

India And South East Asia: Continuty And Changes In A Globalised World

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ABSTRACT

The paper basically aims to critically examine and analyze the relationship that dwells between India and the South East Asian nations in the globalized inter connected world. The paper specifically tries to cater to look into the matter with respect to the inception of the process of globalization and how that has evolved with the process of time there by leading to a complete metamorphosis of South East Asian region as a whole. The traditional aspects, concerns of economic nationalism, the region emerging as a powerful geopolitical entity, issues of cultural homogeneity are the points of focus, however major emphasis has also seen laid to study the evolution of the individual as a potent agent in the process of globalization studies since it tries to look beyond the institutional approach so that the same can be looked from a new angle.

Introduction

The world is a unique place and it is so due to the fact that the dwellers are unique in the first place hence the interactions between the groups and institutions formed by them are also unique. Nation state is a human construct and it has solved its purpose for the right people at the right time. However, it must be remembered that while that construct was a boon for the people, it is also evident that the same institutions were effectively used to systematically overpower the ones who were beyond this construct of man. Modern capitalist system and globalization are but an outcome of these very socio-economic constructs and thus it led to a new integrated way of life that integrates by dissociating. Studying the process of globalization as an agent of change and the harbinger of historical realization is very interesting. The following has been specifically carried out to cater to the context of India and South East Asia (i.e.

Philippines, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Timor, Brunei, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand and Myanmar)

The South East Asian nations are a major trade bloc in the world (ASEAN) and its relationship with India has been very warm and essential for the economics of India and the member nations of South East Asia. Globalization has further made this exchange more vital than ever before since the consumer producer relationship completes the cycle.

The world economy is an interlinked circuit and every node is important in its own way, hence interdependence is a hard reality despite the continual strife for self sufficiency. India and South East Asia have been related since the very ancient times when Europe was uncivilized. Trade and cultural ties led to the exchange of language, cuisine, religion, traditions and lifestyle. The continuity and change ascribes to the traditional heritage of the Indian and South East Asian nations as a moderator or a catalyst in the equation of globalization that partly gave way to a new mode of life that is somehow influenced or shaped by the shared past of the great people.

Another question posed in the study enquires to the fact that how far is the process of globalization instrumental in controlling or rather overpowering the nationalist forces of consolidation while also looking at globalization as a rejuvenating force for conservative economic nationalism.

The world is an arena of conflict and that affects all in some way or the other. The Indian and South East Asian interests have been affected due to the trade wars and it can be negative or a positive trend subject to realization of the situation.

The central argument however seeks to delve deeper into the process of globalization itself and studying the agent attributing to the same. Institutions have been the only active agents in the global phenomenon but the role of

individuals as the newest dynamic force needs to be understood and conceptualized.

Globalization as a process has been a mould to shape the world as it exists today. It not only shaped the world as it stands but on the other hand it has revolutionized the way, the people, societies & states conceive the same.

India and South East Asia are no different and they've also had their fair share of participation in the global process which in turn has shaped rather transformed their respective societies of people.

Globalization as a process has ushered in a new realm of progress and development which has in turn led to a complete metamorphosis in the lives of the people and hence their worldview has also changed. Globalization brings in new people, thoughts, ideas, machinery and money.

The case of India and South East Asia is very unique since they have had a shared past and the two have had political, social, cultural and religious arrangements since ancient times. South East Asian nations have had a profound exposure to the Indian way of life and they have had bilateral and cultural relations before the pre-colonial past (European colonialism) since the entire South East Asian region was but a domain of the Chola dynasty.

This puts the two at par in many ways since they resemble in religion, culture, heritage, tradition, cuisine and history. Hence the process of globalization or this so called globality has affected each of the constituent nations in one way or the other and hence it has definitely had an effect on the way these countries engage with each other.

However, we must also contend with the reality that states have been the dominant players in international relations and their shadow always looms in the background of the so called globalized world but we must also realize the facts and issues. The post liberalization era completely changed the entire

system and the states went for a greater share of autonomy to the private sector and foreign investors. This changed the system completely since earlier the brunt of nationalization rendered the public sector in tattered financial conditions which also led to blatant corruption which became a huge problem for the nation states.

The solution to these economic woes and poverty came in the form of liberalization of economy thence opening up new vistas of development for these countries and hence they were a part of the global machine of capitalism.

The major process that runs parallel to the coming globalization is that the host countries which were earlier traditionally inclined and agrarian based, village community driven were transformed into modern out looked, industrialized manufacturing hubs, market oriented, metro driven urban centres. This was the single largest transformation that came about as a result of the induced globality.

India and South East Asia have been at the receiving end of the globalized world and have therefore integrated itself with the system but the rate of success in differential for each member state in the context that it is further influenced by demography, human capital, labor laws, type of regime, popular perception, foreign capital and lastly the initiation of the policy of liberalization.

A simple cause for India that it lagged behind its neighbouring countries in some parameters of growth and infrastructures development being that initially it missed the bus in the 70s and 80s, when the countries such as China opened up their economies to the world, which cost India very dearly in terms of building up capacity to compete with other markets.

