

Section B.

## Technology as the Silent Factor in International Relations.

Technology is one of those things that is good and bad. It can save lives and ruin them it can rebuild and complete it can destroy and create it can send and delete. It's the same old barter system wrapped in paper, plastic and elections, more easily dispatched. The more we make, the more we spend.

The advancement of technology has evoked a range of emotions in people from all walks of life. Some view technology as a great evil that slowly diminishes our humanity, while others view it as a way to bring the world closer together and help solve some of our greatest collective challenges. Technology has helped bind communities together into a collective consciousness. Yet, in the lofty terms and terminologies of "dialogue", "discussion" and "cooperation" Technology has played the loudest role between different nations. Technology is the overlooked and silent factor in international relations.

The role played by technology is as old as interaction between different civilisations of the world.

The thousands of kilometre long, transcontinental Ancient Silk Route running from southeast Asia in the south to Russia in the North and from China in the east to Spain in the west saw exchange of ideas and technology across civilisations. The technology of paper making in China is premier example. Silk weaving and tea cultivation also flowed through these channels.

Another component of this exchange of ideas was the movement of scientific treatises. For instance of Brahmagupta and Aryabhatta, that travelled with Persians and Arabs like Khwarizmi, Al-Beruni and reached the Arab and Ottoman world, thus al-jibre became Algebra while Greek medicine came to be synthesised with Persian medicines by Ibn Sina (Avicenna). Architectural styles of south India are still reflected in the last temple complex at Java, Sumatra and Angkor (Cambodia).

The high degree of advancements in shipping technology led European naval states like Portugal, Spain, Britain and Netherlands to undertake risky journey and "discover" the flourishing civilisations of the "New World". It helped them to advent as free traders, only to colonise the entire parts of Africa, South Asia and South east Asia.



Technology has also played a significant role in the transfer of intellectual treatises and ideas such as those of Locke, Rousseau and Immanuel Kant across the world. These ~~have~~ brought about a new wave of "Enlightenment" amongst literate masses, as they began to question the idea and authority of the Absolutist Monarchs, Church and Ritual hierarchy. In India, Raja Rammohun Roy, Swendranath Banerjee, Keshab sen began questioning the legitimacy of social inequality of various kinds like dowry, sati, prohibition of widow remarriage and advocated for social reforms. Martin Luther's Ninety five Theses set in the movement of Protestant reformation and influenced European Revolutions throughout the 19th century.

~~The~~ The 19th and the 20th century are also known as the age of Military Transformation. They continue to bear an impact on our defence diplomacy. Smaller states grouped and allied together with bigger states into Military alliances, such as Allied Powers and Axis powers and NATO - Warsaw pact (in the post world war years). The central idea to this is the need to have Balance of power, so that a war does not break out. But this has often resulted into subtle bullying and threatening of smaller states to join the larger block.

It is here, newly independent countries like India, Rugostania,



Egypt, Thailand advocated their commitment to 'NON-ALIGNMENT' with either of the military blocks and advocate for NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT and Arms Reduction.

The innovation of Nuclear technology had ushered the world with great potential and concern. The horrors of Nuclear technology was borne by Japan when USA bombed Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. Nuclear technology has tremendous potential to generate electricity and power for the benefit of people on a sustainable basis. But, it has also divided the world into Nuclear haves and Nuclear have nots.

The Nuclear states of the 19<sup>th</sup> 20<sup>th</sup> century assumed unbridled power in the International institutions such as the United Nations Security Council. The P-5 or Group of 5 countries including USA, Russia, UK, China, France enjoy  veto powers over any military and security decision. This has had significant impact on the ability of United Nations to act on humanitarian crisis. International rivalry between P-5 states has resulted in the invasion of Iraq, Syria, Libya on one hand and neglect of Rohingya refugees of Myanmar and Uighur muslims in Xinjiang province of China.



Instead of disarmament, modern states like Ghan continue to enrich their uranium in order to build strategic Nuclear deterrence with their neighbours. Stockpiling of Nuclear arms has contributed to an arms race that pushes humanity to the brink of its existence by each passing day. Many hostilities, such as that between India and Pakistan in 1999 and the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 almost reached to the point of a Nuclear war.

