

## THE POHOTTUWA GOVERNMENT OF SRI LANKA Part 2 A 2

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When India gained Independence as a sovereign state in 1947, it considered itself the natural leader of South Asia because of its size, its antiquity and its classy leader, Jawaharlal Nehru. It considered itself a regional power and took a very arrogant attitude towards its neighbors. This haughty, aggressive policy only succeeded in angering India's neighbors.

India has interfered in the internal affairs of neighboring countries and tried to bully them. As a result, India became heartily disliked by its neighbors. Indian analysts are concerned. One after another of India's immediate neighbors in South Asia are turning away from India. Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal are tilting toward China, they said.

With each of our South Asian neighbours, the potential for accommodating bilateral relations is immense. But our relations with nearly all of them is 'discordant.' India should secure its security through friendly relations with its neighbors, they advised.

Pakistan, Sri Lanka and China could gang up against India in the future. China (1962) and Pakistan ((1965, 1971, 1999) fought wars against India. India does not have cordial relations with these two countries today either.

India shares land borders with, Pakistan, Afghanistan, China, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Myanmar. There are border disputes with several of them. The main reason for this is that, except for China, all the other states are 'new' states and the boundaries are not historical ones. In addition, the population in the northern states is clearly of Chinese origin.

Pakistan and India are fighting over Jammu and Kashmir, China and India are fighting over the two extremes of their border, Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh and Nepal has recently expanded its territory.

In June 2020 Nepal took three strategic areas bordering India, Kalapani, Lipulekh and Limpiyadhura, into its territory through an Act of Parliament and then issued a map showing these areas. Nepal says that its right to Lipulekh Pass is mentioned in Sugauli Treaty between the British East India Company and Nepal in 1816. These places are at the border with India's Uttarakhand state.

The biggest problem for India at present is its land border with China. India has no historical links to its northern border, and wants China to recognize the McMahon Line. China says No. Imperial China was border conscious and would have had a firm border in its south. But China prefers to settle the issue militarily.

The entire Sino-Indian border is 4,056km or 2,520 miles long, and traverses one Indian union territory, Ladakh, and four Indian states, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh. India claims the McMahon Line drawn in 1914 including Arunachal Pradesh as its border with China in the north-east and the Johnson Line drawn in 1899 including Aksai Chin in the north. China has brushed this aside. China lays claim to several parts of Ladakh and the whole of Arunachal Pradesh.

In July 2020 China's army pushed into several disputed areas in Eastern Ladakh and there was direct confrontation. Over 100 Indian and Chinese soldiers were injured. This could become the biggest confrontation after the Doklam episode in 2017. India sent a senior official from the Ministry of External Affairs to the border talks. This was a surprise and China also sent a foreign ministry representative. India wants a final agreement which will settle all the friction points along the border with China.

India has good relations with Bangladesh. There is some arrogance arising from the fact that it was India that helped Bangladesh gain its independence. A comprehensive bilateral treaty was signed by India and Bangladesh in 1996. The treaty established a 30-year water-sharing arrangement and recognized Bangladesh's rights.

India has settled its land boundary issue with Bangladesh with an exchange of enclaves. There was an exchange of territories in Assam, Tripura, Meghalaya and West Bengal. In July 2015, a total of 162 tiny Island of land, 111 in Bangladesh and 51 In India were officially handed over to the countries surrounding them. they had been stateless, without schools, clinics, or power since 1947. The enclaves were allowed to decide where they wanted to go.

West Bengal and Bangladesh share the Teesta River, Negotiations on the Teesta River have been going on for decades and a draft agreement was prepared, in 2011 but it was not accepted and no progress has been made since. there are over fifty rivers that flow from India into Bangladesh and sharing arrangements will be needed for them all later said analysts.

India annexed Sikkim in 1975 when Sikkim asked to be made sovereign state. The head of Sikkim, the Chogyal asked India to revise the Indo-Sikkim Treaty, which made Sikkim a protectorate of India. Sikkim wanted to be a sovereign state like Bhutan. But Sikkim was on India's border with China and Prime Minister Indira Gandhi did not want to let Sikkim go.

Instead she wanted Sikkim absorbed into India in the shortest possible time. the task was given to RAW, India's intelligence agency. The operation was carried out by a secret three-member RAW team. . Only they knew what the ultimate objective was.

RAW ran a 27-month-long, ruthless operation from 1973 to 1975, to undermine and weaken the Chogyal. RAW instigated, directed and funded political and social agitation by political parties, notably Sikkim National Congress. The head of the Sikkim National Congress, Kazi Lendhup Dorzi alone, knew what the real purpose was.

The plan succeeded. There was an uprising against Sikkim's rule. Kazi won a landslide victory at the general election. Parliament passed the Government of Sikkim Act, 1974, making Sikkim an associate state of India.

The Chogyal was removed from office in a bloodless coup. it took less than 20 minutes for the Indian Army to enter the palace, disarm the Sikkim guards and take the Chogyal. Chogyal was furious but was helpless. On May

15, 1976 Sikkim officially became the 22nd state of India. Chogyal's eldest son, the potential heir died soon after.

Rarely has there been a more successful Indian intelligence operation than the merger of Sikkim, said RAW proudly. This is a classic example of what RAW can do. The operation was low key and executed without any international furore.

But the matter is not ended. The Sikkim public continue to recognize the Chogyal who is living in Sikkim. In 2015, the Opposition in the Sikkim State Assembly asked for a reappraisal of India's annexation of Sikkim. Sikkim National Congress also pressed for an open debate. This annexation of Sikkim by RAW is of interest to Sri Lanka. Analysts in Sri Lanka said that RAW was behind India's support for the LTTE in 1980s.

