Editorial

West Asia Crises: Conflict, Geopolitics and Humanitarian Challenges

West Asia remains one of the most consequential geopolitical spaces of the contemporary world. Located at the intersection of Asia, Africa and Europe, the region connects major energy-producing areas with global markets, encompasses critical maritime choke-points and brings together diverse states, societies and civilisations. At the same time, it continues to face protracted conflicts, humanitarian emergencies, political instability, economic vulnerabilities and changing strategic alignments. The present issue of *Lok Sambhashan: A Journal for Contemporary Discourse*, themed **"West Asia Crises: Conflict, Geopolitics and Humanitarian Challenges"**, brings together six contributions that examine these interconnected challenges through the perspectives of geopolitics, connectivity, strategic partnerships, humanitarian security, peace-building, political economy and digital transformation.

The issue begins with Dr. Nilesh Kharche's work **"The Geopolitics of Connectivity: The India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) Amid Regional Conflict"**. The paper examines IMEC not merely as an infrastructure and trade initiative but as a project whose viability is closely linked to regional security. The Gaza conflict, Red Sea and Bab-el-Mandeb disruptions, and instability around the Strait of Hormuz demonstrate how geopolitical insecurity can affect connectivity, maritime movement and global supply chains. The contribution consequently highlights the relationship between infrastructure, economic resilience and geopolitical stability.

This theme connects with Mr. Taqdees Sajad and Mr. Alam Musheer's **"Bharat and West Asia: Strategic Engagement and Emerging Partnerships in an Era of Regional Crisis"**. The authors examine Bharat's evolving engagement with West Asia across energy, trade, defence, investment, connectivity and cultural diplomacy. Approaches such as "Think

ISSN: 3108-0405 (O)

West," strategic autonomy, de-hyphenated relationships, I2U2 and IMEC reflect the multidimensional nature of this engagement. The paper also highlights the significance of the large *Bhartiya* community in the Gulf, remittances, evacuation operations and people-to-people relations, demonstrating the close relationship between strategic interests and human security.

Mr. Abhishek's **"Changing Geopolitics of West Asia: An Analysis of Regional Conflicts and Humanitarian Consequences"** broadens the discussion to regional security. Drawing upon Neorealism, Regional Security Complex Theory and Human Security Theory, the paper highlights the roles of proxy networks, non-state actors, drones, missiles, maritime insecurity and shifting alliances. Its examination of Yemen, Syria, Iraq and Lebanon demonstrates the interconnections among state fragility, external intervention, economic vulnerability and humanitarian insecurity. The significance of the Bab-el-Mandeb and Strait of Hormuz further illustrates how West Asian instability can affect global trade, energy security and maritime stability.

Moving from geopolitical analysis towards peace-building, Prof. Kapileswar Mishra's **"Downstream to Peace: RIVER 2.0, a Gated and Evidence-Graded Framework for Humanitarian De-escalation, Resource Cooperation and Sustainable Conflict Resolution in West Asia"** proposes an integrated approach to crisis resolution. The RIVER Framework - Rights-based protection, Infrastructure resilience, Verified ceasefire-to-settlement transition, Equitable resource-sharing and Reconciliation, seeks to connect immediate humanitarian needs with longer-term peace-building. Its emphasis on water, food, energy and essential infrastructure expands the understanding of security beyond military balances and territorial control towards civilian resilience, resource governance and sustainable peace.

The digital dimension of contemporary geopolitics is addressed by Mr. Alam Musheer and Ms. Zainab Khan in **"AI, Surveillance, and Data Colonialism in West Asia: Algorithmic Extraction and Geopolitical Vulnerability"**. The paper examines the interaction of technology platforms, state

ISSN: 3108-0405 (O)

surveillance, algorithmic systems and conflict environments. Its discussion of facial recognition, spyware, predictive systems, content moderation and digital sovereignty demonstrates how data, algorithms and digital infrastructure are becoming increasingly significant dimensions of geopolitical power and vulnerability.

The final contribution, Dr. Maheep's **"Different Foundations, Shared Arena: India, Pakistan and the Political Economy of Gulf Partnerships"**, comparatively examines South Asian engagement with the Gulf through commitment, capability, performance and protection. The analysis considers economic relations, labour migration, remittances, security cooperation and institutional arrangements, while also recognising the agency of Gulf states in pursuing economic transformation, technological advancement, security and national-development objectives. The importance of *Bhartiya* and Pakistani migrant communities further highlights the centrality of migration and human mobility to Gulf political economy.

Taken together, these six contributions demonstrate that the contemporary crisis of West Asia is simultaneously *geopolitical, security-related, humanitarian, economic, environmental, connectivity-driven and increasingly digital.* These dimensions are deeply interconnected: conflict can disrupt maritime routes; maritime insecurity can affect trade and energy; economic disruption can weaken livelihoods; humanitarian deterioration can intensify displacement; political instability can damage infrastructure and institutions; and digital technologies can reshape security practices and civilian vulnerability.

A further theme emerging from this issue is the evolving relationship between **Bharat and West Asia**. This relationship extends beyond energy imports to trade, investment, defence, maritime security, connectivity, migration, remittances, humanitarian assistance, technology, food security and civilisational and people-to-people ties. The substantial *Bhartiya* community in the Gulf represents an important social and economic bridge between the two regions. At the same time, regional instability underscores

ISSN: 3108-0405 (O)

the importance of economic resilience, technological capacity, institutional preparedness and the protection of human interests.

The issue also reaffirms the importance of geography in understanding West Asia. Its location at the crossroads of continents, concentration of energy resources, strategic maritime choke-points and major connectivity corridors ensure that regional developments have consequences far beyond the region itself. Yet the same spatial connections that transmit conflict and disruption can also facilitate trade, cooperation, cultural exchange, resource sharing and peace-building.

This issue of *Lok Sambhashan*, therefore, seeks to move beyond fragmented accounts of crisis towards an integrated understanding of West Asia. Alongside conflict and instability, attention must also be given to dialogue, humanitarian action, resource cooperation, economic integration, technological governance, infrastructure resilience and people-to-people engagement. Contemporary scholarship has a vital role not only in documenting vulnerability but also in examining the institutional and structural conditions through which resilience and cooperation may be strengthened.

West Asia remains a region of profound uncertainty as well as significant human, cultural, economic and strategic possibilities. Understanding its future requires attention to the connections among *security, development, resources, technology, connectivity and human dignity.*

We sincerely thank all the authors, reviewers and members of the editorial team whose efforts have contributed to this issue. The diversity of perspectives represented here reflects the journal's commitment to interdisciplinary contemporary discourse.

ISSN: 3108-0405 (O)