

# **FINS JOURNAL**

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# Human Trafficking and Human Smuggling: Ferries



## Introduction: Human Trafficking

Article 3, paragraph (a) of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons defines Trafficking in Persons as “*the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.*”

Human trafficking occurs not only domestically but transnationally as well. It is also considered to be the fastest growing activities of transnational criminal organizations and has resulted in a “\$32 billion dollars” annual profit, with no real cost.<sup>[2] [3]</sup> Human trafficking is considered to be highly profitable, hard to detect and the law as such is lacking, thus making the punishment incurred worth the crime for some.

The most common victims of human trafficking are women and children from poor, rural areas in developing countries. There continue to be many forms of trafficking, some of them being];

1. Trafficking for forced labour – Victims mostly originate from developing countries. They are held in conditions similar to that of slavery in various jobs.
2. Trafficking in women for sexual exploitation – This certain trafficking affects every region of the world, that is vulnerable, regardless of it being a developed or developing country. Victims are usually taken under the false pretense of decent employment to achieve a better life.
3. Commercial sexual exploitation of children in tourism – Mostly prominent in Asia but has now found a hold in Africa and South America as well.
4. Trafficking for tissue, cells and organs – This trafficking is a rapidly growing field as it is very lucrative. This is due to the fact that in most countries the waiting list for transplants is very long.

Trafficking at sea involves seafarers and fishers in the context of at-sea activities, i.e. it includes fishing, transporting and fish processing, while on vessels, rafts, fishing platforms, or otherwise offshore. This does not include any sort of shore-based operations like packaging, and any kind of port-based work.



Inadequate investigation and examination has been done for trafficking at sea as a standalone subject, be that as it may, there keeps on being an assemblage of writing on work and labour issues that fishers and seafarers might face, involving any kind of violation, infringement and exploitation they may confront. This group of learning, while not unequivocally about trafficking, can reveal insight into various parts of the seafaring and fishing sectors, including how these may converge with human trafficking and where human trafficking has gone unrecognized in this labour sector. Additionally, there have been an increase in recent reports tackling exploitation, human rights and even human trafficking. However, it stands to say that there is dearth in the information available regarding the issue of trafficking of and by seafarers and fishers

### **Human Trafficking and Human Smuggling**

In this time and age it has also become important to differentiate between human trafficking and human or migrant smuggling. Unlike human trafficking where the individual has not given any consent and is exploited, human smuggling occurs when a person voluntarily enters into an agreement with a smuggler to gain illegal entry into a foreign country and is moved across an international border. It is defined in the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea, and Air (Migrant Smuggling Protocol), supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. Nevertheless, we cannot ignore the fact that people who are smuggled can be extremely vulnerable to human trafficking, abuse, and other crimes, as they are illegally present in the country of destination and often owe large debts to their smugglers. Technically speaking, the smuggler and the migrant's relationship should come to an end as soon as the person has arrived in the destination country.<sup>[5]</sup> Nonetheless, evidence points out to something altogether different where the illegal migrants are continued to be exploited, this is done through constant threats and demands for additional fees made by the smugglers. There have been cases where migrants are forced to work for years on end in the illegal labour market to pay off the resultant debt due to their transportation. This is where both human trafficking and people smuggling start overlapping.]

Human trafficking and human smuggling are two distinct phenomena, and yet they are interlinked and partly overlapping. An important difference between both of these would be that smuggling is more of a crime that violates the national and international borders in place as compared to trafficking which is a crime which primarily violates the fundamental rights of a person.<sup>[7]</sup> The state will provide support and assistance to the victims of trafficking whereas it generally does not recognise the smuggled migrants as victims of crime.

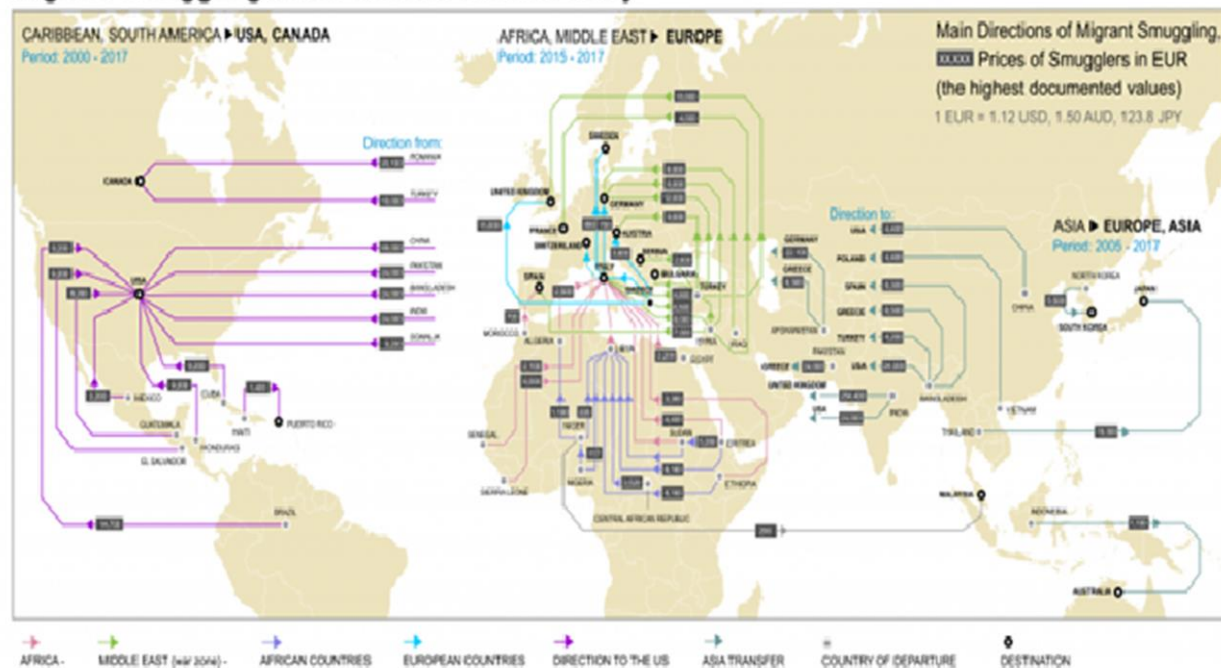
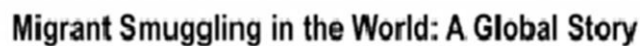
Despite all of this, the distinction between both of these crimes is not that easy to discern and authorities find themselves challenged, this includes ferry personnel.

Circumstances have indicated that smuggled migrants may become victims of trafficking, and that traffickers are also found to be acting as smugglers and use the same routes for both trafficking and smugglings. Trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants are part of a continuum of a migration process and the person who is smuggled one day may be a trafficked person the next.]

It stands to say that even if initial consent has been, it becomes legally irrelevant as the trafficker starts using threats, coercion, deception or fraud in order to exploit the victim.<sup>[10]</sup> The recent increase in migration into Europe has shown that the categories are not as clear cut e.g. in situations where female migrants are forced to provide sexual services to smugglers, or when migrants are forced to compensate the costs of smuggling through labour.

## Main Sea Routes for Human Smuggling and Human Trafficking

*“Modern slavery doesn’t happen only in warzones. It exists in areas of both darkness and plain sight of people all over the world – even at sea ... there are many, many stories ... where unscrupulous fishermen use the isolation of the sea to hide their crimes ... And the reasons aren’t hard to figure out. When criminals are able to turn a profit in an illegal fishing market, they’ll go after as many fish as possible. ...the more labor they have on board, the larger their catches will be. The economic incentives are there, which is precisely why illegal, unregulated, and unreported fishing practices have grown into a \$20 billion a year industry.” John Kerry ( Former US Secretary Of State), remark at the 2016 Trafficking in Persons Report Ceremony*



Source: IOM, visualization by MINDSČTK, 2017.

- **From Africa to Europe**

At present, there are two focal routes of smuggling from Africa to Europe, crossing the Mediterranean between Libya and Italy (the central Mediterranean route) and between Morocco and Spain (the Western Mediterranean route). Recently, a growing number of Africans have been detected to be transiting via Turkey, although the figures remain moderately low so far.



A much greater route crosses the central Mediterranean from Libya (and in 2011, Tunisia) towards Italy. Smugglers have connived to hire boats and, if they pilot them, abandon them before the rescuers can reach the terminus. There has also been noticeable flow into Italy from Egypt and Turkey. Increased expected profits and the business for traffickers on the central Mediterranean route can be seen due to the influx of relatively affluent Syrian migrants, majorly transiting from Egypt to Libya along with the increased use of social media to reach out potential clients. This has also led to the creation of comparatively new and inexpensive opportunities for African migrants who are seldom middle-class and may face difficulties in paying the huge fee demanded by smugglers for a full package trip.

- **To and across Europe**

A large number of potential refugees make up the population being smuggled to Europe through the Eastern Mediterranean route between Turkey and Greece. For example, most people fleeing Syria use the pay-as-you-go system with smugglers to reach Greece and then either contact other brokers to further reach the western Balkans or choose to travel independently.

Other routes such as from Central and Eastern Europe to the EU for the purposes of human trafficking and smuggling, are older yet persist. They are less prominent and the composition of flows and their modus operandi have changed since the 2004 and 2008 EU enlargements and subsequent visa facilitation.]

- **Smuggling routes in Asia**

In Asia, the route between Indonesia and Malaysia has been used for a long period time by smugglers to bring in Indonesians who will work illegally. Another route into Malaysia serves the Rohingyas, a Burmese minority group who are fleeing from Myanmar. Despite eras of settlement, the Rohingyas, a Muslim Minority estimated to be at 1.3 million in Myanmar have been denied citizenship and endure various restrictions on their right to marriage, family size, access to public education and adequate medical services and freedom of movement. In 2015 in the months of January to March itself about 25,000 journeyed from Bangladesh via boats in the Bay of Bengal.

### **How is the ferry industry affected?**

The most evident connection between the ferry business and human trafficking is that of transportation in the commission of the trafficking. As a result, the ferry business is by all accounts generally in a roundabout way affected; ships are utilized by people or different criminal organisation as a method for transport in carrying out human trafficking or human smuggling. According to an assessment by Swedish authorities focusing on 350 vessels in the Baltic Sea region, passenger ferries especially on the Riga-Stockholm route are used by persons with the intention of committing crimes[13]. For example, on a single trip to Sweden or from Sweden, a vessel may carry 20-30 persons with links to criminality such as drug trafficking and firearm crime.

