

2017



Foreign Policy Review

*Annual Report on the Developments in the Field of
Foreign Affairs*

Indian Council of World Affairs
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Annual Report on the Developments in the Field of Foreign Affairs

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New Delhi

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1. Ministry of External Affairs
2. Ministry of Commerce
3. Ministry of Finance
4. President's Office
5. Vice President's Office
6. Prime Minister's Office
7. Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP)
8. Press Information Bureau
9. Websites of various News and Media Houses

SOUTH ASIA

1. SOUTH ASIA

The year 2017 saw a number of political, strategic, security and economic developments in the countries of South Asia. On the strategic front, Bhutan faced a strategic dilemma, with the forceful incursion of Chinese soldiers into its territory. The Chinese post incursion, started to illegally construct a road, at the Dokhlam plateau. On the request of the Bhutanese government, Indian soldiers entered the disputed territory, which led to a stand off, lasting for 74 days. However, the impasse was resolved when both the nations retreated. At the political and security front, Nepal while conducting elections in the country battled new political symmetries within its domestic political set-up. Afghanistan witnessed numerous terrorist attacks in and around Kabul. The horrific May 31 terrorist attack in Kabul, had more than 150 people killed and more than 500 injured. Though countries met in Moscow, Kabul and many other forums, the progress of the peace process was slow. The Taliban gained ground and turned into a major strategic player in the peace process. Maldives went through political doldrums. Pakistan witnessed the removal of an elected Prime Minister, rising judicial activism and weakening democratic traditions and culture. Bangladesh faced humanitarian and security challenges with the influx of Rohingya refugees who fled violence in Myanmar. SAARC remained defunct due to the political tension in between India and Pakistan. The sub-regional initiative of Bangladesh Bhutan India Nepal Motor Vehicle Agreement (BBIN-MVA) also hit a roadblock, as Bhutan waits for its national elections in 2018, after which they will be able to take a decision on the Agreement. The other three countries have ratified the agreement. As regards to economic development India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka constantly worked for gaining a steady growth rate (7.0 [India], 7.2 [Bangladesh], 6.9 [Nepal] and 4.5 [Sri Lanka]).¹

1.1 Afghanistan

The year 2017 was a challenging year for Afghanistan. There were attempts of restoring peace, where multiple actors including Russia, China and Pakistan played a leading role. They stated that Taliban remained to be an important factor in the peace process and should be made a part for reaching lasting peace. Such remark was criticised by the Lower House of the Afghan Parliament.² In the second round of talks that took place, Afghanistan along with India and Iran participated in the talks in Kabul.³

¹ The other growth rates are Afghanistan – 2.5, Bhutan – 6.9 and Maldives – 4.2, as per the Asian Development Bank, <https://www.adb.org/countries> as accessed on March 28, 2018

² “Taliban Welcomes Moscow Talks”, *Tolonews*, 01 January 2017. URL: <http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/taliban-welcomes-moscow-talks> accessed on 02 January 2017.

³ “Six Nations To Meet In Moscow Over Afghanistan”, *Tolonews*, 11 February 2017. URL: <http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/six-nations-meet-moscow-over-afghanistan> accessed on 13 February 2017.

Another major political development was the return of Hizb-e-Islami leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar to Afghanistan, who signed a peace deal with the Afghan government in 2016.⁴ Further it is to be noted that US President Donald Trump declared his Afghan strategy on August 2017, unveiling an enduring commitment as a key partner of the Afghan government. He also sought a larger role of India in the Afghan peace process.⁵ The US Congress took a tough stand on Pakistan by passing a bill to curb funds provided to Pakistan from the Coalition Support Fund as it failed to curb the Haqqani terrorist network.⁶

Afghanistan got the permanent membership to the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) in October 2017, which opened a major avenue for getting assistance for infrastructural development.⁷ As per a report issued by the NATO-led Resolute Mission in Kabul, Afghanistan Air Force in 2017 August attained organic intelligence reconnaissance capability, and efforts were underway to expand the capabilities to the other wings of the Afghan defence machinery.⁸ On August 2017, the US Military acknowledged nearly 3,000 more troops to Afghanistan, which would join the already stationed 11,000 troops in Afghanistan.⁹

Bilateral Relations with India

Air freight corridor was inaugurated with a flight landing in Delhi airport from Kabul, carrying tradable commodities on June 2017. This dedicated air freight corridor was planned during Prime Minister Modi's visit to Kabul on September 2016.¹⁰ On September 11, 2017 a joint statement was issued on the 2nd Strategic Partnership Council Meeting between India and Afghanistan at New Delhi. The Strategic Partnership Council discussed a range of bilateral, regional and global issues of mutual interest and shared understanding and convergence of views on them. The outcomes of the four Joint Working Groups in the areas of political and security issues; trade, commerce and investment; development cooperation; and human resource development, education and culture were reviewed and assessed positively.

⁴Tamim Hamid, "Hekmatyar's Return Met With Mixed Reaction", *Tolonews*, 29 April 2017.

<http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/hekmatyar%E2%80%99s-return-met-mixed-reaction> accessed on 01 May 2017.

⁵ "Trump Unveils Long-Awaited Afghan Strategy", *Tolonews*, 22 August 2017.

<https://www.tolonews.com/index.php/afghanistan/trump-unveils-long-awaited-afghan-strategy> accessed on 22 August 2017.

⁶ "US congress passes new bill regarding Pakistan and Haqqani network", Khaama Press, 19 November 2017.

<http://www.khaama.com/us-congress-passes-new-bill-regarding-pakistan-and-haqqani-network-03877> accessed on 20 November 2017.

⁷ "Afghanistan Gets Permanent Membership of AIIB", *Tolonews*, 15 October 2017.

<https://www.tolonews.com/index.php/business/afghanistan-gets-permanent-membership-aiib> accessed on 15 October 2017.

⁸ "Afghan Air Force to get organic intelligence reconnaissance capability for the first time", Khaama Press, 20 August 2017. <http://www.khaama.com/afghan-air-force-to-get-organic-intelligence-reconnaissance-capability-for-the-first-time-03395> accessed on 21 August 2017.

⁹ "US Defense Secretary Orders New Troop Deployment to Afghanistan", *Outlook Afghanistan*, 04 September 2017. http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=18931 accessed on 04 September 2017.

¹⁰ Kallol Bhattacharjee, "India, Afghanistan open air freight route", *The Hindu*, 19 June 2017.

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-afghanistan-open-air-freight-route/article19104598.ece> accessed on 19 June 2017.

On a multilateral platform Shri M.J. Akbar, Minister of State for External Affairs went to Baku, Azerbaijan for attending the Ministerial Conference of the Heart of Asia - Istanbul Process on December 1, 2017. The 2nd Ministerial level trilateral meeting between Afghanistan, India and Iran to discuss the implementation of Trilateral Agreement on Establishment of International Transport and Transit Corridor was held at Chabahar, Iran on December 3, 2017, where Phase I of the Chabahar Port was inaugurated.

Terrorism & Counter-Terrorism

Security Situation in Afghanistan

The security situation in Afghanistan worsened in the year 2017 with Taliban gaining ground and Islamic State of Khorasan Province (ISKP), the Afghan offshoot of Islamic State (also known as ISIS), consolidating itself in its main area of operation and expanding further into neighboring areas. Terror attacks by Taliban intensified through 2017. The increasing presence of ISKP in Nangarhar province and spill over to Kunar and other provinces was another indicator of growing insecurity in the country. The escalation of conflict, intertwined with organized crimes like opium production and drug trafficking, had led to high level of conflict-induced displacement. In its December 31, 2017, report, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) reported that nearly a million Afghans had been internally displaced in the previous 18 months, at an average rate of 1,100 per day in 2017 – two-thirds of them women and children. The issue of displacement is further compounded by the returning refugees from neighbouring countries -- Pakistan and Iran.

In taking stock of Afghanistan's security situation in 2017 this section of the annual report will give an overview on the issue by compiling major international reports on the subject of war on terror and organized crime in Afghanistan.

UNAMA – Quarterly Report, October 2017

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in its last released Quarterly Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict (January – September 2017) urged parties to the conflict to intensify efforts to protect civilians from harm, as the data released in the report documented 8,019 civilian casualties, 2,640 deaths and 5,379 injuries.

Human Rights Watch (HRW), Country Chapter – Afghanistan, Events of 2017

Relying on the civilian casualties data provided by UNAMA, the HRW reports, fighting between Afghan Government and Taliban forces intensified through 2017. Civilian casualties caused by government forces during ground fighting declined; however, US forces expanded their use of airstrikes, including drones, in military operations.” According to HRW report, the number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) who fled from their homes due to the conflict surged as fighting intensified. More than

250,000 were displaced in the first 10 months of 2017, bringing the nationwide total to at least 1.7 million people.

Department of Defense (DoD), Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan, December 2017

On the security condition, the DoD in its semi-annual report submitted to the Congress stated that Afghanistan faced an externally enabled and resilient insurgency. It reported that the Afghan Government maintained control or influence over approximately 60 percent of the population, while insurgents had control or influence over approximately 10 percent of the population, with the remainder contested. The presence of over 20 terrorist organizations creates the largest concentration of terrorist and extremist organizations in the world.

UNGA Security Council, December 15, 2017

By 15 November, the United Nations had recorded more than 21,105 security related incidents for the first 11 months of 2017, an increase of 1 per cent since 2016. The continuing high number of incidents is attributed mainly to armed clashes. The eastern region experienced the highest number of incidents, followed by the southern region, with the two regions accounting for 56 per cent of all incidents.

The Taliban launched multiple large-scale operations to capture district administration centres, temporarily overrunning Maruf in Kandahar Province, Andar in Ghazni Province, Shib Koh in Farah Province and Shahid-e-Hasas in Uruzgan Province. However, Afghan security forces pushed back Taliban and in some cases with international military air support. Also, Taliban launched complex attacks through the country.

IS remained resilient and claimed responsibility for several attacks against both the civilian population and military targets.

Security-related Bilateral ties with India

Bilateral ties between Afghanistan and India intensified with emphasis on security-related issues. With the launch of the “new development partnership” on September 12, 2017, and signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) of technical cooperation on Police training and development on September 28, 2017, Afghanistan and India expanded their bilateral ties.

1.2 Bangladesh

The year 2017 witnessed growing political tussle at home between Sheikh Hasina led ruling Awami League and Khaleda Zia led Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). Right from the beginning of the year, the BNP pushed the government to accept certain poll-related demands of the party so that it could declare its participation in the upcoming general elections. One such demand remained the establishment of a neutral election-time caretaker

government to ensure free, fair and inclusive general elections. The party maintained that there will be no credible election in the country without BNP's participation. The ruling dispensation did not accept the demands and made it very clear that it wants an inclusive election and do everything within the prescribed constitutional limits and laws of the land to ensure an inclusive election.

Bangladesh's relations with China progressed well. Apart from the ongoing economic cooperation, the two countries expanded cooperation into other crucial arenas including defence. It went on to procure two submarines—BNS Nabajatra and BNS Agrojatra—from China to upgrade its naval capabilities and modernise country's defence system. In October 2017, the two countries signed a deal to build a 220 Km oil pipeline with the help of Chinese assistance. As per the agreement, Chinese Exim Bank would provide funds as a loan to be repaid in next 20 years with an annual interest rate of 2 percent.

Bangladesh's relations with Myanmar deteriorated and witnessed a historic low in the wake of the growing Rohingya crisis. It is worthwhile to note that following the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) attack on Myanmar BGP posts and army base, the situation worsened in the Rakhine province which had the largest concentration of Rohingyas. In order to escape from violence, a large number of people fled their homes in Rakhine and crossed over to take shelter into neighbouring Bangladesh. Bangladesh called international community to pressurise Myanmar to stop human rights violations and take back their citizens. Showing humanitarian gesture, Bangladesh allowed the fleeing people of Myanmar to temporarily reside in the make-shift camps and made it categorically clear that once the situation stabilises they will have to go back to their own country. International community expressed its displeasure towards the treatment of Rohingya in Myanmar and international organisations such as UN, EU and OIC condemned the outbreak of violence. UNHCR went to the extent of terming it as a text book example of ethnic cleansing. Under severe international criticism over Myanmar's response to the crisis and large scale forced migration to Bangladesh, the two countries entered into a dialogue which resulted in the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in November 2017.¹¹

India-Bangladesh Bilateral Relations

A number of high level visits from both sides took place which strengthened the bond of friendship between the two countries. In February, India's then Foreign Secretary Dr S. Jaishankar visited Dhaka to review the area of bilateral cooperation between India and Bangladesh. The two sides also took stock of decisions taken during the recent meetings of various bilateral

¹¹ "Bangladesh and Myanmar conclude 'Arrangement' on Return of displaced persons from Rakhine state," November 23, 2017, available at <http://www.mofa.gov.bd/media/bangladesh-and-myanmarconclude-'arrangement'-return-displaced-persons-rakhine-state-11>

mechanisms in the areas of security & border management, trade and commerce, power, energy, shipping, railways etc.¹²

In April, Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina embarked on a four day state visit to India. The two leaders undertook a comprehensive review of the bilateral relationship. Hasina publicly honoured the Indian martyrs who had fought alongside the Mukti Bahini in the run up to the liberation of Bangladesh back in 1971. India reciprocated this good gesture and renamed a road in Delhi in memory of Bangladesh's founding father Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

The two countries signed 11 agreements, 24 MoUs and two SOPs. Out of the eleven inked agreements, four belong to the power sector, three come under the category of cooperation in the nuclear field strictly restricted to the peaceful purposes, and one each pertains to the regulation of Motor Vehicle Passenger Traffic, Petro-refinery cooperation, construction of thirty six community clinics in Bangladesh, and audio-visual co-production. The two countries also entered into an understanding over Defence Cooperation Framework. Out of the four MoUs in defence sector, one exclusively talked about cooperation in the defence arena. Under these MoUs, India extended \$500 million Defence Line of Credit to Bangladesh which could be used to purchase defence equipments from India. Additionally, India also extended a \$4.5 billion credit to Bangladesh for infrastructure development connectivity projects.¹³

In the wake of the humanitarian crisis, India was among the first countries to reach Bangladesh. Within no time, the government decided to launch Operation Insaniyat to help Bangladesh with relief material to deal with the crisis.¹⁴ Indian External Affairs Minister Ms. Sushma Swaraj visited Bangladesh in October 2017 to chair the 4th meeting of the India-Bangladesh Joint Consultative Commission.¹⁵ In November, 2017 the two countries formally launched the connectivity projects which included the second Bhairab and Titas Railway Bridges, and the International Rail Passenger Terminus at Chitpur in Kolkata. Indian Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee were present at the launching ceremony. The dignitaries

¹² MEA Press Release on Visit of Foreign Secretary of India Dr. S Jaishankar to Bangladesh, February 23, 2017, available at <http://mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/28096/Visit+of+Foreign+Secretary+of+India+Dr+S+Jaishankar+to+Bangladesh+February+23+24+2017>

¹³ India-Bangladesh joint statement during the state visit of Prime Minister of Bangladesh to India, April 8, 2017, available at <http://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/28362/India++Bangladesh+Joint+Statement+during+the+State+Visit+of+Prime+Minister+of+Bangladesh+to+India+April+8+2017>

¹⁴ MEA press release on “Operation Insaniyat—Humanitarian assistance to Bangladesh on account of influx of refugees,” available at <http://mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/28944/Operation+Insaniyat+Humanitarian+assistance+to+Bangladesh+on+account+of+influx+of+refugees>

¹⁵ MEA Press Release on Visit of External Affairs Minister of India to Bangladesh, available at <http://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/29038/Visit+of+External+Affairs+Minister+of+India+to+Bangladesh+October+22+2017>

also flagged off the inaugural run of the Bandhan Express between Kolkata and Khulna.¹⁶

1.3 Nepal

The year 2017 will be remembered as an election year for Nepal as three crucial local, provincial and federal elections were held successfully. In June 2017, Nepal witnessed a political change when Nepali Congress president Sher Bahadur Deuba being elected as the prime minister of Nepal for the record fourth term, after Prachanda handed over the reign to the veteran leader under a power sharing deal June 2017. Before the provincial and federal election in November-December 2017, the Maoist Center and CPN-UML announced coalition for provincial and federal elections, announcing the birth of a single communist party in the future after the merger. However it should be noted here that the Maoist Center was already in alliance with the ruling party Nepali Congress in the federal government. CPN-UML was in opposition to the Nepali Congress and the Maoist Center went into an alliance with CPN-UML (for election purposes) already having an alliance with the Nepali Congress (For being part of the federal government).

Nepal held the local body elections in 6 metropolitan cities, 11 sub-metropolitan cities, 276 municipalities and 460 rural municipalities in three phases in May, July and September. The CPN (UML) emerged as the largest political party through these elections. The Nepali Congress became the second largest. The CPN (Maoist Center) ranked third through these elections.¹⁷ In 2017, the Madhesh-based regional parties representing the Terai plains of Nepal bordering India took part in the elections.

India Nepal Bilateral Relations

In April 2017 President Bidhya Devi Bhandari made her first trip to New Delhi. During the visit, Bhandari met President Pranab Mukherjee and Prime Minister Narendra Modi discussed all aspects of bilateral ties.

Indian External Affairs Minister Smt. Sushma Swaraj in July 2017 visited Nepal to attend the meeting of BIMSTEC (The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation).¹⁸

India and Nepal signed eight MoUs, during Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba's visit to India on August 2017.¹⁹ It was signed mostly in the sectors

¹⁶ Press release on "Joint launch of connectivity projects between India and Bangladesh," available at

<http://mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/29101/Joint+Launch+of+Connectivity+Projects+Between+India+and+Bangladesh+November+09+2017>

¹⁷ "Federal Parliament and Provincial Assembly Election 2017", My Republica, 20 December 2017, <http://election.nagariknews.com/federal-election-2074-nepal/candidates?lang=ENG>

¹⁸ "Sushmaswaraj to attend Bimestec meeting in Nepal", Business Standard, 4 August 2017, http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/sushma-swaraj-to-attend-bimstec-meeting-in-nepal-117080401237_1.html

¹⁹ "PM Deuba returns home after 5 days India visit", The Kathmandu Post, 27 August 2017, <http://kathmandupost.ekantipur.com/news/2017-08-27/pm-deuba-returning-home-tonight.html>

of development, earthquake rehabilitation, connectivity and energy. During the visit, PM Deuba also discussed about completing the detailed project report of Pancheshwer Multipurpose Project with the Indian officials. He also sought from India more economic developmental assistance and investments in Nepal.

1.4 Pakistan

Pakistan has experienced a tumultuous 2017, politically, socially as well as economically. It also found an extremely challenging foreign policy scenario. Politically, the year saw a growing rift in between the civilian and military leadership. The members from the military were include in the Joint Investigation Team to have a control over the investigation,.This culminated into the dismissal of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, on July 28, 2017, by the judiciary, as not been *Sadiq* (truthful) and *Ameen* (honest) as per Article 62 in the Constitution of Pakistan.²⁰

The dismissal saw the rise of a selected political leader, Prime Minister ShahidKhaqqanAbbasi, and rift within the members of the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) (PML(N)).

Rising incidence of persecution of religious minorities, including persecution of Ahmadis²¹, Christians, ethnic Baluchis and Pakhtuns, Hindus, as well as Shia's all throughout 2017 in Pakistan.

Economically, the World Bank's twice-a-year Pakistan Development Update outlined that the country's economic growth accelerated to 5.3 percent in the 2017 financial year.²² There was some improvement in human development indicators, such as school participation rates and access to health services.²³

China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) made advancements in some projects as well as many faced various legal, logistical and financial bottlenecks. Neither China nor the Pakistani government made the CPEC Long Term Plan public. Iran showed its interest to join the CPEC.²⁴

Judicial overactivism was carried out by the Pakistani judiciary throughout the year. The kidnapping and later assassination of two Chinese nationals in June 2017, created some strains between the Chinese and Pakistani administration.

The then Army Chief Raheel Sharif was provided the No Objection Certificate on April 2017 to lead the Saudi led military alliance. General Bajwa, the Pakistani Army Chief, in 2017 testified in the Pakistani Parliament that it

²⁰Mohsin Raza Malik, "On 'Sadiq' and 'Ameen'", *The Nation*, June 29, 2017, <https://nation.com.pk/29-Jun-2017/on-sadiq-and-ameen> accessed on February 20, 2018

²¹ Kalbe Ali, "Senate body to approach FO for complaint against Canadian citizen", *Dawn*, January 3, 2017, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1306105> accessed on January 9, 2017

²² Pakistan Development Update, World Bank, November 2017, <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/386771510146349984/pdf/121027-WP-P164910-PUBLIC-11-9-17-12am-PDU-Fall-2017-Online.pdf> accessed on February 20, 2018

²³ Pakistan Development Update, World Bank, November 2017, <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/386771510146349984/pdf/121027-WP-P164910-PUBLIC-11-9-17-12am-PDU-Fall-2017-Online.pdf> accessed on February 20, 2018

²⁴ "Iran keen to join CPEC, says envoy", *Dawn*, January 27, 2017, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1311031> as accessed on January 30, 2017

was an institution that should be directed by the elected representative, and requested the Parliament not to create a political vacuum.²⁵

Trump announced his South Asia Policy on August 22, 2017 and made categorically clear, that Pakistan still gives “safe haven to agents of chaos, violence and terror”, and should take steps to counter terrorist groups. Immediately after such announcement the Pakistani administration reached out to Saudi Arabia, Russia, Turkey, China, as well as Iran for countering such accusations, while trying to create a group of like-minded nations, who supports Pakistan. Relations between US & Pakistan, and Afghanistan & Pakistan deteriorated throughout the year.

Pakistan became a full member of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, June 2017.²⁶ Pakistan was countered, without being directly addressed in not being cooperative in countering cross border terrorism in the BRICS Summit in Xiamen, China, in September 2017.²⁷

India Pakistan Bilateral Relations

India and Pakistan were not able to re-initiate free and open dialogue. The case of Kulbhushan Yadav, and he being awarded a death sentence by a military court remained a major irritant in India Pakistan relations. On May 18, 2017, the International Court of Justice asked Pakistan not to carry out the awarded death sentence, till ICJ did not come to a final decision regarding the case that was brought forward to the international court.²⁸ India and Pakistan tried to find some resolution on the Indus Water Treaty with the World Bank being the mediator in January 2017, which ended finding any resolution.²⁹ The National Security Advisers of Pakistan and India met in Bangkok on December 2017. The Pakistani administration also allowed Kulbhushan Yadav’s mother and wife to visit him in Islamabad on December 25, as a humanitarian gesture.

