



Vivek

Issues & Options

April - 2012

Issue: I No: IV



Constitutional Promises - Still a Dream

Betrayal of Trusteeship

Indo - Pak Back Channel Uncalled For

Sri Lanka: An Area of Vital Interest

and many more

Published By : Vivekananda International Foundation

3, San Martin Marg, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi - 110021, info@vifindia.org, www.vifindia.org

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Worrisome Trends For National Parties

- *A. Surya Prakash*

The two main national parties – the Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) - are going to take a long time to digest the bitter medicine that has been administered to them by the electorate in the recent assembly elections held in five states. Apart from the fact that these election results have once again shown the declining popularity of national parties, they have also shown that these parties are no big attraction for the youth and women, especially in Uttar Pradesh.

The Election Commission classifies the Congress, BJP, the two prominent communist parties, the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and the Nationalist Congress Party as national parties. These are parties which cross a minimum threshold of votes in at least four states. In the Lok Sabha election held in 2009, national parties secured 63.58 per cent of the vote, with a good chunk of the remaining 36 per cent going to state parties. In the assembly elections held in 2007, the national parties had a vote share

of 56.50 per cent in Uttar Pradesh. In 2012, their share of the votes is down by about 3 per cent. This still looks like a decent figure because the BSP is classified as a national party. If not, the share of national parties would be just 28 per cent. Similarly, there is a marginal drop of about 2 per cent in the vote share of national parties in Punjab as compared to 2007.

It was clear during the run up to the election in Uttar Pradesh that the Congress and the BJP were fighting for the third and fourth positions. The two parties have lived up to the general assessment of their electoral strengths. But what should be disquieting for both the parties is that out of the 403 assembly constituencies in this state, the contest was mainly between these two parties only in 11 seats namely Mathura, Bilaspur, Govindnagar, Tamkuhi Raj, Suar, Varanasi Cantt, Varanasi South, Kidwai Nagar, Lucknow Cantt, Pharenda and Saharanpur Nagar. In most of the assembly segments, the fight was mainly between the Samajwadi

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Party and the BSP and this left the two main national parties in dire straits. A high percentage of candidates (around 60 per cent) belonging to these two parties have forfeited their deposits and several of them have suffered humiliating defeats. For example, in Bah constituency, out of the 1.83 lakh votes polled, the Congress secured 2411 votes and the BJP, 2131. This means each party got just over 1 per cent of the total votes polled! There are many such examples. In Aliganj, the BJP has polled less than 1 per cent of the 1.96 lakh votes polled. The Congress has done marginally better with 4 per cent of the votes. Again, in Akbarpur, the Congress managed just 4 per cent and the BJP less than 2 per cent of the 1.72 lakh votes polled. There are dozens of such examples, which show how irrelevant the two parties had become in this election. The BJP also lost Ayodhya, a seat held by the party continuously for 20 years.

The disappointment is certain to be much more when these parties take into account the following factors: This election saw a huge jump in first time voters; a higher percentage of women voted in these elections; and although there are more urban seats now

than before, the Samajwadi Party stormed into the urban citadels of these two parties.

In 2012, 13.70 million new voters were registered in Uttar Pradesh, as compared to 2007. Secondly, since the voting percentage shot up this time, 23.90 million more votes were cast in this election compared to 2007. In Punjab and Uttarakhand also, the number of voters went up by 11 lakhs and 3.80 lakhs respectively. But the most interesting and intriguing bit of statistic which should interest political pundits is that in all the five states which went to the polls – Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Goa, and Manipur - the percentage of women who voted this time was higher than that of men by 2 to 3 per cent. The difference was the highest in Goa. In that state while 79.67 per cent of male voters exercised their franchise, the turnout of women voters was 85.97. This means that both first time voters and women found the Congress and the BJP not worthy of support in Uttar Pradesh. The BJP can feel good that the new voters and women have given it and its ally the thumbs up in Goa and Punjab. The Congress can similarly see Manipur, which witnessed a similar trend, as a consolation

prize. But the truth is that none of this can obliterate the disturbing message from Uttar Pradesh for these two parties.

