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THINK TANK



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Department of Political Science

Summer Semester, 2024-25, Volume 6

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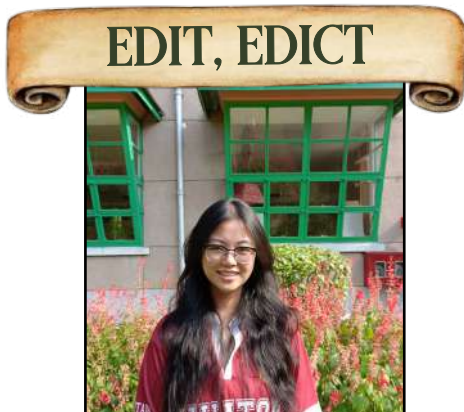
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DEDICATION

A woman scorned by the nation she belongs to, words fall short when describing the relentless struggle of 2023 Nobel Laureate Narges Mohammadi. In her decades-long struggle for women's rights against the repressive Iranian regime, Mohammadi has encountered countless challenges and objections. The government has repeatedly prosecuted her and sentenced her to prison in efforts of silencing her. Despite it all, Mohammadi has remained steadfast in her resistance to the repressed state of women in her country, being a vocal proponent of mass feminist civil disobedience against the hijab in Iran and a critic of the hijab and chastity program of 2023. Once again proving that the fire within her burns brighter than the fire around her, Mohammadi has been active from inside prison, warning of widespread protests by posting letters concerning the situation of prisons and detention centres and violence against inmates and detainees. This edition of Think Tank seeks to further the message that Mohammadi aims to disseminate, which is that human rights and female empowerment should be promoted worldwide, and that justice should always be upheld regardless of the means used by oppressive governments to thwart it.

Image Source: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/10/1141977>



With the ongoing 18th Lok Sabha elections, India stands at the cusp of a nation-wide change that is to determine how the country is to be run for the next 5 years. During this crucial time, it is important to hold close the ideals of democracy that has kept our country afloat for the past 76 years. These principles can be found in the concepts of accountability, transparency, equality and of course, liberty.

The strife towards true democracy is an endless effort made by all who wish to retain their freedoms. The edition delves into world events that have left impressions across boundaries. I am incredibly thrilled to be presenting the sixth volume of Think Tank which takes a deeper dive into a world torn with strife yet bustling with endless possibilities.

Happy reading!

Atoti Zhimomi
Student Editor



The views expressed in the articles are the authors' own and do not necessarily reflect those of The Assam Valley School.

QUILL STROKES

A GRAND SALUTE TO A WOMAN OF SUBSTANCE



Freedom is a timeless and cherished human right. Since time immemorial, there has been an eternal struggle to rise, aspire, dream, fight, live and die for this core human value. Women at the forefront had to endure the brutal might of the

powers that be using rogue force either to suppress or subjugate. This is now a struggle of the mindset, against patriarchy, against rules which are as obsolete as the time of a medieval period. Iran is on the edge as one woman's head scarf defiance stirred the conscience of the world with women joining hands in a remarkable show of solidarity.

The tragic death of Mahsa Amini did not dampen the grit of the ladies in Iran and they are back with an iron determination to break a faith which refuses to face facts. A grim struggle with self-professed guardians of morality versus ladies who want answers as to why they should not break rules has led to a very volatile situation in Iran. The power of conviction has the strength to radically change society. Death for a cause has only strengthened the resolve of these ladies to defy.

Life must be lived to the fullest and any hindrance sans logic must be resisted. For the State of Iran to respond with a typical political move of outlawing such demonstrations, the eternal struggle of might versus right will continue to simmer in this State and the sacrifice of Amini will continue to inspire generations to stand up for what is right. A grand salute to a lady of substance whose sacrifice will surely not go in vain.



Mr. Thajek Ali Hazanika
Teacher Editor



Mrs. Dayita Bira Datta, HoD History,
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The Balfour Declaration

TRACING THE ORIGIN OF THE VOLATILE

[The creation of the state of Israel is traced back to the three careless promises made by the Western Powers. Mrs. Dayita Datta, HoD History evaluates the developments leading to the creation of Israel and its ramifications.]

The Start of it all – The Careless Promises

The non-peace of the Middle East (West Asia to Indians) was broken yet again by the attack by Hamas on Israel and Israel's terrifyingly brutal response. For those not in the know, what are the reasons why Israel and the Arabs have been in a state of "non peace" punctuated by episodes of war? How is it that two religions have ended up competing for the same narrow piece of land? The reasons often point to primordial hatreds between the Jews of the new state of Israel and the Arab population. This is far from the truth. The answer lies in developments just over a century ago. It goes back to the years of the First World War.

The land of Palestine (Filastin in Arabic), had been conquered by Arab Muslims in the 7th century, following the emergence of the religion of Islam in Arabia. Centuries before the land had been populated by Hebrew speaking people (who came to be known as Yehudi or Jews), and conquered by the Roman Empire. The Jews had rebelled against the Roman occupation and had been expelled. This episode is known as the "Diaspora" (Scattering); the Jews settled in Europe and other parts of the Arab world. A smattering remained in Palestine, which became largely Arabic/Muslim, with a few Christians. The communities lived in harmony. In the 16th century Palestine was conquered by the Ottoman Turkish Empire.

As Europe became Christianized, Jews increasingly suffered persecution, often violent, through the centuries, forced to live in designated areas, and increasingly taking up moneylending (Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*). By the 19th century, particularly in the Russian Empire and Eastern Europe, Jews were targeted in a series of pogroms (state sponsored riots). Long years of persecution had resulted in some Jews yearning for a return to the land their ancestors had left. Jews were known to greet each other "Next year in Jerusalem" and pray for a "return to Zion (Jerusalem)". A small minority emigrated to Palestine, often getting help from Arab neighbours.

In 1896 A non practicing Austrian Jew Theodore Herzl wrote a pamphlet *The Jewish State*. He argued that only in their own state would Jews be safe from persecution. The next year he organized the World Zionist Congress at Basle in Switzerland. Very soon its aim became the creation of a home for the Jews in Palestine – the land from which their ancestors had been expelled centuries ago. The Arabs of Palestine remained a community of "fellahin" (peasants), who cultivated cotton and fruits for export and also catered to a growing number of Christian pilgrims who came to visit the Biblical sites of the Holy Land.

Into this region three things happened which were to have long lasting consequence for Palestine:



Careless promise No. 1: In World War I the Turkish Empire fought on the side of Germany against Britain and France. In order to get Arab support against Turkey and protect the Suez Canal, the British promised the Arabs of the “Middle East” (including Palestine) independence after the war. Led by the sons of Sherif Hussain, the ruler of Mecca, the Arabs with British help revolted and drove the Turks out of Palestine. (This revolt was romanticized by the Hollywood film **Lawrence of Arabia** which focused on the British officer T E Lawrence).

Careless Promise No 2: All the while, the British were plotting with the French behind the backs of the Arabs to divide Turkey’s Arab lands between themselves. Why was this? Because the British armed forces had a need for the oil resources of the region, mainly in Iraq. This was the notorious Sykes Picot Agreement.