Likewise, ferries are utilized as a method for transport in the commission of the human smuggling. For example, in Finland, every fourth case of illegal immigration was on human smuggling[14]. Notwithstanding being utilized as a method for transport for human trafficking and human smuggling, passenger ships may also in a few occasions likewise be utilized for the misuse of unfortunate victims. There have been media reports of prostitution on board passenger ships.[15] Even though such happenings are considered to be rare, the fact that this might a resultant of human trafficking cannot be ignored. In such situations, the ferry companies are more or less ignorant of the fact that the ferries are being used as sites where prostitution is offered to potential clients. Research covering the global cruise industry indicate widespread exploitation of workers' rights especially on vessels flagged under flags of convenience.[16] These include insecure contracts, low wages, debt and high living costs, extremely long working hours and high intensity, racial and gender discrimination, fatigue and inadequate training, and resistance to trade union organization by ferry companies.

## **Identifying Smuggling and Trafficking in Ferries**

Even though victim identification can be challenging, ferry staff are apt at recognising any unusual conditions on board. These skills should be honed so that the staff can learn to identify possible situations of trafficking. However, it is important to understand that law enforcement officers themselves find it challenging to identify victims on board because when travelling by ferry, the victims more or less exude personas that are travelling for legitimate purposes, such as work. Out of fear they often try to not create any sort of scene that requires attention. Nevertheless, there are certain instances where the person might be travelling against their will and are uncomfortable due their situation, which makes it easier for staff to notice such happenings. Potential instances of trafficking and, specifically, smuggling or undocumented entry, can be distinguished if and when passenger archives are checked. Random checks might be conveyed in the waiting region in the port, at the registration area in the harbour, upon embarkation and control of tickets, or in checks by security guards when entering the ship and the voyage itself. The booking office is the main spot where identity records are deliberately checked, yet just a few travellers are checked. Tickets are likewise purchased on the web and a portion of the booking office in the port have been supplanted with electronic registration booths. While it makes the journey faster for passengers and reduces personnel costs for the ferry companies, it increases the risks of undocumented entry. However, staff at the booking office may not possess sufficient experience and knowledge to recognise suspicious documents or potential situations of trafficking or smuggling.

## **Conclusion and Suggestions**

It is evident that human trafficking and human smuggling contrast in several ways even though they can overlap at times. Understanding the dissimilarities between the two criminal actions is vital if law enforcement agents are to be effective in identifying traffickers and smugglers. This is the only way to guarantee that the right treatment is given to all individuals involved in both activities.

The law enforcement experts recognize that the spotting of victims of trafficking and exploitation going on board ferries is tough, both for the experts themselves and for ferry delegates. Law enforcement and the ferry business are two altogether different entities with isolated objectives, obligations and orders, and this ought to be acknowledged when developing further methods for collaboration. There has to be sharing of information and combined response between the ferry staff and the law enforcement authorities. To strengthen this collaborative effort there have to be more systematic regular meetings between both of them, then only will there be an enhanced exchange of information. Ferry staff at the operational level would appreciate and benefit from concrete feedback by the law enforcement authorities regarding cases reported by them or where ferry staff has provided information at the request by authorities. Law enforcement representatives should thus provide ferry companies with more substantial information such as operational data and data on specific trends. Keeping in mind the increase in migration, any responsibilities imposed on the ferry companies should be done through consensus. The representatives of law enforcement agencies should also share tools and guidelines as to victim identification, with ferry companies and its staff. It should be confirmed by law enforcement agencies that the ferry staff have correct contact details for the authorities so that they be contacted as and when needed. The representatives should effectively train ferry staff on identification and intervention. This would ensure that their expertise on concrete cases is transmitted to ferry staff, avoid duplication of training efforts, and strengthen the existing communication between operational ferry staff and law enforcement representatives.



About Malvika Rangta

# Criminalisation of Seafarers

## Introduction

Millions of seafarers are the backbone of the global fishing and maritime industries. They are solely responsible for the success of these industries and to enable consistent profits from their efforts for the ship owners. It is therefore imperative that all seafarers; regardless of their nationality, gender, religion and location – and regardless of whatever vessel they work on – from the lightest of fishing trawlers to the heaviest of container ships, are protected from abuses of their human rights and labor rights.

To ensure transparency in the global maritime industry; the exposure of abuse must be of the highest priority, followed by easy access to effective remedies without any harmful consequences towards such exposures of abuse. Human rights abuses in this industry are relatively unexplored, never fully discussed and normally just ignored.

The aim of this symposium is to understand how different flag states comply with their international human rights obligations and through these findings to increase awareness of human rights abuses occurring at sea and the challenges in effectively monitoring and reporting them to competent authorities for remedial action.

Human rights obligations of Nations should ideally be applied in the maritime industry as equally and effectively as on land based industries. The fact that human rights are regularly violated at sea and remain mostly ignored is a high priority concern. The gap between human rights obligations and available means of monitoring, reporting and enforcement at sea requires a thorough examination of the manner in which key actors' contribute to the protection of human rights on board vessels, by flag States and coastal States.

The aim of this conference is to examine how flag States, especially “open registries” comply with their domestic and international human rights obligations aboard vessels registered under their flags. Moreover, the focus is to provide new insight into how to better assess flag State practice going forward.

Our purpose should be to collect and review data for the following issues:

1. To summarize the international human rights and labor obligations of each flag state, and the mechanisms and reporting procedures, if any, that each flag State has for ensuring compliance with human rights on board their vessels.
2. Highlight the lack of key information regarding the human rights obligations of each flag State;
3. Identify key contacts that could be used and approached during the outreach stage of implementation of new policies.

## REGISTRIES

The process to register a vessel under a specific flag requires several certificates and other mandatory information; such as the age of the vessel, owner's nationality, and vessel fitness certificate from its insurance company, etc.; that must be presented to and approved by the flag State registry.

- Closed registries are those that only permit vessels owned by persons residing in or companies registered in the country, to be registered under the flag of that country.
- By contrast, open registries or ‘flags of convenience’ do not impose any nationality restriction in the registration process.



The requirements of ship registries in-part ensure that the vessels are compliance with international regulations related to safety and pollution prevention, as well as living and working conditions of seafarers. In order to verify that vessels adhere to international standards set out in the Paris and Tokyo Memorandum of Understandings (MoU), Port State Control (PSC) acts as a maritime inspection and enforcement agency. PSC inspection records form the basis of this MoU's 'White', 'Grey' and 'Black' list flag ratings, which reflect high, medium and low compliance respectively.

Since the first point of compliance with internationally accepted standards is the requirements and due diligence of ship registries, they play a key role in managing human rights obligations more broadly. The registries of vessels vary significantly by type and as a result the extent of obligations placed on the owners of ships is also different.

Closed registries, offer a higher level of safeguard against the operation of a vessel that are likely to violate the terms of MoUs or other international obligations. Conversely, open registries seem to prioritize 'ease of access' over stringent compliance. Further, the distance, both physical and in organizational context, between the flag State and the private entity operating the registry may create opportunities for negligent or potentially illegal activities of ship-owners and remove a critical barrier for monitoring and enforcement of international law obligations, such as environmental legislation or safety standards.

Monitoring and enforcing human and labor standards on board vessels is also challenging, especially for those vessels registered under an open registry flag.

## **HUMAN RIGHTS OBSERVATIONS & OBLIGATIONS**

It is an inherent risk in the working lives of seafarers that they may be subjected to criminal charges either of a professional or a non-professional nature, simply due to the task of carrying out their duties. Seafaring is trans-national by nature. As seafarers transit from port to port, they are subject to the entire range of criminal laws of those port states. As foreigners, they cannot know and may not have been warned about local criminal laws, and hence they are at risk of committing an offense without any awareness or intention to do so.

Seafarers sometimes seem to be excluded from the entitlements and human rights accorded to others. Often foreign seafarers are treated differently and less fairly than nationals, and can be discriminated against. They may find themselves friendless in a strange land, facing charges that are incomprehensible to them under a wholly alien system of justice, and with defense lawyers mostly unfamiliar with the technical nuances of maritime laws and their applications where the seafarers may have infringed upon the law. Language, and the lack of adequate translation facilities, might well be a serious handicap.

Seafarers Rights International had conducted a survey of 3480 seafarers of 68 different nationalities to find out how many seafarers had faced criminal charges, and to learn more about seafarers' experiences if they had faced criminal charges. The findings in the survey raised a number of significant issues and highlighted the frequent lack of due process for those who face criminal charges:

- 8% of seafarers and 24% of masters had faced criminal charges
- 91% of seafarers who had faced criminal charges and who needed interpretation services were not provided interpretation
- 90% did not have legal representation
- 88% did not have their legal rights explained to them
- 80% felt intimidated or threatened.
- 46% said that they would be reluctant to cooperate fully and openly with casualty inquiries and accident investigations
- Overall 81% of seafarers who faced criminal charges did not consider that they had received fair treatment.
- And 85% were concerned about criminalization.

The findings of the survey were presented to the IMO Legal Committee in April 2013 under the auspices of the ITF and the International Federation of Ship masters Associations (IFSMA). The Legal Committee called on States to continue efforts to promote Guidelines and mandated that the subject should remain on the agenda of the Legal Committee.

Seafarers are recognized as a special category of worker. Given the international nature of the shipping industry and the different jurisdictions within which seafarers may face criminal prosecution, seafarers need special protection when facing criminal prosecution in order to receive fair trials. For seafarers some of the most important constituent elements are:

- The right to a fair trial
- The right to have free interpretation and translation services
- Right to have their legal rights explained to them
- Right to have legal representation during pre-trial proceedings as well as trial proceedings, and
- The right to have their communications with investigators be kept confidential when cooperating in a no-blame investigation.

## **MONITORING AND REPORTING**

With human rights obligations established with reference to the flag State, it is now necessary to identify specific human rights monitoring organizations, and to define the procedures that seafarers should follow in order to report human-rights abuses on board vessels. In doing so, we have to seek National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and other relevant sources of monitoring and reporting.

The Paris and Tokyo MoUs are of significant relevance in this respect, as they provide evidence of flag performance in relation to inspections and detentions. MoUs incorporate a three-level grade of compliance; White, Grey and Black, which indicate high to low compliance. Usually, States on the black list have demonstrated poor performance with many of their vessels having been detained. Under the Paris MoU, flag State performance is determined by the total number of inspections and detentions over a 3-year period. Flag States classified as ‘White’ are considered as high-compliance flags, while ‘Black’ listed flag states have a poor inspection performance records.