Following the delimitation of assembly and Lok Sabha constituencies in 2008, much of the imbalance in the spread of constituencies and total electors was corrected because the

Delimitation

Commission

decided to redraw the boundaries based on population. This also meant a jump in urban constituencies in all states. After this Commission completed its task, the BJP was happy because there were more urban constituencies now than before. The

Congress too was pleased because it felt the Rahul spell would work in the urban areas and bring in more seats. But the recent election in Uttar Pradesh has changed all that. The Samajwadi Party has made a confident entry into urban pockets. For example, in Lucknow, it has edged out these parties in three of the five seats. It has also

made inroads into many other urban constituencies.

Yet another phenomenon that is certain to disturb the electoral base of the two main national parties is the emergence of the Peace Party of India (PPI). This party, launched by Muslims, made its debut only in 2009 and is now slowly but surely creeping up the

electoral ladder. In this election it has bagged four Vidhan Sabha seats and secured 2.35 per cent of the votes. But, the vote share could be misleading because of the impact of its presence in 10-15 per cent of the constituencies. The data put out by the party in its website is interesting. It won 4 seats, stood

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second in three, third in 8 and fourth in 25 seats. In other words, the Peace Party has influenced the outcome in this election in at least 40 seats. The website says the party over 50,000 votes in three constituencies. It secured 20,000-50,000 votes in 15 seats and 8000-25,000 votes in 52 seats. This is how the BSP started out in the

late 1980s and if this trend continues, the Peace Party will make elections in Uttar Pradesh a five-cornered affair some years from now. The party's website also made the following observation which could be of value to political analysts – “ Besides winning four seats and securing second position at three places PPI has influenced results of at least 61 other constituencies where it secured more votes than the winning margin”. It also claimed that it had “broken the myth” that voting PPI would benefit the BJP, “because the BJP won only 8 seats out of the 61 constituencies mentioned above”.

How the two national parties have grievously erred in their politics in the Hindi heartland is best explained by the electoral performance of these two parties vis-à-vis the BSP and SP over the last two decades. In the Uttar Pradesh Vidhan Sabha election held in 1993, the BSP secured 11.50 and the SP 18.60 per cent of the vote, which meant

Apart from the poor performance of the Congress Party, the 2012 results also point to the declining influence of the party's first family. In particular, the outcome in the Amethi-Rae Bareli-Sultanpur belt in Uttar Pradesh should be a matter of concern for the Nehru-Gandhis. The results show that the family's vote bank has suffered considerable depletion in this belt, which was considered its bastion for many decades.

that together these two parties obtained 30.10 per cent of the popular vote. As against this, the BJP secured 33.10 and the Congress 14.40 per cent votes. In other words, the two national parties commanded 47.50 per cent of the vote in that state. In 2012 one sees a neat reversal of this situation. The BSP (25.91) and the SP (29.15) together garnered 55 per cent of the vote, whereas the BJP (15.00) and Congress (11.63) managed just 27 per cent, which is much less than the share of the BSP and SP in 1993. It will be an uphill task for these two parties to regain their pre-1993 influence and to dislodge the SP and BSP from their pre-

eminent perch.

Can the Nehru-Gandhis Bounce Back?

Apart from the poor performance of the Congress Party, the 2012 results also point to the declining influence of the party's first family. In particular, the outcome

in the Amethi-Rae Bareli-Sultanpur belt in Uttar Pradesh should be a matter of concern for the Nehru-Gandhis. The results show that the family's vote bank has suffered considerable depletion in this belt, which was considered its bastion for many decades. Yet, given the distinct electoral advantage that the family has over others, can we presume that its charisma has evaporated altogether? A detailed analysis of the results and their implications may be in order.

When the assembly results came in on March 6, most analysts were shocked to see that the Congress Party won just 2 of the 15 assembly segments - Amethi (SP), Jagdishpur (Cong), Gauriganj (SP), Tiloi (Cong), Salon (SP), Rae Bareli (Peace Party), Sareni (SP), Bachhrawan (SP), Harchandpur (SP), Unchahar (SP), Sultanpur (SP), Sadar (SP), Lambhua (SP), Kadipur (SP), Isauli (SP) - falling within the Lok Sabha constituencies of Amethi, Rae Bareli and Sultanpur.

