritative knowledge in geopolitics?

- For decades, knowledge was hierarchical. States, militaries, and their think tanks defined the narratives.
- Today, new knowers enter the room: AI systems producing simulations, grassroots movements reshaping agendas, regional blocs like BRICS or the Alliance of Sahel States asserting alternative discourses.
- Expertise itself is contested. Is a naval officer with lived deployments more credible than a policy analyst with datasets? Is an AI forecast a knowledge claim or a statistical guess? TOK reminds us that knowledge is not only what is said but who says it, and who accepts it.

The risk is that think tanks become echo chambers, reinforcing their own assumptions, while AI systems produce outputs without human judgment. The challenge is not to abandon theory, but to ensure that experience, history, and epistemic humility guide how we interpret models.

India’s Bearings in a Multipolar Sea

In this turbulent ocean, India finds itself both a ship in the fleet and a potential provider of bearings.

Historically, India has been a maritime civilization, with the Indian Ocean as its crossroads of trade and encounter. Culturally, it has navigated pluralism, balancing multiple faiths and traditions. Strategically, it has guarded its autonomy, resisting being a camp follower in global blocs.

In 2025, India faces difficult waters. U.S. pressure on trade and energy, Chinese assertiveness along borders and seas, and Russian ties that are both legacy and liability. Yet India’s civilizational ethos, of dialogue, diversity, and knowledge, offers more than just another ship in the lineup. It offers a compass.

India does not need to merely balance blocs. It can articulate a perspective that sees power not only as coercion or currency but as responsibility, responsibility for stability, for freedom of navigation, for inclusive development, and for critical thinking. If the world is spinning, India can be an anchor, not because it is flawless, but because it knows what it means to navigate contradictions.

Mentorship as Compass Calibration

As I turn sixty, I am mindful of the responsibility not just to read the compass but to hand it down calibrated. The greatest danger in a spinning world is not disorientation but the absence of guides who can steady younger hands.

Every classroom I teach in, whether Global Politics or Theory of Knowledge, is a miniature think tank. There, I see students wrestling with concepts of power, justice, sovereignty, and human rights. There, I see the temptation of quick answers and the allure of simplistic narratives. And there, I see the opportunity to equip them with intellectual compasses that will help them navigate beyond exams into life.

Mentorship is not about dictating routes. It is about teaching how to read bearings, how to question assumptions, how to balance reason with empathy. Just as a naval navigator must constantly correct for drift and current, so must young scholars learn to adjust their course without losing their destination.

The compass we hand down must be ethical imagination — the capacity to see not only where power lies, but where responsibility lies.

Holding a Compass in a Spinning World

In 2025, the gyrocompass spins wildly. The CRINKs bloc parades its defiance, Western alliance's strain, AI redraws sovereignty, and the Global South asserts new alignments. For many, the world seems unmoored, without fixed bearings.

Yet clarity is possible. History shows us patterns, lived experience shows us consequences, and critical thinking shows us questions worth asking. From deckplates to think tanks, I have seen power in motion. But motion without bearings is drift.

The greater task before us is not to predict every wave but to hold the compass steady. To teach, to mentor, to guide — so that in the spinning world, a generation of navigators will emerge who can chart courses responsibly, with wisdom and courage.

The seas are uncertain. The compass may spin. But the responsibility to navigate remains ours.

Repercussions of the Israeli Attack on Doha

By Vappala Balachandran

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There are indications that the Israeli attack on the Hamas office in Doha on 09 September 2025 is heavily recoiling on the Netanyahu government. Wes Streeting, United Kingdom's (UK) Health Secretary warned on September 09 that the "Netanyahu government's handling of the Gaza war is leading Israel to pariah status."

This was on the eve of Israeli President Herzog's visit to UK to express solidarity with the British Jewish community, which, Herzog's office alleged, "is under severe attack and facing a wave of antisemitism." However, Streeting insisted that Herzog "needs to answer the allegations of war crimes, of ethnic cleansing and of genocide that are being levelled at the government of Israel."

"+ 972 Magazine", an Israeli left-wing periodical said in a survey in December 2014 that over 70 percent of Israelis were worried about international isolation. Israel, which is heavily reliant on foreign trade and investment, always wishes to be part of the Western democracies as it has less resilience, unlike Iran and Russia, to "cope economically, militarily, and psychologically with sanctions and global disapprobation", as the magazine "Foreign Policy" said recently.

Significantly on September 8 British Prime Minister Keir Starmer hosted Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas at 10 Downing Street. The PM is reported to have promised "to recognise a Palestinian State ahead of the U.N. General Assembly later this month unless Israel changes course". Spain, Ireland and Norway have already announced recognition while Belgium, Australia, Portugal, Canada and Malta have stated plans to go with Britain and France in recognising Palestinian statehood joining more than 140 other countries.

Los Angeles Times (11 September) said that American credibility in the Gulf States was the first casualty when Israel attacked the Hamas office in Doha on the 9th as these States thought that their security was assured with "tens of billions of their petrodollars and agreements that allowed

the U.S. to dot the Middle East with some of its largest military facilities". It was particularly incredulous that Israel, which depends mainly on America for its existence, could attack Qatar, which hosts Al Udeid Air Base, the largest American military installation in the region.

It was also a personal insult to President Donald Trump as he had signed the US-Qatar economic agreement valued at US \$1.2 trillion in May this year, which he had described as "historic", besides accepting a luxury jet as an "unconditional donation". As a result, the US joined other members at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in condemning the attack, an unprecedented action, as America always vetoes anti-Israel resolutions. During the UNSC meeting Qatari Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman al-Thani alleged that the Israeli government was "led by blustering extremists."