Careless promise No 3: And in 1917, the British made the third agreement which proved to have the most lasting consequence. This was the Balfour Declaration, which took the form of a letter from the Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour to Lord Rothschild the leader of the British Jews:

Dear Lord Rothschild: I have much pleasure in conveying to you, on behalf of His Majesty’s Government, the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations which has been submitted to, and approved by, the Cabinet:

His Majesty’s Government view with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.

I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation.

Yours, Arthur James Balfour

The British were careful with the crucial sixty seven words of the Declaration. At no stage did they use the words a Jewish state. But no surprise, the Zionists immediately interpreted it as support for a **Jewish state!**

As for the Arabs who made up 90% of the population of the area they were simply dismissed as “existing non Jewish communities” whose rights should be protected.

This stunning piece of **British arrogance** was summed up by the great Palestinian academic Edward Said: **“made by a European power...about a non European territory... in flat disregard of both the presence and**



wishes of the native population resident in that territory.”

Why was it issued?

There is a general consensus about the following reasons:

1. Control over the Suez Canal, Egypt and the Middle East was important for British imperial interests.
2. In 1917 Britain was bogged down in World War I and hoped influential Jews in USA would encourage that country to come in on Britain’s side.
3. There was some sympathy for Jewish persecution particularly in Russia a British ally in World War 1.
4. It is in this context that the active lobbying of British Zionists must be seen. There have been several articles about the role of Chaim Weizmann the leader of the British Zionists, claiming that his scientific discoveries during the war pressured the British to give in to his demands for support of a Jewish state in Palestine. This is one of the myths about the Balfour declaration that contains just a smidgen of truth.



CHAIM WEIZMANN

Image Source: <https://winstonchurchill.org/publications/finest-hour/finest-hour-170/churchill-chaim-weizmann/>

Role of Chaim Weizmann

It must be remembered that the Zionist Jews were very much in a minority. Many Jews in Britain did not support the idea of a Jewish state and wanted to assimilate into British society. Sir Edwin Montagu (Secretary of state for India), and one of the few Jews in the Cabinet was one such who vehemently opposed the Balfour declaration.

But Weizmann was happy to give the impression to British policy makers that Zionists could influence

the Americans to join the war, if it meant support for a Jewish nation in Palestine. He had powerful friends in the British cabinet, notably Herbert Samuel, a fellow Jew. He was also friendly with the influential editor of the newspaper The Manchester Guardian.

Weizmann's scientific discoveries and his manipulation of British policy makers must be set in this context. Weizmann had grasped the opportunity created for the Jewish state in Palestine once Turkey entered the war. In a letter to a fellow Zionist Israel Zangwill he had written as early as 1914 **"I have no doubt in my mind that Palestine will fall into the sphere of England....We could easily move a million Jews into Palestine within the next fifty to sixty years...we would have a country."**

Weizmann, a biochemist, had developed a new process

for the production of acetone, an essential element in the making of shells for artillery. No doubt this endeared him to the British establishment. In 1925, Lloyd George told a Jewish audience "Acetone converted me to Zionism."

After the War Palestine, Transjordan and Iraq became British Mandates (a thinly disguised device to take over Turkey's territories) under the League of Nations. The British allowed Jews to emigrate to Palestine – to the consternation and then the outright hostility of the resident Arabs. The scene was set for the Arab-Jewish hostility that lasts to this day and the universal Arab anti-Westernism. In the words of Richard Crossman: **"If the Balfour Declaration had not been issued...there would have been no Mandate and no National Home. Israel would have remained unborn and Arab nationalism would not have been transformed into an anti-western movement."**



MAP SHOWING PALESTINIAN LOSS OF LAND

Image Source: <https://skeptics.stackexchange.com/questions/55902/is-this-infographic-about-palestinian-loss-of-land-since-1947-accurate>



Akansha Bhuyan

Class 12 Humanities



INDO-CANADA RELATIONS: ISSUES AT HAND

[Indo- Canadian relations in the past has seen charges and counter charges signalling a new low. Aakansha Bhuyan delves deep into the issues involved.]

Introduction:

The bilateral relations between India and Canada based on shared values of democracy and a pluralist outlook on the society along with strong interpersonal relations, is also referred to as the Indo-Canadian relations. Both these countries have had a long standing bilateral relationship since the year 1947, the year India secured its independence. Later this bilateral relationship was further elevated into a strategic partnership with Prime Minister (PM) Modi's visit to Canada in April 2015. Furthermore, cooperation agreements between the countries have been signed to help expansion in the areas of Agriculture, Trade, Energy, Science and Technology, Security and Defence, Education, Information Technology, Space and Foreign affairs. Even during the Covid-19 pandemic the confidence in the bilateral relations could be seen through the active cooperation between these nations, be it through the supplying of medicines and PPE kits or, through the special charter flights provided for repatriation operated by the Canadian High Commission and facilitated by India. Therefore through these we can reaffirm that the bilateral relations between the two nations have been quite strong and reliable since its inauguration and thus has been resilient for over 70 years.

However in recent times the bilateral relations between India and Canada has been going through quite a rough patch, and the reason behind this can be broadly categorized

into mainly 7 challenges being faced by the countries.

The Khalistan Issue:

The Khalistan movement which demands a separate and sovereign state for the Sikhs has been a constant thorn in the Indo-Canadian relations since way back in the 1980s. The first major triggering point was the Operation Blue Star of the India Army in the year 1984 which had aimed to remove the Sikh militants taking refuge in the Golden Temple at Amritsar in Punjab, but unfortunately in the process had resulted in the killing of many innocent Sikh pilgrims and significant damage being dealt to the sacred Golden Temple of the Sikhs. This incident ignited large feelings of anger and resentment among the Sikhs who then in retaliation assassinated the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, resulting in a wave of anti-Sikh riots taking place in India which ended up killing thousands of Sikhs. Another significant event of this movement was the bombing of two Air India flights by the Sikh militants in Canada in 1985, causing the death of around 329 people. The response of the Indian government was a massive counterinsurgency campaign and thus by the 1990's the movement had largely waned, though residual support still remained among the Sikh diaspora in countries like the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada.



The Khalistan Movement was banned in India but the Sikh activists in Canada still freely advocated for a separated and sovereign state. Thus a frustrated India accused Canada of turning a blind eye towards the pro-Khalistan movements being organized in its territory and moreover refusing extradition requests of Sikh activists from India, creating a massive strain in their relations.state. Thus a frustrated India accused Canada of turning a blind eye towards the pro-Khalistan movements being organized and moreover refusing extradition requests of Sikh activists from India, creating a massive strain in their relations.

following on India updated its travel advisory to warn its citizens to exercise “extreme caution” in Canada due to the “growing anti-Indian activities and politically condoned hate crimes”. India also suspended all visa applications for Canadians stating “security threats” due to the “inaction of the Canadian authorities” on hate crimes as her reason.