As against 8.74 lakh votes polled in the five assembly segments in Amethi represented by Rahul Gandhi, Congress candidates bagged 2.59 lakh votes constituting just under 30 per cent

– hardly anything to crow about. However, the little hope that one sees in Amethi, is well and truly extinguished when one steps into Rae Bareli represented by Ms.Sonia Gandhi and Sultanpur, which returned Mr.Sanjay Singh in 2009. In Rae Bareli, of the 9.12 lakh votes polled, Congress candidates secured just 1.97 lakh votes (22 per cent). The party lost all the five assembly seats. Enter Sultanpur, and you see the family's electoral fortunes virtually nose dive. Here, of the 8.84 lakh votes polled, the Congress candidates secured just 59817 votes amounting to a miserable 7 per cent of the votes polled. All of them lost their deposits.

The macro picture of the Amethi-Rae Bareli-Sultanpur belt is as follows: Of the 26.70 lakh votes polled in these constituencies in 2012, the family could swing just 5.16 lakh votes in its favour, which amounts to 19 per cent. But if one sees it as a percentage of the total electors in these constituencies (44 lakhs approx), it is less than 12 per cent. This amounts to virtually scraping the bottom of the ballot box because the Nehru-Gandhis were out in full strength during the campaign. Apart from Sonia and Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka and

Son-in-Law Robert Vadra also stepped out with their children to campaign for the party. The contrast is even sharper when seen against the party's performance in the 2009 Lok Sabha election. In that election, of the 20.21 lakh votes polled, the party garnered 12.46 lakh votes (60 percent). In 2012, though the votes polled went up to 26.70 lakhs, the Congress Party's share slumped to just 5.16 lakh votes.

From here on, much depends on how the Nehru-Gandhis view the results. Being one of the younger politicians in the country who has not held any public office (and is therefore untainted) and who

appeared to be sincere, Rahul Gandhi was perceived as a natural ally by millions of citizens who supported the anti-corruption movement. However, their expectations were belied when Mr. Gandhi virtually became a spokesman for the union government and the politicians

who stood tainted. He made no promise to fight corruption and therefore failed to connect with the people and ride the crest of the anti-corruption wave. Thereby he let go the most "secular" issue which troubled voters across religions, castes and states. This was the prime reason for his disastrous

performance in U.P.

The other issue that repulsed voters was the crass attempt made by the family and the Congress Party to woo the Muslims. The results show that all the drama about reservations before the announcement of elections and during the campaign failed to impress this

community. On the other hand, the relentless and often self-congratulatory proclamations regarding the party's commitment to reservation for Muslims alienated several sections of the Hindus. The results show that the Muslims lent massive support to the Samajwadi Party and even

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gave a leg up to the fledgling Peace Party, promoted by Muslims. The Peace Party even won the Rae Bareilly assembly seat in Sonia Gandhi's Lok Sabha constituency by a huge margin and pushed the Congress to third place. Clearly, the Muslims gave the Congress the thumbs down. Significantly, the Peace Party got its share of the Muslim vote and determined the outcome in at least 40 seats in the state.

Will the Congress Party persist with its policy of chasing this chimera called the Muslim Vote? Since its arch rival – the Bharatiya Janata Party – is losing out on Hindu support, will the Congress Party re-work its relations with large sections of the Hindus? Why did Rahul Gandhi fail in Uttar Pradesh? Is it because the family's charisma is on the wane or is it because he espoused all the wrong causes? From here on, much will depend on the answers that the Congress Party and the Nehru-Gandhis come up with for all these questions.

Those who are predicting the end of the charisma of the Nehru-Gandhis and writing their political obituary after seeing the U.P results are acting in haste or allowing their political

predilections to get the better of their judgement. Even today, though their hold over the electorate has declined, the Nehru-Gandhis remain the country's best vote pullers at the national level. That is why Indira Gandhi could win comfortably from Chickmagalur in Karnataka in 1978 and Sonia Gandhi from Bellary in 1999. The fascination of the electorate for members of this family extends to the Sanjay-Maneka branch – as well. Ms.Maneka Gandhi has won comfortably from Pilibhit in five elections, two of which she contested as an independent. Her son, Mr.Varun Gandhi has now stepped in and taken her place as the MP from Pilibhit, while Ms.Gandhi has shifted to Aonla.