Bilateral interaction between India and Pakistan has remained bare minimum, while both honouring the past protocols, including release of prisoners and fishermen on both sides.

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1.5 Sri Lanka

At the political front the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka tried to implement the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) resolution 30/1 on Sri Lanka and made progress in its constitution drafting process. The Steering Committee (SC) SC consisting of 21 members representing various political parties presented an interim report to the Constituent Assembly on 21st

²⁵ Irfan Ghauri, “You make policy, we follow it, Gen Qamar tells parliament”, *The Express Tribune*, December 19, 2017, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1587001/1-army-chief-arrives-parliament-brief-lawmakers-security-situation/> accessed on February 21, 2018

²⁶ It is a historic day: Pakistan becomes full member of SCO at Astana summit”, *Dawn*, June 9, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1338471> accessed on February 21, 2018

²⁷ “Spotlight: BRICS summit in Xiamen brings China, India closer”, *Xinhua*, September 4, 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-09/04/c_136583342.htm accessed on February 21, 2018

²⁸ “UN court stays KulbhushanJadhav hanging; Modi govt says will do everything to save him”, *Hindustan Times*, May 18, 2017, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/kulbhushan-jadhav-case-live-icj-verdict-expected-at-3-30pm-today/story-v6LJQlnS4Rqapv5i7H9P3I.html> accessed on February 21, 2018

²⁹ Anwar Iqbal, “US initiates process for resolving Pakistan-India water dispute”, *Dawn*, January 4, 2017, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1306011>

September 2017. However, there seemed lack of consensus on main contentious issues regarding the nature of the state, devolution of powers, merger of Northern and Eastern Provinces and on official language and the status of religion. The Tamil National Alliance TNA had demanded nationwide referendum to introduce a new constitution.

The U.N. Human Rights Council on 3rd March had criticised Sri Lanka's "slow" progress in addressing its wartime past and reiterated its earlier call for hybrid court of international and local judges to investigate allegations of rights violations. Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe rejected the demand. The UN had given two more years for Sri Lanka to implement the resolution. The Sri Lankan government rejected an appeal from the UN to allow international judges to investigate alleged war crimes committed during the conflict with the LTTE, vowing not to prosecute soldiers.

The Cabinet of Ministers on 2nd May 2017 approved the proposal made by President Maithripala Sirisena to implement the first ever National Reconciliation Policy drafted by Office for National Unity and Reconciliation (ONUR). In June 2017, the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights urged Sri Lanka to adopt a comprehensive Bill of Rights that fully incorporates economic, social and cultural rights. President Maithripala Sirisena on 20th July signed the gazette on the Office of Missing Persons (OMP).

Sri Lanka ratified the Maritime Labour Convention of 2006 in January 2017 and participated in the Indian Ocean Rim Association Leaders' Summit, in Indonesia on 8th March 2017. In April 2017, Colombo hosted the first ever Regional German Ambassadors Conference Sri Lanka and discussed its ambition to be an economic and political hub in the Indian Ocean region with Germany. At the sidelines of The 6th Moscow Conference on International Security which took place in on 27th April 27 2017 Sri Lanka and Iran called for expansion of all-out defence cooperation between the two countries.

The US increased its cooperation with Sri Lanka in economic, political and security fields. The Pacific Partnership 2017 made its initial mission stop in Hambantota, with the arrival of US Naval Ship Fall River on 07th March. The Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT) Exercise – 2017 conducted in collaboration with US and SL Navy Marines concluded in Trincomalee on October 6, 2017. Sri Lanka regained its GSP + status in May 2017 after the EU expressed its satisfaction about the progress made in reconciliation efforts by the Sri Lankan Government. The Hambantota port was formally handed over to a China-led company on 9th December and Sri Lanka received its initial payment for the lease.

India Sri Lanka Bilateral Relations

The Prime minister of Sri Lanka Mr. Ranil Wickramasinghe was in India on a working visit from 25th to 29th April 2017. Indian Prime Minister undertook a bilateral visit in May 2017 and the Sri Lankan Prime Minister undertook a

visit to India from 22nd to 24th November. Foreign secretary level visits of both the countries also took place in the year 2017.

During the Sri Lankan Prime Minister's visit A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between India and Sri Lanka "for 'cooperation in economic projects', which outlined the agenda for bilateral economic cooperation in the foreseeable future". Indian Prime Minister visited Sri Lanka to attend the UN International Vesak Day celebrations as well as to address the up-country Indian origin Tamils.

As part of development cooperation, India was engaged in constructing 4000 houses in the Central Province and building additional 10,000 houses in upcountry areas. India and Sri Lanka in principle, agreed to jointly operate the World Warera oil storage facility in Trincomalee in April 2017. As drought relief assistance, India provided 8 water bowsers and 100 metric tonnes of rice to Sri Lanka in April 2017. A Student Development Centre of the Agriculture Faculty of the Jaffna University and a two storey building for the Engineering Faculty set up with financial assistance provided by India was inaugurated in June 2017.

In April 2017, workers of Sri Lanka's state-run petroleum firm launched an indefinite strike against the government's proposed deal with India to jointly operate an oil storage facility at the strategic eastern port town of Trincomalee.

The opposition parties also mobilised public against the proposed Economic and Technical Cooperation Agreement (ETCA). Both governments tried to find a solution acceptable to the fishermen communities of both sides. India and Sri Lanka Ministerial level talks on fishermen issue was held in January and in October 2017. Initiatives taken by the Government of India to end bottom trawling in the Palk Bay area were shared with the Sri Lankan side. Those included launching of a programme on diversification of bottom trawlers into Deep Sea Fishing Vessels for tuna long lining under Blue Revolution Scheme, construction of Mookaiyur and Poompuhar fishing harbours, capacity building programmes for fishermen of Palk Bay area in deep sea tuna long lining. Besides, fresh registration for bottom trawlers in the Palk Bay area was been banned by the Government of Tamil Nadu. In addition, alternative livelihood opportunities for the fishing communities in Palk Bay area were offered through open sea cage farming, seaweed farming and other allied coastal fisheries activities.

1.6 Maldives

The year 2017 had been a turbulent year for Maldives democratic consolidation. The government arrested many opposition leaders on various charges. In January 2017, the United Nations panel ruled that Maldives' continued detention of a former defence minister illegal and declared that he should be freed immediately. Maldives rejected UN decision on detained ex defence minister. The then Maldivian president Mohamed Nasheed announced in February 2018 that he would be contesting the Maldives Presidential Election in 2018 as a candidate representing the Maldives

Democratic Party (MDP). He also stated that India had a moral obligation to ensure fair polls in Maldives. Mr. Nasheed was bestowed the prestigious ‘2017 Courage Award’ by a coalition of 25 international human rights groups at the Ninth annual Geneva Summit for Human Rights and Democracy. Mr. Nasheed travelled to Sri Lanka to mobilise opposition coalition. Jumhooree Party leader Gasim Ibrahim was arrested and later allowed to travel Germany for medical treatment.

In April 2017, brutal murder of social media activist and blogger, Yameen Rasheed took. In June 2017, Maldives slammed UK-led criticism of human rights situation. The Maldives scornfully dismissed calls by more than 30 countries to restore constitutional freedoms, allow space for political opposition, and prevent the intimidation of human rights defenders. Maldives had also criticised the European Parliament after it called for individual targeted sanctions over “the deteriorating political and human rights situation in the Maldives.

Regarding Maldives and Saudi Arabia relations, the main opposition Maldivian Democratic Party expressed concern about alleged plans to sell Faafu atoll to the Saudi royal family and warned that the deal would “effectively cede control of an entire atoll to a foreign government”. In March 2017, the Saudi Arabian government said that it had no intention of investing in a mega project or buying an island or atoll in the Maldives. Following the opposition’s announcement of a mass protest on March 24 to coincide with the official visit of King Salman, the visit of the king was cancelled.

In May 2017, President Donald Trump submitted to Congress a reduction in foreign aid to South Asia which included a heavy cut in the amount of aid provided by the US to the Maldives. While the then President Barack Obama gave USD 3.3 million to the Maldives under the US foreign aid policy, the Trump Government provided only the amount to USD 444,000.

The Government of Maldives decided to sever diplomatic relations with Qatar effective from 5 June 2017. Maldives president Abdulla Yameen signed a loan agreement with the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development (ADFD) to develop the Velana International Airport (VIA) during his official visit to the UAE. Maldives and China signed a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in December 2017, during the Maldives President visit to China.

India Maldives Bilateral Relations

The then Foreign Secretary of the Ministry of External Affairs of India, Dr.S.Jaishankar, paid a courtesy call on President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom, on 13th April, at the President’s Office. The President expressed sincere appreciation for the continued support and assistance provided by the Government of India. Minister of State for External Affairs Shri M.J. Akbar visited Maldives from February 21-22, 2017 as a Special Envoy of the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi. The Minister reiterated India’s support for a stable, democratic, peaceful and prosperous Maldives fulfilling the aspirations of its citizens.

The First India Maldives Consular Dialogue was held on 24 October at New Delhi. India on 14th December, gave a guarded response to the Free Trade Agreement signed between China and the Maldives, saying it had yet to see the full document and could not comment on its contents. The joint military exercises between the Maldives National Defence Force (MNDF) and the Indian Army named “Ekuverin” was held in Belgam in the state of Karnataka. India continued its development assistance to Maldives despite the turbulent internal developments.

SOUTH EAST/EAST & FAR EAST ASIA

2 SOUTH EAST/EAST & FAR EAST ASIA

Major Developments in the Region: The first draft code of conduct (COC) on the South China Sea was completed in March 2017, and both China and ASEAN countries were satisfied. At the 50th ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Manila on August 6, 2017, a two page frame work of a code of conduct on the South China Sea was adopted by the Southeast Asia's Foreign ministers and China.

US Defence Secretary Jim Mattis held meetings on the sidelines of the Shangri- La Dialogue (June 1-4, 2017) with defence ministers from the ASEAN nations. The US Defence Secretary affirmed the continuation of the US presence in the region.

At the 50th ASEAN Anniversary celebration, the ASEAN Foreign Ministerial Meeting communiqué, emphasised the importance of non-militarisation and self-restrain in the South China Sea, after extensive discussions and concerns being voiced by some ASEAN members, about land reclamation and activities in the area.

At the 24th ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) meeting held in Manila on August 5, 2017, the members voiced their support for the complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula in a peaceful manner. The ARF also called upon North Korean, as a participant of the ASEAN Regional Forum, to positively contribute to the realisation of lasting peace, stability, friendship, and prosperity of the region.

The 11th ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) was held on October 23, 2017, at Clark Freeport in the north of Manila, Philippines. Singapore assumed the chairmanship of the ADMM. Discussions took place on three 'key thrusts'; promote regional counter-terrorism collaboration, grow collective capability for chemical, biological, and radiological threats, and promulgate the use of practical confidence-building measures in the aviation and maritime domain. Indonesia in the ADMM proposed the creation of a "mini-Interpol" that would involve six countries in the region sharing intelligence through the "Our Eyes" Initiative.

The 29th Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Ministerial Meeting held on November 9, 2017 at Da Nang, Vietnam, saw the participation of APEC Ministers and representatives of the ASEAN, the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (PECC), the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), and the APEC Business Advisory Council (ABAC).

2.1 Brunei

On October 5, 2017, the Sultan of Brunei Hassanal Bolkiah celebrated his 50th anniversary on the throne, and as the longest ruling monarch with absolute power. The plunge in the global energy prices had impacted the oil-dependent States, with prices of crude oil reducing by more than half in comparison to the 2012 prices. Despite being loved and respected amongst the people of Brunei the falling revenue on account of global energy prices provided a major challenge for the ruling monarch.

2.2 Cambodia

Human rights activist KemSokha was appointed as the new leader of the opposition Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP), replacing Sam Rainsy. After Sam Rainsy resigns as head of the Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP). He had been in self-imposed exile since 2005, when parliament stripped him of his immunity after amendment to the law to bar anyone convicted of an offence from running for office. Cambodia's Supreme Court on November 16, 2017, ruled that the country's opposition Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP) be dissolved for its part in plotting a "coup" against the government, essentially eliminating any competition to Prime Minister Hun Sen ahead of a general election to be held in July 2018.

2.3 Indonesia

Indonesia renamed the northern reaches of its exclusive economic zone in the South China Sea as the North Natuna Sea on July 14, 2017. Indonesia insisted it's a non-claimant state in the South China Sea dispute but clashed with China over fishing rights around the Natuna Islands, detaining Chinese fishermen and expanding its military presence in the area. At the 6th Meeting on RI-PRC Politics and Security Dialogue Mechanism in Beijing, both China and Indonesia agreed to strengthen the alignment between the World Maritime Axis Vision initiated by Indonesia with the 21st Century maritime Silk Road initiated by China.

Lao PDR

In April 2017, about thirty Laotian soldiers encroached on the Cambodian territory. Cambodian PM Hun Sen had set a deadline of August 17 for Lao troops to pull back while also sending his troops to the contested area. By August 15, Lao troops began to pull out of the disputed border areas in northern Cambodia after a deal was struck between Cambodian PM and his Lao counterpart ThonglounSisoulith. Cambodian PM Hun Sen met his Laos PM ThonglounSisoulith, at Phnom Penh's 'Peace Palace' in September 2017, in an effort to further de-escalate tensions. Since both nations were once colonised by the French both nations agreed to write a joint letter to the French president requesting border maps that illustrates the historical border demarcations. Further, they also asked France to provide any other relevant documents on the Cambodian and Laos border.

At the 24th meeting of the Thai-Lao General Border Committee (GBC) an agreement was reached between Thailand's Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister PrawitWonsuwon and Lao's Defence Minister ChansamoneChanyalath, to increase bilateral cooperation against people threatening security in the region.

2.4 Vietnam

Vietnam emerged as the most vocal opponent of China's claims in the South China Sea. Vietnam had noted concern about island-building and criticised militarisation in the South China Sea at the ASEAN foreign ministerial meeting held in Manila to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of ASEAN.

During his State visit to Vietnam on November 12, 2017, President Trump met with his counterpart President Tran Dai Quang, Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc, and the General Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam,

Nguyen Phu Trong. Trade was one of the major agenda for President Trump visit to Vietnam. President Trump also offered to mediate in the issue of the East Vietnam Sea with China.

2.5 Myanmar

The Second sessions of the 21st Century Panglong Peace Conference was held in May 2017, which brought together, various ethnic armed groups, government representatives, army and civil society groups under one umbrella. The peace conference outcome was significant as the stake holders agreed upon various political, economic and social principles. However, the continuation of peace process remained strained due to religious violence in Rakhine state as well as in frontier areas between the Army and the ethnic armed groups. The violence in Rakhine came under severe international condemnation. Meanwhile, Myanmar participated actively in ASEAN and BIMSTEC processes.

2.6 Philippines

In May President Duterte declared martial law on the island of Mindanao after fighting erupted between security forces and Islamic State-linked militants of the Maute group and Isnilon Hapilon. In October the Southern city of Marawi which oversaw a brutal siege was declared liberated from jihadist fighters who held it for almost five months.

The US and Philippines troops launched a new joint counter-terrorism exercise on October 2.

US President Donald Trump visited the Philippines on November 13, as part of his five-nation Asia tour. President Trump met with President Rodrigo Duterte at the sidelines of the ASEAN Summit, where both leaders while acknowledging their 70 years of partnership, reaffirmed their commitment towards strengthening their bilateral alliance.

On December 6, 2017, President Duterte signed a proclamation classifying the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and its armed wing the New People's Army (NPA) as terrorist groups following the cancellation of peace talks. The President's order also allows the state to go after groups or individuals who are wittingly or unwittingly supporting the CPP-NPA.

2.7 Singapore

The Prime Minister of Singapore Lee Hsien Loong, during his official visit to China met with members of China's apex Politburo Standing Committee, including with President Xi Jinping, and Premier Li Keqiang. PM Lee stated that Singapore's relationship with China is in a good state. Singapore's Defence Minister Ng Eng Hen also, met with Chinese State Councillor and Minister of National Defence General Chang Wanquan. Both ministers agreed to reaffirm the commitment to deepen defence ties and build mutual trust and practical cooperation between both countries, by exploring concrete and practical ways to deepen defence relations based on the Four-Point Consensus agreed to in 2014.

Thailand

King Vajiralongkorn signed the new, military-drafted constitution that paves the way for a return to democracy in Thailand since the junta rule in 2014.

Thailand's PM Prayut Chan-o-cha speaking after a joint meeting of the cabinet and the National Council for Peace and Order on October 10, 2017, stated that the regime will consider easing political restrictions so that parties can resume their political activities in compliance with the new law.

On July 11, 2017, Thailand's military government approved 179 billion baht to build the first stretch of a high-speed railway that will ultimately link Bangkok to Southern China. The project is part of China's huge regional infrastructure plan to build a high-speed rail network connecting the southern city of Kunming with Laos, Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore.

President Trump welcomed PM Prayut Chan-o-Cha to the White House on October 2, 2017 and stated that the US and Thailand that the relationship at present is very strong and has gone stronger over the last nine months.

2.10 ASEAN-India Bilateral Relations

2017 marked the 25th anniversary of the ASEAN-India Dialogue Partnership. Prime Minister Modi observed that the "Act East Policy" is a reflection of the importance India attach to its strategic partnership with ASEAN. During his address at the 15th India-ASEAN Summit on November 14, 2017, in Manila, Philippines, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, stated that India places ASEAN at the core of its 'Act East' Policy and is central in the regional security architecture for the Indo-Pacific.

On April 1, 2017, the Prime Minister of Malaysia Mohammed Najib bin Tun Abdul Razak, visited India. Both nations agreed on a shared vision to enhance our strategic partnership.

Gen V K Singh (Retd), Minister of State for External Affairs, addressed the 15th ASEAN-India Foreign Ministers' Meeting on August 6, 2017, in Manila.

On August 26, 2017, India expressed its concerns over the reports that revealed renewed violence and attacks by terrorists in the northern Rakhine State of Myanmar and condemned such violence.

Further, it extended its strong support to the Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar. At the invitation of H.E. U Htin Kyaw, President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, the Prime Minister of India, paid his first bilateral State visit to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar from 5th to 7th September 2017. The visit witnessed the signing and exchange of various documents in the areas of health, culture, capacity building, maritime security and collaboration between key institutions. The two sides shared the view that the situation in Rakhine State had a developmental as well as a security dimension. Myanmar welcomed India's offer of assistance under the Rakhine State Development Programme and the two sides agreed to finalize the implementation modalities within the next few months. Both sides reiterated their mutual respect for the already demarcated boundary between the two countries and emphasised the need to resolve outstanding boundary demarcation issues as fast as possible through existing bilateral mechanisms and consultations. The then Foreign Secretary of India Dr S. Jaishankar was on an official visit to Myanmar on December 20, 2017. During the visit, he called on State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, Union Minister in State Counsellor's Office U Kyaw Tint Swe and Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr Win Myat Aye.

Singapore and India reaffirmed their strong and long standing defence relationship in bilateral talks on the sidelines of the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting on October 24, 2017. Under Defence Cooperation Agreement (DCA), which was signed in November 2015, both nations agreed to establish a regular defence ministers' dialogue, deepen cooperation in maritime security, and encourage cooperation between their defence industries. India and Singapore on November 29, 2017, signed an agreement to deepen cooperation in maritime security and called for ensuring freedom of navigation in critical sea lanes.

The first ever ASEAN-India Connectivity Summit (AICS), on the theme "Powering Digital and Physical Linkages for Asia in the 21st Century", was held on 11-12 December 2017, at New Delhi. The AICS was organised by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) in collaboration with the ASEAN-India Centre (AIC) at RIS and the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII). The two-day summit brought together senior government officials, experts, business leaders, and entrepreneurs, from India and the ASEAN member states.

2.11 Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea)

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea), made significant developments in its nuclear and missile programme in 2017. North Korea conducted 24 missile test and a nuclear test in 2017.³⁰ The tests included the successful launching of the two Inter-continental Ballistic Missiles (ICBM); Hwasong-14 and Hwasong-15, and an intermediate-range ballistic missile (IRBM) called the Hwasong-12. On September 3, 2017, North Korea conducted its sixth nuclear test, with an estimated yield of 250kt. North Korea claimed that the bomb tested was a hydrogen bomb capable to be mounted on an ICBM. Following the testing of Hwasong -15, on November 28, 2017, North Korea claimed the completion of its "state nuclear force." Hwasong -15 estimated to have a range of than 13,000 km (8,100 miles) – capable enough to reach Washington D.C.³¹

In response to North Korea's nuclear missile provocation international community introduced a range of sanctions by adopting five UNSC resolutions: 2345, 2356, 2371, 2375, and 2397.³² The new sanctions banned all exports of coal, iron, lead, and seafood, textile exports etc. and bans imports of industrial equipment, machinery, transportation vehicles and industrial metals. It also cuts exports of gasoline, diesel and other refined oil products by a total of 89%. It also demands countries using North Korean laborers to send them back home no later than 24 months.

In 2017, the security tension in the Korean peninsula heightened to an unprecedented level following the exchange of military threat between the US and North Korea. On September 19, 2017 in his address to UN General Assembly US President Donald Trump stepped up his warning against North Korea by saying he could "totally destroy" North Korea in the face of its nuclear and ballistic missile threats. In response North Korea leader Kim

³⁰ "North Korean Missile Launches & Nuclear Tests: 1984-Present", CSIS, <https://missilethreat.csis.org/north-korea-missile-launches-1984-present/>

³¹ David Wright, "North Korea's Longest Missile Test Yet", November 28, 2017, www.allthingsnuclear.org/dwright/nk-longest-missile-test-yet

³² "Security Council Resolutions", United Nations, www.un.org/en/sc/documents/resolutions/2017.shtml

Jong-un issued a statement vowing to take the "highest-level" action. On November 20, 2017 United States designated North Korea as a state sponsor of terrorism in a symbolic move aimed at increasing pressure on the regime over its nuclear weapons program.