Diplomacy, in terms of space technology has continued to remain very exclusive. The 'Elite clubs' of Mars and Moon are unwilling to share satellite technology with other nations, which are usually low in income and prosperity. Strategists fear colonisation of planets in the future. The recent decision of US military department to have a special wing for space has prompted anxiousness over the very real possibility of space wars and sabotaging of each others satellite in the future.

But, is diplomacy with technology only conflicting in nature? That may be untrue. Cyber security cooperation has emerged as big field of interaction and mutualism between states. So, while there is a real possibility of cyber attack on countries (example - Solar winds attack on US systems by Russian intelligence), there is also chances of cooperation and coordination. The best example of the



above would be the INTERPOL that issues notices of various kinds to catch hold of terrorists, drug peddlers, organised crime syndicates.

The Financial Action Task Force also coordinates between countries on the issues of global collective security, terrorism and misuse of legal loopholes for channelling illegal / hidden income. These would have been impossible without technology.

In fact, "e-diplomacy" has emerged as the buzz word for countries to interact with each other in the face of coronavirus pandemic. In 2020, once lockdowns and air travel restrictions were set, most summits and dialogues took place virtually, such as G-20, SAARC, BIMSTEC, Green Bilateral treaties came to be signed in the virtual format to prevent transmission of the virus. A good example of this would be the various million dollar investments India and UK signed together for development of special economic zones (SEZ) like GIFT city in Gujarat.

Economic cooperation through technology is not a new phenomenon. Colonial enterprises like the East India Company brought crores of rupees of investment into modern infrastructure such as railways, telegraphs, ports, canals even if to suit self interests. Technology transfer for deliberately withheld to



continue to make Indian markets dependant on the imports of Britain even today. In the globalised world, big Multinational corporations have set up their ventures across continents to form a global value chains. Most of the semi-skilled and cheap labour is provided for assembling products by economies of Asia. The technology transfer however continues to be very limited and costly. Hence, most of the developing countries like India are focusing on 'Indigenisation of Technology' through programmes like Make in India and Atmanirbhar Bharat to achieve self-sufficiency.

Self-sufficiency however, may be limited when it comes technology for climate adaptation and climate mitigation. Through various global environmental summits like United Nations Framework Convention on climate change (UNFCCC), the developed countries of the North have reluctantly come to accept the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities in order to aid the Global South in meeting their socio-economic as well as environmental needs. About 100 billion dollars have been set aside as Climate Adaptation Fund under the Paris Climate Accord of 2015. Countries are participating in carbon trading and jointly investing in sustainable projects under



Kyoto Protocol.

The downsides to cooperation and joint investment in various infrastructure projects are that big countries like China are deliberately investing in redundant and financially unsustainable projects like Hambantota port in Sri Lanka, Gwadar port in Pakistan, as also in African countries. This has been identified as debt trap diplomacy where on future, big countries buy strategic positions on the smaller nations on hundred-year leases which is reminiscent of 19th century colonialism.

Hence, technology induced globalisation has also been criticised by many as a form of neo-colonisation of the Least developed countries. Neither the rules of trade, nor the markets are equally or equitably for any country. The major decisions of the World Trade Organisation, IMF and World Bank favour the big players and the global corporate elite such as Apple, Amazon, Facebook, Twitter. The companies + now have transcendental control over people of the world.

Companies like Google, Facebook, Twitter play a major role in creation of information and the hold power of censorship and digital erasure.



clear identity of people, groups. This cyber age has also thus witnessed information warfare and malignment of people through propaganda and fake news. Technology should be ~~not~~ used to connect people and bond our similarities instead of hate and animosity.

Thus, technology has a significant role in building bridges and breaking walls between people. It has remained the backbone of interaction between people throughout history and continues to do so in the ever-evolving modern age. The year 2020 saw so many good will and humanitarian relief work, such as operation vanilla in Madagascar, operation sambandh. These would have been impossible to think of without the presence of technology. It is up to the citizen vigilance and political will of the governments to protect bodily integrity of the individual and not let technology exceed our humanity. As Albert Einstein, the great scientist remarked, "The human spirit must prevail over technology."

- Good attempt
- Multi-dimensional - yes
- Latency - examples were over 100 dead
- 2 less relevant
- Coherence / ideas - awkward
- Coherence - good
- Coherence - limited
- Introduction - Good
- Conclusion - decent - with few more ideas
- overall decent effort

65 / 125

Total

135 / 250