Meanwhile at the UN Trudeau asked the Indian Government to cooperate with the Canadian authorities in order to “Uncover the Truth” behind the assassination. While at present any evidence Canada has on the killing is yet to be made public, Trudeau to have made the statement as he did, despite the obvious implications and backlash, implies a really significant level of confidence in the evidence that they have.

This diplomatic fallout is though very likely to spread far beyond simply a disintegration of India-Canada relations. Countries such as the UK, USA and Australia have also found themselves caught in the middle between Canada and one of their oldest allies India, which has now also come to occupy a pivotal place in their foreign policy agendas and has become the focus of multiple recent strategic partnerships as well.

The Trade Impasse:

More than 600 Canadian companies and organizations have already established a presence in India. While hundreds more are actively pursuing business opportunities there. The bilateral commercial relationships between the two countries stand at US\$ 100 billion, which includes US\$ 70 billion of Canadian portfolio investment into India.

As of September 2023, Canada was ranked as the 17th largest foreign investor in India, having made cumulative investments amounting to US\$ 3.6 billion since April 2000. During April-November 2023 Canada and India achieved a bilateral relationship that reached US\$ 5.3 billion, and US\$ 8.27 billion in FY23. The countries had consequently been keen on completing the negotiations on The India-Canada Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) and an Interim Agreement or Early Progress Trade Agreement (EPTA) that could bring early commercial gains to both the countries. Unfortunately these negotiations have all been halted currently due to the recent tensions in the Indo-Canadian relations.

Though for now, it doesn't seem like the usual business between the two countries in terms of trade have been affected much despite the adverse situation. The trade impasse has in fact prevented the two countries from tapping into their complementarities and synergies in sectors such as energy, agriculture, education, information technology and infrastructure.

Both the countries have long since shared strong economic ties and as such breaking off ties would be in neither country's interest, thus in the best



HARDEEP SINGH NIJJAR

Image Source: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/nijjar-killing-india-will-not-aid-probe-until-canada-shares-evidence-says-indian-envoy-to-ottawa/articleshow/107432555.cms>

The Nijjar Assassination Controversy:

On June 18, 2023 Hardeep Singh Nijjar, the chief of the banned Khalistan Tiger Force (KTF) and also one of India's most wanted terrorists was shot dead outside a Gurudwara in Surrey, Canada by two unidentified assailants.

This incident has caused major aggravation in the Indo-Canadian relations at present, as after precisely three months of the Nijjar assassination, the Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau described in the parliament what he claimed to be “Credible Allegations” linking the Indian government to the assassination. The Indian government immediately dismissed these allegations as “Absurd” and politically motivated, however the ramifications were instant and Canada expelled a top India diplomat who was reported to be involved in providing intelligence.

India also retaliated by expelling a Canadian Diplomat in return. Unfortunately it didn't end there and



interests of both countries hopefully this pause will only be a temporary hiccup instead of being a full stop.

Human Rights Concerns:

The human rights situation in both the countries, and their concerns and disagreements regarding it, is another dispute in the Indo-Canadian relations. Canada has been raising concern over the acts of human rights violation in India, in regards to the Kashmir Conflict, The Citizenship Amendment Bill, the Farmer's protests, all of which are particularly related to the treatment of the religious minorities.

On the other hand, India also has raised her own concerns over Canada's treatment of the Indian minorities and its records on racial discrimination and hate crimes. These human rights concerns have also thus played a part in causing further dissent and erosion of the foundational mutual understanding in the Indo-Canadian relations.

Security Dilemmas:

The countries both seem to see each other now as threats, which has limited their scope for strategic cooperation and dialogue and in turn become another challenge for the stability of the Indo-Canadian relations. Their different views and interests on security issues have also led to dilemmas on regional as well as global context.

However both nations at the same time also have very significant interests involved, thus despite the current strains in their bilateral relations it is unlikely that their military ties will be discontinued.

Diaspora Dynamics:

The Indian diaspora in Canada is one of the largest and most influential in the world being around 1.7 million people, which also amounts to about 4.9% of the Canadian population.

This Indian diaspora has contributed to Canada's economy, culture, and society, and has in turn benefited from

the Canadian government's policy of multiculturalism. However now, in the face of the recent turn of events this diaspora is currently facing distress, the retaliatory actions of both these nations have far reaching consequences which have been directly affecting the life and relationships of these common people along with their safety and well-being.

Moreover the Khalistan movement also has led to extreme divisive elements taking refuge amidst the diaspora causing further tension. To ease these worries and provide the required assurance, it is absolutely necessary for the countries to settle their issues and reach a peaceful conclusion soon.

Leadership:

The deteriorating rapport and understanding between the leaders of the countries, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, due to the differences in their personality, ideology and style have played a major part in creating the present-day strains in the bilateral relations of India and Canada. A sign of this relationship heading further south was seen during the G-20 summit held in New Delhi in September 2023, when Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, unlike the other Western leaders, did not hold formal bilateral talks with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Instead, the two leaders raised serious concerns with each other on the sidelines of the summit.

Their gap in communication has led to their failure in capitalizing the profits that could have arisen through their mutual cooperation, along with creating tensions and concerns at a global level.

The reconciliation of both the countries is hence absolutely crucial for their own best interests, after all they have very strong and complexly interconnected bilateral relations.

Letting these issues fester longer would therefore only lead to further complications and more losses for both countries, along with producing more anxieties and tensions for the citizens. Thus it is essential that they reach a peaceful conclusion through a diplomatic discussion at the earliest, and stop this long standing bilateral Indo-Canadian relations from deteriorating any further.

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“Their different views and interests on security issues have also led to dilemmas on regional as well as global context.”



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PM JUSTIN TRUDEAU AND PM NARENDRA MODI

Image Source: <https://www.outlookindia.com/national/baseless-india-rejects-canadas-allegation-of-interfering-in-its-federal-elections>

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Sachi Poddar
Class 12 Humanities

ELECTORAL BONDS IN INDIA: JUDGMENT BY THE SUPREME COURT

*[With the Supreme Court of India striking down the Electoral Bonds,
Sachi Poddar investigates the implications of the judgement]*

The recent judgment of the supreme court with regards to the electoral bonds scheme has sparked numerous debates and questions all around India and this research paper aims to answer the questions as to why the Electoral Bonds scheme is important for the country and the political parties or it is just another way to promote corruption on higher grounds, which makes “Democracy” just a legal word in the thumbed book: The Constitution of India with regard to the judgment provided by The Supreme Court of India on the same.

Electoral bonds are money instruments like promissory notes, which can be bought by companies and individuals in India from the State Bank of India (SBI) and donated to a political party which can then encash these bonds. The bonds are only redeemable in the designated account of a registered political party. Electoral Bonds were introduced in the union budget of 2017 and 2018 by our then Finance Minister Late Arun Jaitley. They were introduced because- as we all know India is known for its black money transactions and this black money was being used as an instrument by the corporations to make political donations. Some people might call this donation evil regardless of whether it is done in black or white and today if I declare that I am donating 10 lakh rupees to the Aam Aadmi Party all the BJP supporters and Congress supporters will start hating me, but the reality is that business and political funding has always worked hand in hand. So, if they are legitimate, it's good. If not, then it is bad for

India. But at the end of the day both business and politics are two interdependent pillars of the market and businesses donating money to political parties is not a new thing at all as it has been happening since 1947. There are three disadvantages to openly admitting to political donations:-

1. The reputation of the donors gets affected inversely & leads to loss in brand value.
2. It might also lead to stock dumping and the deterioration of investors' confidence.
3. Because of these consequences black money gets circulated in the form of cash for political funding. So, in the union budget of 2017-18 electoral Bonds were introduced to make sure that political parties can get funding from businesses through a legitimate digital transaction. The companies only have to declare that they have bought electoral bonds, without the need to reveal which party they donated to.