Most Nation-State flag vessels are considered as a White or low risk flag State under the Paris and Tokyo Memorandum of Understanding. The European Union Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) has adopted the same system of classification (Low Risk Profile, Standard Risk Profile or High-Risk Profile). Member States of the EU undertake inspections of ships calling at their ports through the PSC system. Most global Nations conduct expanded inspections of foreign-flagged ships calling at ports or anchorages, which consist of detailed checks of construction elements and safety systems, such as the structural condition of the ship, the emergency system, fire safety systems or life-saving appliances. While human rights are not central to these inspections, seafarers’ living and working conditions are taken into account into deciding whether the ships meet the requirements to qualify as a “low risk profile”.

In terms of human rights monitoring, the treaties ratified by the member nations are not directly legally enforceable in each-others respective courts, but they do constitute binding obligations in international law. This means the Parliament, the Human Rights Commission and civil society can hold the Government accountable to the terms of the treaties. Trade unions are found to be a valuable lobbying mechanism for individuals who have complaints about rights violations and claim to fill in the monitoring gaps left by other agencies. However, it is not clear which national mechanisms are available to seafarers or individuals on board vessels whose rights have been violated, nor to what extent trade unions influence governmental policies and the protection of human rights.

Research till date indicates that there may be little correlation between a State's human rights record and its status in the MoU. States with 'white' status reflects their high ratification of human rights treaties and would indicate a higher level of compliance with its human rights obligations. For example the country of Marshall Islands has attained 'white' status, despite its low ratification rate and the lack of accessible information with regards to human rights compliance and Panama is amongst the blacklisted flag states, a ranking reflective of its inadequacies concerning both human rights and maritime standards. It is, therefore, uncertain how informative an indicator the MoU inspections can be in terms of being well equipped to identify and monitor human rights standards, specifically whether they can identify systematic practices of human rights violations, such as human trafficking or ill treatment of seafarers or persons on board that vessel, or whether their inspections retains a focus only on structural and safety standards of the vessel.

## Overview

- Specific monitoring and reporting mechanisms dealing with human rights violations are lacking or absent, especially those dealing specifically with violations at sea.
- There is uncertainty due to the absence of public complaints procedures that would guarantee effective redress for human rights abuses on board vessels.
- Seafarers are especially vulnerable for being isolated in the ocean for long periods of time and therefore require a public, accessible and transparent procedure which ensures that they are not being exploited or left unprotected.

These mechanisms should be made clear to seafarers prior to their maritime activities, both as a registration requirement and through accessible, clear and simple procedures published on relevant websites.

Any system of human rights protection system relies heavily on the availability of resources and political will. The size of the State on the one hand combined with the lack of resources and the size of the registry on the other hand, makes it even more difficult for such a monitoring mechanism to exist. Further, open registries such as those described, place emphasis on economic viability rather than on the protection of the human rights of seafarers. Available means for seafarers to submit complaints concerning human rights violations as well as public information regarding this issue are lacking. This could be interpreted as a lack of political will to accommodate for and protect the human rights of seafarers.

While the Paris and Tokyo MOUs classification is relevant in assessing the compliance of flag states with international safety, security and environmental standards, the extent to which the White, Grey and Black rating indicate actual adherence to human rights obligations is questionable. Thus, the MOUs should consider providing expanded rationale for ratings and publicize data used to assign ratings. Human rights instruments ratification record and human rights compliance should be an important criterion when determining whether a flag state meets the standards required to qualify as a "White" flag state.

The following questions are important in this aspect:

1. How do you [flag State] ensure the protection of the human rights of seafarers on board vessels registered under your flag?
2. How can seafarers report human rights violations on board vessels that fly your flag?
3. How many complaints are received by the flag administration each year?
4. How do you investigate allegations of human rights abuses under your jurisdiction?
5. What remedies do you have in place for human rights violations on board vessels registered under your flag?
6. Do you have any human rights reporting and assurance requirements for vessels registered under your flag?

## Recommendations

1. Flag States should consider ratifying the core UN human rights treaties, IMO and ILO Conventions which provide for safety, human and labor standards.
2. Specific monitoring mechanisms for ensuring the compliance of a flag State with its human rights obligations onboard vessels should be put in place. In cases where the ship registries operate outside the flag State, the latter should be involved in the monitoring process.
3. Reporting mechanisms should be put in place that will allow persons on board vessels to complain of human rights abuses. In cases where these mechanisms are in place, they should become more accessible and user-friendly. Relevant information on how these can be accessed, and the reporting procedure and remedies should become available online by each flag State.

Compliance with human rights on board vessels should also be considered for listing flag States under MOUs. In cases where MoUs do consider this in their rating process, it should be explained how human rights compliance is measured.

## About Capt Pankaj Kapoor



# India's Strategic Statecraft with Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Countries

## Introduction:

The Gulf region is perhaps the most important region for India, even though the fact is less commonly recognised (Kumarswamy, 2014), as it occupies a pivotal place in India's political, economic, cultural, religious and strategic interests and policies. About 6.5 million Indians living in the region remit a huge amount of money to India. The amount of remittance coming from abroad was estimated to be the US \$ 71 billion and around fifty per cent of the remittance is from the Gulf region. The Gulf region has always been significant to India because of geo-strategic location, availability of energy resources, home for the Indian diaspora. India's trade and economic ties with the region which are around the US \$ 160 billion are growing. About 60 per cent of oil is imported from this region. India has a definite interest in the balanced and peaceful strategic environment in the Gulf countries which are the source of two-thirds of India's crude oil requirements and form the largest trading regional block for India, accounting for 23.7 per cent of Indian trade

## Relations in retrospect

Indo-Gulf relations remained primarily commercial without strategic dimension despite the region being India's largest trading partner, supplier of about two thirds of oil and gas imports and home to 8.5 million strong Indian diaspora. India's failure to build upon the growing trade relations with Gulf region can be attributed to: First, trade relations continued to remain mercantile devoid of larger strategic vision. Two, decisions in the Gulf countries take place at the highest level, often by the ruler. Sending members of Ministry of External Affairs suffers from hierarchical deficiencies. In eyes of Arabs, low level Indian delegates lack necessary mandate to make sensitive decisions (Kumarswamy, 2014).

## Reorientation of India – Gulf region Foreign Policy

A reorientation of Indian foreign policy in Gulf region is seen since Mr. Narendra Modi became Prime Minister, as the region has been receiving considerable political, diplomatic, strategic, economic attention and a new focus towards the Gulf region was brought about by Mr. Modi's active role and engagement with overseas Indian community in the Gulf (Kumarswamy, 2018).

## Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is a consortium of six oil-exporting countries, created in 1981 to foster economic, scientific and business cooperation. These countries are among the wealthiest countries in the world and consist of the following:

1. **The Kingdom of Bahrain** – Its 1.2 million people enjoy a GDP per capita of \$50,700. Its economy grew by 3.0 per cent in 2016.
2. **Kuwait** – Its 2.8 million residents enjoy the 11th highest standard of living in the world (\$71,900 per person). The country holds 6 per cent of the world's oil reserves.
3. **The Sultanate of Oman** – With dwindling oil reserves it must rely on tourism more to improve the lifestyle of its 3.4 million residents. Its GDP per capita is \$46,100.
4. **Qatar** – The second richest country in the world, with a GDP per capita of \$125,100 for each of its 2.3 million residents. It has 25 billion barrels of proven oil reserves and 13% of the world's natural gas reserves.
5. **The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia** – The largest of the GCC countries (28.5 million people) has 16 per cent of the world's proven oil reserves. Its GDP per capita is \$55,300.
6. **The United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.)** – Its 6 million people enjoy a per capita GDP of \$68,100. Abu Dhabi has proven oil reserves of 92 billion barrels (Amadeo, 2017).

Aware of impending problems of relying on finite resources such as oil, the GCC countries embarked on massive diversification and investment programmes to reduce their dependence on those resources for income (Sultan, 2012). During the last decade, the GCC countries embarked on massive infrastructural programmes aimed at diversifying their economies and creating job opportunities for their citizens, spending hundreds of billions of petrodollars on building new cities; accumulating massive financial reserves (known as Sovereign Wealth Funds or SWFs) and using them to invest internationally through buying commercial outlets and shareholdings in major foreign businesses (Sultan, 2012). U.A.E. wants to become the world's new tourist attraction. Qatar hopes to become destination for world events and conferences. Saudi Arabia is trying to become the region's economic powerhouse. Some GCC countries like U.A.E. have invested in renewable and potential future energy fuels such as solar and nuclear (Sultan, 2012). Kawach (2009) believes that GCC countries could spend about US \$ 200 billion on such projects in next two decades. Unlike previous years when economic growth was driven mainly by government spending, the private sector is expected to play an important role in future development in GCC countries. The non oil growth in the GCC countries has been driven by the newly emerging private sector. In Dubai, for example, non oil sector in mid1990s were already contributing 82 % of the emirates GDP and in 2006, the figure may have been 95 % (Davidson, 2008). Partnerships between private and public sectors became more widespread. Projects in infrastructure and utilities are carefully selected and implemented according to a predetermined framework and are linked to macro indicators (Saif, 2009).

The 36th annual GCC summit took place in Riyadh on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2015 which saw a broad consensus on a variety of political, social, and economic issues such as combating extremism, security cooperation, economic integration, support for a political solution to crises in Yemen and Syria, and firm support for the Palestinian cause (*Gulf News*, 2015). The 37th annual GCC summit was held in Manama, Bahrain on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2016 (*Arab News*, 2016). The promotion of GCC unity and economic integration among the GCC member states was one of the important points of discussion. Their prime focus was on stopping terror-financing (Khatana, 2018).