That members of this family have a distinct advantage over others in electoral contests in many parts of the country should now be beyond dispute. It is also a fact that the Rajiv-Sonia branch has a far greater sway over the electorate. However, this does not necessarily guarantee success at the hustings. Members of this family can leverage this advantage only if they have their finger on the pulse of the people, be on the side of good governance, have a nationalist approach and shun

denominational politics. Whenever they score low on these four counts as they did in 1977, 1989 and 1999 and 2012, the Nehru-Gandhi lineage turns into a distinct disadvantage. We must therefore wait and see whether they wish to regain their charisma or see it slowly but surely ebb away.

Finally, a word about anti-incumbency.

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Finally, a word about anti-incumbency. Whenever there is talk of an anti-incumbency wave, everyone presumes there is only one incumbent – the party in power in the state. They seem to forget that there is another incumbent – the party that runs the union government – which is also a contender for power in the state. The image of the Manmohan Singh government has taken such a beating over the last 18 months that the Congress Party's campaign against other political parties failed to carry conviction in four states.

The image of the Manmohan Singh government has taken such a beating over the last 18 months that the Congress Party's campaign against other political parties failed to carry conviction in four states. The anti-incumbency

sentiment against the union government was so strong that this eventually prevailed in all the states except Manipur. If this be so in elections to state assemblies, one can well imagine what awaits the Congress Party in a Lok Sabha election! In any case, both the national parties need to go back to the drawing board.

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Need To Review The Constitution

- *RNP Singh*

After over sixty years of Parliamentary democracy in India, people have started losing faith in it as it has become synonymous with elections only. The victim of democracy is the politics. If in India, people are asked to vote for an institution that has maintained some level of integrity – they would vote for the Supreme Court, Election Commission or to the Comptroller and Auditor General of India. Their last preference would be either Parliament or State Assemblies. In the parliamentary democracy till the leaders become responsible, conscious of their duties and responsive to the public opinion, democracy itself will not be stable. If they start ignoring the will of the people, the government will become dictatorial. In India, politicians are looked upon with disdain. There is reason for this. Politicians whom people elect with much fanfare tend to become the arbiters and abusers of power.

The realization of social and economic justice, as promised by the Constitution still remains a dream, and the system of

administration has reduced and limited the sovereignty of the people to a mere right to exercise their franchise at elections. Gloomy, harsh, unimaginative and indifferent administration has affected the poor to their core. Corruption, inefficiency and insensitivity, particularly in the distribution of goods have given rise to extra-legal systems. The people in India today stand more divided amongst themselves than at the time of the country's independence. Common national purpose is seldom seen pursued by the national political parties and noble purposes of public life have degenerated into opportunistic and self seeking politics of competitive personal gains.

Corruption, it seems, has been legalized, particularly in political life. Electoral reforms and reforming of the political parties and their internal democracy are essential parts of reform. The politician-bureaucrat nexus have eroded administrative credibility. Unprincipled, opportunistic political re-alignments and defections and re-defections

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minimize the scope of the stability of the governments. The instability of the governments gave rise to maladministration which has paralyzed the creative energies of the people. The opportunistic and self seeking politics and politicians and an increasing scenario of politician, criminal and the bureaucratic nexus has resulted into enormous corruption in electoral, political and bureaucratic spheres. There is pervasive degeneration of values.

In view of the prevailing atmosphere, the foremost requirement is the restoration of confidence in the institutions of democracy. This needs strong and enlightened leadership to address the emergent problems of divergent nature dealing with the aspirations of the people and requirements of the country. Besides the politicians, bureaucrats and criminals, the voters are also responsible, to some extent, for the prevailing situation because they do not

discharge their civic duty honestly. The alarming increase of violence and money influence in the electoral process is a matter of grave concern which threatens the very survival of the democratic system. Besides the frustration from political and administrative side, there has been a picture of near collapse of the judicial trial system. The delays and mounting costs of the cases have kept the

There has been increasing disillusionment about the fairness of electoral process. Corruption and criminalization has over-shadowed its processes. The enormity of the costs of elections has kept the suitable persons away from this exercise and has led to the degradation of political processes to detriment of common good.

general people away from justice, thereby causing frustration and blocking of their aspirations. The percentage of cases that go through the whole processes in courts is quite large which urgently need exploration of some other means.