The way these bonds work is very similar to coupons or gift cards and they have 5 major attributes. Firstly, any person or company can buy these bonds. Secondly these bonds are issued in multiples of 1000, 10000, 1 lakh and 1 CR rupees. Thirdly there is no limit as to how many of these bonds can be bought. Fourthly, only those parties which have secured a minimum of 1% votes in the previous election can encash these bonds and lastly, these bonds could be bought only at authorized SBI branches with cheque



AN IMAGE OF THE SUPREME COURT OF INDIA

Image Source: <https://www.indiatoday.in/law/story/supreme-court-hear-plea-seeking-inauguration-new-parliament-building-president-draupadi-murmu-friday-2384458-2023-05-25>



or digital payment only. So one cannot buy these bonds with cash. Now if I bought a bond worth 1 CR Rupees to donate to Congress then Congress can use the bond like a coupon and redeem 1 CR rupees from the bank within 15 days and if they don't redeem it, this money, will get transferred to the PM Relief Fund and this money could be used by the Congress for their campaigns. This is how electoral bonds work.

If electoral bonds were introduced with such good will then where did the issue lie? The issue was the transparency of the data as it was publicly not available which could and had borne tons of new problems. Therefore on 15th February, 2024 The supreme court declared these bonds as **UNCONSTITUTIONAL** and demanded the SBI to submit mandatory information like **date of purchase, name of purchaser, and name of the political party** receiving the bonds, for which it was provided 21 days. SBI tried its best to delay the submission of the data and claimed that they needed 4 months for the data collection as they had no central database. The Supreme Court was not simpleton to understand that the claimed 4 months were enough for the completion of elections and for people to cast their votes without knowing this information, therefore the Supreme Court denied the plea by the SBI and strictly demanded the data.

As per a report by the **Association of Democratic Reforms** a total of 28,030 electoral bonds worth 16,518 crores were sold between 2018 and 2024 and when dug deeper into the papers that have been released by the SBI, it was understood that firstly the Bharatiya Janata party or the BJP have emerged as the top beneficiary of electoral bonds wherein they have encashed bonds worth 6,060.50 crores between April 2019 and January 2024 this amount is the highest among all political parties and BJP alone has a total share of 47.5% of the donations. Similarly, TMC secured the second spot with 1,609.50 CR rupees and Congress got 1421.9 CR rupees. So now the question over here is if these Bonds were curbing the circulation of black money and still gave a legitimate instrument to the corporate for donation then why did the



Supreme Court call them Unconstitutional. Well the Supreme Court ruled **against** this law for **three main reasons**: firstly it **went against the right to information of Indian citizens**, secondly it said that **the donor privacy should not be made as a quid pro measure** and lastly it is said that **unlimited corporate donations violate free and fair elections and hence it hinders the very thread of our democracy**.

The first reason is pretty straightforward where the court said that the Electoral bonds went against the right to information of Indian citizens; in short if an important piece of information like a large scale donation to a political party is kept away from the citizens it is against the right to Information Act

The second reason - Quid pro quo is a Latin phrase - which means something for something. In this case the theory is that electoral bonds could be used to get unfair favors. For example, if- X company gets raided by the Enforcement Directorate for money laundering then the theory says that the political party in power could blackmail X to make it donate the 10 CR rupees using the Electoral Bond. In exchange for this donation they will let X go. So, in this way a political party could use extortion to get funding from businesses. This is the reason why in Twitter one must have seen a lot of people make connections between the ED raids and the donations made by these companies.

The third reason is that unlimited corporate donations violate free and fair elections; Before 2017 the companies could contribute 7.5% of their average net profit over the past 3 years. But after electoral bonds, since companies could donate unlimited amounts of money with anonymity it opened up the possibility of shell companies which could be used only to rotate funds. So it is said that these electoral bonds could be used to channel undocumented black money into the political and electoral process of India. Now the counter-argument to this is that if the government bans anonymity, then companies can still give cash-right? And they can still fund political parties and still ask for favors-right?

Unfortunately, our system is not foolproof enough to prevent cash entirely. It's just that with electoral bonds it just becomes a little easier to donate large amounts of money in exchange for favors. Thirdly, electoral bonds make it easier for foreign companies to spend money in Indian elections and influence our elections and again, back when cash was used it became difficult to transfer large amounts of money but through electoral bonds it was possible to transfer a lot of money and then influence the elections, so if this information is kept away from the public then there is a very high possibility that a rich country might just pour in billions of dollars and influence the elections in India and this is considered to be a threat



**“...THE
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to our democracy and again while this influence is still possible through a complex mechanism it's just a bit more

difficult and lastly critics also point out that big parties and big corporations together can dominate Indian Politics as opposed to small parties and small businessmen so in a way it is evidently favoring bigger powers over smaller ones.

The Top-20 donors included all companies and together they donated around 6000 CR rupees which means 20 donors gave half of all the money. The biggest donor was **Future Gaming and Hotel Services Pvt. Ltd.**, headed by Santiago Martin who donated around **1300 CR rupees**. The second biggest donor on the list was **Megha Engineering and Infrastructures Ltd.** an unlisted company based in Hyderabad and this company donated **966 CR rupees**. The third biggest donor was a company named **Qwik Supply Chain** which donated around **410 CR rupees**. The highlight here also is that none of these above mentioned companies are listed on the stock market. Vedanta Group donated around 400 CR rupees, **The Bharti Group (owner of Airtel)** donated around **224 CR rupees**, **Keventer** a food company based in Kolkata donated using **3 different subsidiaries** and the total was a whopping **670 CR rupees**.

Additional corporate purchasers included **Spicejet, Indigo, Apollo Tyres, PVR, Jindal Group, CEAT Tyres, ITC, Ultratech Cement**, and so on and so forth. An apparent trend in the donations was seen that many of these companies were being pursued by the central agencies like the CBI and the Enforcement Directorate like the Lottery King AKA the company headed by Santiago Martin. The opposition on these donations says that the companies were pressured to donate, sort of like extortion. They also said that donations were used as kickbacks, like mining companies got permits after donating, infra companies got contracts after donating, hence calling it “one donation, one party” but the

ruling BJP has rejected all such charges.

Therefore, though electoral bonds in India were introduced for the greater good, they have constantly and statistically been proven a **threat to THE DEMOCRACY OF INDIA** and this is possibly the reason for the judgment of the Supreme Court on the same.

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Shuhail Ali Ahmed
Class 12 Humanities



Saudi Arabia and Israel: CAN THEY MEND THEIR FENCES?