### **Challenging Gulf Scenario**

The changing dynamics of domestic and regional politics in the Middle East ensured continued turbulence during 2015 and 2016. The GCC monarchies remained embroiled in firefighting issues, ranging from economic troubles due to lower oil prices, Saudi-led military intervention in Yemen, the ISIS threat, and growing Iranian regional influence (Khatana, 2018). The 2011 'Arab Spring' had been a fundamental change for many Arab countries, but with the exception of Bahrain and Oman, the GCC countries in general seem to have been an oasis of relative calm compared with to the rest of the Middle East region (Ramady, 2012). This belies the fact that underneath the calm there are fundamental forces of change also taking place in all GCC countries, affecting the blocs' economic, social and political destiny (Ramady, 2012). Regional upheavals have brought about internal tensions among the GCC member-states. The Qatari support for Egyptian Islamists angered al-Saud and contributed to a temporary breach of diplomatic relations in 2014 when Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and the U.A.E. withdrew their Ambassadors from Qatar (Kirkpatrick, 2014). While Oman did not join hands with this Saudi-led move, Kuwait sought to mediate. Even though the three ambassadors returned to Qatar in December 2014, tensions continued. The Saudi-led military offensive against Yemen, *Operation Decisive Storm* (March–April 2014) and *Operation Restoring Hope* (April 2015– present) highlighted differences within the GCC. Saudi Arabia blamed Iran for Yemeni crisis. Oman maintained its neutrality, partly due to its traditional policy of regional autonomy and partly due to closer ties with Iran. Other GCC countries joined Saudi-led military offensive that was launched. The popular protests which began in Tunisia in December 2010, continue to dominate the regional political landscape. However, with the exception of Yemen, the Arab states along the Persian Gulf have largely weathered the Arab Spring and its adverse effects. The Gulf monarchs settled for popular co-option through financial largesse to blunt the demands for political reforms (Kumarswamy, 2018). The oil prices—which had reached US\$ 60 per barrel in December 2014—continued to fall, and dropped to US\$ 50 per barrel in December 2016 primarily due to slow growth of the global economy and energy alternatives.

Falling oil prices also affected the oil-rich Gulf Arab countries which faced huge budget deficits. All GCC countries were forced to introduce a small portion of taxes to meet budgetary deficits. Saudi Arabia imposed limits on overseas remittances by its expatriate workers (Flanagan, 2011). Bahrain reduced subsidies on key issues such as water, electricity and fuel (Naar, 2016). Saudi Arabia and Kuwait were forced to dip into their sovereign wealth to bridge current account deficits (Townsend, 2016). According to Al-Rasheed (2017) economic prosperity, the enabling back bone of Gulf political ambitions, is now stumbling under the pressure of drastic decline in oil prices. In anticipation of the damage, many GCC countries already adopted economic and social visions for reform; Saudi Arabia was the last country to join the visionary trail of economic transformation in April 2016 when it announced the implementation of Vision 2030. If thoroughly implemented, the visions are bound to impact traditional domestic Gulf politics and the ability of governments to continue to convince domestic and global audiences of the merits of stability and security at the expense of political dynamism. The visions are confined to moving state centred oil-based capitalist economies into open neo-liberal finance, privatisation, knowledge, diversification and greater consumption, without any visible political transformations. The silence with regard to political transformations has not gone without notice. Even the most loyal of Gulf nationals lament the absence of dynamic political culture across the six GCC states (Al-Rasheed, 2017).

The 2017–18 Qatar diplomatic crisis began when Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt abruptly cut off diplomatic relations with Qatar in June 2017 withdrawing ambassadors and imposing trade and travel bans. The crisis is an escalation of the Qatar-Saudi Arabia proxy conflict. The Saudi-led coalition cited Qatar's alleged support for terrorism as the main reason for their actions. Saudi Arabia and other countries have criticised Qatar's relation with Iran. On 27<sup>th</sup> July 2017, the Qatari foreign minister Mr. Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani indicated that Egypt, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Bahrain were showing 'stubbornness' to Qatar and had not taken any steps to solve the crisis. On 24<sup>th</sup> August 2017, Qatar announced restoration of full diplomatic relations with Iran. Saudi Arabia and the UAE notified ports and shipping agents not to receive Qatari vessels or ships owned by Qatari companies or individuals. Saudi Arabia closed the border with Qatar. Saudi Arabia restricted its airspace to Qatar Airways. Qatar was forced to reroute flights to Africa and Europe through Iranian airspace. Saudi Arabia's central bank advised banks not to trade with Qatari banks in Qatari riyals. The Foreign Ministry of Qatar criticised the ban, arguing that it undermined Qatar's sovereignty. All GCC countries involved in the announcement ordered their citizens out of Qatar. Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain gave Qatari visitors and residents two weeks to leave their countries. The foreign ministries of Bahrain and Egypt gave Qatari diplomats 48 hours to leave their countries. Kuwait and Oman remained neutral. Kuwaiti mediators in Riyadh were presented with a list of Saudi demands of Qatar. These included cutting off all links with Iran and expelling resident members of Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood, curbs on the freedom of al-Jazeera, to stop 'interfering' in foreign countries' affairs and to cease any funding or support for terrorist organisations (Wikipedia, 2018). Regional tensions, the sectarian divide, Arab-Persian political rivalry, falling oil prices marked 2015 and 2016 (Kumarswamy, 2018).

### **India and GCC Economic Relations**

The importance of GCC for India lies in its energy security, the volume of trade, and the large presence of Indian expatriates. Due to lower oil prices and international slowdown, trade figures witnessed more than 30 per cent decline between 2013 and 2016 (Khatana, 2018). As a result, India's trade deficit with the GCC has fallen from US\$ 46 billion to US\$ 14 billion in last three years (*The Hindu*, 2016). The drop in oil prices also impacted remittances from the region, leading to a 2.2 per cent fall, which occurred for the first time in last six years. In 2014–15, remittances to India from the GCC amounted to US\$ 36.7 billion, and dropped slightly to US\$ 35.9 billion in 2015–16 (*The Hindu*, 2016). According to the World Bank, if oil prices stay low for a prolonged period, or undergo unforeseen drops, remittances from GCC to India could fall further in the future (Bundhun, 2016). It is important to note that GCC countries are the biggest source, contributing about 60 per cent of total remittances received by India in 2015–16 which contributed nearly 3.3 per cent to its GDP.

In the given situation, Bahrain offers less opportunities and more challenges to India. The issues of counter-terrorism and increase in trade suggest a formal type of engagement from Indian side. The lowering of oil prices has led to decline in oil trade. There is need to explore non-conventional sectors in the relationship between the two countries.

## OMAN

Oman is an important trading partner of India in the GCC with bilateral trade exceeding US\$ 5.70 billion in 2013-14 and US\$ 3.86 billion in 2015-16. The contribution of over 688,000 strong Indian community in the progress and development of Oman is well acknowledged. The economic ties are an important pillar in the strategic partnership between the two countries. The mutual investment between the two has grown significantly in last few years, and stands around US\$ 7.5 billion. The first share of the India-Oman Joint Investment Fund has already been invested, which was around US\$ 100 million. However, the bilateral trade has seen fluctuations in recent years. During 2011–12, India's exports to Oman stood at US\$ 1.3 billion, which further increased to US\$ 2.5 billion in 2012–13. In 2013-14, they stood at US\$ 2.8 billion. However, after this it has been constantly declining. In 2014–15, India's exports decreased to US\$ 2.3 billion, and dropped further to US\$2.1 billion in 2015–16. India's imports from Oman also saw a decline from US\$ 5.7 billion (2013–14) to US\$ 1.7 billion (2014–15) and US\$ 1.6 billion (2015–16). Total trade declined in 2014–15 by 28 per cent to US\$ 4.1 billion (Jatin Kumar, 2018).

The economic and commercial relations between the countries have strengthened further by the presence of Indian private sector companies like Wipro, Larson & Toubro, Shapoorji Pallonji, Jindal, Aditya Birla Group, Nagarjuna Construction Company, Simplex, and KEC who are engaged in various projects in Oman. An Indian-Omani joint venture—Sebacic Oman will be constructing the Sebacic Duqm Acid refinery which is worth around US\$ 1,200 million. Oman is among top five sources of fertilizers for India accounting for 5.26 per cent of India's fertilizer imports. India imports 8 Metric Tons (MT) of urea, 25 per cent of which is supplied by Oman India Fertilizer Company (OMIFCO) (Ahmed and Soni, 2017).

Mr. Yousuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah, Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs, Sultanate of Oman visited India on 3rd June 2014 to congratulate the Indian new leadership on behalf of his government (MEA GOI, 2014). External Affairs Minister Smt. Sushma Swaraj paid a return visit to the Sultanate of Oman from 17th-18th February 2015. During the visit, the two sides discussed issues of mutual interest (MEA GOI, 2015). The Fifth Meeting of the India-Oman Joint Working Group on Manpower was held in New Delhi on 26<sup>th</sup> July 2016. The Indian delegation was led by Shri Manish Gupta, Joint Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs and the Omani delegation was led by Mr. Saleh Bin Ayil Al Amri, Advisor to the Minister of Manpower, Sultanate of Oman (MEA GOI, 2016). Mr. Yousuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah, Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs, Sultanate of Oman visited India on 2<sup>nd</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2017, called on Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi and both exchanged views on the close relations between India and Oman (MEA GOI, 2017).

In recognition of the growing strategic relations between Oman and India, Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, paid a State visit to Oman from 11th-12th February 2018. His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said received Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi on 11th February at Bait al Barakah. Majesty the Sultan and the Indian Prime Minister exchanged views on issues of common interest. The Indian Prime Minister also received H.H. Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmoud al-Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers and H.H. Sayyid Asa'ad bin Tariq Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs and Special Representative of H.M. Sultan Qaboos. The two sides expressed satisfaction over the current state of bilateral relations and agreed to further expand their cooperation to new areas of mutual interest, including space, cyber security, energy security, renewable energy and food security etc. The two leaders directed their Finance and Trade Ministers to work together to find ways and means to substantially increase the flow of bilateral investments and trade. The Indian Prime Minister welcomed the invitation to Indian companies to invest in various sectors in the special economic zones of Oman, including SEZs in Duqm, Sohar and Salalah. The Indian Prime Minister offered India's partnership and cooperation in areas of priority, such as minerals and mining, manufacturing, logistics, infrastructure, tourism, agriculture and fisheries, IT and IT enabled-services, skills development, innovation etc.



The Indian Prime Minister apprised His Majesty The Sultan of various key initiatives of the Government, including “Start Up India”, “Make in India”, “Smart City”, “Digital India” and “Clean India”, highlighting their strong potential to provide Indian economy a positive thrust for sustained growth. The Indian Prime Minister invited Omani Sovereign Wealth Funds, including State General Reserve Fund, and private businesses to invest in India (MEA GOI, 2018).