The demography, immature political realization, agrarian majority and a corrupt bureaucracy were some other reasons that India had some difficulties in ascribing to the global setup. The democratic ideals that persist in the Indian

existence, is one other factors that can be attributed to the delay in the implementation of the same, cause of the fact that achieving consensus in such a great, diversified and vast country is a challenge in itself since dissent and debate is the basic characteristic of a rich democracy but eventually it came out in due time.

The case for some of South East nations like Malaysia and Singapore has been quite different due to the fact that the demography has been highly favourable for the same. Countries such as Vietnam, Thailand, Laos, Brunei have all metamorphosed from agrarian economies to export driven modern states however, there are some factors which still dominate the society and rather keeps it in a traditional shade.

Globalization has brought about a new and a promising way of life for the people but the ground reality is that the traditions and beliefs of the society are still paramount. Culture adds a new layer to the entire process, since the concept of atheism is entirely inimical to the people at large since the region as a whole has strong tribal & religious beliefs.

The West radically changed itself due to the fact that it dissociated itself from the church and instead it went for the scientific pursuit of materialism, while in the culturally rich East, one can not overlook the distant past since it defines the existence of the people.

The traditions and the cultural identity is what joins the South East Asian nations and the Indian subcontinent. The Indians used to procure medicinal herbs and spices from the “spice islands” as it was known in the other day. Traders left the people of South East Asia in great exposure to the religion, culture & cuisine of India which definitely led to great ties and the people connected with each other through their cultural exchange.

However, the present time bears witness to the past and the South East nations and India share a warm relationship due to their shared cultural past but on the other hand they also saturate their markets in the globalized world. India and South East Asia have huge resources but the demography favors the Indian side since it constitutes such a huge market which gives further impetus to the South East Asian countries.

Globalization means connectivity. It is a web of interrelated markets compensating the demand supply equation thereby making huge gains for the capitalist system and thereby profiteering the large chunk of people who consume and buy the produce of the system.

The onset of globalization led to the rise of huge Multi National Corporations (MNCs) who have huge resources and capital at their disposal. These very organisations have a global presence which further relates the consumer peoples of different nations.

Another factor that the MNCs bring out is that they have been instrumental in bringing out uniformity in the societies in which they venture since they offer their signature products in different countries and hence the clientele develops a common culture which brings out a new bond between the people, however their process also called sometimes as the “Mc Donaldization” is not only hampering the cultural aspect but it also harms the domestic market which leads to discontentment among the local people.

Globalization is carried out by major transnational corporations since they hold the capital but lately regional forums or frameworks have become the vital part of the globalization process. These forums such as SAARC and ASEAN have a huge impact on the trade and the bilateral relations between the member nations of the world.

Infact, it is these regional groupings that define the flow and feasibility of trade in the contemporary world. These forums have been instrumental in shaping the globalization process and they have rather streamlined or fine-tuned the entire process as it stands today.

Trade brings vitality to the markets and the productivity and innovation is boosted. They only negative that trade has is with the imbalance in the same. The import-export gap is very important for the upkeep of the entire system and this is the major cause that leads to economic woes and as is evident in the current situation, trade wars. The ASEAN-India free trade pact has had some issues on the same lines. While the imports from the ASEAN are booming due to the booming Indian market consumption, the Indian exports have rather been on the lower end which leads to the huge trade deficit leading to billions of dollars.

Further, huge trading cartels such as ASEAN have certified, cheap quality products assured for a long term supply which puts a huge burden on the domestic market further creating problems for the exchequer. These factors add up to the genesis of completely new forces.

The basic argument was that globalization rather helps to get rid of narrow national concerns and nations & societies tend to have a worldly outlook & changed position due to the exposure of the global system which helps to check the conservative, traditionalist and ultra nationalistic tendencies.

The newest concern however is that the capital outflow & loss of jobs due to the outsourcing process has given a new boost to the same. US-China trade war is the biggest example but the same can be said in the Indo-ASEAN context when we discuss the rise of the Indian behemoth “*Patanjali*” which has been the manifestation of the same process. The MNC grew out of its agenda of “*Swadeshi*” and a blend of “*Indian Nationalism*” thereby capturing a major chunk of the Indian market. This demonstrates that the globalistic tendencies do

in some specific circumstances rather consolidate or cause the rise of the narrow nationalistic aspirations.

The single biggest happening that has changed the world is the invention of the internet. The internet has completely revolutionized the way the world interacts, thinks, sleeps, behaves and exists. The whole world is but a global village. A person living in a high end metropolitan city has a global platter. To summarize, he may have rice from Vietnam, French cheese, British wine, American meat, Italian bread on an Indian plate. This is the wonder of globalization, you can have it and you can brag about it. This has been possible due to the fact that the spending power of the people increased. The persistent problem with globalization being the uneven dissipation of wealth. Countries such as Singapore are a utopian reality. Demography has also favored some of the SE Asian nations while the countries such as Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar and Vietnam are still struggling but moving in a positive direction.