*[The long standing distrust between Saudi Arabia and Israel has left the world nervous.
Shuhail Ali Ahmed analyzes the possibility of peace and cooperation between these two states]*



**A MAP SHOWING THE
LOCATION OF ISRAEL
(GREEN) AND SAUDI
ARABIA (ORANGE)**

Image Source: <https://www.globalguardian.com/newsroom/risk-map-iran>

“Peace and normalization between Saudi Arabia and Israel will be a monumental change in the Middle East,” said Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. On one side, we have the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, better known as the jewel of the Middle East, being the largest exporter of oil with a revolutionary leader (bin-Salman) who has the vision of diversifying its economy. On the other hand, we have a country that is smaller than the US state of Massachusetts, Israel, which is six years younger than Joe Biden but still carries a lot of weight and is momentous in world geopolitics. Israel is the only Jewish country with its capital in Jerusalem, which is not only religious to Jews but also to Muslims and Christians. Over the years, the country has advanced its economy in tech-start-ups and military and defense equipment.

Both countries have a lot to gain from the normalization of each other's foreign policies. Israel needs Saudi



Arabia's recognition not only to tackle proxy wars with Iran and Houthis in Yemen but also because Saudi Arabia is the epicenter of the Muslim world, as it consists of two highly religious places of Islam, 'Mecca' and 'Medina'. A good relationship with Riyadh will help Netanyahu gain more support from Muslim majority countries. With anything going on in the Middle East, the USA has to be the middleman. The USA, under the Trump administration in 2020, has already established a peace agreement between Bahrain, Morocco, the United Arab Emirates, and Israel with the Abraham Accords, 'Abraham' so named after the Jewish, Christian, and Islamic roots of Prophet Abraham. But this agreement is more than prophetic. It's about profit. This agreement will help both sides in trade, military, and investments. The same peace talks were expected between Saudi Arabia and Israel because, as much as Israel needs Saudi Arabia's support, so too does Saudi Arabia need Israel's. Israel has become the global hub of tech start-ups, and what better place to invest for the Saudi

Prince, who has the aim of diversifying its economy in tech and tourism? Israel is also capable of providing military help to Saudi Arabia, which it seeks. It is also speculated that once the normalisation is established the US will provide access to distinct weapons and uranium enrichment facilities in Saudi Arabia. But more importantly, as the saying as old as time goes, “enemy’s, enemy is a friend” has a significant relation with this. From a broader geopolitical perspective, Iran, which desires to be the next leader of the Muslim world, is not only a threat to Israel but also to Saudi Arabia and USA. Iran has been accused of illegally funding the heinous acts of Hamas. And these three countries, coming together with their joint efforts, can face Iran’s nasty tactics.

Everything was looking good. The world was finally expecting some peace in the Middle East with the normalization of policies between Riyadh and Jerusalem until October 7th, 2023, the day Hamas attacked Israel by launching rockets into southern Israel land. And as expected, Jerusalem retaliated with an iron fist, openly declaring war against Hamas in international media, and launching the operation “Iron Sword.” Israel has attacked Gaza, which has led to the killing of thousands of innocents. This has led to the halt of peace talks. Hamas is a militant group that recognizes itself as the representative of the Palestinian people and demands Palestine to be a separate state. Saudi

nations, as this will lead to greater presence of the US in the Middle East as both its allies will be coming together. Hamas expected the destructive retaliation from Israel, as it would lead to the deaths of innocents in Gaza, which would ultimately result in Saudi Arabia going against Israel. Both Saudi Arabia and Palestine are Islamic countries. For obvious reasons, the people of Saudi Arabia have been providing their support to the people in Gaza. But we cannot say the same for the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia. Dennis Ross, a former member of the US Middle East Peace Team, has said that every official from the region of the kingdom he has spoken to is hoping that Israel will end Hamas reign. And what the kingdom is saying in international media is all PR. He has indirectly accused the prince of supporting Israel’s act.

Saudi Arabia has nothing to gain from Palestine except the fact that both nations are Islamic states. But what Israel offers cannot be undermined. It is clear that no one wants Hamas to be active in Gaza. It’s only a matter of time before Israel will defeat Hamas and the fences between Israel and Saudi Arabia will be mended. Both countries have a lot to gain by recognizing each other and neither of the countries can afford to back out. Israel will not only receive billions of dollars in investment and petroleum from Saudi Arabia but will also be recognized as a state by Muslim countries. Saudi Arabia, in return, will be provided military and technological assistance and is also said to be granted nuclear development programs, which will help it not only to generate energy but also safeguard itself from Iran. With key elections in line this year, which will be held in the US, India, UK and Russia as well as the UNSC elections and the European Union parliamentary election, it will be interesting to see how these countries and organizations deal with this matter of affairs.

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MOHAMMED BIN SALMAN AL SAUD, AKA, MBS

Image Source: <https://images.app.goo.gl/gHiaaFuGqeEikVaD6>

Arabia and the US have suggested a ceasefire and two-state recognition to Israel. Saudi Arabia has always called for two separate states on the border, based on June 4, 1967, and this demand has only toughened after October 7th. But Netanyahu has rejected calls for Palestinian sovereignty.

It is also clear that the Hamas attack was intentional and planned to halt the peace talks between the two





Anushka Jitani
Class 12 Science

ON THE CUSP OF CATASTROPHE COMPREHENDING THE CAA CONTROVERSY

[The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the emerging narratives are examined in depth by Anushka Jitani]

In the lead-up to the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, the political climate in India has once again become charged with the flavour of communalism. As the contentious Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) of 2019 has found itself back into the mainstream national discourse, the GoI has recently notified its rules on 11th March, and to add fuel to the fire, Home Minister Amit Shah has made a resolute public proclamation, “CAA will never be repealed.” Opposition claims that the CAA reeks of a right-wing majoritarian ideology, however, whatever the truth may be, it is undoubtedly bound to leave an indelible imprint on India’s polity for decades to come and shape our secular and cultural ethos. However, is the BJP inadvertently diddling with the idea of the Republic as we know it, or is this act much more than what it confesses to be, foreshadowing the beginning of the end of the Republic ‘as we know it’? Could India’s social fabric endure yet another assault as it barely holds on by a thread after 10 years of an RSS-BJP government? Such questions shall be investigated in this article.

It is hard to recall any legislation in the recent past that has ignited and aroused such impassioned debates and protests as the Citizenship Amendment Act of 2019 has managed to do. The CAA, and how India ultimately receives it, would be a defining moment in India’s history: will we come out stronger as a nation, united in the face of assaults on our cohesive peaceful co-existence, with a reaffirmed belief in the ancient principle of ‘Sarva dharma sama bhava’; or come out more fractured, embittered and weak as a nation. Regardless of the outcome, CAA would have an impact that would reverberate through the annals of history: it propels one to step back and rethink the kind of impact such a divisive piece of legislation could have on the course of India’s democracy. Could this

potentially signal the end of India’s tryst with secularism? But before moving any further, let us decipher the question- what is the Citizenship Amendment Act of 2019?