## KUWAIT

Kuwait has been an important trading partner for India in GCC with a total trade of US\$ 5.95 billion in 2016-2017. It was also the seventh largest crude supplier to India in 2016-17. Over 900,000 strong Indian community in Kuwait has been contributing to the development of Kuwait. Both countries have emerged as reliable partners with shared interests, extensive commercial relations, Indian expatriate presence and cultural engagements. Bilateral relations remained stable during 2015 and 2016, although trade witnessed a drop. In the wake of the Arab Spring protests and domestic political developments in Kuwait, curbs on political freedom of citizens have intensified and the state has moved towards political and social deliberalisation. The problem areas in domestic context include restrictions on freedom of speech, assembly and movement. Political relations between India and Kuwait during 2015 and 2016 were limited and there were no major political visits. India and Kuwait share robust economic relations, though overall trade has witnessed a drop due to falling oil prices. The share of Kuwait in India’s total trade has progressively shrunk from 2.22 per cent in 2011–12 to 1.92 per cent 2014–15 and 0.97 per cent in 2015–16 due to reduction in the bilateral trade from US\$ 17.62 billion in 2011–12 to US\$6.21 billion in 2015–16. The share of Kuwaiti oil in India’s total oil imports has reduced from 9.1 per cent in 2011–12 to 4.19 per cent in 2015–16. Oil imports from Kuwait are at their lowest in five years, at US\$ 4.05 billion in 2015–16 (Das, 2018).

In November 2015, Indian Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) companies secured contracts worth US\$ 5 billion for development projects in housing, hospitals, oil and gas sector, universities, power transmissions etc. in Kuwait (*The Economic Times*, 2015). On 26<sup>th</sup> January 2015, Shapoorji Pallonji and Co. Ltd. signed US\$ 150 million contract with Kuwait University for construction, operation and maintenance of buildings of colleges of Law, Social Science and Sharia and Islamic Studies in Sabah Al-Salem University City (*The Times*, 2015). Kuwait National Petroleum Corporation awarded contract worth US\$ 77 million to Larsen and Toubro in May 2015 to replace an old power substation at Al-Ahmadi refinery (*DNA*, 2015).

5th Session of Joint Working Group (JWG) on Labour and Manpower with Kuwait was held in New Delhi on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2016. Shri Manish Gupta, Joint Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs led Indian side and Dr. Mobarak Al-Aazmi, Deputy Director General, Public Authority for Manpower, Sector of Planning and Professional Skill Levels Verification led Kuwaiti side. (MEA GOI, 2016). The then Minister of State for External Affairs, Shri M.J. Akbar led an Indian delegation for the Third Meeting of India–Kuwait Joint Ministerial Commission for Trade, Economic, Scientific and Technological Cooperation held in Kuwait from 18<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> September 2017 (MEA GOI, 2017). These visits have cemented mutually beneficial ties encompassing a wide range of political, commercial, energy and diaspora related issues. While Indo-Kuwaiti relations have remained stable, political and energy ties have been minimal. However, the economic sphere has been dynamic and multi-faceted. Kuwait is vulnerable to regional geopolitical and sectarian fault lines. A proactive foreign policy towards Kuwait is required—with more political engagement and heightened security cooperation to address issues of common concern such as terrorism, maritime security and energy security.

## QATAR

Qatar is an important trading partner for India in the Gulf region with bilateral trade in 2013-14 touching US\$ 16.72 billion. Qatar is the largest supplier of LNG to India, accounting for over 65 per cent of its global imports and 15 per cent of Qatar’s export of LNG. India is the third largest export destination for Qatar and is its tenth largest imports source. Indians form the largest expatriate community in Qatar. There are over 630,000 Indian nationals working in Qatar, whose positive contribution in progress and development of Qatar is well recognised.

A MoU for investment in India's National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF) was signed with the Qatar Investment Authority in 2016 (*Times of India*, 2016). Qatar's Sovereign Wealth Fund held by the Qatar Investment Authority (QIA) and other State-owned entities as well as the wealth held by private investors in the country are attractive investment propositions for India's growing market (Hussain and Ghosh, 2015). Qatar has several large-scale investments in India, including a more than US\$ 1 billion stake in the telecommunications company Bharti Airtel (*BQ Magazine*, 2015). India's corporate sector—particularly construction/infrastructure and IT sectors—has many operations in Qatar. These include Larsen & Toubro, Punj Lloyd, Shapoorji Pallonji, Voltas, TCS, Wipro, Mahindra Tech, HCL etc. SBI, ICICI and other Indian banks have limited operations under the Qatar Financial Centre or private exchange houses (*BQ Magazine*, 2015). On 7th June 2016, the Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy (SCDL) announced that a Qatari company, Al Balagh Trading & Contracting and L&T had been appointed as the main contractors to build the 40,000 seat capacity Al Rayyan Stadium for football in time for the World Cup matches scheduled for 2022 (Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy, 2016).

The second round of Foreign Office Consultations between India and Qatar was held in New Delhi on 5th June 2014. The Indian side was led by Shri Anil Wadhwa, Secretary (East). The Qatari delegation was headed by Mr. Mohammed bin Abdullah bin Mutib Al Rumaihi, Assistant Minister incharge of Asia in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The meeting reviewed progress in bilateral relations (MEA GOI, 2014).

H.H. Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar paid a state visit to India from 24th-25th March 2015. He was accompanied by a high-level delegation. During the visit, H.H. the Emir of Qatar called on President of India and held bilateral talks with Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi (MEA GOI, 2015).

Sheikh Abdullah Bin Nasser Bin Khalifa Al-Thani, the Prime Minister and Minister of Interior of the State of Qatar undertook an official visit to India from 2<sup>nd</sup> – 3rd December 2016. He was accompanied by senior Ministers, including Finance, Transport & Communication and Municipality & Environment and CEOs of Qatar Chamber of Commerce & Industry, Qatar Airways, Deputy CEO of Qatar Investment Authority (QIA) and key captains of Industry. The two Prime Ministers had a delegation level meeting where they reviewed the state of bilateral relations and exchanged views on ways and means to further expand and consolidate the close, multi-faceted relationship between the two countries. It was agreed to expedite steps to put in place the necessary framework so that economic actors on both sides can take full advantage of the opportunities available, particularly in the area of infrastructure, special economic zones, civil aviation, energy, petrochemicals, health and pharmaceuticals, information technology, education, tourism and agriculture. The two leaders also emphasised the need to take practical steps to build on the framework provided by the Agreement on Defence Cooperation signed in November 2008 by enhancing cooperation in the fields of specialised training, exchange of information and joint production of defence equipment. Three Agreements/MOUs were signed, including the MOUs on Technical Cooperation in Cyber Space and Combating Cyber Crime; and between the Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy of Qatar and the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII). Separately, an MoU between Qatar Ports Management Company and Indian Ports Global Private Limited was concluded. During the visit, Prime Minister of Qatar called on then President Shri Pranab Mukherjee. The Home Minister of India, Shri Rajnath Singh, called on the Prime Minister of Qatar during the visit. The two sides resolved to work closely to combat terrorism, radicalisation, preventing spread of sectarianism. They discussed cooperation on counter-terrorism, intelligence sharing, countering terror-financing and money laundering (MEA GOI, 2016).

The Fourth Meeting of India-Qatar Joint Working Group on Manpower was held in New Delhi on 24<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> November 2016 to review labour and manpower related issues. Shri Manish Gupta, Joint Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs led Indian side and Mr. Mohammed Hassan Al Obaidly, Head of Labour Sector, Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs led Qatar side.

Minister of Foreign Affairs of Qatar Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani visited India on 25<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> August 2016 and met External Affairs Minister Smt. Sushma Swaraj during which matters of mutual interest pertaining to bilateral, regional and international affairs were discussed. The visiting Qatari Minister called on Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi. The Indian side thanked Qatar for contributing significantly to India's energy security, being the largest supplier of LNG. The visiting Minister assured India of continued Qatari support in this regard through uninterrupted energy supplies. The Minister assured India of the continued safety, welfare and well-being of the Indian community and briefed the Indian side about new labour laws in Qatar which favour expatriate workers. During the meeting, the Qatari side welcomed participation of the Indian companies through project exports in Qatar's infrastructure development, including for the ongoing FIFA 2022 related infrastructure. On regional issues, Sheikh Mohammed briefed his Indian interlocutors about the situation in the Gulf region. He was briefed that India believes that peace and security in the Gulf are of paramount importance for the continued progress and prosperity of the countries in the region. India is of the view that all parties should resolve their differences through a process of constructive dialogue and peaceful negotiations (MEA GOI, 2016).

India closely followed the emerging situation in the Gulf region in the wake of the recent decision by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and some other countries to break diplomatic relations with the State of Qatar. India is of the view that all parties should resolve their differences through a process of constructive dialogue and peaceful negotiations based on well-established international principles of mutual respect, sovereignty and non interference in the internal affairs of other countries. India believes that peace and security in the Gulf are of paramount importance for the continued progress and prosperity of the countries in the region. International terrorism, violent extremism and religious intolerance pose grave threat not only to regional stability but also to the global peace and order and must be confronted by all countries in a coordinated and comprehensive manner. India has time-tested friendly relations with GCC countries. With over eight million Indian expatriates living and working in these countries, India has vital stakes in the regional peace and stability. Indian Government closely monitored the situation and was in regular contact with the regional countries. Their authorities have assured India continued support for welfare and well-being of the resident Indian communities (MEA GOI, 2017).

## **SAUDI ARABIA**

Saudi Arabia is the fourth largest trading partner for India with bilateral trade exceeding US\$ 25 billion in 2016-17. As our largest supplier of crude oil, Saudi Arabia accounts for about 20% of our total annual imports. About 3.2 million strong and vibrant Indian community forms the largest expatriate group in Saudi Arabia. Their positive and well-appreciated contribution in the development of Saudi Arabia has been an important element of our bilateral engagement. For India, Saudi Arabia is the largest supplier of oil, exporting worth US\$ 15.17 billion in 2015-16. There has been a drastic fall in the value of oil imported compared to 2013-14 when India imported around US\$ 32.78 billion worth of oil from the Kingdom. This amounts to 15.65 per cent of India's total energy imports worldwide, and has also witnessed a fall from 18 per cent in 2013-14. Despite the fall in oil prices, Saudi Arabia has been consistent in its supply of oil to India. Though it is an important trading partner, Saudi investments in India remains far below potential and during the last 15 years, it has totalled only US\$ 53.37 million.

The beginning of the protests in the Arab world brought a number of political, security, economic and strategic challenges for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Amidst unprecedented changes taking place throughout the region, Saudi Arabia was able to contain unrest in its Eastern Province and at the same time, played a key role in trying to change the geopolitics of the region. It has faced strong internal security challenges emanating from terrorism and severe economic downturn following the fall of global oil prices. To protect its interests in the immediate neighbourhood, it has made military interventions in Bahrain and Yemen. Amid all these domestic and external challenges, there has been a change of guard following the death of King Abdullah in January 2015. India's relationship with Saudi Arabia has remained unaffected by the internal changes in the Kingdom. Bilateral trade continues to grow steadily and Saudi Arabia remains the top supplier of oil for India. Both countries are looking to build a comprehensive strategic partnership.