There has been increasing disillusionment about the fairness of electoral process. Corruption and criminalization has over-shadowed its processes. The enormity of the costs of elections has kept the suitable persons away from this exercise and has led to the degradation of political processes to detriment of common good. Political parties collect

enormous funds from criminals and capitalists for meeting electoral expenditure, thereby causing pervasive degeneration of standards in public life. This is also reflected in the quality of governments and of the governing process.

The above mentioned systematic and constitutional failures were foreseen by some members of the Constituent Assembly and they had raised their doubts in the discussion of the Constituent Assembly. Damodar Swaroop Seth, a member of the CA had raised similar views in the discussion held on 5th November 1948. He had said “this Constitution as a whole, instead of being evolved from our life and reared from the bottom upwards is being imported from outside and built from above downwards. A Constitution which is not based on units and in the making of which they have no voice, in which there is not even a mention of thousands and lakhs of villages of India and in framing which they have had no hand, well you can give such a Constitution to the Country but I very much doubt whether you would be able to keep it long”.

Participating in the debate on the same day (5th November, 1948) HV

Kamath had said “Now, what is state for? The utility of state has to be judged from its effect on the common man’s welfare. The ultimate conflict that has to be resolved is this: Whether the individual is for the state or the state is for the individual”.

Carrying forward the debate Naziruddin Ahmad (West Bengal) had commented “Coming to the Directive Principles of the State policy, articles 28 to 48, I think that these are pious expressions. They have no binding force. These cannot be enforced in a court of law and really, as the Honourable the Law Minister himself candidly admitted they are pious superfluities. That is the criticism.”

Even after over sixty years of independence the country is still reeling under the heat of minority and reservation. While participating in debate in Constituent Assembly Krishna Chandra Sharma (United Province: General) had said” I do not think our minorities are minorities in the real sense of the of term or classes or groups accepted by the League of Nations. We all lived in this Country for centuries, for thousands of years. We have imbibed a common

culture, a common way of living, common way of thinking. Thus, I do not understand the meaning of giving these special privileges in chapter XIV. It creates statutory minorities and to say that the thing will last for ten years only is to forget the lesson of the past.....But the result was the partition of the Country". He suggested" if there are any safeguards or any encouragement necessary for the backward classes or certain other classes, there might be other means namely, giving scholarship to deserving students, giving other financial help, opening institutions and other facilities which are necessary for their amelioration and lifting up; but to perpetuate division in body politic, to perpetuate division in the nation, would be detrimental to the healthy growth of the nation and would do an incalculable harm to us and our prosperity".

During six decades the country has grown from 10 states to 28 states with seven Union Territories. The population has grown from 36 crores to 1.2 billion; it has become sixth largest economy in the world; the literacy rate has grown; and the country is today a nuclear power. In spite of this progress, country's track record to fight against poverty, illiteracy and corruption are shockingly by below the poverty line. The largest democracy in the world has moved in the direction of instability and crisis of governability. The gradual decline in value system, erosion in political order and a deepening of social

During six decades the country has grown from 10 states to 28 states with seven Union Territories. The population has grown from 36 crores to 1.2 billion; it has become sixth largest economy in the world; the literacy rate has grown; and the country is today a nuclear power. In spite of this progress, country's track record to fight against poverty, illiteracy and corruption are shockingly by below the poverty line. The largest democracy in the world has moved in the direction of instability and crisis of governability. The gradual decline in value system, erosion in political order and a deepening of social and economic crisis have brought the Indian political system to cross roads. Now the time is ripe for the people and its leaders to take a decision about the future course of action.

It is no denying a fact that despite all those shortcomings, the people of India have reposed their faith in

the democratic process, they maintained the democratic system. But democracy gets strong roots where its plantation proceeds from social to economic and then to political. In India, instead of social democracy taking strong roots ahead, the economic and political democracy arrived earlier. As long as equality and social justice are not visibly present, only voting rights can not bring about change in the profile of a society which was under alien control for centuries.