Personally, Trump exhibited his exasperation by saying that the raid did not "advance Israel or America's goals" as Qatar was hosting Hamas leaders since 2012 for "indirect negotiations" with Israel, as desired by America. Also, the "Abraham Accords" initiated by Trump in September 2020 towards normalisation of Israel – Arab States relations lay in tatters as United Arab Emirates (UAE), one of the important signatories, slammed the "blatant and cowardly Israeli attack that targeted the State of Qatar"

Abu Dhabi also summoned the Israeli ambassador to convey that any aggression against a Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member State was considered "an attack on the collective Gulf security framework". The attack marked the first direct strike by Israel on one of the member States of the Gulf Cooperation Council. Even before this, relations between Abu Dhabi and Israel had begun to deteriorate after the Netanyahu government's open threat over a planned discussion on the West Bank annexation, which the UAE had said would constitute a "red line."

"Politico" reported on September 9 that Trump and his top aides had come to question whether Netanyahu, who authorised the strike, "was trying to sabotage the talks", It quoted a White house insider: "Every time they're making progress, it seems like he bombs someone, the person said. That's why the President and his aides are so frustrated with Netanyahu."

The Israeli newspaper "Haaretz" reported on September 13 that U.S. President Trump had dinner with the Qatari prime minister in New York, days after Israel attacked Hamas leaders in Doha. They were joined by U.S. special envoy Steve Witkoff.

Netanyahu had alleged that Qatar was the chief financier of Hamas terrorists besides hosting them in their country. This was contested by independent observers who quoted an op-ed piece in The Wall Street Journal (WSJ) in 2023, by the Qatari ambassador to the US, Sheikh Meshal bin Hamad Al Thani that Washington wanted Qatar "to establish indirect lines of communication with Hamas".

Al Thani had added: "The presence of the Hamas office shouldn't be confused with endorsement but rather establishes an important channel for indirect communication". The New York Times on December 10, 2023, confirmed that Benjamin Netanyahu had secretly approved this contact through Doha.

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India is Proud of:

Sagarmal Gopa

**Freedom Fighter, Author, Human Rights Activist of Jaisalmer
(03 Nov 1900 - 04 April 1946)**



Once a freedom fighter was killed at the age of 45 in prison in Jaisalmer in the most cruel way, Sagarmal Gopa was one of those who dared to challenge the might of the cruel royal kingdoms which often operated in even more arbitrary ways than the main colonial government and provided hardly any avenues for dissent. Gopa stood up against such arbitrary rulers time and again and finally sacrificed his life at a young age.

His life appears all the more courageous if one remembers that he came from a family which had generally served the royal family and lived under the patronage of the rulers of Jaisalmer, in the Thar desert (present day Rajasthan). A similar option of a comfortable life was clearly open to Gopa also but he clearly rejected this and opted for a life devoted to resisting injustice, no matter how high the cost for him.

Sagarmal Gopa was a brilliant scholar and author and represented the group of intellectual activists in the freedom movement.

Gopa was devoted to serious study from a very young age and to spread the reading habit among people he started a library at the age of only 15. At the age of 20 he participated in the national non-cooperation movement.

His study made him aware of the severe restrictions, suppressions and injustices within which the royal family tried to run the affairs of the kingdom and he just could not accept the comforts and security that came with accepting the patronage of such a royalty.

He wrote in a very courageous way against the injustices of the kingdom which at times appeared to warn and at times to even mock the royalty, using prose as well as poetry. Very few persons would have dared to think of writing a book with the title—Jaisalmer Rajya Ka Goonda Raj (How Goons Rule in the Kingdom of Jaisalmer), but this is precisely what Gopa did. He also documented the inspiring work of other freedom fighters in a book Azadi Ke Deewane. He documented injustices and was a fearless orator as well.

As might be expected, his father soon lost his job and his family had to soon leave Jaisalmer. They shifted to Nagpur which became the new centre of the activities of Gopa. He continued to champion the cause of the freedom fighters in various kingdoms. As a result his entry was banned not just in Jaisalmer but in Hyderabad as well. Clearly, he was establishing wider connections.

A life based on writings and activism continued in Nagpur, but Gopa felt a special responsibility towards Jaisalmer. Attempts to set up Congress type movements in kingdoms called Prajamandals were being made in several kingdoms including Jaisalmer. Gopa was trying to reach out to people in Jaisalmer and it appears that he was able to get some sort of a commitment from official sources of safe visit if he tried to go back, which was actually a trap. He was taken prisoner in Jaisalmer and tortured to extract a false confession and apology from him which he refused. Thus this highly talented activist, scholar and author languished in prison for almost six years.

However as Prajamandal activities grew stronger in Jaisalmer and India also appeared to be moving towards freedom, the kingdom was even more fearful of the mobilizing capacity of their prisoner and his popularity among people. Hence his torture was stepped up and one day even blistering hot oil was poured on him. This led to painful death of Gopa at the age of only 45 on April 4, 1946. Later an official committee tried to cover up this torture and instead mentioned a suicide, but this carried hardly any credibility.

The Government of India and the Department of Posts pays tribute to this great martyr by issuing a commemorative stamp in his honour on December 29, 1986, for the series titled 'India's struggle for freedom'. A branch of the Indira Gandhi Canal is also named after him.

The great contributions of Sagarmal Gopa as a freedom fighter, writer and human rights activist will be remembered for a long time.

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