On 25<sup>th</sup> April 2016, Deputy Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman announced the *Saudi Vision 2030* which envisages making the Kingdom the heart of the Arab and Islamic worlds by turning it into an investment powerhouse and the hub connecting the three continents of Asia, Europe, and Africa (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2016a). He has described the vision as “ambitious yet achievable blueprint” (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2016a) for establishing the long term goals of “a vibrant society, a thriving economy and an ambitious nation” (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2016a). In June 2016, Saudi Cabinet approved the National Transformation Programme 2020 (NTP), with the objective of building the institutional capability to meet the aspirations of *Vision 2030*. The NTP identifies the strategic objectives of the Kingdom in different fields, and the initiatives necessary to meet the themes of the *Vision 2030*. The strategic targets of the NTP included an increase in non-oil governmental revenue from US\$ 43.46 billion to US\$ 141.32 billion; raising non-oil export commodities from US\$ 49.33 billion to US\$ 87.99 billion; and increasing foreign direct investment (FDI) from US\$ 8 billion to US\$ 18.66 billion by 2020 (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2016b).

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi visited the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on 2nd-3rd April, 2016 and held discussions with King Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud on bilateral, regional and multilateral issues of mutual interest (MEA GOI, 2016). Prime Minister Modi invited big Saudi companies like Saudi ARAMCO and Saudi Basic Industries Corporation (SABIC), among others to invest in India. During meetings, Saudi companies have expressed interest in investing in the infrastructure sector, like railways, ports, and roads. India intends to draw investment from the huge Saudi Sovereign Wealth Fund (SWF). According to the Sovereign Wealth Fund Institute, Saudi Arabia has the fifth largest SWF, with US\$ 514 billion holdings at present. To further promote cooperation on investment, both sides signed the ‘Framework for Investment Promotion Cooperation’ between Invest India and the Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority (SAGIA). The 11<sup>th</sup> India-Saudi Joint Commission meeting held in New Delhi in May 2015 also discussed exploring investment opportunities on both the sides. The strategic energy partnership suggested involvement and joint ventures in the production and technology involved in the oil business. Prime Minister Modi’s visit has further accelerated this as both countries agreed to establish joint ventures and investments in the petrochemical sector in Saudi Arabia. In order to take their energy engagements to the next level, both have agreed to cooperate in the fields of training and human resource development; they have also decided to set up the ‘India-Saudi Arabia Ministerial Energy Dialogue’. These are some significant steps in the direction of building a strategic energy partnership with Saudi Arabia. (MEA GOI, 2016).

Mr. Adel bin Ahmed Al-Jubeir, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia visited New Delhi on 7th-8th March, 2016 during which issues of mutual interest were discussed. The Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas, Shri Dharmendra Pradhan, visited Saudi Arabia from 13th–14<sup>th</sup> April 2016 and held bilateral meetings with Chairman of Aramco, Khalidal-Falih and the Saudi Vice-Minister for Petroleum, Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman and discussed various investment proposals in areas like oil, gas, petrochemicals, exploration and production (MEA GOI, 2016).

External Affairs Minister, Smt. Sushma Swaraj visited the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia from 6th-8th February, 2018. She met with the Saudi leadership to discuss issues of mutual interest. She participated at the inauguration of the prestigious National Heritage and Culture Festival ‘Janadriyah’ being held in Saudi Arabia, at which India is the ‘guest of honour’ country. The Minister held bilateral discussions with the Saudi Foreign Minister Adel Jubeir and discussed issues of mutual interest. She said that India’s flagship programmes including ‘Make in India’, ‘Digital India’ complement well with ‘Vision 2030’ launched by Saudi Arabia and invited Saudi investments in India. The External Affairs Minister called on His Majesty, the King Salman bin Abdul Aziz Al-Saud and thanked him for according India the honour at the festival (MEA GOI, 2018). However, despite flourishing trade, there has been a sharp fall in the value of the trade from US\$ 48 billion in 2013–14 to US\$ 39 billion in 2014–15 and US\$ 26 billion in 2015–16. The decline in the value of the total trade is primarily because of lower international oil prices.



## UNITED ARAB EMIRATES (U.A.E.)

The U.A.E. is among the largest investors in India in terms of foreign direct investments. It contributes significantly to India's energy security and has been the fifth largest supplier of crude oil to India in 2015-16. India's well-balanced bilateral trade amounting to around US\$ 50 billion makes U.A.E. India's third largest trading partner while for the U.A.E. India is the largest trading partner. About 2.6 million strong and vibrant Indian community forms the largest expatriate group in the U.A.E. Their positive and well-appreciated contribution in the development of U.A.E. has been an important anchor of excellent bilateral engagement. In 2015–16, India exported US\$ 30 billion worth of goods to the U.A.E. and imported goods worth US\$ 19 billion (Quamar, 2018). According to the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) report, India-U.A.E. is world's second largest migration corridor, with 2.8 million Indians migrating to U.A.E. between 1995 and 2015 (Deulgaonkar, 2017). Moreover, India as the world's highest recipient of remittances (World Bank, 2017) receives almost 50 per cent of its total remittances from the GCC countries; and among the GCC the highest amount—nearly 38 per cent—comes from the U.A.E. (Bundhun, 2015).

Smt. Sushma Swaraj, Minister of External Affairs visited the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.) on 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> November 2014. She interacted with the top U.A.E. leadership and discussed issues of mutual interest (MEA GOI, 2014).

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi visited U.A.E. on 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> August, 2015. Prime Minister Modi met with H.H. Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of United Arab Emirates and Ruler of Dubai. The visit of Prime Minister of India to the U.A.E. has redefined the bilateral relationship and elevated it to a strategic partnership (MEA GOI, 2015).

H.H. Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs of United Arab Emirates led a delegation of senior officials and captains of leading UAE business houses to India for the 11th session of the India-UAE Joint Commission Meeting for Technical and Economical Cooperation, held on 2<sup>nd</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2015, in New Delhi. His Highness was accompanied by Ms. Reem Ibrahim Al Hashimi, Minister of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. During his visit, H.H. Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Al-Nahyan called on the Prime Minister of India and had meetings with External Affairs Minister, Minister of Defence, Minister for Railways, and National Security Adviser. H. H. Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Al-Nahyan co-chaired the Meeting of the Joint Commission with External Affairs Minister of India. During the Joint Commission Meeting, the two sides discussed subjects in areas like, Trade & Commerce; Investments; Finance & Banking; Energy, Hydro-carbons, Petrochemicals & Fertilizers; Defence and Space; Transport, Civil Aviation, Ports & Meteorology; Health & Agriculture, Education, Culture & Tourism; Security and Combating Crime; Immigration, Consular and Indian Community related issues and arrived on agreements to enhance our cooperation in these areas. The two sides agreed to increase the bilateral trade by 60 per cent over the next five years and also to encourage the investment institutions of the U.A.E. to raise their investments in India, including through the establishment of U.A.E.-India Infrastructure Investment Fund, with the aim of reaching a target of US\$ 75 billion. The two sides agreed to work for early establishment of the planned India-U.A.E. Joint Fund for investments in the infrastructure sector in India. An India-UAE Joint Business Council was inaugurated by the two Foreign Ministers and the two sides signed MOUs on cooperation in the areas of Higher Education & Scientific Research; Tourism, Specifications and measures, for cooperation between the respective Telecom Regulatory Authorities and between the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Federation of U.A.E. Chambers of Commerce & Industry (MEA GOI, 2015).

H.H. General Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces visited India from 10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> February 2016. The Crown Prince called on then President Shri Pranab Mukherjee and held bilateral talks with Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi on issues of mutual interest (MEA GOI, 2016).

India and U.A.E. held the first meeting of Strategic Dialogue between the two Foreign Offices on 20th January 2017 in New Delhi. The meeting was co-chaired by the then Minister of State of External Affairs, Shri M.J. Akbar and Dr. Anwar Gargash, Minister of State in Ministry of Foreign Affairs of U.A.E. The two sides were represented by strong delegations drawn from a number of relevant Ministries and Departments. The two sides discussed number of issues ranging from cooperation in areas of trade & investments to expanding bilateral cooperation to new areas under the strategic partnership, in areas of energy security, renewable energy, defence & security, electronics & information technology and space and agreed on number of new initiatives to further strengthen the bilateral cooperation (MEA GOI, 2016).

His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces of United Arab Emirates visited India as Chief Guest for Republic Day celebrations from 24<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> January 2017. He called on then President Shri Pranab Mukherjee, Vice President Shri Mohammad Hamid Ansari and held discussions with Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi on issues of mutual interest (MEA GOI, 2017).

The then Minister of State for External Affairs, M.J. Akbar visited the U.A.E. from 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> April 2017 and the U.A.E. leadership holding discussions on issues of mutual interest (MEA GOI, 2017).

Dr. Anwar Gargash, U.A.E. Minister of State for Foreign Affairs held delegation-level talks with the then Minister of State for External Affairs, Shri M.J. Akbar on 9th August 2017 during his visit to India. He also met with External Affairs Minister Smt. Sushma Swaraj and Foreign Secretary Dr. S. Jaishankar. Dr. Gargash was accompanied by Mr. Mohammed Sharaf, Assistant Minister of Economy and other senior officials in the Government of the U.A.E. The two sides reviewed progress of U.A.E. investments in India. The then Minister of State for External Affairs Shri M.J. Akbar expressed satisfaction over the signing of the MOU on the framework for facilitating the participation of U.A.E. Institutional Investors in National Infrastructure Investment Fund, with Abu Dhabi Investment Authority agreeing to contribute towards the NIIF Master Fund. Dr. Gargash briefed his Indian interlocutors about the situation in the Gulf region. He was briefed about India's position that peace and security in the Gulf are of paramount importance for the continued progress and prosperity of the region (MEA GOI, 2017).