Today, in the 21st Century can we say that the real power to govern this country is vested in its people? Often question arises that does the Constitution in

true terms express the will of the people or it has just become a tool in the hands of some hungry politicians? Are the people of India in real terms assured of justice, liberty, equality and fraternity? Is the common man receiving justice? Does equality really prevail? Has the Constitution not failed to

translate noble principles into practical instruments? Its glaring inadequacy is seen in the dispensation of justice, protection of basic liberties enforcement of bureaucratic accountability and appointments of constitutional functionaries.

The nature of the Constitution of India is not Indian. The Constitutions of USA and Britain has been copied. Some articles have been borrowed from the Constitutions of Ireland, Australia and Canada besides being dependent upon the Government of India Act 1935. Thus, the very nature of the Indian Constitution is a slavish imitation of

the Constitution of these Countries. Due to the mismatch in the nature of the Constitution, it has been amended more than 110 times during last sixty years. On the other hand when we see the Constitution of United States which was presented on 17th September 1787 with only eleven

The need for Constitutional review has been a topic widely debated across the Country. The founding fathers of the Indian Constitution who granted more rights to the people without balancing them with their duties, perhaps did not foresee the emergence of present political environment, wherein the political players of the various segments in the country are more interested in fulfilling their individual aspirations than the aspirations of the people.

articles has so far, been amended only twenty seven times. This comparison speaks volume of the mismatch of the Constitution with the Indian condition.

The need for Constitutional review has been a topic widely debated across the Country. The founding fathers of the Indian Constitution who granted more rights to the people without balancing them with their duties, perhaps did not foresee the emergence of present political environment, wherein the political players of the various segments in the country are more interested in fulfilling their individual aspirations than the aspirations of the people. The debate to review the Constitution started right from the first decade of the enforcement Constitution and within two years of its coming into force, it was required to be amended vide first amendment Bill 1951.

During the period from 1950 to 1967, the Parliament and most of the state assemblies were under the rule of the Congress Party. But after 1967 non-congress coalitions took over the reign of power in several northern states. During this period several issues pertaining to union-state relations cropped up. In the period following

fourth General Election there was wide spread concern over the phenomenon of unprincipled defections. The problem came up for discussion in the Lok Sabha on 8 December in 1967. The Parliament adopted a resolution which said” The House is of opinion that a high level committee consisting of representatives of political parties and Constitutional experts be setup immediately by Government to consider the problem of legislators changing their allegiance from one party to another and their frequent crossing of the floor in all its aspects, and make recommendations in this regard”. Following Parliament resolution, Y B Chavan (Home Minister) committee was formed which addressed variety of issues including the problem of defections.

Subsequently the Congress president D. K Barooah appointed a committee on 26 Feb 1976 to study the question of amendment of the Constitution. The 12 member committee headed by Sardar Swarn Singh submitted its report to the Congress President in April 1976. The committee in its recommendation touched upon wide range of issues including the

Preamble, Directive Principles, Power of Parliament to amend Constitution, Election matters, disqualification of membership of House or State legislature etc.

On 27- October 1976 the 42nd Amendment Bill was presented in the Lok Sabha. The Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi in her speech said that the purpose of the Bill was “To remedy the anomalies that have long been noticed and to overcome obstacles put up by economic and political vested interest”. She said “the Bill was responsive to the aspirations of the people and reflects the realities of the present time and the future”. The Bill was passed in the Lok Sabha with 4 against it and 366 in favour and in Rajya Sabha passed by 190 Votes in its favour and none against it. The amendment led to imposition of Emergency in the country which is a dark period of the Indian democracy.

After change of the Government in 1977, the then Prime Minister Morarji Desai appointed a committee of the Members of Parliament and subsequently set up a sub-committee of the cabinet mainly to correct imbalance in the Constitution caused by some provisions of the 42nd amendment.

In 1983, a committee was constituted under the chairmanship of justice R S Sarkaria with fairly wide ranging terms of reference.