In brief, the Citizenship Amendment Act proposes to amend the Citizenship Act of 1955, which lays down the legal framework for acquiring Indian citizenship. The CAA introduces provisions to grant expedited citizenship to persecuted religious minorities from Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan who entered India on or before December 31, 2014. It offers an expedited pathway to citizenship by relaxing the residency requirement from the original 11 year-period, to a mere five year-period. This legislation, passed in December 2019, ostensibly aims to provide an expedited path to citizenship for ‘religiously’ persecuted minorities from these neighbouring countries. The bone of contention in this act is the fact that it chiefly leaves out one community— the Muslims and fails to address the status of atheists, agnostics and other religious minorities. Critics argue that if only one were to delve beneath the surface, one would come to the horrid realisation that this legislation specifically discriminates against one community: is fundamentally unconstitutional and is a devious attempt to strip millions of Indian Muslims of their citizenship when combined with the NRC. Yet in this comprehensive exploration, I endeavour to move beyond the ordinary arguments deployed by both sides and critically analyse the intricacies of the CAA, examining its historical context, constitutionality, societal repercussions, and the polarised perspectives that have shaped the discourse surrounding it.





HOME MINISTER AMIT SHAH

Image Source: <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/elections/lok-sabha/india/ amit-shah-slams-congress-leader-chidambarams-anti-caa-stance-vows-to-uphold-law/articleshow/109508664.cms?from=mdr>

WHAT IS THE NEED FOR CAA?

The Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019 finds its roots in the partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947, as the hasty and ignorant pen of Radcliffe descended upon the map of undivided India— it cut across districts, villages, communities and families, successfully causing the largest forced human migration in recorded history, involving well over 10 million Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs who were being forced to relocate to their side of the border. Unfortunately, not all could undertake this perilous journey and some were forced to make do with their fate of being a religious minority. Amidst the communal violence and mass migrations that accompanied partition, religious minorities often found themselves marginalised and persecuted in their newly formed homelands.

Fast forward to the present day, and the plight of religious minorities in neighbouring countries remains a pressing human rights issue. Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis, and Christians in Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan continue to face pervasive discrimination, persecution, and even violence on account of their religious beliefs. The ruling dispensation argues that it is within this historical and geopolitical context that the Citizenship Amendment Act emerged as a response to the plight of these persecuted communities. Thus, Home Minister Amit Shah advanced the proposition that the CAA

was brought in on humane grounds and is in furtherance of India's 'moral responsibility' towards minorities undergoing persecution in neighbouring countries.

IS THIS CONSTITUTIONAL?

Although the Union government has termed it as a "benign piece of legislation" in the Supreme Court, one of the chief arguments against the CAA is its alleged violation of Article 14 of the Indian Constitution, which guarantees equality before the law (even to non-citizens) and prohibits discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth. Critics contend that by granting preferential treatment to certain religious groups while excluding others, the CAA violates the principle of equality and specifically discriminates against the largest minority bloc in the country—the Muslims.

Moreover, the Constitution confers citizenship by way of birth, descent and migration, irrespective of religion. The provisions are codified in Articles 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10. These Articles are a representation of the secular nature — a basic feature — of the Constitution. The Citizenship Act (1955) was enacted by Parliament to regulate the grant and termination of citizenship. The 1955 Act also does not make religion a criterion for the grant of citizenship. With the amendment and Rules, citizenship will be granted by naturalisation based on religion alone.

Certain experts have also contended the rationale behind granting citizenship solely on the grounds of 'religious' persecution; as communities could be subjected to linguistic persecution, as is the case of Sri Lankan Tamils; or on the grounds of ethnicity, as is the case with the Rohingyas in Myanmar. If India had been a signatory of the UN Refugee Convention of 1951 OR its 1967 Additional Protocol, it would have been legally obliged to take in these refugees on the aforementioned grounds.

The Supreme Court of India has taken cognizance of the petitions filed against the CAA and has conducted hearings to examine its constitutionality. Although the outcome of these legal proceedings remains uncertain, Indians would intently look towards the Supreme Court to realise its role as the 'final guardian' of the Constitution.

WHAT DOES INDIA THINK?

Beyond its legal dimensions, the Citizenship Amendment Act has had profound ramifications on India's social fabric, moulding narratives of identity, belonging, and citizenship in the public consciousness, inadvertently so it had galvanised various segments of society, sparking widespread protests across religions, gender, age and regions and prompted grassroots activism across the country in 2019.



The sheer extent and intensity of nationwide protests forced a haughty BJP to back down albeit temporarily from going ahead with a nationwide CAA and NRC in 2019, thus reposing faith in the power of the people and shattering BJP's ill-founded notions of having an uncannily accurate sense of the 'mood' of the country and belief in its power to unilaterally shape and form narratives on the back of its propaganda machine.

Propelling such independent and widespread protests is the deep-seated concern about the erosion of India's secular ethos and the marginalisation of religious minorities amongst Indians. CAA is widely regarded as part of a broader agenda to redefine Indian citizenship along religious lines, excluding Muslims and perpetuating a vision of Hindu majoritarianism, an extension of the right-wing RSS ideology.

On the other hand, proponents of the CAA argue that it is a humanitarian gesture aimed at providing refuge to persecuted minorities fleeing religious persecution in neighbouring countries. They contend that the legislation is not about excluding Muslims but rather extending a helping hand to those in need of protection and sanctuary, thus painting it as an inclusionary device rather than an exclusionary weapon as painted by the critics.

However, the narrative of the CAA as a humanitarian measure is taken with a pinch of salt by its critics, who point to its selective focus on specific religious communities as evidence of its discriminatory intent; they contend that if the CAA were truly motivated by humanitarian concerns, it would not exclude persecuted Muslims from its ambit, thereby reinforcing perceptions of religious bias and discrimination. It

is a well-known fact that despite being Muslims, Ahmaddiyas in Pakistan are treated as second-class citizens, if the ruling dispensation genuinely had a humanitarian outlook whilst drafting the CAA, perhaps provisions would have been put in place to accommodate such communities.

However, it seems that the BJP has come better prepared to the table this time around, having picked an opportune moment such as the Lok Sabha elections is symptomatic of a well-thought-out strategy as racking up the CAA issue would divert attention from the allegations of electoral bond scam and serve as a perfect wedge to further polarise the electorate, allowing it to effectively pander to its increasingly extremist-Hindu voter base thus effectively shooting two birds with a single stone, ensuring victory in the Lok Sabha elections and smoothly getting CAA across.

WHAT DOES THE WORLD THINK?

The Citizenship Amendment Act has not only sparked domestic controversy but has also drawn attention from the international community, eliciting reactions ranging from concern to condemnation. Human rights organisations, foreign governments, and international bodies have expressed apprehensions about the discriminatory nature of the CAA and its potential impact on religious minorities in India.