On October 7, 2017, in the Second Plenum of the 7th Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea Kim Jong Un's sister, Kim Yo-jong, was made an alternate member of the politburo - the top decision-making body. In the reshuffle, ChoeRyong-hae, a vice chairman of the party and one of the closest aides to Kim Jong-un, was selected as a member of the party's Central Military Commission. He holds eight high-profile positions in the government and the party. North Korea's foreign minister Ri Yong Ho, was also promoted to full vote-carrying member of the politburo.³³

India-North Korea Bilateral Relations

At the bilateral level there was no visit between India and North Korea. On April 21, 2017, India banned any Indian citizen or firm from supplying to Pyongyang arms, any nuclear related material or technology, or any other material that would enhance North Korea's ballistic-missile capabilities and stopped all military and police training to North Korean official in India. However, decided to continue the supply of food and medicine.³⁴ In response to North Korea's nuclear test on September 3, 2017, India deplored the test as a matter of deep concern over its violation of international commitment and adverse impact on Indian national security.³⁵

2.12 Japan

The political landscape in Japan in 2017 remained volatile, witnessing allegations of corruption against Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, snap election, disintegration of opposition party and the formation of new political parties. The political standing of Abe administration was tarnished in the first half 2017, by allegations of corruption involving Prime Minister Abe for doing favors for two school operators who have links to him and scandals involving cabinet ministers. On July 29, 2017, Defence Minister Tomomi Inada resigned, following allegations of a cover-up of logs detailing the activities of Japanese troops serving as U.N. peacekeepers in South Sudan.³⁶

On September 28, 2017, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe dissolved the Lower House of the Diet and called for a snap election. Following the announcement of the election, a new political party Kibō no Tō (Party of Hope), was formed under the leadership of Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike. In the run up to the snap election the main opposition party, Democratic Party

³³ "Second Plenum of Seventh WPK Central Committee", KCNA, October 8, 2017, <https://kcnawatch.co/newstream/1507453321-366833140/second-plenum-of-seventh-wpk-central-committee/> (Accessed on October 9, 2017)

³⁴ "Democratic People's Republic of Korea- Non-Proliferation order, April 21, 2017 Democratic People's Republic of Korea- Non-Proliferation order", MEA, India, April 21, 2017 (2.79MB) mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?51/Press_Releases

³⁵ "Press Statement on Nuclear Test conducted by DPRK", The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, India, September 3, 2017, mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/28911/press+statement+on+nuclear+test+conducted+by+dprk

³⁶ Reiji Yoshida, "Struggling in polls, Abe puts premium on stability in Cabinet shake-up", The Japan Times, August 3, 2017, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/08/03/national/politics-diplomacy/struggling-polls-abe-puts-premium-stability-cabinet-shake-#.WYgB9oh96M9> (Accessed on August 7, 2017)

disintegrated to form a new political party, Constitutional Democratic Party (CDP) under Yukio Edano. Some member of the Democratic Party joined the Party of Hope. In the election held October 22, 2017, the ruling coalition of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's Liberal Democratic Party and its partner Komeito retained two-third majority in the Lower House of Japanese Diet by winning 312 seats out of 465 seats in the October 22 election. LDP secured 284 seats retaining its pre-election position. Party of Hope received 50 seats, the Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan -54, LDP's coalition partner Komeito -29, Japan Community Party-12 and Hope Party's coalition partner Nippon Ishin -10 seats.³⁷

On December 8, 2017, the Japanese government approved that April 30, 2019, will be the day when Emperor Akihito abdicates the Chrysanthemum Throne. On the next day, May 1, Crown Prince Naruhito will become emperor, ending the Heisei Era at 30 years and four months and ushering in a new yet-to-be named era. This will be the first abdication in Japan's history of constitutional politics.³⁸

The security situation in Japan remained volatile in 2017 following the continued missile and nuclear provocation from North Korea. On two occasions North Korean missile passed over the Japanese territory. In response, Japan together with US and South Korea was at the forefront in the global campaign of "maxim pressure". On February 10, 2018, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe had Summit with the new US President Donald Trump. During the Summit President Trump reaffirmed the US U.S. commitment to defend Japan through the full range of U.S. military capabilities, both nuclear and conventional including the Senkaku Islands. Japan participated in the first Belt and Road Forum held on May 14–15, 2017 in Beijing. The Japanese delegation was headed by LDP Secretary-General Toshihiro Nikai. On November 11, 2017 Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe met Chinese President Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in the Danang, Vietnam and declared their meeting as a "fresh start" in Japan-China relations. On December 8, 2017, Japan finalized a free trade agreement with European Union after an agreement in principle was reached in July 2017.³⁹ Japan – EU free trade agreement is the largest free trade agreement ever signed.

³⁷ "VOTE 2017: Coalition retains two-thirds majority as all seats finalized", Asahi Shimbun, October 23, 2017, <http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201710230012.html> (Accessed on October 30, 2017)

³⁸ "Cabinet sets abdication date; talks move to ceremony plans", The Asahi Shimbun, December 8, 2017, <http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201712080054.html>

³⁹ "Japan-EU Economic Partnership Agreement", Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan, February 15, 2017, http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/economy/page6e_000013.html

India-Japan Bilateral Relations

Amongst the various bilateral Summits, on July 8, 2017, Prime Minister Naredra Modi and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe had a Summit Meeting on the sidelines of the G 20 Summit in Hamburg, Germany.⁴⁰

On September 13-17, 2017, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe visited India. In the Joint Statement “towards a free, open and prosperous Indo-Pacific”, India and Japan articulated the “central role” of both countries in “safeguarding and strengthening” a rule-based order in the Indo-Pacific region. During the visit, India and Japan signed 15 agreements.⁴¹ These include, MoC on disaster management, agreement on Japanese language education in India, an initiative to set up India-Japan Act East Forum to enhance connectivity and promote developmental projects in the North Eastern Region of India, two agreements to promote Japanese investment in India, three agreements to promote science and technology cooperation, four agreements in the field of sports, and an agreement on civil aviation.⁴²

There were engagements at the trilateral and quadrilateral levels as well. On December 13, 2017, Foreign Secretary Dr. S. Jaishankar hosted the 4th India-Australia-Japan Trilateral Dialogue with Secretary of Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Australia Ms. Frances Adamson and Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan Mr. Shinsuke J. Sugiyama, in New Delhi.⁴³

On November 12, 2017, officials from India’s Ministry of External Affairs, Australia’s Department of Foreign Affairs, Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and United State’s Department of State met in Manila, for consultations on issues of common interest in the Indo-Pacific region.⁴⁴

On September 18, 2017, Indian Foreign Minister, Sushma Swaraj had a Ministerial Trilateral with US Secretary of State Tillerson and Japanese FM Kono today morning in New York. Views on maritime security, connectivity and proliferation issues were exchanged.⁴⁵

On July 10, Japanese Maritime Self Defence Force (SDF) joined Indian and the US Navy in the annual Malabar exercise in an effort to bolster their maritime security cooperation. Japan joined the Malabar exercise in 2014.

⁴⁰ "Meeting between Prime Minister and Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan", MEA, India, July 8, 2017, www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/28604/Meeting_between_Prime_Minister_and_Shinzo_Abe_Prime_Minister_of_Japan

⁴¹ "List of MoUs/Agreements signed during the visit of Prime Minister of Japan to India", Ministry of External Affairs, Republic of India, September 14, 2017, http://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/28949/List_of_MoUsAgreements_signed_during_the_visit_of_Prime_Minister_of_Japan_to_India_September_14_2017 (Accessed on September 15, 2017)

⁴² "India-Japan Joint Statement during visit of Prime Minister of Japan to India", Ministry of External Affairs, India, September 14, 2017, www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/28946/IndiaJapan+Joint+Statement+during+visit+of+Prime+Minister+of+Japan+to+India+September+14+2017

⁴³ "4th India-Australia-Japan Trilateral Dialogue", MEA, India, December 13, 2017, <http://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/29176/4th+indiaaustraliajapan+trilateral+dialogue+december+13+2017>

⁴⁴ "India-Australia-Japan-U.S. Consultations on Indo-Pacific", MEA, India, November 12, 2017, <http://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/29110/indiaaustraliajapan+us+consultations+on+indopacific+november+12+2017>

⁴⁵ "India Japan US Trilateral Foreign Ministerial Meeting", MEA, India, September 18, 2017, <http://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/28957/india+japan+us+trilateral+foreign+ministerial+meeting>

Japan sent its largest destroyer, the Izumo, capable of carrying up to 14 helicopters for the first time.⁴⁶

On November 12, 2017, Officials from India’s Ministry of External Affairs, Australia’s Department of Foreign Affairs, Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and United State’s Department of State met in Manila for consultations on issues of common interest in the Indo-Pacific region.⁴⁷

2.12 Republic of Korea (South Korea)

2017 witnessed significant political transformation in South Korea. The political crisis unfolded following the corruption scandal involving President Park Geun-hye since October 2016 continued until March 2017. In March the Constitutional Court of Korea upheld the impeachment of President Park Guen-hye by the National Assembly. In the Presidential election held in the first week of May, Moon Jae-in of the Democratic Party emerged victorious.

The political crisis during the first of 2017 had a negative impact on the economy but the situation got better in the second half. China’s economic retaliation against South Korea’s decision to deploy the THAAD system was another factor which affected the Korean economy. China economic retaliation included its ban on Chinese group tours to South Korea in March and hit many Korean industries, including airlines, tourism, duty-free shops, department stores and hotels. However, with the political transition in May, the new administration in Seoul carried out supplementary budget focused on employment generation. In 2017, South Korea achieved economic growth of 3 percent, highest in the last three years. President Moon Jae-in’s economic policy called “J-nomics” has three pillars: job creation led by the public sector, expansion of the social safety net with a particular focus on unemployed youth and retirees, and the reform of large multinational Korean corporations known as chaebol. These policies represent a radical shift from the two conservative government’s economic policy which held the idea that jobs were created as a result of growth. The government declared job creation and income-led growth as its key economic agenda.

On the security and foreign policy front, 2017 witnessed a heightened tension following the continued missile and nuclear provocation from North Korea. In response to North Korean belligerence, President Moon adopted a strong posture of deterrence and “maximum pressure” while keeping the door for dialogue open. Seoul’s deterrence posture was strengthened through reaffirming its alliance with United States during President Moon’s Summit with President Donald Trump on June 29-30, 2017 and by deploying THAAD missile defense system. Seoul also joined Washington’s “maximum pressure” campaign by adopting unilateral and multilateral sanctions. On July 7, 2017, President Moon announced the ‘Korean Peninsula Peace Initiative’, envisaging a peaceful resolution of North Korean nuclear problem through the promotion of inter-Korea engagement. On

⁴⁶ “Japan, U.S., India begin joint naval drill in India”, The Japan News, July 11, 2017, <http://the-japan-news.com/news/article/0003811579>

⁴⁷ “India-Australia-Japan-U.S. Consultations on Indo-Pacific”, MEA, India, November 12, 2017, www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/29110/IndiaAustraliaJapanUS_Consultations_on_IndoPacific_November_12_2017

October 31, 2017, South Korea and China reached an agreement to normalize bilateral relations between the two countries, which was strained due to Seoul's decision to THAAD deployment. South Korea's relation with Japan deteriorated following President Moon's decision to revisit the 2015 agreement between the two countries on "comfort women" issue.

India- South Korea Bilateral Relations

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Moon Jae-in had their first Summit Meeting on July 7, 2017, on the sidelines of the G 20 Summit in Hamburg, Germany.

On April 21, 2017, India and the Republic of Korea signed an Inter-governmental Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for Defence Industry Co-operation in Shipbuilding. On July 25, 2017, a roundtable meeting on development cooperation between the Republic of Korea and India was held in New Delhi to order to explain the ROK's development cooperation policy and share development cooperation experiences with donor organizations in India.⁴⁸

On October 6, 2017, Indian and South Korean navies held a joint drill in the Indian Ocean. Fleet of South Korean warships visited Mumbai as part of a military exchange between the two countries.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ "ROK and India to Hold Roundtable Meeting on Development Cooperation ", MOFA, Republic of Korea, July 25, 2017, www.mofa.go.kr/eng/brd/m_5676/view.do?seq=318824

⁴⁹ "Navies of S. Korea, India hold joint drill in Indian Ocean", The Yonhap News, October 7, 2017, <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/national/2017/10/07/0301000000AEN20171007003000320.html> (Accessed on October 9, 2017)

CENTRAL ASIA

3. CENTRAL ASIA

The region marked its 25th anniversary of independence with noteworthy political developments and economic progresses. Overall, the region

remained stable in 2017 and increased hope of political and economic reforms.

Reforms were launched in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. The Kyrgyz Republic witnessed its first peaceful transition of power from one democratically elected government to the next with a new President. Uzbekistan's new administration signed long-awaited border agreement with Kyrgyzstan. Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan signed strategic cooperation agreement in April 2017. Politically, the region remained active with multiple visits to foreign countries taken by the leaderships throughout the year and the region also received foreign heads of government and international organizations, including the United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres. Leaders of Central Asian countries attended the Arab Islamic American Summit organized in Saudi Arabian capital Riyadh on 20-21 May 2017. Kazakhstan hosted the Expo 2017 themed on future energy as well as the First Summit of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation on Science and Technology on 10-11 September 2017 at Astana.

From economic angle, the region continued to face the global slowdown in oil and gas prices. The growth of Russian economy in 2017 provided some succor to the republics that export their goods and labourers to Russia. Remittances sent by migrants of the region in Russia account for a substantial portion of the national GDPs of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The region also continued its economic integration with the world with improving transport linkages. The trilateral Baku–Tbilisi–Kars (BTK) railway line inaugurated in October 2017 not only connects Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey but reduces transportation time between Asia and Europe, which has been termed as the ‘the shortest and most reliable link between Europe and Asia’⁵⁰ and a ‘new Eurasian bridge’. The corridor connects Caspian Sea to Europe through Turkey, linking Central Asian countries with the western transportation networks.

3.1 Kazakhstan

The Parliament approved on March 6 certain amendments to the country's constitution. The amendments reduced the power of the presidency and increased the power of the parliament and the cabinet of ministers. The presidential form of governance remains intact but other branches would have greater autonomy.⁵¹

Kazakhstan also ordered changing Kazakh alphabets from Cyrillic to Latin script by 2025.

In 2017, Kazakhstan also offered to host talks on Syria in capital Astana. Meanwhile, Kazakhstan started its two-year tenure as the non-permanent member of the UN Security Council from 1 January 2017.

⁵⁰NailiaBagirova, “Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkey launch 'Silk Road' rail link,” Reuters, 30 October 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/azerbaijan-railway/azerbaijan-georgia-turkey-launch-silk-road-rail-link-idUSL8N1N52XR>

⁵¹Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Final Proposal Suggests Redistributing 35 Presidential Powers,” <http://mfa.gov.kz/index.php/ru/astana-calling/12-material-orys/8396-astana-calling-51>

3.2 Kyrgyzstan

In the Kyrgyz Presidential election held in October 2017 Mr. SooronbaiJeenbekov was elected as the new President of the country. The election was considered crucial in Central Asia as it is the only country in the region to follow a parliamentary form of democracy.

3.3 Tajikistan

The government of President EmomaliRahmon's crackdown against religious extremism continued. Tajikistan security in May 2017 arrested the eldest son of Colonel GulmurodHalimov, former elite police force commander in Tajikistan, who defected to Daesh in 2015.⁵²Tajikistan's relations with Arab countries seemed deepening, with visit to Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Jordan, but its relations with Iran witnessed some hitches in 2017. Tajikistan hosted the C5+1 Security Working Group meeting in July 2017. Besides Tajikistan, the meeting was attended by participants from other four republics Kazakhstan Kyrgyz Republic, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and the US. The meeting discussed the threat posed by terrorism in the region and the way to increase the cooperation.⁵³

3.4 Turkmenistan

People in Turkmenistan voted in February 2017 the country's presidential election and once again elected President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov for a term of seven years.⁵⁴ Turkmenistan government took steps towards political reforms in the country. For the first time, following the recent constitutional amendments, candidates from more than one party participated in the presidential election. Nine nominees from the different parties and groups of the people took part in the elections as candidates for the presidency.⁵⁵

3.5 Uzbekistan

Among the important developments in the country included the peaceful completion of one year of the Presidency of Mirziyoyev. President ShavkatMirziyoyev launched reforms, including in economic, judicial and administrative sectors, and continued strengthening his position through fresh appointments to various critical positions in the government. The new President reached out to neighbours for improving ties and to harness the potential of regional cooperation.

Uzbekistan also concluded crucial boundary agreements Kyrgyzstan, which had persisting for a long time. The measures taken by the new administration has generated hope and it is helping an environment of cooperation and engagement in the region.

⁵² Asia Plus, "Son of fugitive Tajik police colonel who joined IS group arrested," 10 May 2017, <https://news.tj/en/news/tajikistan/security/20170510/239630>

⁵³ U.S. Embassy in Tajikistan, "C5+1 Meeting Held in Dushanbe," 27 July 2017, <https://tj.usembassy.gov/pr-07272017/>

⁵⁴ Reuters, "Turkmenistan leader certain to win third term in vote," 12 February 2017, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkmenistan-election-idUSKBN15Q0TC?il=0>

⁵⁵ The Golden Age Online Newspaper, 12 February 2017, <http://www.turkmenistan.gov.tm/eng/?id=7656>

3.6 India and Central Asia

India increased its engagement with the five republics in the region both bilaterally and multilaterally. India and the region marked 25 years of diplomatic relations in 2017. Kazakhstan increased its diplomatic presence with the opening of its consulate in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, in April 2017. This step expected to boost people to people relations, including through tourism. Apart from Delhi-Almaty flights, Kazakhstan air carrier started another service connecting Delhi and Astana, the capital of Kazakhstan.

In 2017, the most significant development at the multilateral level with the region was India's full membership of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in Astana Summit in June, attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Home Minister of India Rajnath Singh participated in the SCO 9th Ministerial Meeting on Disaster Management in Issyk Kul, near Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan in August 2017. The Home Minister made two proposals and both were accepted by all SCO members: first, to organize a 'joint urban earthquake search and rescue' exercise to improve collective preparedness, and second, India to host the next meeting of SCO Head of Departments dealing with Disaster Prevention in 2019. In October 2017, Uzbekistan organized the fifth conference of Justice Ministers of SCO members. The participants discussed range of issues on increasing cooperation in the legal field among member states and to further ensure the rule of law, protection of rights and legitimate interests of citizens. They also deliberated on the introduction of modern mechanisms of legal support for investments in the SCO area.⁵⁶

Kazakhstan emerged as the top supplier of uranium to India.⁵⁷ The South Asia-Central Asia energy project Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India natural gas pipeline (TAPI) made some progress in 2017; the 214-kilometer Turkmen section of the pipeline is being constructed as per the schedule. The works are planned to be accomplished by the end of 2018. During his visit to Turkmenistan in May 2017, President of Uzbekistan ShavkatMirziyoyev held discussions on energy cooperation, including on possible participation of Uzbekistan in TAPI project.⁵⁸ TAPI also generated interest in Saudi Arabia, which expressed readiness to support the pipeline. Saudi Arabia's interest was announced in November 2017 in Riyadh.⁵⁹ Minister of Energy, Industry and Mineral Resources Khalid Al-Falih said

⁵⁶ Diana Aliyeva, "Justice ministers of SCO member states convene in Tashkent," 21 October 2017, <https://en.trend.az/casia/uzbekistan/2811031.html>

⁵⁷ Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, "Transcript of Media Briefing in Astana on ongoing visit of Prime Minister to Kazakhstan (June 08, 2017)," 9 June 2017, http://www.mea.gov.in/media-briefings.htm?dtl/28521/Transcript_of_Media_Briefing_in_Astana_on_ongoing_visit_of_Prime_Minister_to_Kazakhstan_June_08_2017

⁵⁸ Turkmen Petroleum, "GurbangulyBerdimuhamedov and ShavkatMirziyoyev have Discussed Participation of Uzbekistan in the Project of the TAPI Gas Pipeline," 22 May 2017, <http://turkmenpetroleum.com/en/2017/05/22/gurbanguly-berdimuhamedov-and-shavkat-mirziyoyev-have-discussed-participation-of-uzbekistan-in-the-project-of-the-tapi-gas-pipeline/>

⁵⁹ "The Nation, Saudi Arabia supports TAPI gas pipeline project," 11 November 2017, <http://nation.com.pk/11-Nov-2017/saudi-arabia-supports-tapi-gas-pipeline-project?show=preview>

that the kingdom “supports” the TAPI pipeline and the project will receive materials made in Saudi Arabia.⁶⁰

In June 2017, India and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) signed a ‘petition’ on the beginning of talks to create a free trade area.⁶¹ The two sides had established a Joint Feasibility Study Group on India-EAEU free trade area.⁶² Both sides accepted the report prepared by the joint study group and the formal negotiations would begin with the signing of the petition.

From security cooperation perspective between India and Central Asia, the year 2017 had a busy schedule with India and Kyrgyzstan holding their annual joint Special Forces anti-terror Khanjar series military exercise at KokJhangak in the Central Asian country’s southern region in Feb-March 2017. The Khanjar series exercises were focussed on training of Special Forces for tactics and techniques in mountain terrain. The exercises were held in Kyrgyzstan and India. India and Kazakhstan also held their joint military exercise Prabal Dostyk 2017 in Himachal Pradesh in November 2017. The 14-day training exercise aimed to increase bilateral military ties and improve interoperability between the two armies.⁶³ The first ‘Prabal Dostyk’ exercises were held in 2016 in Kazakhstan.

Security and defence authorities of India and Central Asia paid visits to each other. India’s Chief of the Army Staff General Bipin Rawat visited Central Asian countries of Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan from 1 to 6 August 2017. He held meeting with high level authorities in the two countries. Kazakhstan further sought India’s support in capacity enhancement in the areas of counter insurgency operations, military education and training of cadets in India. General Rawat reportedly assured Kazakhstan army chief of all possible support in strengthening its counter-insurgency operations.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Al Arabiya (English), “Saudi Arabia eyes investments in Turkmenistan, including gas, says Falih,” 8 November 2017, <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/business/energy/2017/11/08/Saudi-Arabia-eyes-investments-in-Turkmenistan-including-gas-says-Falih.html>

⁶¹ Sputnik, “EAEU, India Sign Petition on Beginning of Free Trade Area Talks at SPIEF 2017,” 3 June 2017, <https://sputniknews.com/business/201706031054277151-eaeu-india-petition-trade/>

⁶² Ksenia Kondratieva, “India, Russia to set the ball rolling for FTA talks with Eurasian union,” *The Hindu*, 31 May 2017, <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/policy/india-russia-to-set-the-ball-rolling-for-fta-talks-with-eurasian-union/article9717037.ece>

⁶³ Press Information Bureau, Government of India, “Indo – Kazakhstan Joint Exercise ‘PRABAL DOSTYK 2017’ Begins,” 2 November 2017, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=173183>

⁶⁴ Press Information Bureau, Government of India, Ministry of Defence, “Gen Bipin Rawat Meets C-in-C Land Forces, Kazakhstan,” 3 August 2017, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=169578>

WEST ASIA

4. WEST ASIA

West Asia, which includes 24 countries, has experienced large scale violence, displacement of people and extreme political instability. There have been rifts on the basis of religion, ethnicity, which is underlined by resource and territorial compulsions. Thousands of lives have been lost in this continuous conflict, which has bred hatred amongst ethnic and religious communities within the region. Nations like Turkey experienced referendums changing a parliamentary set-up to a presidential system. Five Arab nations led by Saudi Arabia broke diplomatic ties with Qatar due to its links with Muslim Brotherhood, Egypt even closing its airspace and seaports for all Qatari transportation. Saudi Arabia itself witnessed major changes. Arrests of more than 500 princes, government ministers as well as business elites on charges of corruption, the rising influence of Crown Prince Salman, and the slow modernisation of Saudi society. The region also witnessed severe intervention in the internal politics of Yemen, which led to major internal conflict and loss of life and property.