India, while has been moving at a rapid pace. It is a gigantic economy with enormous resources and a great future. The immediate effects of the trade war have further aggravated the importance of ASEAN and India in the global arena.

China has dominated every sphere of trade and the US has been the paramount but lately the confrontation has led to new way for ASEAN & India since both the US and China need the two blocks to be a paramount power.

This definitely needs to be looked carefully and the Indian-ASEAN FTA is also one such step in the direction. However both India and the SE Asian nations should be wary of the developing situations. India must ramp up its manufacturing and streamline the business prospects by putting a hold on the red tape while on the other hand, the SE Asian nations must be wary of the American & Chinese clout which would further be a blot on their bright

feature. The South China Sea issue has been a serious matter of concern and it will have definite impact on the global politics.

The most important conceptualization that is being realized today is that the means of globalization and the agents carrying it out have changed dramatically. With the passage of time, new agents have come into play. Earlier, it was only the state and the major transnational corporations that played the part in the whole process and the people were the tools in their hand but lately the inception of digital technology and social media has completely changed the paradigm.

New technologies like block chain which have led to the genesis of companies like Bitcoin, who have the capability to change the system completely. They have rather changed it bypassing the regulatory arms of state and the capital power of the trans-national corporations.

Globalization is the exchange of people, ideas and money. Basically all this can be done and is being done without the other two major actors namely the state and the corporations.

Incidents have been there when a single individual has changed the entire equation between two or more states thereby having a serious impact on the globalized world. Individuals such as Snowden, Assange, Satoshi Nakamoto are but the break that defines the very change in the process of globalization. The institutions' approach in the globalized world has evolved and we now need to look beyond the scope of institutions and people as a part of these institutions.

Individuals are the basic components of this new equation and they have the potential to change the entire equation. Companies or corporations were hailed as the major agents of globalization but it's the people, the individual that will have the curve.

The basic argument being the technological revolution has empowered the normal state citizen to be a citizen of the world since the tide of individualism has led into a totally newer zone. People to people interactions have been the new vogue in the world and even public opinions are being formed due to the internet. Globalization has been and is still being influenced by individuals. Roger Stone Jr., Steve Banon, Dominic Cummings are some of the few men who have been instrumental in making a shift away from a globalized world to the one that is nation-centric, and they have been rather successful since Brexit is a coming reality and Trump will only stop at making America great again.

However, the positive side being that people live together and they understand each other. People to people interactions have ushered in a new wave of sensitization for peace and harmony. People of India and Pakistan never support wars nor they have any opposition to trade but it is the government that does so in the name of the very people.

Till now, we did not have any means of efficiently articulating and understanding the public opinion but the tech which has come out of the globalized world may be a solution to make this a world worth living in where people really decide, interact and democratic and liberal ideals can be realized in true form. This is the only way that we can ensure the continual existence of the global world or else its all a house of cards, just ready to fall.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The factors continue to add up and there is no single actor or agent that acts alone but rather a nexus of all, but sure changes have been there. The India-South East Asia case is a blend of ancient and the modern, rational and the believer and the global and the national.

There have been certain “Continuities” and “Changes” in the “Globalized World” but it is a specific reality in the case of post colonial nations. The East, unlike the west has been greatly influenced by the rich cultural history and the Indian-South East Asian relation is also one of these special ones. The cultural exchange of the past times definitely affects the public perception and strengthens government ties which is indeed crucial for a globalized system.

Globalization has ushered in the great forces of capitalism which have changed the societies and the outlook of the people but economic nationalism has also been gathering pace in India and the South East Asian nations and it is but the greatest test for the continual of this system.

The latest developments further highlight the importance of India and ASEAN nations in the global fabric of trade and security hence the amicable relationship between the two would only cater to promote peace & stability if the ultra-nationalist force of each nation state is negated.

All this points to the people, who are the main agents and the supposed benefactors of the same. A globalized world negates state control and the individual comes into the main shade. Institutions have been the norm for a long time but the technology has ushered in the age of individualism which would last for the time to come.

People and their perception has gained prominence and foreign and trade policies are being affected due to the same. Technology has brought about the “golden age of populism” due to the fact the people have the right to express.

An Indian stranded in Qatar can tweet about the same & the foreign minister takes notice.

Trade has also been like that. People have their pros & cons about brands & they express it. The critical case of Posco in Odisha is still remembered. People

have become the main agent in this age of information and technology and this is the greatest trend in the globalized world.

Populism is a curious process since it has many aspects. People definitely account for the existence of the system but they also cast a shadow over the working of the same. Since public perception is subject to manipulation and that is what corporate & politicians are best at. However, this would be quite a battle since democracies have matured and the people have begun to understand the need of effective democratic norms and legal systems so as to live an unhampered life.

The people have risen to the challenge and the forces of globalization are also keen to manipulate them but this populist renaissance has rather changed the way we perceive of globalization. Instead of being a capitalist venture, globalization is being viewed as a tool for change which would enlighten the present for a brighter future.

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