The fallout from the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) holds profound implications for India, particularly as it hopes to position itself as a democratic alternative to China and leverage its soft power as a pluralistic and ancient civilization to cultivate deep ties

across the globe, rooted in mutual respect, trust, and shared values, are integral to its vision of becoming the preeminent leader of the 'Global South' and securing a permanent seat at the Security Council in the longer-run. India's use of platforms such as the G20 to project itself as the bridge connecting the West and the world reflects its growing ambitions as a rising power that aims to cement its status among the great powers of the world. However, recent events, such as the Hardeep-Singh Nijjar spat with Canada, have

.....
**“...the
Citizenship
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cast doubts on India's credibility as a reliable ally and leader. Furthermore, the CAA has the potential to strain India's relations with Muslim-majority countries on the international stage, which could lead to repercussions for India's long-term strategic interests: such as the loss of key allies like the UAE and Saudi Arabia which could severely undermine its aspirations to emerge as a global actor. Such a consequence could be the straw that breaks the camel's



back and would undo the years of work that have gone into isolating Pakistan on the world stage and could deal irrevocable damage to India's strategic interests in the long term.

The Union government must be prudent and sighted enough to strike a balance between short-term political decisions and India's international standing. As the country navigates the complexities of its identity and political landscape, it must carefully consider the broader ramifications of its actions on the world stage. Maintaining its reputation as a pluralistic and inclusive democracy will be crucial for India's ability to effectively wield its influence and shape global narratives in the years to come. Much harm has already been dealt to that carefully cultivated image since Modi has come into power, more damage is certainly not desirable or warranted.

Several countries and International bodies, including the United States, the European Union, and the UN, have raised concerns about the CAA's compatibility with international human rights standards and its implications for religious freedom and minority rights in India. They have called on the Indian government to uphold its commitments to pluralism, secularism, and democratic principles enshrined in its constitution. In response to international criticism, External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar fiercely defended India's stance and called out International actors for being oblivious to the partition of India and why the CAA is necessary to deal with the consequences of it. Although India has found a rare firebrand Foreign Minister in Mr Jaishankar, India can't be seen throwing around its weight more often than necessary, especially against partners as important as the US.

The international discourse surrounding the Citizenship Amendment Act highlights the interconnectedness of human rights, democracy, and global solidarity in an increasingly interconnected world. It underscores the importance of upholding universal principles of equality, non-discrimination, and freedom of religion in safeguarding the rights and dignity of all individuals, regardless of their faith or background.

CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, the Citizenship Amendment Act is a complex and multi-faceted issue that affects several stakeholders and could potentially do more harm than good. The only viable path forward would be for the government to engage with the relevant stakeholders in a spirit of deliberation and cooperation to ensure an equitable, just and acceptable compromise.

As students and future leaders, it is our sole duty to engage with issues such as the Citizenship Amendment Act critically, compassionately, and comprehensively. We must endeavour to uphold the values of justice, equality, and pluralism that are central to the Indian Constitution and strive to build a society that is inclusive, tolerant, and respectful of the rights and dignity of all its citizens, irrespective of their identities, as envisioned by the Indian constitution; an idea that is constantly under threat by anti-democratic forces that have repeatedly undermined the Constitution and its ethos, an idea that faces the looming threat of a fascist ideology that seeks to uniform but not unite.

As the discourse on citizenship, identity, and democracy continues to evolve, India stands at a crossroads, faced with the challenge of reconciling its diverse fabric with the ideals of democracy and secularism; a challenge that India is bound to win sooner or later if we come together as one against the forces of totalitarianism. It is through introspection, dialogue, and collective action that we can fully realise the principles enshrined in its Constitution to emerge stronger from it and stand as a shining beacon of light for the world to look up to and emulate.

Jai Hind, Jai Bharat.

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Threat of the Red Sea Pirates and Preparedness of the Indian Navy

[The rise of the pirates in the Red Sea poses a new challenge to maritime security, Aira analyzes the causes]

The Red Sea, a long narrow sea between Arabia and NE Africa, linked with the Mediterranean in the north by the Suez Canal and with the Indian Ocean in the south has become a threatening zone for commercial shipping. Since November last year, Iran's ally Houthi rebels in Yemen have launched over 40 attacks on commercial vessels using drones, missiles, and daring tactics like helicopters and boats. These attacks, supposedly in support of Palestinians, have targeted ships with little to no connection to Israel. The southern Red Sea, especially along the Yemeni coast near the Bab al-Mandab Strait, has become a target for these attempted strikes. In fear for their cargo and crews, a growing number of companies are opting for the much longer and more expensive route around Africa's Cape of Hope, bypassing the Red Sea altogether. While India's concerns in the conflict are rising from the economic reality that approximately \$240 billion of the country's economy depends on the route of the Red Sea, any disruption, disturbance or instability in the Red Sea could lead to increased shipping costs, delays and potential damage to cargo. Therefore, having a negative impact on India's economy. Major shipping companies like CMA CGM, MSC, Maersk, Hapag Lloyd, and others have all diverted their routes, and data suggests that nearly all previous Red Sea traffic has been rerouted. For those still passing by the Red Sea, additional security measures like Best Management Practices

(BMP) 5 are being implemented to prevent attacks.

A significant number of Indian citizens, estimated to be around 10% of the global maritime workforce, are employed on ships that travel the oceans all around the world. This makes them particularly vulnerable to any rising violence or piracy that may occur in the Red Sea. As experts have predicted, the number of Indian seafarers is expected to grow to 20% in the next decade, ensuring the safety of these individuals becomes an even greater concern for the Indian government.

With high concerns for Indian nationals, The COVID-19 pandemic displayed how important Indian seafarers are to keep world trade moving by ship. At first, some shipping companies didn't want to hire Indian seafarers because of worries about COVID-19 in India. Even though a big organization like the International Maritime Organization said all seafarers were equally important, the Indian government took action to make sure its seafarers were looked after in particular. By taking an active interest in resolving the conflict and promoting maritime security in the Red Sea, India is working to protect its economic interests and safeguard the well-being of its citizens working at sea. India faces problems with the IT sector's lack of awareness about seafaring careers, limited onboard training opportunities restrict the pipeline of qualified officers. Even conservative, traditional mindsets and a lack of



supportive infrastructure discourage women from joining the workforce. However, highlighting job and career benefits, fostering industry-academia collaboration to expand practical training, and promoting gender equality through mentorship programs can propel India's merchant navy forward. By overcoming these challenges, India could become a world leader in seafaring, supplying one-fifth of the global workforce. However, the situation has grown even more complex with the resurgence of Somali piracy in the Horn of Africa which is likely due to a combination of economic desperation and the perceived weakness of maritime security checks and measures.

This adds another layer of threat to vessels already facing the Houthi menace. Increased attacks raise insurance costs for shipping companies, ultimately leading to higher prices for consumers. Additionally, disruptions to vital trade routes can create shortages of essential goods. The potential for hostage situations and violence against crew members further adds to the human cost of piracy. International forces, including the Indian Navy, Coast Guard, the EU's Operation Atalanta, and national counter-piracy missions, are actively patrolling the region to prevent Somali piracy. With 20 years of experience in anti-piracy operations, competence, and commitment, the Indian Navy has taken responsibility to step in to endow with security for merchant shipping.