4.1. Saudi Arabia

On 20 May 2017, the US President chose Saudi Arabia as the country of his first foreign visit. During his two-day stay in Riyadh three important events took place. First was the bilateral meeting between the US and Saudi Arabia and in this both sides signed one of the largest defence deals of US\$ 110 billion, which is likely to increase to US\$ 300 billion in the next one decade. Second event was the US-GCC Summit, which took place in Riyadh. In this meeting, the US President reversed the lukewarm policy of the previous administration towards the GCC countries and assured full cooperation and security to its Gulf allies. President Trump also assured them against Iran and its proxy groups. Riyadh had invited more than 50 Muslim leaders to participate in the Summit. President Trump delivered a speech on Islam and urged the Muslim leaders to cooperate with him in eliminating the radical force, which is growing in Islam. During this visit, President Trump also inaugurated antiterrorism centre in Riyadh, whose task would be to counter the ideology of terrorism, extremism and growing radicalization among the Muslim youth.

President Trump's visit to Saudi Arabia was seen as a beginning of new partnership between the two countries. The US President assured its full cooperation to Riyadh's security and economic engagement, especially when Iran was growing its influence in the region rapidly. Second, Washington also supplied the precision weapons to fight in Yemen denied by the Obama administration. Third, the visit of President Trump to Saudi Arabia was also interpreted as a boost to the image of the young Crown Prince.

In June 2017, four Arab countries, including three GCC member states Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain and Egypt cut off their diplomatic, transport and economic relations with Qatar. They charged Qatar of financing and supporting terrorist groups. Doha was also accused of providing asylum to the outlawed people who were involved in provoking their citizens against their governments and misusing of its media platform, Aljazeera by airing their views and creating an unwanted atmosphere of chaos and

disturbances. The four Arab countries, popularly known as Anti-Terrorist Quartet (ATQ) blamed the Qatari Amir for not implementing the two agreements it had signed in 2012, including the Supplement agreement. The ATQ issued ten demands to be accepted in a deadline, which included implement the agreements signed with GCC countries; oust the outlawed people from its land; windup Aljazeera, snap ties with Iran, roll back Turkish military stationed in Doha. The Emir of Qatar refused to accept these demands and termed it as an attempt to subjugate its independence. However, with active mediation of Kuwait, the ATQ revised its demand and reduced it to five in Cairo meeting. More or less, the nature of demands of ATQ remained the same. Both sides were stubborn with regards to their demands. The impasse could not be broken despite active mediation by the US, and several European countries. The stalemate continued throughout the year.

In November 2017, news flashed that Lebanon Prime Minister Saad Hariri resigned just after arriving in Riyadh. The Saudis were allegedly accused of forcing Saad Hariri to tender his resignation. The reason of his resignation was cited as the utter intervention of Hezbollah in the administration of the country, which had setup its own parallel government in some parts of the country. The Lebanese President, who had friendly relation with Hezbollah, did not accept the resignation of Saad Hariri and after a week he returned to Lebanon and resumed his position. Before his return to Lebanon, Saad Hariri visited France and Egypt and it was believed that with the active involvement of the two countries the Lebanese PM was able to free himself from Saudi hostage. Although the Saudi side denied of any harassment of Saad Hariri and said that it was his personal decision to resign, it was believed that the growing role of Hezbollah in the region in general and active cooperation with Houthi rebels in Yemen might have forced the young Crown Prince to expose and discredit Hezbollah, which was working as a deep state in Lebanon.

4.2. Iran

Domestic and Regional Developments

For Iran, the year 2017 began with the sad demise of one of its prominent and pragmatic leaders in recent times Ayatollah Hashemi Rafsanjani, who served as the President of Iran for two consecutive terms from 1989 to 1997 and ‘died of an unexpected heart attack’⁶⁵ on January 8.

On December 28, Iran was engulfed in popular unrest on account of inflation and rising prices of essential commodities. This unrest appeared to pose a severe challenge to the basic fabric of the Islamic Republic. Initially started in Mashhad, the second largest city of Iran, the uprising spread in other cities including the capital Tehran and took a violent turn in which scores of people reportedly lost their lives and hundreds were reportedly

⁶⁵*Press TV*, “An Ayatollah’s death bereaves the nation,” January 18, 2017, <http://www.presstv.com/Detail/2017/01/18/506695/Ayatollah-Akbar-Hashemi-Rafsanjani>, accessed on February 27, 2018.

arrested.⁶⁶ Another major setback in the year 2017 for Iran and its ailing economy came on November 12 in the form of a powerful earthquake of 7.3 magnitudes⁶⁷ which struck near the border of Iran and Iraq. This natural disaster, which killed more than 500 people and injured thousands, was considered as the strongest so far to have hit in the western part of Iran.

On the positive side, the year 2017 saw the re-election of Dr. Hassan Rouhani for the second term as the President of Iran. Dr. Rouhani, widely known for his support for introducing moderation in the Iranian political system, won the election held on May 19. The election result, announced on May 20, declared him defeating his primary rival Ebrahim Ræisi by a margin of about 20 per cent of votes.⁶⁸

Throughout the year 2017, however, Iran's domestic and international politics were marred by economic and political uncertainties due to the election of Donald Trump as the new President of the United States, whose election campaign was dominated by the slogans of denouncing the Iran nuclear agreement.

President Trump and Saudi Arabia endeavoured to build a grand coalition to isolate Iran. This was done through the Riyadh Summit. Saudi Arabia organised the Riyadh Summit 2017 on May 20-21, in its capital in which the US interacted at three different platforms respectively with Saudi Arabia, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), and host of Islamic countries. While the anti-Iranian content at all the three platforms were visible, during the US-Saudi Arabia bilateral Summit, the two countries also signed '\$110 billion worth of defense'⁶⁹ deal 'in the face of malign Iranian influence and Iranian related threats.'⁷⁰

While Iran dismissed the Riyadh Summit as an "obscene"⁷¹ act of the US, President Donald Trump left no opportunity in his attack on Iran. In his maiden speech⁷² to the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on September 19, Trump warned that the US would not allow Iran's "murderous regime" to destabilise the region, neither would it allow Iran to build "dangerous missiles." He also clearly stated that the US "cannot abide

⁶⁶*The Telegraph*, "Hundreds arrested as Ayatollah Ali Khamenei blames Iran's 'enemies' for unrest," January 2, 2018, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/01/02/nine-dead-iran-protesters-storm-police-station-fresh-unrest/>, accessed on February 27, 2018.

⁶⁷*The New York Times*, "Iran-Iraq Earthquake Kills More Than 500," November 13, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/13/world/middleeast/iran-iraq-earthquake.html?_r=0, accessed on February 27, 2018.

⁶⁸*Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA)*, "Brief summary of presidential candidates' backgrounds," April 21, 2017, <http://www.irna.ir/en/News/82500644/>, accessed on February 27, 2018.

⁶⁹ U.S. Department of State, "Supporting Saudi Arabia's Defense Needs," Press Release, May 20, 2017, <https://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2017/05/270999.htm>, accessed on February 27, 2018.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Official Website of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei, "POTUS dances with head of a reactionary regime, criticizes Iran's 40-million election: Ayatollah Khamenei," June 4, 2017, <http://english.khamenei.ir/news/4890/POTUS-dances-with-head-of-a-reactionary-regime-criticizes-Iran-s>, accessed on February 27, 2018.

⁷² The White House, "Remarks by President Trump to the 72nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly," September 19, 2017, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-72nd-session-united-nations-general-assembly/>, accessed on February 27, 2018.

by an agreement if it provides cover for the eventual construction of a nuclear program.”⁷³

A day later, on September 20, during his speech⁷⁴ at the UNGA, Iran’s President Hassan Rouhani strongly rebutted Trump’s claims saying that the nuclear deal was “overwhelmingly applauded by the international community and endorsed by the Security Council as a part of Resolution 2231.”⁷⁵ On September 21, Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei too reacted to Trump’s rhetoric against Iran terming it “senseless.”⁷⁶

On October 13, President Trump announced⁷⁷ that he was not going to certify the Iran nuclear agreement anymore and on the same day he pronounced his new Iran policy consisting of three components. These included countering Iran’s “destabilising activity and support for terrorist proxies in the region”⁷⁸ and placing “additional sanctions”⁷⁹ on Iran; addressing Iran’s “proliferation of missiles and weapons;”⁸⁰ and denying Iran “all paths to a nuclear weapon.”⁸¹ The Qatari crisis of June 5th was mainly due to Qatar’s ties with Iran.⁸²

Trump’s opposition to Iran and its alienation in the Arab world notwithstanding, throughout the year 2017, Iran remained entrenched in supporting the Houthi rebels in Yemen in its proxy war with Saudi Arabia. Iran-Saudi conflict was further escalated⁸³ on November 4 when the Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri announced his resignation from Riyadh blaming Iran for regional meddling and within hours a long range missile was fired from Yemen by Houthi rebels towards Riyadh, which Saudi Arabia blamed on Iran, terming it ‘an act of war.’⁸⁴

Similarly, Iran also continued to hold its position in Syria. In this, Iran got a consistent support of Russia and later from Turkey as well after Erdogan revised his Syria policy as a result of failed coup attempt against him. Erdogan’s disenchantment with the US and resultant increasing closeness with Russia and Iran helped the latter gain additional support towards its

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Official Website of Iran’s President Hassan Rouhani, “Full text of President Rouhani’s address’s to the United Nations General Assembly,” September 20, 2017, <http://www.president.ir/en/100837>, accessed on February 27, 2018.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Official Website of Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei, “Angry at Iran’s Victories and Their Own Defeats is the Reason for America’s Enmity with Iran,” September 21, 2017, <http://english.khamenei.ir/news/5142/Angry-at-Iran-s-Victories-and-Their-Own-Defeats-is-the-Reason>, accessed on February 27, 2018.

⁷⁷ The White House, “Remarks by President Trump on Iran Strategy,” October 13, 2017, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-iran-strategy/>, accessed on February 27, 2018.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ CNN, “Missile attack ‘an act of war’ by Iran, Saudi Foreign Minister says,” November 6, 2017, <http://edition.cnn.com/2017/11/06/middleeast/saudi-foreign-minister-interview/index.html>, accessed on February 27, 2018.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

quest to save Bashar al-Assad. This was evidenced by the 7th round of delegation level talks⁸⁵ in Astana between Iran, Turkey and Russia on October 30-31 towards the resolution of the Syrian crisis and the tripartite talks⁸⁶ between Iran's President Hassan Rouhani, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in the city of Sochi in Russia on November 22, 2017 towards 'establishing peace and stability in Syria' under the rubric of UNSCR 2254.⁸⁷

However, the popular unrest in Iran at the end of the year 2017 suggested that there is a substantive domestic cost of and limit to Iran's increasing regional gains and extraterritorial influence in the Middle East. The year 2018 may see Ayatollah Khamenei investing substantial amount of energy in finding an optimum mix of domestic stability and regional influence, while ensuring his regime's survival through Iran's regional role.

India-Iran Bilateral Relations

For the year 2017, India-Iran relation was marked by creation of history when on November 11 about 15,000 tonnes of wheat reached Afghanistan from India for the first time through a new trade and transit route via Chabahar in Iran. This shipment was dispatched in late October from India's western port of Kandla and it reached the Afghanistan's province of Nimroz bordering Iran.⁸⁸ In terms of bilateral visits, the year saw India's Minister of Road Transport, Highways and Shipping visiting⁸⁹ Iran to participate in the inauguration ceremony of President Rouhani for his second term held on August 5. During his visit, Mr. Gadkari also handed over the letter of felicitations from India's Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi for President Hassan Rouhani. In this letter, Prime Minister Modi had extended his invitation to Iran's President to visit India.⁹⁰ India's External Affairs Minister Mrs. Sushma Swaraj made a visit⁹¹ to Iran on December 2 during her return journey from SCO Summit at Sochi. During the inauguration ceremony of the Phase 1 of the Shahid Beheshti Port at Chabahar, Iran held on December 3, India was represented by Minister of

⁸⁵ *Tasnim News*, "Iran, Russia, Turkey Wrap Up Syria Peace Talks with Joint Statement," November 1, 2017, <https://www.tasnimnews.com/en/news/2017/11/01/1561953/iran-russia-turkey-wrap-up-syria-peace-talks-with-joint-statement>, accessed on February 27, 2018.

⁸⁶ Official Website of the President of Russia, "Joint statement by Presidents of Iran, Russia and Turkey," November 22, 2017, <http://en.kremlin.ru/supplement/5256>, accessed on February 27, 2018.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ *Press TV*, "Indian wheat cargo reaches Afghanistan via Iran," November 12, 2017, <http://www.presstv.com/Detail/2017/11/12/541905/Indian-wheat-cargo-reaches-Afghanistan-via-Iran>, accessed on February 26, 2018.

⁸⁹ Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, "Minister of Road Transport, Highways and Shipping represents India at the Inauguration Ceremony of President Dr. Hassan Rouhani of Iran," August 6, 2017, <http://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/28812/minister+of+road+transport+highways+and+shipping+represents+india+at+the+inauguration+ceremony+of+president+dr+hassan+rouhani+of+iran>, accessed on February 26, 2018.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, "Visit of External Affairs Minister to Iran on December 2, 2017," December 2, 2017, <http://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/29145/visit+of+external+affairs+minister+to+iran+december+2+2017>, accessed on February 26, 2018.

State (Shipping) Mr. Pon Radhakrishnan.⁹² During his two day visit to Iran on December 2-3, 2017, Mr. Radhakrishnan ‘represented India in the 2nd meeting of the India-Iran-Afghanistan Ministerial-level Trilateral Meeting on Chabahar Port Development and involving the respective Ministers of Iran and Afghanistan.’⁹³

4.3. Israel

Israel experienced significant challenges in the region as well as internally throughout 2017. Issues like the crisis in Syria, rift with Iran, controlling terrorism within its own territory, and growing anti-Semitism has kept Israeli decision makers busy. The multiple resolutions passed in the United Nations dealing with human rights abuses, treatment of people in the Israeli occupied areas and the like, have pushed the leadership to actively engage with countries they had not reached out before. Prime Minister Netanyahu in 2017 made extensive visits throughout Europe, Africa and Latin America. Throughout the year, there was no thawing of relations in between the Israeli and Palestinian authority and the entire year saw more hunger strikes, organised and spontaneous rallies, stone throwing and border attacks. Domestically, multiple cases of corruption was filed against leading political figures including PM Netanyahu. US President Trump’s announcement of shifting the US embassy to Jerusalem in December 2017 also created ripples in global diplomacy leading to the Security Council passing a resolution against such a move.

India Israel Bilateral Relations

Marking the 25th anniversary of diplomatic relations, Prime Minister Narendra Modi made his maiden visit to Israel, a first ever by any Indian Prime Minister to Israel. On his three day tour (July 3-5, 2017), India and Israel signed various agreements and MoUs. MoUs signed were MoU between the Department of Science & Technology, India and National Technological Innovation Authority, Israel for setting up of India-Israel Industrial R&D and Technological Innovation Fund (I4F); MoU between the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation of the Republic of India and the Ministry of National Infrastructure, Energy and Water Resources of the State of Israel on National Campaign for Water Conservation in India; MoU between U.P. Jal Nigam, Government of Uttar Pradesh, of the Republic of India and the Ministry of National Infrastructure, Energy and Water Resources of the State of Israel on State Water Utility Reform in India; India-Israel Development Cooperation - Three Year Work Program in Agriculture 2018-2020; Plan of Cooperation Between the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and the Israel Space Agency (ISA) regarding cooperation in Atomic Clocks; MoU between the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and the Israel Space Agency (ISA) regarding cooperation in GEO-LEO

⁹²Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, “Inauguration ceremony of ShahidBeheshti Port at Chabahar, Iran,” December 3, 2017, <http://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/29146/inauguration+ceremony+of+shahid+beheshti+port+at+chabahar+iran>, accessed on February 26, 2018.

⁹³ Ibid.

Optical Link and MoU between the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and the Israel Space Agency (ISA) regarding cooperation in Electric Propulsion for Small Satellites.

4.4 Turkey

The country's economy did well for past many years with becoming among the top twenties economies of the world with 905 Billion US Dollars GDP.^[3] According to Turkish Statistic Department, Germany remained Turkey's top export market, at \$11 billion, or a 9.6 percent share of total exports, and \$53.6 billion worth of Turkish exports were delivered to EU28 countries from January to September in 2017, making Turkey an integral part of European economy, notwithstanding strained political relations.

Turkey's foreign trade volume reached \$284 billion in 2017 with 13.4 percent increase from 2016. Turkey's close economic relations with the Arab world continued to deepen, the United Arab Emirates as the largest receiver of Turkish exports (\$7.8 billion) followed by Iraq (\$7 billion), the U.K. (\$7 billion) and the U.S. (\$6.5 billion). Turkey's import, however, has diversified and China and Russia have become the major export partners with \$17 billion and 13.9 billion respectively.^[4]

The year 2017 had seen an unprecedented normalization process with Russia but its relations with the European countries remained strained over multiple issues. Turkey's continued actions against the Fetullah Terrorist Organization (FETO), and differences over American military support to the Kurdish militant groups in Syria, mainly PKK affiliated group PYD-YPG widened the trust gap between Turkey and its Western allies. By the time Iraq's Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) decided to hold an independence referendum defying the counsel of its regional ally mainly Turkey, and the central authority of Iraq and the European countries, Turkey played a vital role in reaching out and unifying Iraq, Iraq and Syria on a common response to the independence referendum.

Turkey's Foreign Ministry continued demanding from EU authorities to clarify their position with regard to the failed military coup, which many European Countries tend to doubt and even sympathised with the persons and individuals Turkey accused of plotting the coup. The only exception in Turkey's relations with Europe was Britain whose leader Theresa May visited Ankara in January

The US-Turkey relations continued to face difficult questions over the role of US embassy in the failed military coup attempt, which Turks saw with deep suspicions. On March 29, the U.S. Embassy in Ankara acknowledged that the U.S. Consulate General in Istanbul on July 21, 2017, cancelled the visa of FETO fugitive Adil Oksuz and they had contacted with him in this regard. On March 30, U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson tried to repair the relations by visiting Ankara and calling Turkey a reliable ally of Turkey. In May, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan visited the US in hope to normalise his country's relations with the Trump administration. But the visit failed to find any breakthrough and instead, a brawl between President Erdogan's

security staff and pro-PKK protesters outside Turkish embassy overwhelmed the media coverage. The relations between the two sides further deteriorated on Turkey's insistence on stopping arm supply to the PKK linked Syrian militant group PYD and YPG. As efforts failed, Turkish reaction against the US intensified, mainly by pointing out the involvement of US embassy staff in suspicious activities and by detaining some of the embassy's Turkish staff. As a reaction, on October 8, the U.S. Embassy in Ankara suspended processing of non-immigrant visa applications at its all missions in Turkey, a decision that Turkey immediately reciprocated by suspending visa services for US nationals in all Turkish consulates in the United States.

The US-Turkey relations have been typically strained by multiple distractions. The US judiciary process against a Turkish-Iranian businessman Reza Sarraf was another major issue that had a lasting effect on the relationship. In November, Turkey flagged notice on the health condition of Reza Sarraf after knowing that he has been moved out to an unknown place from his detention, fearing that Reza Sarraf had agreed to become the witness against Turkey. The Turkish Embassy in Washington received a reply from both the U.S. Department of Justice and the State Department saying Sarraf was safe and in good health. After Reza Sarraf became the witness, Turkey would be facing the prospects of economic sanctions or heavy fines for violating the sanctions imposed on Iran. Before the year 2017 came to end, the issue of US support to the Syrian Kurdish militant groups brought the two sides complete breaking point forcing U.S. President Donald Trump to assure his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan over the phone that 'from now on, no arms will be given to the YPG [PKK/PYD]'. However, Turkey remained sceptical of US claims and continued its preparation for a military operation against the PYD in Afrin which would start in January 2018.

On regional political landscapes, Turkey has to reach out new players. Turkey also reopened its embassy in Libya's Tripoli after its closure in 2014. Turkey also declared that it would not recognize an illegitimate "referendum on constitutional changes" which was slated for Feb. 20 in Upper Karabakh, a region which is under Armenian occupation. But the most important issues that Turkey faced was the referendum that Iraq's Kurdish Regional Government had sought in order to claim sovereignty and independence from Iraq. The process to claim its sovereignty started when the KRG controlled Peshmargas recaptured Kirkuk from ISIS and brought it under KRG control by hoisting the KRG flag on provincial offices. Turkey's Foreign Ministry noted that "these moves risk eroding Kirkuk's multicultural identity, which is embodied by the social, cultural and economic wealth of Iraq". Turkey cautioned the KRG against holding its planned independence referendum which the KRG did not heed and went ahead with its plan. Turkey as a result coordinated with Iran and Iraq to not only reject the referendum but also encouraged Iraq to recapture Kirkuk from Peshmarga's control. The swift security cooperation between Turkey and Iraq ended dashed KRG's ambitions and created another political crisis against the Barzani government. Turkey's resetting its relations with Iraq came after long-strained relations with Iraq.

Amid its widening the trust gap between Turkey and its Western allies, Turkey was left with two serious security challenges in its Southern borders, Iraq and Syria, where terrorist groups and anti-regime rebels have interchangeably maintained violence against the governments. Turkey's nearly a thousand kilometre border could not be completely secured against terror and illegal migration problems. Turkey saw an opportunity in mending ties with Russia and Iran and to de-escalate the situation and press for a negotiated political process, though on lowered expectations. Turkey's key role in facilitating the Astana peace process has brought significantly brought down the level of violence in Syria and established several escalation zones. By the end of 2017, Turkey has managed to secure a key role in the future of Syria and secured assurances from Russia and Iran to not allow the country becoming divided into ethnic lines as the US policies are clearly aiming to divide the country. President Erdogan and President Putin have talked and met on regular basis to advance the peace process. President Erdogan also visited Iran and Prime Minister Benali Yelderim visited Iraq.