India would very much like to become a world power, rivaling China. In 2016, India announced the creation of an Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC) with Japan as a counter to China's One Belt One Road (OBOR). This was stated in the joint declaration issued by Prime Ministers Modi and Shinzo Abe in November 2016 and declared at the 52nd annual general meeting of the African Development Bank in May 2017.

the AAGC has a plan to connect ports in Jamnagar (Gujarat) with Djibouti in the Gulf of Eden. Similarly, ports of Mombasa and Zanzibar will be connected to ports near Madurai (Tamil Nadu); Kolkata (West Bengal) will be linked to Sittwe port in Myanmar.. this will be under the Sagarmala programme. Unlike OBOR which entails development of a land corridor, AAGC will essentially be a sea corridor linking Africa with India and other countries of South-East Asia and Oceania.

There is now a powerful new Buddhist region, led by China, in South East Asia, with Sri Lanka and Nepal joining in. India does not wish to be left out. India plans to reconstruct Nalanda University in Bihar. Nalanda is one of India's largest archaeological complexes with stupas, temples, monasteries, hostels, meditation hall and libraries spread over 16 square kilometers. This is planned as an international project.

India is also to create a Buddha Smriti Park in Patna, Bihar, with relics from Japan, Thailand, Sri Lanka Myanmar and Dharamsala. India's most sacred

relic of the Buddha, the Vaishali relic, discovered in excavations of 1958-62, is presently in display at the Patna museum, reported the media in 2010.

India wishes to emerge as a powerful military in its own right. It buys its military requirements from both Russia and the US. In 2018 India signed a Rs 39,000-crore deal with Russia for the supply of S-400 Triumf air defence missile systems, ignoring Washington's concerns about the purchase.

What we have to buy from Russia, we will buy. We do not recognize unilateral sanctions by any country. We have made known to the US that we have our own national interest and the ties with Russia are old and unique, said India.

The US is also a leading supplier of weapons to India, accounting for 12% of the country's defence imports. Since 2008, India has bought or ordered military equipment worth \$15 billion from the US, including C-130J special operations planes, C-17 transport aircraft, P-8I submarine hunter planes, Harpoon missiles, Apache and Chinook helicopters and M777 lightweight howitzers.

.In 2020 India signed two deals worth \$3 billion for 24 MH-60 'Romeo' naval helicopters and six Apache attack choppers. They have taken the total value of lucrative Indian defence deals bagged by the US to over \$21 billion just since 2007.

India has test fired a number of its own missiles including a new version of the surface-to-surface supersonic cruise missile BrahMos and anti-radiation missile Rudram-1. The successful test firing of Rudram-1 was seen as a major milestone as it is India's first indigenously developed anti-radiation weapon. India also carried out successful test firing of a laser guided anti-tank guided missile and nuclear capable hypersonic missile 'Shaurya'.

BrahMos Aerospace, an India-Russia joint venture, produces a supersonic cruise missile that can be launched from submarines, ships, aircraft, or from land platforms. naval version of the BrahMos supersonic cruise missile was successfully test-fired from an indigenously built stealth destroyer of the Indian Navy in the Arabian Sea it hit the target with pin-point accuracy . It will engage naval surface targets at long ranges.

In May last year, the Indian Air Force successfully test fired the aerial version of the BrahMos missile from a Su-30 MKI fighter aircraft. On September India successfully test fired a new version of the surface-to-surface version of the BrahMos. The range was now 400 km, increased from the original 290 km. India has already deployed a sizeable number of the original BrahMos missiles along the de-facto border with China in Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh.

India conducted wide-ranging military exercises in a tri-service format (army, navy, air force) with the United States and Russia, in separate exercises in November and December, 2019. This was the first time with USA and second with Russia. The first exercise with Russia was in Vladivostok in October 2017.

India's ties with the US and Russia are independent of the relationship between those two powers, India said. India is guided by its own national interests. It is imperative that India maintains good relations with both the US and Russia. The fact that both those nations want to exercise with us shows that India too is important in their calculations.

India has its own foreign policy it is not a satellite of US, said its analysts. In 2016, India ruled out US proposal for joint patrolling of Asia Pacific region to counter China. India will participate in joint naval exercises, that is all. India and France held talks for exercises involving their armies, navies and air forces in 2019.

However, India has signed many military agreements with USA. India inked the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) with the US in 2002. It was followed by the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) in 2016, and then the Communications, Compatibility and Security Arrangement (COMCASA) in 2018.

LEMOA provides for reciprocal logistics support like refuelling and berthing facilities for each other's warships and aircraft, while the COMCASA has paved the way for India to get greater access to advanced military technologies with encrypted and secure communications and data links like armed Predator-B or Sea Guardian drones.

In 2020 India will ink the fourth and final 'foundational military pact' called the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement for Geo-Spatial Cooperation (BECA) with the United States. BECA will enable the US to share advanced satellite and topographical data for long-range navigation and missile-targeting with India. There are, however, some concerns about Indian inking BECA when India has its own considerable satellite imaging capabilities.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had refused to sign LEMOA, COMCASA and BECA on the grounds that it would compromise India's strategic autonomy", but Narendra Modi has signed, saying that there are enough India-specific safeguards" built into these pacts.

India is a part of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) led by USA. The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue was specifically created to control China in the Indo Pacific. It is however described as a strategic forum between the United States, Japan, Australia and India ,maintained by regular summits, information exchanges and military drills between member countries. (Continued)

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