Indian forces have displayed success in this fight, with "four boarding incidents" against pirate groups resulting in successful interventions, according to a statement. Instead of combating the Houthis in the Red Sea, the Indian Navy has primarily chosen to tackle increased piracy in the Gulf of Aden and the Arabian Sea to monitor 1.5 million square miles of commercial shipping in the Arabian Sea. India has responded to 18 incidents, deploying 21 ships and 5,000 personnel in rotation, boarding and investigating over 1,000 vessels. The Indian Navy on March 16 forced 35 Somali pirates to surrender and rescued 17 crew members held hostage on the hijacked ship.

The Indian Navy impressed many with a recent operation in the Arabian Sea. They dropped inflatable boats and special forces soldiers far from shore using a giant air force plane. This complex operation involved many different military resources working together and was praised by experts for minimizing risk. John Bradford of the Council on Foreign Relations commended this operation and said: "Risk was minimized by using a coordinated force that includes the use of a warship, drones, fixed- and rotary-wing aircraft, and marine commandos."

The United States is also stepping up its support for regional security. On February 1, the Biden Administration approved a nearly \$4 billion sale of drones and military

equipment to India, specifically for the purpose of increasing its maritime safety and surveillance capabilities. This includes advanced drones, missiles, and other support equipment. In the Red Sea itself, the U.S. Navy is working alongside allies to strengthen defenses against Houthi attacks, which continue despite multiple U.S. airstrikes against Houthi targets.

The Houthis' most recent attacks targeted a commercial container vessel and a U.S. owned bulker carrying U.S. cargo. These attacks are part of a larger pattern of Houthi aggression in the Red Sea, an important trade corridor linking Africa and Asia through the Suez Canal. The ongoing instability threatens to significantly disrupt global trade



AN IMAGE OF THE HOUTHIS

Image Source: <https://images.app.goo.gl/f93FtJXbD2PGSNLq8>

and highlights the urgent need for increased international cooperation to ensure the safety of vital shipping lanes.

The Red Sea is a vital artery for global trade, and its current state of insecurity poses a significant threat to the world's economic well-being. While military responses are necessary to deter attacks, a multi-pronged approach is crucial for long-term stability. Only through international cooperation, diplomatic solutions, and addressing the root causes of regional instability can the Red Sea return to being a safe and secure passage for global trade.

India's Navy is getting impressive and illustrative to undertake the challenges of conflicts at the sea. They have ships strategically placed to guard the oceans (global commons), airplanes that constantly check on things



at sea, and special marine commandos who can quickly respond to problems. This shows everyone that India is becoming a key player in keeping the oceans safe for everyone.

It's also described to be a message to China that India has a strong navy and that India will not sit idle as the Chinese navy expands its global role and presence. It can help maintain a balance of power in the Indian Ocean, which is important for both countries. Particularly as China faces allegations of inaction in the wake of the Houthi and Somalian pirate attacks, India's show of force telegraphs clear modern skills and capabilities.

Seeing India's strong Navy makes other countries in the region feel more secure. This builds India's influence and makes them a more important player overall. By being so active in protecting the oceans, India is basically acting like a big security guard for the region. Missions like Operation Sankalp are crucial stepping stones for India as it helps them gradually in the becoming of a major world power and not just a regional one.

Stopping pirates gives Indian Navy personnel valuable experience in real-life situations. This experience tests their ability to operate effectively for extended periods away from their territorial waters. But perhaps even more significant than the immediate success of these deployments is the image created of India. These missions help build a reputation for India as a country that contributes significantly to global security by keeping the oceans safe. Additionally, they showcase India's growing strength and capabilities as a player in the maritime world.

The resurgence of piracy in the Red Sea is a complex challenge, demanding a global response that goes beyond simply just patrolling the territorial waters. By forging a united front, resorting to a comprehensive strategy that hinges both the symptoms and underlying causes, and investing in long-term solutions, the international community can ensure the safety and security of this vital

trade route. The future of global commerce, and the safety of the brave men and women who navigate these waters, rests on our collective ability to find a lasting solution.

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Pratiti Barua

Class 12 Humanities



ISRAEL AND THE IRON DOME: DEFENCE ANALYSIS

[The world's most secured defence system and how it could repulse a series of threatening attacks is what Pratiti seeks to zoom in.]

In the turbulent landscape of the Middle East, where conflicts often erupt with little warning, Israel stands out as a nation constantly challenged by security threats, particularly from short-range rockets and artillery shells. To counter these dangers, Israel has developed and deployed one of the most sophisticated defence systems in the world - the Iron Dome.

The Iron Dome serves as a stalwart shield, designed to intercept and neutralize incoming threats from distances ranging from 4 to 70 kilometres. Developed by Israeli defence companies Rafael Advanced Defence Systems and Israel Aerospace Industries, this ground-breaking system has revolutionized modern warfare tactics.

The development of the Iron Dome can be traced back to the early 2000s when Israel faced a growing threat from rockets fired by militant groups such as Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon. These rockets posed a significant danger to civilian populations, as demonstrated during the 2006 Lebanon War and subsequent conflicts. Recognizing the need for a robust defence system, Israel embarked on a mission to create a multi-layered missile defence architecture. The Iron Dome was designed to intercept and destroy incoming rockets with a high degree of accuracy, thus mitigating the impact of such attacks on Israeli communities.

At the core of the Iron Dome system are advanced



AN IMAGE OF THE IRON DOME MISSILE

Image Source: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-20385306>

radar sensors that detect incoming threats, such as rockets and artillery shells, in real time. The radar tracks the trajectory of each projectile and determines whether it poses a risk to populated areas. If a threat is identified, the system calculates the optimal interception path and launches a Tamir interceptor missile to neutralize the incoming projectile before it reaches its target. The Tamir missile is equipped with sophisticated



guidance systems and manoeuvring capabilities, allowing it to adjust its trajectory mid-flight to ensure a precise interception. This level of precision is crucial in densely populated areas where collateral damage must be minimized.

Since its deployment, the Iron Dome has proven to be highly effective in countering rocket threats. During conflicts such as Operation Protective Edge in 2014 and the recent clashes with Hamas, the system intercepted and destroyed a significant percentage of rockets aimed at Israeli cities and towns. This success rate has saved countless lives and prevented extensive damage to infrastructure. Moreover, the Iron Dome's effectiveness has strengthened Israel's deterrence capabilities, sending a clear message to adversaries that rocket attacks will not go unanswered and that the Israeli population is well-protected.

Israel's Iron Dome defence system represents a paradigm shift in modern warfare, showcasing the power of technological innovation in safeguarding civilian populations. Beyond its tangible defensive capabilities, the Iron Dome serves as a powerful tool of strategic deterrence. Its very presence sends a clear message to adversaries that launching rocket attacks against Israel carries a high risk of interception and retaliation. This deterrence factor contributes to regional stability and serves as a deterrent against potential aggressors.

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BENJAMIN NETANYAHU, PM OF ISRAEL

Image Source: <https://www.telegraphindia.com/opinion/isolated-editorial-on-the-growing-global-isolation-of-benjamin-netanyahus-government/cid/2018767>