On the other hand, Turkey saw itself marginalized by the new Saudi leadership when Riyadh hosted a conference of Arab Islamic countries with President Donald Trump. Soon after the conference, the powerful Gulf countries Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and UAE declared a wide range boycott of Qatar which Turkey feared could have involved a covert military intervention or a direct regime change attempt. Turkey's swift response came in close coordination with Iran, Russia and Iraq and opened a communication line with the boycotting countries to mediate the resolution. President Erdogan and his ministers frequently visited the region in securing a balancing act between Qatar, Iran and other Gulf countries. By the end of 2017, Turkey strengthened its military and diplomatic presence in the Gulf without damaging many its relations with Saudi Arabia.

India Turkey Bilateral Relations

State Visit of His Excellency Mr Recep Tayyip Erdogan President and Mrs Emine Erdogan of the Republic of Turkey was the main event of India-Turkey bilateral relations in which the two sides had held multiple dialogues and agreed to cooperate on many areas. The two day long (30 April-1 May 2017) visit concluded successfully a delegation-level talk with Prime Minister Modi, meeting with Hon'ble Rashtrapati ji. Also President Erdogan was conferred an Honorary degree (Honoris Causa) Jamia Milia Islamia (a central university) for his outstanding contributions in providing humanitarian assistance and hosting refugees from conflict affected countries, Syria, Somalia, Iraq and other countries. Hon'ble Vice President and External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj also called on President Erdoğan.

The joint press statement by the two leaders underlined the close and historical linkages between the two countries. Prime Minister Narendra Modi [\[1\]](#) recalled that ties of culture and language connect our societies for hundreds of years. Our bilateral trade turnover of around 6 billion dollars does not do full justice to convergences in our economies. Clearly, the

business and industry on both sides can do much more. He expressed his optimism that Turkish businesses would be quick to tap the diverse and unique opportunities inherent in rapidly growing India. He also pointed out that our societies face new threats and challenges every day. In particular, the constantly evolving threat from terrorism is our shared worry. I held an extensive conversation with the President on this subject. Both the leaders recognize the need for the UN Security Council to reflect the world of the twenty-first century and not of the century gone by. In his speech at India-Turkey Business Summit Prime Minister Narendra Modi pointed out:^[2] that there is huge potential and opportunity to enhance the bilateral engagement. Prime Minister Modi thanked President Erdogan for Turkey's support for India's membership of the MTCR and applications to join the Nuclear Suppliers Group and Wassenaar Arrangement. On Counter-Terrorism, the two leaders exchanged views on other international issues of common concern, most notably the fight against terrorism. The two countries signed Cultural Exchange Program for 2017-2020, MoU for Cooperation between Foreign Service Institute of India and Diplomacy Academy of Turkey, Agreement between the Government of The Republic of Turkey and the Government of The Republic of India on Gainful Occupation for Family Members of the Members of Diplomatic Mission or Consular Post and MoU between Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), India and Information and Communication Technologies Authority (ICTA), Turkey and Cooperation Agreement between Press Trust of India (PTI) and Anadolu Agency (AA) of Turkey

On 11 July 2017, Minister of State for Petroleum and Natural Gas Shri Dharmendra Pradhan visited Istanbul, Turkey to attend the 22nd World Petroleum Congress, in Istanbul, where he also held meetings with Turkey's energy minister Berat Albayrak on 11 July.

4.5 Palestine

H.E. Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, President of State of Palestine was on a State Visit to India from 14 to 17 May 2017, at the invitation of President of India Shri Pranab Mukherjee. This was his fifth visit and the third State visit to India. Earlier he had substantive meeting with PM Modi on the margins on the UNGA in New York in September 2015. President Abbas visited C-DAC in Noida on May 15 to forge cooperation between Palestine - India Techno Park being built by India in Palestine and Indian IT industry. He also delivered lecture at Indian Islamic centre. During the visit both sides reviewed the entire gamut of relationship. India assured technical and financial assistance to Palestine, besides signing of MoU on several issues.

4.6 Qatar

Minister of Foreign Affairs of Qatar Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani visited India on 25-26 August. The Qatari dignitary was hosted by External Affairs Minister Smt. Sushma Swaraj. They held delegation-level talks on 26 August during which matters of mutual interest pertaining to bilateral, regional and international affairs were discussed. The two sides reviewed progress on the follow up of key decisions taken during the high-

level bilateral visits which have been contributing to building a mutually beneficial partnership between the two countries.

India thanked Qatar for ensuring uninterrupted energy supply, especially the LNG, while the Qatari minister also appreciated the contribution of the 6,30,000 strong Indian community, which forms the largest expatriate community in Qatar. He also assured Indian workers' safety, well being and welfare and briefed about the new labour laws, which favour expatriate workers.

The minister also welcomed participation of Indian companies through project exports in Qatar's infrastructure development, including the ongoing FIFA 2022 related infrastructure. The Minister also discussed regional issues and the Indian side also briefed about India's position that how much peace and stability in Gulf region is vital to its national interest. Both sides also discussed over counter terrorism, extremism and growing religious intolerance, which is posing grave threats not only to the regional stability but also to the global peace and order. India is of the view that parties should resolve their differences through a process of constructive dialogue and peaceful negotiations.

4.7 Sultanate of Oman

H.E. Mr. Yousuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah, Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs, Sultanate of Oman paid an official visit to India on 2-3 April 2017 at the invitation of Hon'ble External Affairs Minister Smt Sushma Swaraj. During the visit, the two sides discussed bilateral, regional and other issues of mutual interest.

4.8. Jordan

On 27-28 December Ayman Al Safadi, foreign Affairs minister of Jordan visited India to prepare the visit of the King Jordan to India in February 2018. The minister stressed for a greater role of India in the region. During his lecture to Indian Council of World Affairs, the minister stressed the 'lack of opportunity' is a threat and urged countries to address the fundamental cause of instability in the region. He also underlined the need of a unified policy to counter terrorism, extremism and radicalization.

AFRICA

5. AFRICA **North Africa**

The year 2017 for North Africa (Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya and Algeria) depicted a gloomy picture on both economic and political fronts. The region failed to make any major headway in term of political stability or economic prosperity despite all the claims made by the respective regimes. Egypt witnessed a wave of terror attacks in 2017 and some of them were worst in recent history. On economic front, it witnessed number of mass protest due to imposition of heavy taxes and removal of subsidy on basic goods. Similarly Morocco and Tunisia could not make desired level of economic progress but politically these two nations remained relative stable and calm. The worst political and economic impasse was seen in Libya where the state institutions are lying in tatter and national economy is constantly declining with no sign of an early recovery.

5.1. Egypt

The year 2017 was the worst year for Egypt in terms of terror attacks since the ouster of President Morsi in 2013. The first major attack was witnessed in the month of April 2017 when two Coptic Christian churches in town of Tanta and Alexandria were attacked killing around forty five persons were killed and injuring many. In the attack in the city Tanta, 27 people were killed while in the city Alexandria, 15 were killed. Immediately after that President El-Sisi announced the extension of nationwide emergency in the country.

Another attack came on November 24, 2017 during Friday prayers when a group of armed assailants attacked worshipers at Belal Mosque in the village of Rawda in North Sinai, killing 311 civilians, among them 27 children, and injuring 128.

On diplomatic front, there was major development in the country when Egypt along with AUE, Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain announced to cut its diplomatic tie with Qatar in June 2017. The boycotting nations said they would halt all land, air and sea traffic with Qatar, eject its diplomats and order Qatari citizens to leave the nations. One of the many accusations leveled against Qatar was abetting terrorism in the region and giving shelter to the members of the MBH, a banned and officially declared terrorist organization in Egypt.

On its relationship with the major power, there was a major political and strategic set back when the US, Egypt's oldest strategic ally in the region announced in September 2017 that it would withhold \$95.7 million in aid to Egypt and delay a further \$195 million because of the country's lack of respect for human rights.

On its relation with Palestine, there was a positive development when Egypt sponsored the Palestinian-Palestinian dialogue and brought Hamas and Fatah (two warring factions) on negotiating table in Cairo. Egypt remained an important actor in the Palestine-Israel crisis and Egyptian political leadership's keenness on achieving Palestinian unity yielded some positive outcome.

On political front, Egypt announced to hold the Presidential election in March 2018. President El-Sisi of Egypt will contest for the post of President second time in the forthcoming election in month of March 2018. There is only one contender who would challenge him in the election and he is Mr.

Mustafa. Many of earlier candidates have withdrawn their nomination or have been forced to leave the contest. The MBH, another formidable force in the national politics of the country has called for boycotting the election.

In the economic sphere Egyptian economy bounced back after years of decline as there was negative growth for almost six years amidst political upheaval in the country. The Egyptian economy witnessed positive developments during the year 2017, thus sending strong messages of hope that Egyptian economy is on the right path. Indicators of the Egyptian economic performance during the fiscal year 2016-2017 showed a remarkable growth in all sectors after the government came with some initiatives like “Start Egypt”, “Your idea is your company” and “Establish your own service.

India – Egypt Bilateral relations

On bilateral political and economic front, not much happened in the year 2017 between India and Egypt. But some cultural activism were witnessed between the two nations in 2017. The Maulana Azad Cultural Centre in Cairo, a cultural wing of Indian embassy in Egypt organized a Tagore cultural festival to celebrate the 156th birth anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore. The festival was organized between 8-12 May 2017 with the cooperation of Egyptian Ministry of Culture, Cairo Opera House, Cultural Production Sector, Dancers’ Guild and the Indian Community Association in Egypt.

5.2. Kingdom of Morocco

After constant on the stability front, the country finally was able to have a new coalition government in April 2017. The kingdom of Morocco finally got a new coalition government under Prime Minister Othman of Islamsit Party of Justice and Development. The formation of new government brought to an end the six months of deadlock in the national politics. To form the government, Mr. Othman had to structure the alliances with conservatives, socialist and pro-market parties. It is worth mentioning here that Morocco king as a preemptive measure amidst the uprising had introduced a series of political reforms.

India- Morocco bilateral Relations

On the bilateral front with Morocco, India had some cultural interaction in 2017. The 6th Edition of FICMEC Nador Film Festival was organized from 07-12 November 2017 in the city of Nador on the theme ‘Memory of Oceans’. India was invited to the event as the Guest of Honor at the event.

5.3. Tunisian Republic

The tourism Industry in Tunisia after years of decline due to insecurity and political instability has bounced back. The latest figures from the National Office of Tunisian Tourism (ONTT) show that 3.6 million tourist visited Tunisia till July 31, a 27% increase from the last year. Visitors from Europe increased by 15% over the same period. The latter figure boosted further by the British government's withdrawal of an advisory against travel to Tunisia, following France and Germany, which had already relaxed restrictions.

On political front, Tunisia witnessed a series of political protest and nation-wide boycott. One of them was seen in in month of May 2017 when large number of people came on the street to protest against economic reconciliation law. Different parts of nation witnessed demonstrations against proposed economic reconciliation law that would grant amnesty to businessmen and civil servants accused of corruption under former regime. On bilateral front, a rift occurred between Morocco and Algeria in April 2017 over the issue of refugees. Morocco and Algeria summoned each other's ambassadors and traded accusations after government of Morocco accused that Algerian authorities had allowed 54 Syrians to "illegally enter" Morocco to stir tensions on their mutual border. Morocco said the Syrians attempted to enter Morocco through the border town of Figuig, an area surrounded by mountains, between April 17 and 19. It accused Algeria of forcing them to cross into Morocco.

India –Tunisia bilateral relations

On bilateral front between India and Tunisia, the Foreign Minister of Tunisia Mr. Khemaies Jhinaoui visited India between 28-31 October, 2017 for co-chairing the 12th India-Tunisia Joint Commission Meeting along with Smt. Sushma Swaraj, External Affairs Minister of India. He was accompanied by a high-level business delegation representing diverse areas of business, trade and investments.

The Foreign Minister called on Hon'ble Prime Minister. Besides official meetings, the Foreign Minister of Tunisia addressed the business sessions organized by apex chambers of commerce and industry and delivered a keynote address on "New Tunisia and emerging democracy in an age of challenges and global threats" at the Indian Council for World Affairs

5.4. State of Libya

The city of Derna in Libya was subjected to heavy air strike in May 2017 by the Egyptian air forces to chase out the ISIS. Egyptian military carried out a series of airstrikes against alleged jihadist training camps in Derna, after the Islamic State group claimed responsibility for ambushing and killing many Christians on a bus.

In a sudden political development in June 2017, a Libyan militia group said it freed Saif al-Islam Gaddafi, who was being nurtured by father-Gaddafi to succeed him and he was the most prominent son of the country's late dictator Muammar Gaddafi. He was released after more than five years in captivity in jail. The Abu Bakr al-Sadiq Brigade, based in Zintan, said it released Saif al-Islam under an amnesty law passed last year by the eastern-based parliament. The group said that they decided to liberate Saif al-Islam Muammar Gaddafi. He is now free and has left the city of Zintan.

In July 2017, Libya's eastern commander Khalifa Haftar announced that Islamic State group has been ejected from Benghazi after a prolonged fighting for years. He said that his forces have taken full control of Libya's second city Benghazi from rival armed groups after a three-year campaign. The battle for Benghazi between Mr. Haftar's self-styled Libyan National Army (LNA) and an array of Islamist militants and other fighters has been

part of a broader conflict since Libya slipped into chaos following the 2011 fall of strongman Muammar Gaddafi.

In October 2017, the suspected killer of US ambassador in Benghazi was captured. The official source in Libya said that US Special Forces in Libya have captured a man suspected of involvement in the attack on the US diplomatic compound in Benghazi in 2012.

Sub Saharan Africa

Sub-Saharan Africa witnessed major political changes in the year realm in 2017. South Africa's President Jacob Zuma had to stand down from the position after two five-year terms after African National Congress (ANC) elected a new leader Cyril Ramaphosa. Zuma and his allies were accused of a number of corruption allegations, which sparked large protests and created deep divisions in the party, the ANC. These controversies took a toll on the country's economic performance and also impacted policy making in South Africa. Zimbabwe saw a major political upheaval as after 37 years, Robert Mugabe had to step down as president of Zimbabwe following the military coup. In Angola, one of Africa's longest political reigns came to an end with Dos Santos' being replaced by Defence Minister João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço as the country's third President, following Angolan law stipulating that the top candidate of the winning party automatically becomes president. In bold political move Lourenço after taking office unexpectedly fired Isabel dos Santos, the former president's daughter, from her position as head of the state-owned oil enterprise, Sonangol, on 14 November in an attempt to dismantle the dos Santos family's extensive patronage network. In Kenya Uhuru Kenyatta became President of Kenya for a second term on 28 November, following the Supreme Court's decision for the first time to annul his victory in the 26 October election re-run. The prolonged election period generated political uncertainty and sporadic violence, which negatively impacted the economy.

On the economic front, growth in Sub-Saharan Africa rebounded to 2.7 percent in 2017, after slowing sharply to 1.3 percent in 2016. This rise was led by the region's largest economies, Angola, Nigeria, and South Africa, and was supported by rise in energy and metals prices, favorable global financing conditions, improvement in non – energy sectors, including rising and increased capital inflows.

5.1 West Africa

The growing significance of West African countries as major oil and gas producers and subsequent rise of terrorist activities attracted a great deal of international attention to the region in 2017. West Africa witnessed both constructive and negative developments in the area of political, security, economic and social developments.

On the political front, one of the most significant countries in the region i.e. Liberia witnessed smooth and peaceful elections on 10 October 2017⁹⁴. George Weah, a former international soccer star succeeded Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, a Nobel Laureate and Africa's first democratically elected female president in a country of 4.5 million populations where 2.18 million registered voters showed their commitment to democratic exercise. Even though Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf is internationally recognised who brought stability to the war-torn country, she felt from the grace on account of various allegations of corruption which eventually culminated her downfall. Liberians placed enormous expectations on George Weah who has to work to uproot high unemployment and restructure the country's weakening health system.⁹⁵

In the area of regional peace and security, the year 2017 was marked by tumultuous events. In particular the region faced many security challenges by the militant Islamist group Boko Haram. Insurgency of the group was on rise around Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and Niger region. The terror group adopted the tactic of recruiting children living in extreme poverty and involved them in their violent agenda. On 25 July 2017, the militant group attacked a convoy of staff of Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation consisted of geologists in the Magumeri area situated in north-eastern state of Borno.⁹⁶ Around 50 people had been killed during the attack. Following the attack, the Nigerian government had decided to stop oil exploration project near the Lake Chad Basin. On 21 November 2017, Boko Haram, carried out a suicide attack in Mubi in Adamawa state which situated in north-eastern part of Nigeria. The total casualties were 50 people, considered to be one of the most brutal attack after President Muhammadu Buhari came to power in 2015. Although the government under the President Muhammadu Buhari claimed to have succeeded in destroying the militant group, the violent activities of Boko Haram forced millions of Nigerian to flee their country.

Apart from terrorist attacks, the increased number of clashes between the government and a section of citizenry was seen as a growing security concern in the region.

A five day uprising from 12 -16 May by ex-combatants occurred in Cote-d'Ivoire that paralysed the whole country. On account of lack of payment of bonuses, the mutineers revolted against the government in early January 2017 in the second largest city of the country i.e. Bouake and later extended to other cities like Daloa, Korhogo. The protestors seized weaponry from

⁹⁴ECOWAS observation mission satisfied with liberian election, calls for calm, ECOWAS, , 29 December 2017, <http://www.ecowas.int/ecowas-observation-mission-satisfied-with-liberian-election-calls-for-calm/>, accessed 5 February, 2018

⁹⁵“George Weah Wins Liberia Election”, New York Times, 28 December 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/28/world/africa/george-weah-liberia-election.html>, accessed 5 February 2018.

⁹⁶AU, UN, AND ECOWAS' statement on Terrorist Attack against a Convoy of Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC) in Maiduguri, ECOWAS, 30 July 2017, ECOWAS, <http://www.ecowas.int/au-un-and-ecowas-statement-on-terrorist-attack-against-a-convoy-of-nigerian-national-petroleum-company-nnpc-in-maiduguri/>, accessed 2 February 2018.

police stations and erupted gunfire. The fragmented and disappointed armed forces in Côte d'Ivoire called for transformation of Ivorian army.⁹⁷

Violent demonstrations against the ruling Gnassingbe family dynasty broke out across Togo in August 2017⁹⁸. The opposition PNP party asked the President Faure Gnassingbe to step down since he was in power for last 15 years. Protesters also asked for the replacement of the constitution that was introduced by GnassingbeEyadema, father of the current President in 1992 in response to curb opposition.⁹⁹

Several international leaders visited West African region in 2017, signifying their willingness to have a closer relations with Africa. On 19 May 2017, France President Emmanuel Macron visited French soldiers stationed in Mali to fight terrorism and rebuild peace process in the fragile African country. France vowed to end violence by Islamist militants in the North and West Africa. It increased its effort towards counter terrorism in a coordinated and sustainable manner. A new multinational military force was created by five African countries in collaboration with France to tackle security in the Sahel region¹⁰⁰. France President Emmanuel Macron in the presence of G5 Sahel leaders i.e. Mali, Mauritania, Burkina Faso, Niger and Chad at a regional summit held in Bamako, capital of Mali on 2 July 2017 announced that France would provide \$9 million to the new force which would jointly work with French soldiers and understaffed UN peace keeping force in Mali i.e. MINUSMA.¹⁰¹

For the first time in the history of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) summit, a non-African leader i.e. the Prime Minister of Israel Benjamin Netanyahu addressed the 51st ECOWAS Summit of Heads of State in Monrovia, the capital of Liberia on 4 June 2017, strengthening ties between Israel and West Africa.¹⁰² Israeli Prime Minister announced cooperation in areas of technology, agriculture and security to assist development process in Africa.

By the end of this year, we have observed that many countries in Africa signalled a clear indication that they desired for equality in their engagement with other countries especially with European nations. After the fifth AU-EU summit in Abidjan, the President of Ghana made a clear statement on autonomy of African nations when French President visited

⁹⁷ "Côte d'Ivoire: The mutiny may be over, but the army's problems are not", African Arguments, 17 May 2017, <http://africanarguments.org/2017/05/17/cote-divoire-the-mutiny-may-be-over-but-the-armys-problems-are-not/>, accessed 15 January 2018

⁹⁸ Message of Sympathy from the ECOWAS Commission President in the wake of violent demonstrations in Togo, ECOWAS, 23 October 2017, <http://www.ecowas.int/message-of-sympathy-from-the-ecowas-commission-president-in-the-wake-of-violent-demonstrations-in-togo/>, accessed 3 February 2017.

⁹⁹ "Two killed in Togo in protests against 50-year ruling dynasty", Reuters, 19 August 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-togo-protests/two-killed-in-togo-in-protests-against-50-year-ruling-dynasty-idUSKCN1AZ0KM>, accessed 3 February 2018.

¹⁰⁰ Aljazeera, 2 July 2017, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201707030730.html>, accessed 1 March 2017.

¹⁰¹ Diallo, T, "French and West African presidents launch Sahel force", Reuters, 3 July 2017, <https://af.reuters.com/article/topNews/idAFKBN19O0KE-OZATP>, Accessed 2 February 2018.

¹⁰² Fulbright and Ahren, "Seeking to boost ties, Netanyahu meets with African leaders", The Times of Israel, 4 June 2017, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/seeking-to-boost-ties-netanyahu-meets-with-african-leaders/>

the country.¹⁰³ He expressed his views on account of the fact that health and education sector of Ghana being heavily financed by European countries and it's a high time for Ghana to break this dependency and come out independently to fulfil its basis needs.

India-West Africa Bilateral Relations

In the year 2017, there was no high-level visit between India and West African countries except Guinea. India and Guinea established a renewed friendship when Guinea's Foreign Minister Mr. Mamadi Toure visited India from 3-6 November, 2017. The two leaders discussed various issues to increase bilateral cooperation between the countries. Appreciating India's assistance for economic development of Guinea, the Foreign Minister welcomed Indian donors and investors for business collaboration. Meanwhile, Indian External Minister Mrs. Sushma Swaraj expressed her happiness in offering Lines of Credit and capacity building initiatives in Guinea. Indian government also invited Guinea to participate at the summit level meeting of International Solar Alliance to be held in New Delhi that Guinea has ratified recently.¹⁰⁴

5.2 East Africa

The Eastern Africa witnessed some significant political developments in the year 2017. Burundi became the first nation to exit from the International Criminal Court (ICC), Kenya faced political uncertainty due to the questions over presidential elections, and South Sudan experienced a famine besides the flip-flop between conflict and ceasefire. The Ugandan Parliament voted for scrapping the presidential age limit, and Rwanda reelected Paul Kagame with a landslide of 98 per cent votes. It was claimed that the base would ensure China's performance of missions, such as escorting, peace-keeping and humanitarian aid in Africa and West Asia.