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi paid a visit to the U.A.E. from 10th-11th February, 2018 and met with Prime Minister and Vice President of the U.A.E. and Ruler of Dubai, H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, in Dubai on 11th February 2018. Prime Minister Modi delivered his key note address on the theme- "Technology for Development"- at the sixth World Government Summit in Dubai, where India was invited as the Guest of Honour. On the side-lines of the World Government Summit, Prime Minister Modi met with a select group of senior GCC CEOs and Business Leaders. This visit allowed leadership of the two countries to take regular stock of the bilateral ties and to review the progress made in implementing the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership agreement signed in January 2017. Prime Minister Modi and Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan reaffirmed their abiding commitment to further consolidating the comprehensive strategic partnership and expressed satisfaction at the meticulous follow up on the decisions taken during their previous meetings to achieve the set targets. Both leaders noted the robust and forward-looking bilateral engagement in the past two years across a whole range of spheres, including political, economic, trade and investment, energy, education, culture, defence and security, etc. Acknowledging India's highly successful and cost-effective space programme, the U.A.E. side evinced interest in deepening cooperation with India in space exploration under the existing MOU on Space cooperation signed during February 2016. The leaders expressed satisfaction at the holding of the first Joint Working Group Meeting in December 2017 under the existing MOU on space cooperation. They welcomed proposed cooperation in the identified areas of remote sensing, space science, satellite navigation, launching services, academic cooperation and industry interactions. Both leaders noted the excellent trade and economic ties between the two countries, as each other's major trading partners and expressed satisfaction at the current level of bilateral trade, which amounted to about US\$ 53 billion in 2016-17.

With an aim to devise a long-term strategy on trade enhancement, the two leaders decided to examine various tariff and non-tariff barriers, and agreed to focus on encouraging trade in identified commodities and to expand access of goods and services in both markets. Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan welcomed India's decision to participate in Dubai Expo 2020. Prime Minister Modi reiterated the interest of Indian companies to be a partner in the infrastructure projects being undertaken by the UAE in preparation for the Dubai Expo as well as in UAE's development plans. Both leaders reviewed the progress in realizing the US\$ 75 billion target for UAE investments in India committed towards infrastructure development. Prime Minister Modi welcomed ADIA's participation in India's National Infrastructure Investment Fund as an anchor investor and welcomed DP World's agreement with NIIF to create a joint investment platform for ports, terminals, transportation and logistics businesses in India. He also welcomed UAE's continued interest in investing in infrastructure development in India, especially in priority areas such as renewable energy, power generation and transmission, defence production, real estate, industrial corridors and parks, railways, roads, ports, shipping, logistics and food processing among others. Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan welcomed interest from Indian IT and technology companies in investing in the UAE, and encouraged them to use the UAE as a platform for expanding their businesses in the region. The two leaders complimented the work of the ministerial-level UAE-India High Level Task Force on Investments in promoting bilateral investment ties between the two countries. They noted the positive outcome of its fifth meeting held in January 2018 in Abu Dhabi, and urged the Task Force to explore investment opportunities in both countries, including through India's flagship initiatives such as "Make in India", "Digital India", "Skill India", "Smart India", "Clean India," and "Start-Up India". Prime Minister Modi highlighted the strong potential of these initiatives to accelerate the Indian economy's robust and sustained growth. The two leaders expressed satisfaction at the cooperation in energy sector, noting that the UAE is one of the leading suppliers of crude oil to India. Prime Minister Modi invited ADNOC and Mubadala to invest in downstream projects in India's hydrocarbon sector. Both sides reviewed the progress being made in early implementation of the agreement on Oil Storage and Management between Abu Dhabi National Oil Company and the Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserves Limited signed in January 2017 and underscored that crude oil supply from U.A.E. for the Mangalore cavern would be a significant transformational step in building a strategic partnership in the energy sector. Prime Minister Modi welcomed the decision to award a major oil concession to ONGC-led consortium from India in the ADMA-OPCO field in Lower Zakum. Prime Minister Modi thanked the U.A.E. leadership for supporting initiative of International Solar Alliance (ISA). Both sides welcomed the signing and ratification of the Framework ISA Agreement by U.A.E. (MEA GOI, 2018).

Due to the drop in oil prices, the GDP growth of the U.A.E. has been sliding—from 4.6 per cent in 2014 down to 3.4 per cent in 2015—and 2.5 per cent during 2016 (The World Bank, 2016). Nevertheless, with investments in financial sector and growth in airline and tourism sectors, the U.A.E. was able to tide over revenue losses from oil sector (Quamar, 2018). It has also been able to achieve some success in diverting oil revenues to develop the non-oil sectors. The Emirati rulers have invested significantly in optimising oil production capacity, and are investing heavily in capacity building in renewable energy to be able to maximise oil exports (*BBC News*, 2017). With astute fiscal management and the proposal to implement VAT from 2018, the government aims to minimise dependence on oil exports (Augustine, 2016). It is also investing heavily in human resource development and creating a knowledge-based economy to adjust to changing market needs. Overall, the economic situation has started to recover from the recession and the adverse impact of falling oil prices (Quamar, 2018).

India and the U.A.E. share strong and robust economic relations that form the back bone of the bilateral ties. The U.A.E. is India's third largest trading partner, the second largest export destination, and the fourth biggest source for imports. For the U.A.E., India is the second largest trading partner, the second largest export destination, and the third biggest source of imports. However, the volume of trade has declined from a high of US\$ 75.4 billion in 2012–13 to US\$ 49.7 billion in 2015–16 owing to low oil prices and an overall slowdown in global trade. Both countries are aware of the potential to increase bilateral trade. Hence, during Prime Minister Modi's visit to the U.A.E., they agreed to expand trade by 60 per cent in the next five years. (MEA GOI, 2015).

The U.A.E. continues to play an important role in its energy security, and supplied nearly 8 per cent of its energy needs in 2015–16. It is India's fifth largest supplier of oil and gas oil contributes only 40 per cent of total imports, signifying the diversification in the goods that India imports from the U.A.E. The decline in the volume of energy trade between India and the U.A.E. is mainly due to lower oil prices that had touched a high of US\$ 140 per barrel in June 2014 but witnessed a sharp fall subsequently, to touch a bottom of US\$ 30 per barrel in mid-2016. As of early 2017, it has consolidated to reach US\$ 50 per barrel. While oil prices have stabilised, India is keen to improve its energy security, and the U.A.E. has responded positively by agreeing to store oil in India's strategic storage facilities (Quamar, 2018). During the visit of Prime Minister Modi, the two sides agreed to establish a US\$ 75 billion U.A.E.-India Infrastructure Investment Fund. The India-U.A.E. HLTFI has held several meetings since September 2015 to discuss and finalise the modalities of the investment fund. Between April 2000 and September 2016, India received a cumulative investment of US\$ 4.3 billion from the U.A.E., thus becoming the 10th largest source for FDIs in India (DIPP, 2016). There has been a three-fold increase in FDI inflow from the U.A.E.: from US\$ 350 million in 2013–14 to US\$ 1 billion in 2015–16, thus being the fifth largest investment source for India during the period (DIPP, 2016). More than 800 leading Indian companies have opened their businesses in the Jebel Ali Free Zone (JAFZA) and many Indian business houses have a strong presence in Dubai and Abu Dhabi. Further opportunities are opening up as the U.A.E. is looking to diversify its economy, strengthen its financial and service sectors, and establish the Emirates as a global tourism and sports hub (Quamar, 2018).

## **Conclusions**

India has friendly relations with all GCC countries and has strategic interests due to energy security as well as presence of over eight million expatriates. India should continue to engage with all sides without antagonising any of the countries and without taking sides. Except for Bahrain and UAE, India has high trade deficits with all the GCC countries. This imbalance is due to skewed nature of India's imports in favour of oil and gas. In countries like Kuwait, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, hydrocarbons account for more than 90 per cent of India's imports. India should capitalise on the diversification plans of countries. Though investments are its prime agenda, diplomatic outreach has not materialised due to bureaucratic bottlenecks and unattractive opportunities. India will have to ensure that investments are not entangled in domestic political and legal traps through transparency, efficiency and professionalism. India's interests in the GCC have deepened due to significant trade and investment relations along with increasing expatriate presence. Hence, peace and stability in the region acquires greater significance for India.

## **About Pradeep V Kamat**

Mr. Pradeep V. Kamat is a Management Educator and frequent contributor in the field of Management, Human Resource Management, Strategic Studies, International Relations, Geo-politics. Mr. Kamat has three decades of senior managerial corporate experience in field of Human Resource Management. He is Visiting Faculty in Management in number of Management Institutes in Mumbai and was Visiting Faculty at Naval War College of Indian Navy at Karanja. Mr. Kamat is a graduate in Economics from University of Mumbai and has passed M.A. in Human Resource Management and Industrial Relations from Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai and LL.B. from University of Mumbai. Mr. Kamat was conferred Distinguished Services Award in 1995 for his contribution to Training and Development and Honorary Fellowship in 2016 for his contribution to Human Resource Development by Indian Society for Training and Development, New Delhi. He can be reached at [pradeepvkamat@yahoo.co.in](mailto:pradeepvkamat@yahoo.co.in)



# Developments In The Field Of Soft Power

## WORLD SOFT POWERS

Soft power is the ability to attract and co-opt, rather than coerce (hard power). Soft power is the ability to shape the preferences of others through appeal and attraction. The currency of soft power is culture, political values, and foreign policies.

America is leading the world both in hard and soft powers. The American way of life, capitalism and the American dream appeals to people all over the world. USA is a modern, innovative, country. It has the largest number of foreign journalists and attracts largest number of foreign students. Its soft power can be seen through its Hollywood movies and music. In a short period of time, China has created a systematic, coherent soft power strategy, and a set of soft power tools to implement that strategy. Its Confucius Institutes promote teaching Chinese language and culture internationally and facilitate cultural exchanges. Over 2,40,000 foreign students are studying in China. China's soft power is seen in the One Belt One Road initiatives to bring the world closer together and where goods and services could be exchanged.

## INDIA'S SOFT POWER

Large number of India engineers and IITians are given the post of CEOs of foreign companies. Satya Nadella of Microsoft, Sundar Pichai of Google, Indira Nooyi of PepsiCo and Ajit Jain of Berkshire Hathaway Insurance have raised the image of India. It shows that the Indian engineers are more capable than the engineers in foreign countries. Pramila Jaypal is the first Indian- American woman to be elected as the U.S House of Representatives. Sunita Williams and Kalpana Chawla are American astronauts. Radhika Sitsabesan is a Member of Parliament in Canada. People of Indian origin have been heads of states in Singapore, Mauritius, Guyana, Trinidad and Fiji. The newly built airport in Bangkok, Thailand is called Swarnabhumi International airport.

The Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi makes use of the soft power to its full extent. He has been declared as the world's third influential Political leader after Angela Merkel of Germany and Emmanuel Macron of France and ahead of Donald Trump, Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin. He introduced internationalization of Yoga which was actively participated by many of the countries of the world. He addressed the POIs, NRIs and OCIs in USA, Australia, UK, Saudi Arabia, Abu Dhabi and Tel Aviv. His presence in the foreign soil created a buzz in the international media. Every news channel was casting his international meeting. He handles the international media with poise. He praises India's rich culture and heritage. These praises help overseas Indians. People in foreign countries get a positive perception about India and its people. Narendra Modi went to Pakistan to attend wedding ceremony of Nawaz Sharif's daughter. This was the initiative taken from the Indian side for friendship. It didn't give the fruitful result but in international arena India's effort was appreciated and it is supported by many countries. Narendra Modi wished Chinese President in Chinese on his birth day and wished Israel Prime Minister in Hebrew on the occasion of Hanukkah festival. In 2010, the Indian Navy rescued a Mozambican vessel from pirates.

Hindu Swayamsewak Sangh has been promoting yoga among American and African youth. HSS celebration of Raksha Bandhan as a festival of Universal Brotherhood and Guru Vandana for promoting respect for teachers has been well received by many leaders around the world. Tulsi Gabbard a senator of USA and Kamala Persad Bissesar, prime minister of Trinidad took oath of office holding Bhagwad Gita in their hands. Deepavali celebrated annually by Hindu Swayamsewak Sangh, Sydney attracts over 20,000 Indians and non-Indians. Persons learning Vedic chantings, Bhagwad Gita, Ayur veda and Indian music is increasing rapidly. Sultan of Abu Dhabi welcomed Ramayan scholar Murari Bapu with the slogan Jai Shri Ram. His wife begumsahiba carried the holy book Ramayana on her head. Sultan has given a piece of land to build a grand Hindu temple. Many Arabs in traditional dress are seen singing Sanskrit bhajans.

Indian movies are liked by people of many countries. In Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand people take holidays to watch Bollywood movies and they return singing the songs of the movie. Plane load of Japanese youth fly to Chennai just to watch first day first show of Tamil actor Rajnikant. They now know Tamil especially many of his punch dialogues. Indian actors and actresses are liked by them. They try to imitate the styles of the Bollywood stars. Priyanka Chopra working in Hollywood TV series and movies is an example of the use of India's soft power. Her work is appreciated all over the world as an Indian artist and it creates a positive image of India in the eyes of the people of the other countries.

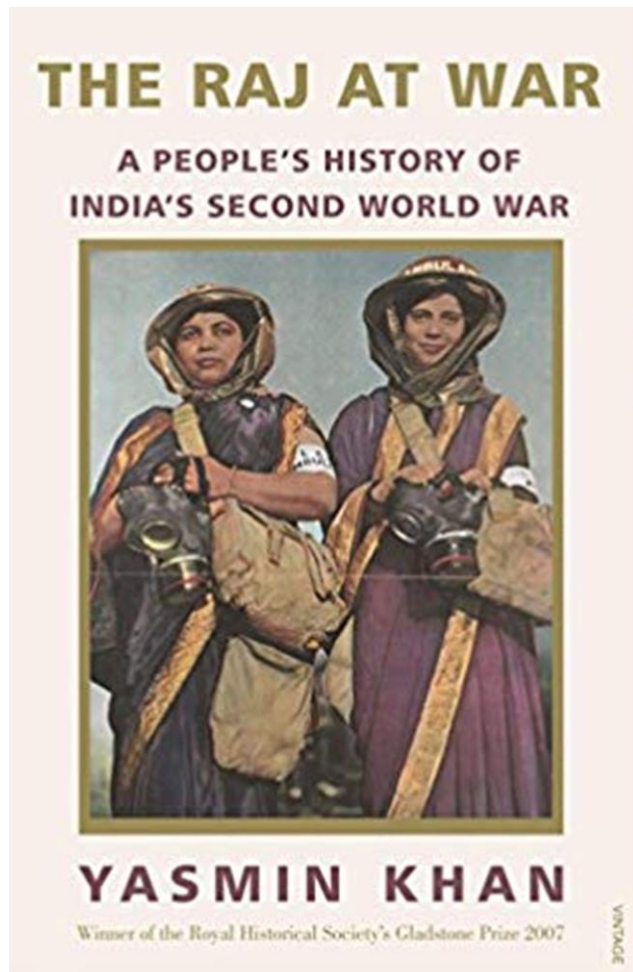
Thousands of students from Asia and Africa pursue their education in Indian universities. Kerala's ayurvedic massage treatment is drawing millions of patients from all over the world. Our spiritual masters like Dalai Lama, Swami Chinmayananda, Mata Amritananda, Sri Sri Ravishankar and Satya Sai Baba have millions of devotees all over the world.

In June 2017, on Global warming, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has vowed his country will go "above and beyond" the 2015 Paris accord on combating climate change. The Paris agreement commits the US and 194 other countries to keeping rising global temperatures "well below" 2C above per-industrial levels and "endeavour to limit" them even more, to 1.5C. US President Donald Trump walked out of the Paris climate agreement. Mr Trump said the deal would impoverish the US and cost American jobs. Several global leaders have criticized President Donald Trump's decision to withdraw the US from the Paris accord. They have praised Narendra Modi for his whole- hearted support to protect Mother Earth.

Thus India's soft power is influencing more and more people. India is utilizing its soft power very confidently for the benefit and welfare of the world.

### **About Ravi Kumar**

## Book Review: 'The Raj At War' authored by Dr Yasmin Khan



15<sup>th</sup> August 1947, India broke free from the shackles of slavery and servitude. This independence struggles can be traced back to the period of the Second World War. 'The Raj at War' by Yasmin Khan entails gripping tales of struggle, perseverance, resilience and victory. It successfully captures the prevalent obscurity about the war and India's contribution.

***"Britain did not fight the Second World War, the British Empire did."***

This statement captures the essence of the Second World War. The Second World War was, for Britain, a matter of prestige. The mother empire drew heavily from its colonies in terms of manpower and monetary requirements. India's contribution in supplying human force was phenomenal and it played a very important role in the battles of Tobruk, Kohima, Keren, Imphal, Monte Cassino.

The first news of victory for the British Empire came from Middle East and North Africa. This was largely possible due to the valour and determination of the Indian men. Another important battle which won the Indian army appreciation from Winston Churchill was the Battle of Keren. Yasmin Khan narrates the battle by pivoting around Richpal Ram and his team. She describes the battle as *"The Battle of Keren was an extraordinary feat of endurance and willpower over six weeks of protracted and stubborn fighting in almost impossible terrain."*

The battles of Kohima and Imphal were one of the bloodiest battles in the Second World War in India. The Indian Army's victory was facilitated by their knowledge of guerilla tactics provided to them by the indigenous Nagas and other tribesmen.

But who were these men whose selfless service was unnoticed by many? They were the destitute unemployed youth of India. The recruiting officers took cognizance of the helpless condition of many young men and announced various incentives to entice them into joining the army. *“Free ration, clothes, and games that soldiers would be able to access development and the promise of a more modern future were used as enticements to induce the men to sign.”* India was plagued with poverty, unemployment, illiteracy etc. Many were the single bread earners of the family and thus they joined the army to ensure a decent living oneself and one’s family.

While some were compelled to join the army, certain sections of the populace voluntarily joined. These were the Punjabi, Sikhs, Jats, Rajputs and descendants of families who for generations served in the army. For them, it was a matter of pride and question of loyalty.

War entails the brave stories of soldiers and those who were in the forefront, bearing arms and defending borders. What about non – combatants? The Second World War demonstrates the contribution of an army who can be rightly called the unsung heroes. This is summarized in the following lines, *“And behind them all stood the non – combatants who made the Indian army function... Behind the caricatures of ‘martial races’ were millions of people with miscellaneous back grounds, ambitions, fears and needs.”*

A group of people who were ignored and not given due importance for their contribution were the Lascars. Lascars, all non – European sailors, mostly from the Indian sub – continent were employed to work on British marine ships. They were subject to inhuman conditions of work and indiscriminate treatment. Although the war proved as a catalyst for the improvement of the Lascar’s living condition, this change was brought in, much later after the damage was done.

The period of war in India was besieged with a number of problems. Imposition of martial law, differential treatment among soldiers, inflow of refugees were some of them. The Defense of India Act was popular for its inhuman treatment and its restrictive nature. India was home to small but significant communities of Germans and Italians in 1940 and many Polish refugees. While Polish refugees welcomed, Germans and Italians were treated differently. While discrimination existed in the treatment of refugees, the situation in the army was no different. Despite demonstration of unflinching loyalty and determination, the Indian men were not given due importance in the British Empire.

The Indian mercenary army swore allegiance to the British Empire during their recruitment. They promised to be loyal and execute all strategies to ensure victory. But ‘loyalty’ was not the only reason why Indian men voluntarily joined the army. For many the Second World War was a leverage to seek independence for India. Yasmin Khan narrates several incidents to corroborate the claim that India’s independence was one of the major reasons why she supported the war. Despite repeated demands, India’s independence was given secondary importance. Britain continued to drain India of her manpower and other resources. *Indian army encouraged men to serve the empire today in order to work towards a better future tomorrow.*

As war drew close and celebrations were in full swing, the future of India appeared nebulous. *Indian Independence, although certain to take place, still looked likely to face potential delays.* Finally on August 15<sup>th</sup> 1947, India achieved independence. India’s participation in the Second World War proved as a catalyst in her struggle for Independence.

The Second World War was not only about the Allies winning over the Axis power. The world witnessed victory, but victory does not only mean overpowering ones enemy, it also entails certain positive changes which proved beneficial for future generations. India witnessed an upsurge in the field of art, literature and culture. The government took cognizance of the various issues affecting combatants and their families and efforts were taken to rectify problems. The biggest advantage to India came in the form of a shipyard which was initiated by Walchand Hirachand. Another notable impact was the involvement of women. The women workforce multiplied and they actively participated in all wartime activities. Cinema started reflecting the emerging themes and the underlying nuances of the war. Psychological effects of the war cannot be ignored. While many soldiers suffered from survivor’s guilt, survivors of the Bengal famine and those whose property had been requisitioned had a different story to tell.



‘The Raj at War’ provides an alternate history of the Second World War. Dr. Yasmin Khan provides authentic details about the war by including personal accounts of people. Dr. Khan’s efforts in justifying India’s participation also helps one understand the political and social conditions prevalent in India during the 1940s. The political classes in India, the people, the royalty, the government all were collectively involved in the war and their contribution facilitated the Allied victory.

A major drawback of the book is the style of designing the events. The book does not follow a chronological order and thus it becomes difficult for the reader to ascertain certain events.

Martin Luther King Jr. once said “We are not makers of History. We are made by History.” The ‘Raj at War’ helps one understand the history of India which was left unexplored for the longest period.