Burundi's withdrawal from the ICC took effect from October 27, 2017.¹⁰⁵ However, the ICC may exercise its jurisdiction over crimes listed in the Rome Statute committed on the territory of Burundi or by its nationals only from December 1, 2004 to October 26, 2017.¹⁰⁶ The ICC Prosecutor, on October 25, 2017, therefore, authorised to open *proprio motu* investigation of crime against humanity by Burundian nationals in and outside Burundi.

The Kenyan political calendar was marked by intense contest for legitimacy and control of domestic politics. Kenya saw two presidential elections in 2017. The reelection of Uhuru Kenyatta as President was nullified by the Kenyan Supreme Court citing irregularities in the first election in

¹⁰³ Africans Press, 5 December 2017, <https://africanspress.org/2017/12/05/ghana-president-akufo-addo-schools-france-president-macron/>, accessed 5 March 2018.

¹⁰⁴ Visit of Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Guinea to India (November 3-6, 2017), Ministry of External Affairs, 6 November 2017, <http://mea.gov.in/incoming-visit-detail.htm?29092/Visit+of+Minister+of+Foreign+Affairs+of+the+Republic+of+Guinea+to+India+November+3+6+2017>, accessed 15 February 2018

¹⁰⁵ "Burundi becomes first nation to leave international criminal court", The Guardian, 28 October 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/law/2017/oct/28/burundi-becomes-first-nation-to-leave-international-criminal-court>

¹⁰⁶ Situation in the Republic of Burundi, International Criminal Court, International Criminal Court, 14 March 2018, <https://www.icc-cpi.int/burundi/>

August.¹⁰⁷ The same court unanimously dismissed two petitions against the reelection of President Kenyatta and declared the October 26 election as final. However, Mr. Raila Odinga, the opposing leader challenged the elections, creating a phase of political uncertainty. The entire election process was questioned as the election commissioner fled from the country before the elections and resigned citing threat to her life. Mr. Odinga also did not participate in the elections and left the country for a while before return. He did not recognise the legitimacy of the government.

South Sudan's President Salva Kiir had announced a unilateral cease-fire in the wake of a national dialogue that was criticised by the opposition groups.¹⁰⁸ However, with several flip-flops between lull and hostilities, South Sudan Govt. and rebel groups signed an IGAD (Intergovernmental Authority on Development) mediated ceasefire deal in December 2017.¹⁰⁹

At the regional level, according to the Disaster Emergency Agency and Action Aid, a prolonged drought and conflict situations in the Eastern Africa left more than 16 million people hungry and in urgent need of food aid. The famine affected Ethiopia, Somalia, Kenya and South Sudan.¹¹⁰ The situation worsened due to ongoing conflict situations and hindrances to aid for the affected people. The drought and conflict together also created a historic refugee crisis in the region. UNHCR reported the South Sudan crisis as the world's fastest growing refugee crisis in March 2017. The influx of refugees peaked in February to around 6000 in a single day.¹¹¹

Meanwhile, as a marker of the progress in regional connectivity, the 752 km long Addis Ababa-Djibouti Railway Line was inaugurated in January 2017. The new inaugurated railway is relatively high in speed as it can reach speeds of 160 km/h for passenger trains and 120 km/h for cargo. The project was funded heavily (70 per cent) by Chinese loans, and built by China Railway Group.¹¹²

The issue of the Renaissance Dam between Ethiopia and Egypt lingered but, given both the countries' positions, no immediate solution was visible. However, there were attempts for negotiation.

India-East Africa Bilateral Relations

An exchange of high level visits took place between East Africa and India. India's President Ram Nath Kovind visited Ethiopia and Djibouti while Vice President Hamid Ansari visited Uganda and Rwanda. From the African side, the president of Kenya and Rwanda also visited New Delhi. The Vice Premier & the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration of the Democratic

¹⁰⁷ "Kenya court upholds President's election win", The New York Times, 20 November 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/20/world/africa/kenya-supreme-court-ruling.html>

¹⁰⁸ "S. Sudan's Kiir announces truce, national dialogue", Voice of America, 24 May 2017, <https://www.voanews.com/a/south-sudan-kiir-announces-ceasefire-national-dialogue/3869423.html>

¹⁰⁹ "South Sudan govt, rebel groups sign IGAD ceasefire deal in Ethiopia", Africa News, 21 December 2017, <http://www.africanews.com/2017/12/21/south-sudan-govt-rebel-groups-sign-igad-ceasefire-deal-in-ethiopia/>

¹¹⁰ "Food crisis in East Africa 2017", Action Aid, 8 August 2017, <https://www.actionaid.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/emergencies-disasters-humanitarian-response/east-africa-crisis-facts-and-figures>

¹¹¹ "South Sudan's refugee crisis now world's fastest growing, Uganda and region in critical need of help", UNHCR, 17 March 2017, <http://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2017/3/58c8a77f4/south-sudans-refugee-crisis-worlds-fastest-growing-uganda-region-critical.html>

¹¹² "New African railways ride on Chinese loans", Voice of America, 24 January 2017, <https://www.voanews.com/a/new-african-railways-ride-chinese-loans/3690287.html>

Republic of Congo (DRC), and the Foreign Minister of Somalia were in India on official visits. India's Minister of State for External Affairs, Mr. M.J. Akbar also visited the Republic of Congo.

These visits marked an unprecedented level of India-East Africa engagement. Defence, agriculture, maritime domain, blue economy, ICT and health were the most dominant themes of cooperation in these visits. India and Ethiopia signed two agreements during Indian President's visit to the country. The first was a trade agreement, while the second was on cooperation in the field of Information, Communication and Media.¹¹³ Being one of the largest trade, investment and development partners of Ethiopia, India continued to provide the country the largest share of its lines of credit to Africa.¹¹⁴ President Kovind's visit to Djibouti in early October was at the invitation of the President of Djibouti H.E. Mr. Ismail Omar Guelleh; and this could be seen as a balancing act by Djibouti. This was the first ever visit of the Head of State or Government from India to the Republic of Djibouti since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two nations.¹¹⁵ Both the sides emphasised on the need to hold regular consultations on bilateral issues and further diversify the agreed agenda of cooperation. The president of Djibouti also called for a greater role for India in the Economic Development of Djibouti with a focus on small and medium scale industries.¹¹⁶

A US\$100 million line of credit agreement for agricultural mechanisation was signed when the Kenyan President visited New Delhi; and the two sides pushed for a quick operationalisation of their defence cooperation.¹¹⁷ A joint group between the two was directed to focus on cyber security, counter terrorism, combating drugs, narcotics, human trafficking and money laundering. Paul Kagame, President of Rwanda, visited India for the first time in January 2017. The visit was historic as India and Rwanda issued a declaration to the effect of elevating their relations to Strategic Partnership level.¹¹⁸ While India expressed an interest in exploring the untapped

¹¹³ "List of agreements signed during State Visit of President to Ethiopia (October 05, 2017)", Ministry of External Affairs, http://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/29001/List_of_Agreements_signed_during_State_Visit_of_President_to_Ethiopia_October_05_2017

¹¹⁴ "State visit of President of India to Djibouti and Ethiopia (3-6 October, 2017)", Ministry of External Affairs, http://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/28987/State_Visit_of_President_of_India_to_Djibouti_and_Ethiopia_36_October_2017

¹¹⁵ "State Visit of President of India to Djibouti and Ethiopia (3-6 October, 2017)", Ministry of External Affairs, http://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/28987/State_Visit_of_President_of_India_to_Djibouti_and_Ethiopia_36_October_2017

¹¹⁶ "India-Djibouti Joint Statement during the State Visit of President to Djibouti (October 04, 2017)", Ministry of External Affairs, http://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/28999/IndiaDjibouti_Joint_Statement_during_the_State_Visit_of_President_to_Djibouti_October_04_2017

¹¹⁷ "Press Statement by Prime Minister during the State visit of President of Kenya to India", Ministry of External Affairs, 11 January 2017, http://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/27922/Press_Statement_by_Prime_Minister_during_the_State_visit_of_President_of_Kenya_to_India

¹¹⁸ "Declaration on Strategic Partnership between India and Rwanda", Ministry of External Affairs, 10 January 2017, http://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/27915/DECLARATION_ON_STRATEGIC_PARTNERSHIP_BETWEEN_INDIA_AND_RWANDA

enormous methane reserves in Lake Kivu for energy production, Rwanda showed interest in replicating digital inclusion programmes run by India.¹¹⁹ India's assistance in Rwanda's electricity production with a Line of Credit of US\$ 80 million was also acknowledged. Moreover, India conveyed its readiness to provide lines of credit for phase II of the Nyabarongo power project, Technical and Vocational Training Centres (TVET) and Huye-Kibeho road project in Rwanda. It also announced gifting of US\$2 million of medicines and a cash grant of US\$1 million for sourcing medical equipment from India.¹²⁰

The growing defence cooperation between Uganda and India was also noted, particularly the training of the Ugandan People's Defence Force (UPDF) through various Indian Army training institutions as well as deployment of its military training team in Uganda's Senior Command and Staff College Kimaka.¹²¹ The Vice Premier of the DRC discussed the issues of his interest like peacekeeping, mining, education and electoral process. India also signed a prisoners' exchange agreement during the visit of the Somali Foreign Minister. The issue of United Nations Security Reforms in the changed world realities was a consistent feature of discussions during the visits from both the sides. India's active engagement with the Indian diaspora in the region was also noted.

5.3 Southern Africa

Two of the longest ruling Presidents of Africa in Angola and Zimbabwe departed out of power in the year 2017. The transition in Angola was visibly smooth and charted out by the outgoing president Mr. José Eduardo dos Santos while the change in Zimbabwe was tumultuous due to the military taking over power from President Robert Mugabe and putting him under confinement in his residence till he resigned.

Amid speculations of failing health President Santos of Angola, who had been in the position since 1979, announced that he would not be running for another term in the elections to be held in August 2017. However, he did not give the reasons for his abdication. Experts speculated about some internal pressures within the MPLA, the ruling party in the country since end of the civil war. It is also said that Mr. Santos attempted to install his son as the next centre of power and politics but opposition within the party forced him to give way and project Mr. Joao Lourenco, the then defence minister, as his successor.¹²²

¹¹⁹Joint Communique on the visit of the Vice President of India to the Republic of Rwanda, Kigali, Ministry of External Affairs, 21 February 2017,

http://www.mea.gov.in/Uploads/PublicationDocs/28083_JointStatement.pdf

¹²⁰“India-Rwanda Joint Statement during the visit of President of Rwanda to India (January 9-11, 2017)”,

Ministry of External Affairs, [http://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-](http://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/27914/IndiaRwanda_Joint_Statement_during_the_visit_of_President_of_Rwanda_to_India_January_9_11_2017)

[documents.htm?dtl/27914/IndiaRwanda Joint Statement during the visit of President of Rwanda to India January 9 11 2017](http://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/27914/IndiaRwanda_Joint_Statement_during_the_visit_of_President_of_Rwanda_to_India_January_9_11_2017)

¹²¹Joint Statement on the Occasion of the visit to Uganda of the Vice President of India, Mr Mohammad Hamid Ansari From 21 – 23 February 2017, Ministry of External Affairs,

http://www.mea.gov.in/Uploads/PublicationDocs/28095_Uganda_Joint_Statement_new.pdf

¹²²“Angola prepares for life after Dos Santos”, Chatham House, 20 February 2017,

<https://www.chathamhouse.org/expert/comment/angola-prepares-life-after-dos-santos>

On the other hand, Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe faced a military takeover of power from him. The political and popular pressure amid initiation of impeachment process in the parliament and his confinement to his residence forced Mr. Mugabe to resign after ruling the country for 37 years since 1980. Peculiarly, the involvement of military turned out to be just for forcing Mugabe out and handing over power to Mr. Emmerson Mnangagwa, who was fired by him from the post of the Vice President just before the dramatic set of events for change unleashed. The deal after the forced exit of Mr. Mugabe, however, allowed him to leave with some dignity, acknowledging his role for the Independence of Zimbabwe. Mr. Emmerson Mnangagwa swore in as the new President of the country.¹²³

President Jacob Zuma in South Africa also faced severe criticism for his misuse of power allegedly for corruption and amassing wealth. The forces within his party (African National Congress) as well as the opposition parties were building pressure against Zuma to resign. Mr. Zuma had been holding the presidency with a series of charges against him. However, with the election of Cyril Ramaphosa as the president of African National Congress (ANC) and the courts taking a strong view against Zuma,¹²⁴ the departure of Zuma from the presidency appeared just a matter of time. In fact, the leaders within the ANC indicated that the terms and conditions of Zuma's departure were being negotiated.¹²⁵

As for some other important development in the region, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) plunged into another round of violence¹²⁶ and refugee crisis.¹²⁷ The violence also saw killing of 15 Tanzanian peacekeepers in the country.¹²⁸ Madagascar suffered a plague outbreak; one of the most stable countries in Southern Africa, Zambia, went into a 'state of emergency'¹²⁹ to deal with the acts of opposition induced arson and sabotage,¹³⁰ and Air Namibia was granted rights to fly into the US, a privilege thus far enjoyed by only South African Airways, Ethiopian Airlines, Egypt Air, Moroccan Royal Air Maroc and Cape Verde's TACV airline.¹³¹

¹²³ "Zimbabwe swears in a new president, in the first transfer of power since independence", NPR, 24 November 2017, <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/11/24/566341627/zimbabwe-swears-in-a-new-president-in-the-first-transfer-of-power-since-independ>

¹²⁴ "South African court raises pressure for Zuma to Go", The New York Times, 29 December 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/29/world/africa/south-africa-court-zuma-impeach.html?mtrref=www.google.co.in&gwh=62DCABE3EBD6723ABBE47269E80D5FF3&gwt=pay>

¹²⁵ "Cyril Ramaphosa chosen to lead South Africa's ruling ANC party", The Guardian, 18 December 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/dec/18/cyril-ramaphosa-chosen-to-lead-south-africas-ruling-anc-party>

¹²⁶ "Fighting kills more than 3,000 in Congo's Kasai region: Catholic Church", Reuters, 20 June 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-congo-violence/fighting-kills-more-than-3000-in-congos-kasai-region-catholic-church-idUSKBN19B0YX>

¹²⁷ "DR Congo forces kill at least 36 Burundi refugees", Al Jazeera, 17 September 2017, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/09/dr-congo-forces-kill-18-burundi-refugees-170916094527832.html>

¹²⁸ "Magufuli 'shocked' by killings of Tanzanian soldiers in DRC", Daily Nation, 9 December 2017, <https://www.nation.co.ke/news/africa/Magufuli-mourns-TZ-soldiers-DRC/1066-4221572-ukqg0g/index.html>

¹²⁹ "Zambia edges towards dictatorship", Mail & Guardian, 5 July 2017, <https://mg.co.za/article/2017-07-05-zambia>

¹³⁰ "Zambia emergency powers decree to end at midnight on Wednesday", Reuters, 11 October 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-zambia-politics/zambia-emergency-powers-decree-to-end-at-midnight-on-wednesday-idUSKBN1CG24X>

¹³¹ "Air Namibia granted right to fly into US", New Era, 22 May 2017, <https://www.newera.com.na/2017/05/22/air-namibia-granted-right-to-fly-into-us/>

On the economic front, Turkey was seen as a potential investor in the Tanzanian railway construction. The development casted some doubts about the Tanzanian future cooperation with China in infrastructure.¹³² In another attempt to regional integration and development, the AfDB decided to Support Mozambique's Nacala Rail Project with US\$300 million. The project consists of a 912 km railway and a port to provide connectivity to and open the western region of Mozambique and the landlocked Malawi.¹³³

These developments in the region will have their repercussions in terms of politico-economic policy readjustments in Southern Africa. The changes in Angola and Zimbabwe were peculiar, without violence, demonstrating an evolution from Africa's history of violent changes of long dictatorial regimes. The handling of the political and economic transitions in the region by its leaders indicates a desire for progress, political stability and growth in the region.

India-Southern Africa Bilateral Relations

In terms of high level visits, the Prime Minister of Mauritius visited India on his first official visit to any country after appointment. The two sides agreed on their responsibility to ensure collective maritime security around their coasts and in EEZs. They also concluded a bilateral Maritime Security Agreement to strengthen mutual cooperation and capacity building in this area. They agreed for wider cooperation on hydrography, and strengthening Coast Guards through Project Trident. India also provided a US\$500 million line of credit (LoC) to Mauritius.

The Vice Prime Minister & Minister of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration of the DRC H.E. Leonard She OkitunduLundula also visited New Delhi in November 2017. He handed over a letter of the President of the DRC inviting the Indian prime minister to visit his country. Mr. Lundula expressed desire for stepping up cooperation in the areas of mining, education and electoral process. The two sides also agreed to explore for holding a bilateral Joint Commission Meeting in early 2018.

In some other India-Southern Africa developments, the third round of India Lesotho Joint Bilateral Commission of Cooperation was organised in December 2017; and India gifted medicines worth Rupees three crores to Seychelles as part of US\$ 8.76 million earmarked for supply of medical equipment and medicines to Seychelles.OVL (ONGC Videsh Ltd), the overseas investment arm of India's ONGC, decided to acquire stake in offshore Namibia block;¹³⁴ and Larsen & Toubro, an Indian company, bagged Rs 3,375 crore metro rail project in Mauritius.¹³⁵ India also initiated

¹³² "Tanzania courts Turkey for its rail megaproject, casting doubt on China's role", Global Construction Review, 24 January 2017, <http://www.globalconstructionreview.com/news/tanzania-courts-turkey-its-rail-megaproject-castin/>

¹³³ The AfDB signs US\$300 mn loan agreement for Nacala Corridor project", African Review, 29 December 2017, <http://www.africanreview.com/transport-a-logistics/rail/the-afdb-signs-us-300mm-loan-agreement-for-nacala-corridor-project>

¹³⁴ "ONGC Videsh to acquire 15% stake in Namibia block", Business Line, 21 November 2017, <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/companies/ongc-videsh-to-acquire-15-stake-in-namibia-block/article9968307.ece>

¹³⁵ "L&T bags Rs 3,375 crore metro rail project in Mauritius", The Economic Times, 2 August 2017, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/indl-goods/svs/engineering/lt-bags-rs-3375-crore-metro-rail-project-in-mauritius/articleshow/59884799.cms>

discussions on liquid gas project in Mauritius as a part of its expanding energy outreach.¹³⁶

¹³⁶ “India to expand energy outreach with Mauritius gas project”, The Times of India, 26 May 2017, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/india-business/india-to-expand-energy-outreach-with-mauritius-gas-project/articleshow/58861108.cms>

INDIAN OCEAN ISLAND STATES

5. INDIAN OCEAN ISLAND STATES

There was major development on the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) front, with its first-ever summit of Head of States on March 07, 2017 in Jakarta and release of the Jakarta Concord and the IORA Action Plan. The Jakarta Summit was attended by leaders of 21 IORA member countries and its seven dialogue partners as well as other special invitees. From India, Shri Hamid Ansari, the then Vice President of India participated in the Summit. Mr. Joko Widodo, President of Indonesia, Mr. Jacob Zuma, the then President of South Africa, Mr. Maithripala Sirisena, President of Sri Lanka, Mr. Abdrabhu Mansour Hadi, President of Yemen, and Mr. Mohammad Javad Zarif, Foreign Minister of Iran was among other key participants.

During the Summit, Jakarta Concord- "Promoting Regional Cooperation for a Peaceful, Stable and Prosperous Indian Ocean" was signed. Besides, the IORA Action Plan for next five years (2017-2021) and the Declaration on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism were adopted during Council of Ministers (COM) meeting and the Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) on 06 March and 05 March 2017 respectively.

Indonesia handed over the chairmanship of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) to South Africa during 17th IORA Council of Ministers meeting in Durban on 18 October 2017 for 2017-19 terms. United Arab Emirate will be vice chair for the same period. The 17th Council of Ministers ratified the Durban Communiqué.

During the second Blue Economy Conference (08-10 May 2017) IORA member states emphasised the need for collaborate in Blue Economy initiatives such as fisheries and aquaculture, inter port cooperation, marine tourism etc. From India, Minister for State for External Affairs M. J. Akbar participated in the conference.

IORA Indian Ocean Conference on "Marine Spatial Planning - Towards Sustainable Use of the Indian Ocean" was organised on 22- 23 November 2017 in Mauritius. Workshop on Marine Aquaculture and Fish Health Management 2017 was organised in Indonesia on 21-28 November 2017.

IORA organised a Special Capacity Building Programme for Somalia and Yemen.¹³⁷ The programme was organised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MOFAIC) of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in Abu Dhabi on 13-14 August 2017.¹³⁸

China, on 11 July 2017, sent ships carrying personnel for setting up its first overseas military base in Djibouti, Horn of Africa.¹³⁹ China media describes its first overseas military base at Djibouti as a logistic facility not a military base.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ IORA Somalia and Yemen Development Programme (SYDP) on Banking & Artisanal Fisheries Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, 13-14 August 2017, IORA Press Release, <http://www.iora.net/sydp-uae-13-14-august-2017.aspx> (accessed on 14 August 2017).

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ China to open first overseas military base in Djibouti, 12 July 2017, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/07/china-open-overseas-military-base-djibouti-170712135241977.html>,

¹⁴⁰ Djibouti a logistic centre, not a military base like US: Chinese media, August 23, 2016, <http://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/djibouti-a-logistic-centre-not-a-military-base-like-us-chinese-media/story-qF9OdvodQNeQCZZa5lp1nO.html>, accessed on 17 July 2017.

Delivering the key note address during the Second IORA (Indian Ocean Rim Association) Meeting of Experts for Maritime Safety and Security in New Delhi On 7-8 November, Foreign Secretary highlighted the issues of maritime security cooperation, freedom of navigation, and the need to respect integrity and urged the countries of Indian Ocean region to secure interests of maritime security and enhance regional cooperation.¹⁴¹

Minister of State for External Affairs Shri M.J. Akbar visited Maldives from February 21-22, 2017 as a Special Envoy of the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi.¹⁴² During the visit, Shri Akbar called on Mr. Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom, the then President of Republic of Maldives and also had a separate meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr. Mohamed Asim.¹⁴³ During the visit he reiterated India's support for a stable, democratic, peaceful and prosperous Maldives.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi Called for Strong and Vibrant Ties between India- Seychelles in the Indian Ocean. During the meeting with a Seychelles parliamentary delegation in New Delhi on August 10, 2017, Prime Minister Narendra Modi hailed the "strong and vibrant ties" between India and Seychelles.¹⁴⁴ The Seychelles parliamentary delegation, led by Patrick Pillay, Speaker of Seychelles National Assembly was on an official visit to India at the invitation of Lok Sabha Speaker Sumitra Mahajan.¹⁴⁵

The then Foreign Secretary Dr S Jaishankar visited Seychelles during the second week of October 2017. The visit was aimed to strengthen bilateral development cooperation and maritime cooperation.¹⁴⁶ . During the visit, the Foreign Secretary met with Seychelles President, the Vice-President, the Leader of Opposition and members of the Cabinet.¹⁴⁷

Prime Minister of Mauritius Pravind Jugnauth Visited India in 26-27 May 2017. He signed a bilateral agreement on maritime security cooperation, while India announced a \$500 million line of credit for Mauritius.¹⁴⁸

International Seabed Authority extended India's Exclusive Rights to Explore Polymetallic Nodules from Central Indian Ocean Seabed Basin by Five Years

¹⁴¹ India calls on Indian Ocean nations to secure interests of maritime security, regional cooperation, November 8, 2017, <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/indian-ocean-nations-maritime-security-china-japan-unclos-indo-pacific-region/1/1084931.html>, (accessed on 13 November, 2017)

¹⁴² Visit of Minister of State for External Affairs, Shri M J Akbar to the Republic of Maldives, <http://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/28087/visit+of+minister+of+state+for+external+affairs+shri+m+j+akbar+to+the+republic+of+maldives> (Accessed on 11 February 2018)

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Modi hails India-Seychelles partnership in Indian Ocean, August 10, 2017, <http://www.india.com/news/agencies/modi-hails-india-seychelles-partnership-in-indian-ocean-2392233/> (accessed on August 14, 2017).

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ S Jaishankar in Seychelles: As China shadow looms, India must quickly iron out disputes over Assumption Island, <http://www.firstpost.com/india/s-jaishankar-in-seychelles-as-china-shadow-looms-india-must-quickly-iron-out-disputes-over-assumption-island-4134995.html>, (accessed on 16 October 2017)

¹⁴⁷ FS Seychelles visit focus was on developmental, maritime cooperation: MEA, 12 October, 2017 <https://news.webindia123.com/news/Articles/India/20171012/3201224.html> (accessed on 16 October 2017)

¹⁴⁸ India reaches out to Mauritius with \$500 million pledge, May 28, 2017, http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/india-reaches-out-to-mauritius-with-500-million-pledge/printarticle/58880622.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst, (accessed on 28 May 2017).

at the 23rd session of International Seabed Authority (ISA) concluded in Kingston, Jamaica on August 18, 2017.¹⁴⁹ The Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) of the Ministry of Earth Sciences, Government of India, inaugurated the Ocean Forecasting System for Comoros, Madagascar, and Mozambique at the third Ministerial Meeting of Regional Integrated Multi-Hazard Early Warning System for Asia and Africa (RIMES) in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea.

The region generally remained peaceful except some political upheavals in Maldives. Enhanced cooperation with Indian Ocean littoral countries remained the priority for India. There were some piracy attacks off Somalia waters, which had declined after 2010.

Addressing the valedictory session of 2nd Indian Ocean Conference 2017 on September 01, 2017 in Colombo, Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena advocated the idea of Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace (IOZP).¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ President emphasizes importance of making Indian Ocean a zone of peace, http://www.defence.lk/new.asp?fname=President_emphasizes_importance_of_making_Indian_Ocean_a_zone_of_peace_20170904_01, (accessed on September 04, 2017).

LATIN AMERICA/CARIBBEAN

6. LATIN AMERICA/CARIBBEAN

In the political developments, Brazil's then President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva was sentenced to 9 years and 6 months in prison on corruption charges. On July 12, 2017, Judge Sergio Moro found Lula guilty of accepting 3.7 million real (US\$1.2 million) worth of bribes from engineering firm OAS, the amount prosecutors said the company spent refurbishing a beach apartment for Lula in return for his help winning contracts with state oil company Petroleo Brasileiro. The ruling was only the first of five regarding Lula's corruption scandal.

Venezuela experienced its worst political conflict, further complicated by economic and social crisis. Inflation was 127.8 percent in 2017 and there were severe shortages of food and essential medicines, creating a humanitarian crisis in the country. Parties opposing President Maduro organised large rallies throughout the country. President Maduro faced condemnation and pressure, including Venezuela's suspension from MERCOSUR, a regional free-trade bloc in Latin America, and several rounds of US sanctions. Foreign Minister Delcy Rodriguez announced the decision to withdraw from the Organization of American States (OAS) after a brief but contentious meeting at the group's Washington headquarters in which its permanent council voted in favor of holding a special session to evaluate Venezuela's crisis.

In the economic perspective, Argentina joined Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Peru and Venezuela to become the sixth Latin American member of Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). In need of further international financial assistance and under pressure after settling a debt crisis, President Mauricio Macri's administration made this move to seek renewed channels for funding from the one-and-half-year-old multilateral financial institution. The AIIB's growth throughout Latin America showed the region's close relations with Asia as well as its intention to seek bilateral bonds.

After a two-year investigation called "Operation Weak Flesh," global food-processing giants, JBS and BRF, along with dozens of smaller companies found evidence of meatpackers bribing inspectors and politicians to ignore the adulteration or expiration of processed foods, water-injected meat and falsified sanitary permits. The fallout from Brazil's rotten meat scandal accelerated on 20 March 2017 when the US, China, a huge market, suspended imports and the European Union and South Korea demanded a partial ban. Chile had also imposed a "temporary" ban. Barbados, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Algeria, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Panama, Qatar, Mexico and the Bahamas had also implemented an immediate import ban of all meat and meat products from Brazil.

Venezuela published its oil prices in Chinese yuan for the first time on September 15, 2017 making good on its promise to layoff the U.S. dollar. On September 8, 2017, President Maduro had announced the forthcoming change.

India –Latin America Relations

While attending the opening of the 9th BRICS Summit in Xiamen, China, Brazil's President, Michel Temer, urged the easing of economic barriers and the reduction of bureaucracy in relation to trade between the five nations

and stated that the South American country welcomes foreign investments from its BRICS partners.

Following the Trump administration's sanctions against the Venezuelan regime, which prevented new Venezuelan bonds in US markets, China moved into fill the void and provided the necessary financial lifeline. Venezuelans officials traveled to China in mid-August 2017 in an attempt to negotiate an investment fund between both nations. The strategy behind that fund was to save Venezuela and PDVSA money by buying, at a discount, bonds that mature in 2017 and 2018.

Russia also allowed President Maduro to restructure a USD \$3 billion loan with more favorable terms, while China continued to take a high-risk gamble with Venezuela, exchanging loans for future oil deliveries. On December 2017, Venezuela declared both Brazil and Canada's ambassadors to be *personas non grata*.

In addition to being close to closing an agreement with the European Union, the South American Trade Agreement Bloc (Mercosur), discussed a possible trade agreement with the United Kingdom. The agreement could take effect after the Brexit. Due to Brexit, UK will be excluded from the trade agreement between Mercosur and the European Union, and will have to negotiate a separate trade agreement with the South American nations. Negotiations of a free trade agreement between Mercosur and the European Union (EU) have been going on since 1999. At the end of 2017, the two parties advanced in the discussions, but the signing of the agreement was postponed for at 2018.

NORTH AMERICA

7. NORTH AMERICA

8.1 Canada

With the United States to the south and Russia as its nearest northern neighbour, Canada faced some challenges in the year 2017. The US called for the renegotiation of the NAFTA, making it clear that it was willing to withdraw from the agreement if need be, forcing Canada to strengthen its economic partnerships with the rest of the world. The Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, concluded a successful visit to France and Germany from February 16 to 17, 2017. During the visit, the Prime Minister addressed the European Parliament in Strasbourg, France, and visited Berlin and Hamburg, Germany. It was an opportunity to promote Canada's role as a leader on progressive trade and investment, highlighting how the Canada-EU Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) will create good, well-paying jobs, bolster shared prosperity, and help grow the middle class. Prime Minister Trudeau visited China (03-07 Dec. 2017), aiming to promote a "progressive trade agenda and tourism initiatives that will create good, middle class jobs" and seeking greater cooperation on fighting climate change.

With the growing rise of Russia's military powers in the neighbourhood, there were calls from within Canada to review its ballistic missile strategy as part of NORAD. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau cracked open the door joining the U.S. ballistic missile defence program, reversing Canada's long-standing opposition in the face of North Korea's new capabilities to strike North America. Prime Minister Trudeau said that North Korea's "reckless behaviour" is a threat to global peace.

Canada also relooked its NATO policy. While Canada defended its contributions to the NATO, the continuous criticism from the US President for equal burden sharing also worked into the Canadian NATO policy. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Defence Minister Mr. Harjit S. Sajjan met with their US counterparts to discuss issues of immigration and economic cooperation, and strengthening of NATO and other areas of military cooperation. The first Canadian troops arrived in Latvia in June 2017, to restrain potential Russian ambitions in eastern Europe. Four countries — Albania, Italy, Poland and Slovenia — promised to contribute troops and equipment to the Canadian-led contingent. The Liberal government extended Canada's military mission in Iraq for almost another two years. The mission was extended until March 31, 2019. Ottawa unveiled a plan to boost military spending by more than \$30-billion over the next decade. The blueprint for defence spending included a more assertive role in protecting Canada's sovereignty in its vast Arctic reaches. The plan was an unexpected pivot for the Liberal Party, which campaigned largely on social spending and infrastructure promises in the last election.

Canada extended its commitment to an international maritime security mission in the waters off the Middle East for another four years. The federal government approved up to \$131.4 million to support the extension, which would see the deployment of up to 375 military personnel. Canada and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) signed a defence cooperation arrangement.

On the economic front, Canada was part of the 11 countries that continued to negotiate the TPP after the US withdrew. Prime Minister Trudeau defended Canada's actions on the Trans-Pacific Partnership, asserting that the country simply was not ready to finalise due to lingering concerns around culture and the automotive sector.

On the domestic front, The New Democratic Party gave Mr. Jagmeet Singh, won elections, making him the first non-white leader of a major political party in Canada.

India-Canada Bilateral Relations

On the bilateral front, Canada's defence minister of Indian-origin, Harjit Singh Sajjan, visited India from April 19 to 22. India's defence ties with Canada are at a nascent stage, but it could benefit from the North American nation's technological skills, cold climate expertise, and even explore the possibility of Canadian defence manufacturers becoming part of the Make in India initiative.

8.2 Mexico

Mexico in 2017, dealt with continuous criticism of US while dealing with natural calamities within the nation. President Pena Nieto cancelled his trip to the United States after President Trump's repeated statements insulting the Mexican people and stating that he would be building a wall to protect the United States from illegal immigrants from Mexico. He also stated that Mexico would pay for the border wall that has been the most contentious issue between the two nations.

Mexico named Mr. Geronimo Gutiérrez, the head of the North American Development Bank, as the new ambassador to the United States. Mr. Gutiérrez replaced Mr. Carlos Sada, who took over the deputy minister post for North American relations.

With the renegotiation of the NAFTA, Mexico strengthened its relations with Canada. China and Mexico initiated discussion about a free trade agreement in the face of the renegotiation of the NAFTA. Discussions were held to modernize the Global Agreement between the EU and Mexico. President Peña Nieto took part in the BRICS summit in China to diversify its trade relationships. Mexico also built strong economic relation with Israel. President Nieto also took part in the APEC Summit to consolidate an important trading network and other partners in the region, to put into effect the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP11) as soon as possible.

Mexico made efforts to resolve the crisis in Venezuela. The Mexican government began studying the possibility of stepping in to replace Venezuelan oil program Petrocaribe if the government of President Nicolas Maduro fell. Mexican foreign minister visited Havana, to help resolve the tense political situation in Venezuela as it witnessed a surge in migrants from the latter. Apart from that, Mexico along with the other countries of the region faced natural disasters such as earthquakes and hurricanes. Belize hosted a historic meeting between heads of government of CARICOM and Mexico to work together on the rebuilding process.

During the year, the Mexican government declared the North Korean ambassador to Mexico persona non grata in protest at the country's nuclear tests.

Domestically, the Mexican government faced protests from its citizens. President Peña Nieto Mexico's Internal Security Law came under severe criticism from the international community which said that the new legislation threatened human rights and put the safety of citizens at risk. Representatives from the United Nations, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, and the National Commission for Human Rights denounced the law which incorporated military forces into citizen security organizations.

The Mexican government also announced that it would stop subsidising petrol. An increase of 20% came into force on 1 January. It brought the price of a litre of petrol to 18 pesos (\$0.85; £0.70). That made the average price of a gallon of petrol around the same as the daily minimum wage - 80 pesos (\$3.77, £3.07) - and the raise caused outrage among people dependent on petrol for their jobs. With elections in 2018, Mexico's conservative opposition National Action Party (PAN) and the leftist Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD) have called for a "broad alliance" for the 2018 presidential elections in an attempt to oust the ruling PRI party and halt leftist Andrés Manuel López Obrador.

India-Mexico Bilateral Relations

On the bilateral relations, there were no high level visits. India and Mexico have agreed to hold an important conference on regional and global disarmament. The meeting would be headed by the Joint Secretary of the disarmament division of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) from the Indian side. It was taken up during the seventh meeting of the Mexico-India Joint Commission (JCM) and the fourth round of Foreign Office Consultations held on June 23 in Mexico City.

MAJOR POWERS

9. MAJOR POWERS

9.1 The United States

The year 2017 marked the transition from the Obama Administration to the Trump Administration. President Trump was inaugurated as the 45th President of the United States. In his first address to the Congress, President Trump mentioned that the stock market has gained almost \$3 trillion in value since the election on November 8th, which is a record. The government placed a hiring freeze on non-military and non-essential federal workers. In keeping with his campaign promises he withdrew the US from the TPP and along with Canada and Mexico started renegotiating the North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). President Trump also withdrew the US from the Paris Agreement on Climate Change claiming that it put unfair burden on US industries and this hampered their growth.

President Trump embarked on his first trip abroad since taking office to the Middle East and to Europe. The countries he visited were Saudi Arabia, Israel, Italy and Belgium for the NATO leaders meeting. President Trump ended his trip in Sicily for the G7 meeting in Taormina. President Trump was criticised for not endorsing Article Five of the NATO during his visit to annual summit.

United States, Russia and Jordan reached the "de-escalation agreement" in West Asia at Trump's first meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin at the G20 summit in Germany. They also agreed on a cease fire for Syria. In an effort to augment Saudi capabilities in the region, the US government approved the sale to Saudi Arabia of its advanced Terminal High-Altitude Area Defense (Thaad) missile defence system. Towards the end of the year President Donald Trump announced that the U.S. recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital and that the American Embassy will be moved there.

In outlining his policy for Afghanistan and South Asia, he made it clear that the US would continue to support the Afghan government but would like the neighbouring nations to take an active role. President Trump in announcing his strategy for Afghanistan threatened to punish Pakistan for harbouring insurgents and invited India, to become more involved in Afghanistan's future. The US administration stated that America's security aid to Pakistan "will be conditioned" on the steps Islamabad takes against terrorist groups such as the Taliban and the Haqqani network. In pursuance of its Afghanistan policy, US Secretary of Defense James Mattis visited Afghanistan, where he met government officials including President Ashraf Ghani.

During his tour of East Asia, President Trump visited allies Japan and South Korea as also its economic partner China. U.S. President Donald Trump set out a strong message on trade at a meeting of Asia-Pacific countries in Vietnam, saying that U.S. could no longer tolerate chronic trade abuses and would insist on fair and equal policies. Trump said the U.S. is ready to make a bilateral deal with any country in the region, but only on the basis of "mutual respect and mutual benefit."

On the issue of Iran, the US President spoke about withdrawing from the Iran Nuclear Deal. However, apart from withholding certification, the Administration and the US Congress did not alter the deal.

On North Korea, President Trump made it clear that all options, including the military are available to the United States and cautioned N. Korea not to pose a strategic threat to regional and global peace.

President Trump ended the year with the blueprint for his administration presenting the US national security strategy. The comprehensive document warns of a treacherous world in which the United States faces rising threats from an emboldened Russia and China, as well as from what it calls rogue governments, like North Korea and Iran.

On the domestic front, the administration has been continuously challenged on charges that the US Presidential elections was tampered by Russian interference, and the US Congress investigated the same. President Trump fired James Comey, the former FBI director in May 2017. Comey went on to testify before the Senate Intelligence Committee about potential White House interference in an ongoing counterintelligence and criminal investigation related to Russian interference in the 2016 election designed to boost Trump's candidacy. Such allegations hampered the ability of President Trump to build better relations with Russia, one of his campaign pledges. President Donald Trump signed into law legislation that levied new sanctions against Russia and restricted Trump's own ability to ease sanctions in place against Moscow. President Trump also faced criticism for his immigration policies. President Trump signed executive orders that led to the suspension of the US Refugee Admissions Programme for refugees coming from some Muslim majority countries. Democrats won key races in Virginia and New Jersey, their first major wins during the tenure of President Donald Trump and a boost heading into the 2018 midterms, when control of US House and Senate will be up for grabs.

India-US Bilateral Relations

On the bilateral aspect, relations between India and the US continued to progress. Prime Minister Modi was hosted by President Trump at the White House on June 26 for an official visit to Washington, D.C. They talked about the stewardship of the Indo-Pacific region, fighting global terrorism, calling on nations to adhere to international laws on freedom of navigation and increasing fair and free trade. External Affairs Minister Ms. Swaraj visited the United States to address the 72 session of the United Nations General Assembly (18-24 Sept. 2017). Her statement called on the nations to fight against terrorism and specially on cross border terrorism that India faces. She also spoke about India's plans for inclusive development of its economy while ensuring that it is sustainable.

Secretary of State Mr. Rex Tillerson visited India on 25 October 2017 While meeting PM Modi, EAM Ms. Swaraj and NSA Ajit Doval, he discussed issues of terrorism, support to Afghanistan and urging Pakistan to take steps to dismantle safe havens for terror groups. US National Security Adviser (NSA) Lieutenant General H.R. McMaster re-affirmed India's position as the US's "major defence partner" during talks with his Indian counterpart Ajit Doval and Prime Minister Narendra Modi before ending his first visit to South Asia. Gen. VK Singh met US secretary of state Rex Tillerson in Manila on the sidelines of the ASEAN foreign ministers meeting. US Defence Secretary James Mattis visited New Delhi. During Gen. Mattis's visit, India made it clear to the US that it won't deploy troops in war-torn Afghanistan. India

and the US reaffirmed their commitment to combat the global scourge of terrorism. The US also decided to release the crucial Electromagnetic Aircraft Launch System for the Indian Navy's future aircraft carrier. The U.S.'s new Ambassador to India Kenneth Juster, presented his credentials to President Ram Nath Kovind.

9.2 China

The Chinese government stated that 2017 was of special significance to both China and the world. China's Foreign Ministry highlighted their achievements in the following five aspects:

First, China drew the blueprint for jointly undertaking the Belt and Road Initiative. President Xi Jinping successfully chaired the first Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation (BRF) in Beijing. The heads of state/government from 29 foreign countries, senior representatives from over 130 countries and heads of over 70 international organizations attended the event.

However, it needs to be noted that India did not participate at the BRF. Second, China strongly advocated economic globalization. President Xi Jinping's visit to Davos in January 2017 boosted global confidence and charted the way forward for economic globalization. Third, China sought stable relations among major countries. Fourth, China worked to maintain stability in their neighborhood and the sound momentum of regional cooperation. Fifth, the Chinese foreign Ministry noted that the concerted efforts of the five BRICS countries and the growth of the BRICS mechanism despite various pessimistic rhetoric, and the success of the BRICS Xiamen Summit.

The Foreign Ministry of China also highlighted that the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (October 2017) concluded with great success, charting the course for China's external relations. General Secretary Xi Jinping made it clear in his report to the Congress that China would endeavor to foster a new form of international relations and build a community with a shared future for mankind.

China issued its white paper titled "China's Policies on Asia-Pacific Security Cooperation" in January 2017. The white paper noted "Its security and development interests are a strategic task in China's modernization drive".

In June 2017, "Vision for Maritime Cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative" was jointly released by the National Development and Reform Commission and the State Oceanic Administration of China.

India-China Relations in 2017

The year 2017 was not a smooth year for India-China relations. While both India and China continued high-level exchanges at multilateral and bilateral level, a face-off situation that had arisen in the Doklam region, was resolved following a diplomatic discussions between India and China. Some of the important meetings/events in 2017 can be listed as follows:

PM Modi's meeting with Xi Jinping at Astana , 9 June 2017

Prime Minister Narendra Modi thanked President Xi Jinping for China's support for India's accession to the SCO.

Understanding for Doklam Disengagement

In 2017, a face-off situation that had arisen in the Doklam region, was resolved following diplomatic discussions between India and China, based on which both sides arrived at an understanding for the disengagement of their border personnel at the face-off site.

The face-off between the Indian and Chinese border personnel in Doklam area of Bhutan started when a large construction party of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) of China entered the area on 16 June 2017 and tried to alter the status quo by building a road in the area in violation of its existing understandings both with Bhutan and India. Both Bhutan and India approached China, as per the existing protocols and understandings, to stop Chinese actions aimed at changing the status quo. Only after these attempts failed that the Indian border personnel, in close consultation and coordination with Bhutan, intervened to stop the road construction.

The disengagement of Indian and Chinese border personnel in the Doklam area was accomplished on 28 August 2017.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bilateral Meeting with President Xi Jinping on the sidelines of Ninth annual BRICS Summit, Xiamen, 5 September 2017
Prime Minister Narendra Modi met President Xi Jinping on the sidelines of BRICS summit on 5 September 2017. One of the important points which was made during the bilateral meeting was that peace and tranquility in the border areas was a prerequisite for the further development of our relationships and that there should be more efforts made to really enhance and strengthen the level of mutual trust between the two sides.

9.3 European Union

The European Union celebrated the 60th Anniversary of the signing of the Treaties of Rome on March 25, 2017. At the end of the celebrations the leaders adopted and signed the Declaration setting out a joint vision for the future. The EU registered economic growth throughout the year. Call for reforming the EU got further strengthened. Although far right parties enlarged their electoral base, in major cases, mainstream parties stayed in power, forming governments. In France a new party managed to win the elections. Victory of Emmanuel Macron in French president election against far-right National Front candidate Marine Le Pen was considered to be politically crucial for EU reforms as well as European integration. In German federal elections, support for both Chancellor Merkel's CDU and Social Democrats relatively declined. The far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) registered victory and entered German parliament. Chancellor Merkel stitched another grand coalition with the Social Democrats. In another important election in Netherlands, far-right Freedom party of Geert Wilders increased its vote share but Prime Minister Marck Rutte's party emerged as the largest party in the elections and managed to form the coalition government with Christian Democrats, D66 and the Christian Union.

The EU faced with challenges of migrant crisis, Ukraine crisis, and socio-economic issues. Inflow of migrants decreased in 2017; the European Union struggled to settle migrants as planned in quota system. Some of the member states refused to take refugees and migrants. Differences between the EU and its member states were observed.

Negotiations started on Brexit. But uncertainty persisted over the final agreement between EU and UK. Although UK and EU decided to move ahead in their negotiations, negotiations appeared to be quite complex. Snap election called by Prime Minister Theresa May weakened her position in her Conservative party.

Externally, policy of Trump administration widened differences in areas of climate change, trade tariff, burden sharing – more defence expending, Middle East in transatlantic partnership. European countries explored greater defence cooperation. 25 member states signed the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) for expanding defence cooperation among themselves. EU tried to bring peace and stability in Ukraine. They stressed on the implementation of the Minsk agreement. EU had also been active in making attempts of diffusing the crises including Qatar crisis, Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri's resignation and subsequent development in the Middle East region. Tension with Russia continued, but new French President Macron talked about cooperation with Russia regional and global issues including Syria. European countries defended the Nuclear Deal with Iran, though they had concerns over Iran missile programme and its regional role. The EU-Turkey relations also got strained after the coup and subsequent actions by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. European countries had expressed their concerns over political development and human rights in Turkey.

India European Countries Bilateral Relations

Prime Minister of Portugal Antonio Costa visited India during 6-12 January 2017. Prime Minister Costa attended the Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas as the Chief Guest in Bengaluru on 8-9 January 2017, also participated in few business events. He also attended the Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit on 10 January 2017 in Gandhinagar.

President of Cyprus Nicos Anastasiades paid a state visit to India from 25 to 29 April, 2017.. President Anastasiades reaffirmed Cyprus's support for India's permanent membership in the UN Security Council. He also said his country as a member of the 48-member bloc supports India's bid for the membership of Nuclear Supplier Group (NSG).

Vice President of India, Hamid Ansari paid a five day official visit to Armenia and Poland from April 24, 2017. Polish Prime Minister Beata Szydło advocated for strong trade ties and more investment. Poland supported India's membership in the NSG and permanent membership in the UNSC.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited three European countries, namely Germany, Spain and France. In first leg of his visit, Prime Minister Modi visited Germany and met with German Chancellor Angela Merkel and German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier. India signed 12 Joint Declaration of Intent (JDI) and agreements with Germany for cooperation in areas of digitalization, empowerment and economic impact, skill development, cyber policy, alternative medicine, railway safety, sustainable development and urban development. After Germany, Prime Minister travelled to Spain. This was first visit by an Indian Prime Minister since 1988. He met King Felipe VI and Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy. Both countries signed MoUs on cooperation in the field of cyber security, civil aviation, renewable energy, etc. On the last leg of his visit, Prime Minister

Modi arrived in France. He met with newly-elected French President Emmanuel Macron on 3 June, 2017. Both leaders discussed the issue of mutual importance.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Portugal and the Netherlands in June 2017. It was the first-ever bilateral visit by any India Prime Minister to Portugal. He held talks with his Portuguese counterpart Antonio Costa to boost bilateral ties. India and Portugal held talks to increase cooperation in areas of counter-terrorism, sciences and technology, space, climate studies. In Netherlands, Prime Minister Modi held talks with his counterpart Prime Minister Mark Rutte. He called on King Willem-Alexander and met Queen Maxima..

The 14th India-EU summit was held in New Delhi on 6 October 2017. Donald Tusk, President of the European Council, and Jean Cluade Juncker, President of the European Commission visited New Delhi to represent the EU in the summit. India and the EU recognized that they the natural partners and reaffirmed their commitment for strengthening the strategic partnership

King Philippe and Queen Mathilde of Belgium came on a seven-day visit to India on 5 November 2017, accompanied by a business delegation of CEOs of Belgian companies.

Italian Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni visited India in October 2017. Jean-Yves Le Drian, French Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs visited India from November 17 to 19, 2017. India and France reviewed the full range of India-France bilateral relations and had in-depth exchange of views on regional, global and multilateral issues of mutual interest.

9.4 Russia

Throughout the year 2017, Russia was engulfed in the controversy of the country's involvement in the 2016 US Presidential election and victory of President Donald Trump. Russia was accused on meddling in the election to which the Kremlin denied. These accusations led to a low in the relationship between the two countries. President Putin on June 1 acknowledged that some “patriotic” individuals may have engaged in hacking but insisted Russia as a country has never done it.¹⁵¹ However, one jailed Russian hacker stated to have hacked into the Democratic National Committee's computers on the directives of Kremlin.¹⁵²

The impact of the relationship between Russia and the US had its influence on the regional and other global issues too. Tension with regard to Crimea continued while US maintained sanctions on Russia regarding Ukraine until it returned full control of Crimea to Ukraine. Russia saw the sanctions as a

¹⁵¹Vladimir Isachenkov and Ian Phillips, “Putin: Russia doesn't hack but “patriotic” individuals might”, *The Washington Post*, June 1, 2017. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/putin-russian-state-has-never-been-involved-in-hacking/2017/06/01/efe4b576-46b1-11e7-8de1-ccc59a9bf4b1_story.html?utm_term=.cbeb9d66bf70

¹⁵²Kevin G. Hall, “Jailed Russian says he hacked DNC on Kremlin's orders and can prove it”, *The Kansas City Star*, December 27, 2017. <http://www.kansascity.com/news/nation-world/article191857884.html>.

"full-fledged economic war" on Moscow.¹⁵³ Russia also continued with its counter-sanctions on US and EU. However, in the first six months of 2017, the volume of EU-Russia trade increased by €27 billion.¹⁵⁴

On the Iranian issue, Russia continued to support Iran and warned US on the repercussion it would have on North Korea.¹⁵⁵ Though Russia did not accept the North's nuclear bid but wanted a larger Russia and Chinese role in coercing North Korea in freezing its nuclear programme.¹⁵⁶

Russia continued to be a supporter of the Syrian government under President Bashar al-Assad. Both the countries signed an agreement on development and modernization of Russian naval base in Syrian Tartus as well as the protocol stipulating the conditions for Russian Aerospace Forces' aircraft deployment in Syria.¹⁵⁷ The Kremlin said that Russia would keep a naval and an air base in Syria.¹⁵⁸ The first Russian troops returned home on 12 December from their deployment in Syria, the army said.¹⁵⁹ Russia signed a 50-year agreement (till 2092) to expand Russia's naval presence in Syria despite an order to withdraw troops from the war-torn country. Russia renewed the lease on its Western Syrian airbase in Khmeimim for an additional 50 years.¹⁶⁰

Russia re-opened a Soviet military, air and radar base in the Arctic.¹⁶¹ Russia claim half a million square miles of the Arctic and on April 29 invited journalists to the refurbishing of the Soviet-era base, the Alakurtti base. Russia is also involved in protecting the Arctic. At the Arctic Council's biennial ministerial meeting on May 11, the US, Russia and the six other Arctic nations pledged to cooperate on science across the circumpolar north, signing a binding agreement to remove barriers and enhance exchanges between scientists working across borders in the far north.¹⁶²

¹⁵³“Russia blasts US sanctions as 'economic war'”, *Times of India*, August 3, 2017. <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/us/russia-blasts-us-sanctions-as-economic-war/articleshow/59897622.cms>.

¹⁵⁴Francesco Giunelli, “EU-Russia trade bouncing back despite sanctions”, *EU Observer*, October 17, 2017. <https://euobserver.com/opinion/139485>.

¹⁵⁵“Negative consequences’ if Trump quits Iran deal: Russia”, *The Hindu*, October 9, 2017. <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/negative-consequences-if-trump-quits-iran-deal-russia/article19829143.ece>.; “Russia warns US against ‘Syria-style’ actions in N. Korea”, RT, April 17, 2017. <https://www.rt.com/news/385039-russia-warns-us-north-korea/>.

¹⁵⁶“Japan becoming ground zero for U.S. military buildup in Asia, Russia’s Lavrov says”, *Japan Times*, November 25, 2017. <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/11/25/national/politics-diplomacy/russia-takes-tokyo-task-defense-alliance-washington/#.WhunOFWWbIU>.

¹⁵⁷“Russia to Expand Capabilities of Naval Base in Syrian Tartus”, *Sputnik*, January 20, 2017. <https://sputniknews.com/military/201701201049836303-base-naval-russia-syria/>.

¹⁵⁸Denis Pinchuk, “Russia will keep bases in Syria to strike at insurgents: Kremlin”, *Reuters*, December 12, 2017. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-russia-withdrawa/russia-will-keep-bases-in-syria-to-strike-at-insurgents-kremlin-idUSKBN1E610E>.

¹⁵⁹“Russia begins partial withdrawal from Syria”, *The Hindu*, December 12, 2017. <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/russia-begins-partial-withdrawal-from-syria/article21543545.ece>.

¹⁶⁰“Russia Rules Out Further Military Expansion”, *The Moscow Times*, December 25, 2017. <https://themoscowtimes.com/news/russia-rules-out-further-military-expansion-60040>.

¹⁶¹“Russia makes big military push in Arctic”, *The Hindu*, January 31, 2017. <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/Russia-makes-big-military-push-in-Arctic/article17124634.ece>.

¹⁶²Yereth Rosen, “Science cooperation promised in newly signed Arctic Council agreement”, *Adn.com*, May 12, 2017. <https://www.adn.com/arctic/2017/05/11/science-cooperation-promised-in-newly-signed-arctic-council-agreement/>.

On the defence sector, Russian Armed Forces have been rearmed with modern armament for 59.5 per cent. More than 3,000 various samples of armament have been introduced in the troops. Military infrastructure has been developed in 2017. In total, 3,000 facilities has been erected, reconstructed and recovered. Combat training has been intensified over the last year. In total, six unexpected inspections and some 15,000 events took place within the combat training programme. The Zapad 2017 Russia-Belarus strategic exercise was the main event of combat training. The two armed forces confirmed their readiness to defend the US.¹⁶³ The Russia's 2017 defense spending reached \$61.2 billion and provided Moscow the 4th place in the Top-15 list of the biggest military spenders around the world.¹⁶⁴

Also, Russia tested 162 types of contemporary and modernized weapons in Syria, which showed a high level of effectiveness.¹⁶⁵

India Russia Bilateral Relations

Both the countries celebrated their 70th anniversary of the establishment of the diplomatic relationship. To celebrate it, the Ministry of External Affairs along with the various think-tanks and other associations came together and marked the occasion with many events such as Track 2, Track 1.5 dialogues, video conference, car rally and cultural shows etc. The high level visits at every level continued in 2017 including the Annual Summit.

During the 18th Annual Summit between India and Russia which took place on June 2017, both the countries concluded upon 12 documents related to cooperation over a very wide range of activities such an agreement for KKNPP Units 5 & 6. The 18th Summit also witnessed the adoption of the “St. Petersburg Declaration” highlighted the multi-faceted cooperation between India and Russia. The Declaration also provided a comprehensive matrix for future cooperation. During this visit to St. Petersburg, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi had a separate meeting with governors of sixteen Russian regions where they discussed various aspects related to the enhancement of cooperation between Indian and Russian regions. PM Modi also participated in the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum as the Guest of Honour. Subsequently PM Modi and President Putin also met at the sidelines of Astana SCO summit in June 2017 and G20 Summit in Hamburg in July 2017.¹⁶⁶

According to Russian Federal Customs Service data, bilateral trade during in 2017 amounted to US\$ 7.3 billion.¹⁶⁷

Cooperation between Russia and India also continued in the multilateral fora. India in June 2017 became the member of the Shanghai Cooperation

¹⁶³“Russian Minister of Defence General of Army Sergei Shoigu holds teleconference with Armed Forces leadership”, *Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation*, December 26, 2017. http://eng.mil.ru/en/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12156325@egNews.

¹⁶⁴“Russia the 4th in Top 15 military defense spending around the world”, *Army Recognition*, March 31, 2018, http://www.armyrecognition.com/march_2018_global_defense_security_army_news_industry/russia_the_4th_in_top_15_military_defense_spending_around_the_world.html.

¹⁶⁵Lucian Kim, “Russian Defense Minister Says His Military Has Tested 162 Weapons In Syria”, *NPR*, February 23, 2017. <http://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2017/02/23/516895124/russian-defense-minister-says-his-military-has-tested-162-weapons-in-syria>.

¹⁶⁶“India-Russia Relations”, *Ministry of External Affairs*, August 2017. http://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Russia_August_2017.pdf.

¹⁶⁷“India-Russia Relations”, *Ministry of External Affairs*, August 2017. http://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Russia_August_2017.pdf.

Organisation (SCO). Both the countries continued to work together at BRICS and Russia-India-China (RIC). The highlight of the 9th BRICS meet that was held on September was on the condemnation of any form of terrorism by the members. They also reaffirmed that those responsible for committing, organising, or supporting terrorist acts must be held accountable.¹⁶⁸ During the 15th Trilateral Meeting of Foreign Ministers of RIC that took place in New Delhi on 11 December 2017, the three foreign ministers discussed on four broad cluster of areas, namely, Economic and Developmental issues; Fight against terrorism; Global / Multilateral issues; and, Regional issues covering challenges to the global economy, menace of terrorism, transnational organized crime, smuggling of drugs, natural and man-made disasters, climate change, and changing political scenario in Middle East and North Africa.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁸“BRICS Leaders Xiamen Declaration”, *BRICS Post*, September 8, 2017.

https://www.brics2017.org/English/Documents/Summit/201709/t20170908_2021.html.

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Multilateral and International Economic Development

10 Multilateral and International Economic Development

Global Economic Situation in 2017

The global economy in the year 2017 started with a note of scepticism generated by two developments. First, the new US administration of President Donald Trump announced in January 2017 its trade strategy to protect American jobs and its withdrawal from the 12-nation Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade pact. This was followed by his decision to renegotiate the NAFTA trade agreement. Second, the official Brexit negotiations started a year after the referendum on June 19, 2017. Nonetheless, by the end of the year 2017, the global economy saw firming recovery. According to the World Economic Situation and Prospects (WESP) Report of 2018, released by the United Nations on 11 December, 2017, the world economy strengthened as lingering fragilities related to the global financial crisis subsided. In 2017, global economic growth reached 3 per cent, a significant acceleration compared to growth of just 2.4 per cent in 2016—the highest growth rate since 2011. It also projected that growth was expected to remain steady for the coming year.

India's Economic Growth

For India's economic growth, the year began with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) downgrading India's growth forecast for the financial year 2016-17 to 6.6 per cent against its earlier estimate of 7.6 per cent on January 16, 2017 due to disruption caused by the government's move to demonetize high-value currencies. However, the revised estimate was in tune with the growth estimates revision by Department of Statistics to 7.1 percent in 2016-17 from 7.6 per cent the previous year. Though the Indian economy slowed down in 2016-17 with the gross domestic product (GDP) declining drastically from 8 per cent in 2015-16 to 7.1 per cent, it remained the second fastest growing major economy in the world in the year 2017.

Trade Balance

In terms of merchandise trade, cumulative value of exports for the period April-December 2017-18 was US\$ 223512.58 million (Rs 1441419.91 crore) as against US\$ 199467.14 million (Rs 1338341.51 crore) registering a positive growth of 12.05 per cent in dollar terms and 7.70 per cent in Rupee terms over the same period last year. Cumulative value of imports for the period April-December 2017-18 was US\$ 338369.63 million (Rs. 2182289.84 crore) as against US\$ 277899.32 million (Rs. 1865151.87 crore) registering a positive growth of 21.76 per cent in dollar terms and 17.00 per cent in Rupee terms over the same period last year. Taking merchandise and services together, overall trade deficit for April-December 2017-18 was estimated at US \$70063.05 million as compared to US \$35626.18 million during April-December 2016-17.

FDI and Forex

Cumulative FDI Flows into India (from April, 2000 to September, 2017), including Equity inflows, 'Re-invested earnings' and 'Other capital' stood at US\$ 518,100 Million. The total FDI (equity inflows) for 2017-18 (Apr-Sept)

was US\$25,354 million. The total foreign exchange reserves as on December 22, 2017 stood at US\$404,921.8 million.

Multilateral and Regional Institutions

72nd Session of the UN General Assembly

The 72nd Session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA 72) was convened at UN Headquarters on September 12, 2017. The General Debate opened on September 19, 2017, with a focus on the theme, ‘Focusing on People: Striving for Peace and a Decent Life for All on a Sustainable Planet’. Among other dignitaries, the General Assembly was also addressed by the Indian External Affairs Minister, Sushma Swaraj. She dwelt on issues like terrorism, climate change, sustainable development and others.

11th WTO Ministerial Conference

The Eleventh WTO Ministerial Conference (MC 11) was held in Buenos Aires, Argentina on December 10-13, 2017. It was chaired by Minister Susana Malcorra of Argentina. The MC 11 ended without a Ministerial Declaration or any substantive outcome due to an absence of consensus. The Conference ended with a number of ministerial decisions, including on fisheries subsidies and e-commerce duties, and a commitment to continue negotiations in all areas. During MC11 India stood firm on its stand on the fundamental principles of the WTO, including multilateralism, rule-based consensual decision-making, an independent and credible dispute resolution and appellate process, the centrality of development, which underlies the DDA, and special and differential treatment for all developing countries.

NAFTA Re-negotiations

On May 18, 2017, US President Trump announced the decision to-renegotiate NAFTA and on July 17, 2017, the Office of the US Trade Representative (USTR) published the US NAFTA Objectives for Re-negotiation. At the end of 2017, five rounds of negotiations were concluded. The first round of negotiation took place in Washington, D.C. from August 16–20, 2017; the second in Mexico City from September 1–5, 2017; the third from September 23–27, 2017 in Ottawa; the fourth from October 11-17, 2017 in Washington D.C; and the fifth in Mexico City, Mexico on November 17-21, 2017. The initial deadline for completing the NAFTA re-negotiation process was December 2017. As the first five rounds, struggled to find agreement, the re-negotiation process was extended to the first quarter of 2018.

The Forty-third G7 Summit

The leaders of the G7 countries gathered in Taormina, Italy for the 43rd G7 Summit held on May 26-27, 2017. The leaders of G7 countries discussed a wide range of issues, both economic and political in nature, posing serious global challenges. At the end of summit, the leaders of the G7 countries adopted the Taormina Leaders’ Communiqué. There were visible divisions between the United States and the rest of the G7 countries on climate change.

G20 Summit

The leaders of the G20 gathered in Hamburg from July 7-8, 2017. The Summit, themed as “Shaping an Interconnected World”, came up with a Joint Communiqué underlining the outcomes of the Summit in the pursuit of three aims: building resilience, improving sustainability and assuming responsibility. During the meeting the leaders were able to reach consensus over a single communiqué with commitments on trade, finance, energy and Africa. But there were differences between US President Trump and the 19 other members of the group on climate change. Even on trade, the Summit came up with a ‘compromise’ language and, on climate change, 19 of the 20 leaders were able to arrive at an agreed position.

IORA Summit Meeting

The Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), held the first-ever summit meeting of leaders in Jakarta on March 7, 2017 in Jakarta, Indonesia. The theme of the Summit was “Strengthening Maritime Cooperation for a Peaceful, Stable, and Prosperous Indian Ocean”. During the Summit, an IORA visionary document, the Jakarta Concord, on “Promoting Regional Cooperation for a Peaceful, Stable and Prosperous Indian Ocean” was signed which highlighted six priority areas. These include Maritime Safety and Security; Trade and Investment Facilitation; Fisheries Management; Disaster Risk Reduction; Academic and S&T Cooperation; and Tourism Promotion and Cultural Exchanges.

The 15th BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting

The 15th BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) Ministerial Meeting was held in Nepal, Kathmandu on August 10-11, 2017. The foreign Ministers of Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Deputy Foreign Minister of Thailand attended the meeting. The meeting took place in the background of the 20th anniversary of BIMSTEC. The Ministerial meeting approved the reports of the seventeenth and eighteenth sessions of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials Meetings held in Kathmandu, Nepal on February 7 and on August 10, 2017 respectively. The Ministerial meeting agreed upon sixteen areas of cooperation.

The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Summit, 2017

The 21 countries of the Asia-Pacific region gathered in Da Nang, Vietnam for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Summit on November 6-11, 2017. The summit, hosted by Vietnam, focused on “Creating New Dynamism, Fostering a Shared Future”. A series of meetings were held during the summit, including the XXIX Ministerial Meeting on November 8 and the XXV APEC Economic Leaders’ Meeting on November 11. The leaders of the 21 APEC member economies issued the Da Nang Declaration following the APEC Economic Leaders’ Meeting. The Da Nang Declaration identified four areas of cooperation: a) sustainable, innovative and inclusive growth; b) regional economic integration and connectivity; c) dynamism for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) and; d) food security and achieving sustainable agriculture.

17th SCO Summit, Astana, Kazakhtan

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) held its 17th Summit of the Heads of the State at Astana, Kazakhstan on June 9, 2017. At the end of the Summit, a total of 11 documents were adopted. During the Summit, the heads of state underscored the historical nature of granting full membership to the Republic of India and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

9th BRICS Summit, Xiamen, China

The Leaders of the Federative Republic of Brazil, the Russian Federation, the Republic of India, the People's Republic of China and the Republic of South Africa, met on September 4, 2017 in Xiamen, China, at the Ninth BRICS Summit under the theme "BRICS: Stronger Partnership for a Brighter Future". At the end of the Summit, the Xiamen Declaration was adopted. During the Plenary Session of 9th BRICS Summit Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged that BRICS countries can work closely with International Solar Alliance (ISA) to strengthen the solar energy agenda since the five countries have complementary skills and strengths to promote use of renewable and solar energy. He remarked that BRICS countries can deepen partnership for win-win results. He also emphasised on the need to mainstream youth in joint initiatives and scaling up cooperation in skill development and exchange of best practices; a strong BRICS partnership on innovation and digital economy to help spur growth, promote transparency and support the Sustainable Development Goals; and to work towards more focused capacity building engagement between BRICS and African countries in areas of skills, health, infrastructure, manufacturing and connectivity.

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2017

Region wise

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| Bangladesh | Dr. Ashish Shukla |
| Nepal | Dr. Rakesh Kumar Meena |
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| Sri Lanka& Maldives | Dr. Samatha Mallempati |
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| West Asia | |
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