The NDA in its National Agenda for Governance issued as its Election Manifesto had pledged to appoint a commission to review the Constitution. The pledge was affirmed in the President’s address to the Parliament on 22 February 2000. Accordingly on 23rd February 2000 the President of India appointed II- member Commission headed by Justice M N Venkatachaliah, Former Chief Justice of India. The Commission was named as “The National Commission to review the working of the Constitution“. The terms of reference of the Commission stated - The commission shall examine, in the light of the experiences of the past 50 years, as to how best the Constitution can respond to the changing needs of efficient, smooth and effective system of governance and socio-economic development of modern India within the framework of Parliamentary democracy and to recommend changes, if any, that are required in the provisions of the Constitution without interfering with its basic structure or features.” The Drafting and

Editorial Committee of the commission submitted the complete Draft Report to the chairperson on 15 February, 2002. It is not known as to what action was taken thereafter.

During last two decades there have been persistent demands from the civil society, some NGOs, academics, Constitutional scholars and others to have a comprehensive review of the Constitution.

Several books and large number of articles and research papers are published, and numbers of seminars have been organized on this topic. There is a general feeling that a review of the Constitution will have a positive impact on the system which will neutralize the hurdles in governance. A Constitution is meant to facilitate the working of the government and administration and also to guide other structures of the country. The static form of the Constitution will not be able to meet the challenges of the situations and requirement of the changing world.

It is now high time that instead of amending one clause or the other of the Constitution, we must gather courage to review the suitability of this Constitution to the people, culture and civilisation of this country. It must be emphasised that a Constitution of the country has to be deeply rooted to the cultural and civilisational ethos of the country.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru while speaking on the Draft Constitution on November 8, 1948 said “The Constitution is after all some kind of legal body given to the ways of Government and the life of the people. A Constitution if it is out of touch with the people’s life, aims and aspirations becomes rather empty, if it falls behind those aims, it drags the people down. It should be something ahead to keep

people’s eyes and minds made up to a certain high mark... Remember this that while we want this Constitution to be as solid and as permanent a structure as we can make it... there should be certain flexibility. If you make anything

rigid and permanent you stop a nation’s growth, the growth of a living, vital, organic people”. Pandit Nehru reiterated this view over and over again on different occasions.

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Trusteeship And Trust

- *Dr. M.N. Buch*

In any democratic society there is a social compact to which every member of society is a signatory and which is binding on everyone because it contains the social order which will govern that society. The opposite of a social compact is anarchy and the rule of the jungle. In India the social compact is contained in the Constitution, which lays down what the nation stands for in clear terms in the Preamble, it enshrines the principle of equality of all, specially before the law, it gives the fundamental rights of citizens and their fundamental duties, it gives a policy framework to the State for the establishment of a just social order in the chapter on the Directive Principles of State Policy and it provides for the institutional arrangement of the State into the Executive, the Legislature and the Judiciary. The Constitution also ensures that the structure of the Indian State will be federal with a strong centripetal bias to hold the nation together, it divides the powers between the Federal and State Legislatures and it also contains

adequate provisions for dealing with any present or future emergency, contingency, breakdown of the constitutional arrangement of government and for dealing with any unknown kind of situation which has to be dealt with urgently. In many ways this is one of the most comprehensive social compacts ever drafted and for the last sixty-two years it has withstood the stress and tension of war, national emergency, changing political scenarios and combinations, judicial crises, public agitations and even movements which are aimed at breaking the Indian Union. From every crisis we have emerged stronger, thanks largely to the Constitution.

One of the strengths of the Indian Constitution that it creates a trusteeship in which those who are placed in a position of authority are there as trustees of the Indian nation, whose owners are the people of India collectively. A person who is in authority is, to quote the Chambers Twenty-first Century Dictionary “in the state of being responsible for the

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conscientious performance of some task”. Because conscientious performance is the hallmark of trusteeship accountability for such performance is also a part of trusteeship. The people of India are the trustees in the matter of exercising their franchise and deciding to whom the reins of power will be handed over. To this extent the very people who are the owners of this nation are also collectively the trustees and must exercise their franchise in discharge of their responsibility. Failure to vote is a betrayal of the trust reposed in the citizen by the Constitution as the arbiters of the question of who will govern the state, the city or the village.

Whereas deciding who will govern is a collective responsibility, governance cannot be done collectively but has to be done by persons empowered to govern. In the matter of governance there are three equal wings of the State, the Executive, the Legislature and the

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Judiciary. The sum total of governance, therefore, is the function of the individual members or authorities within these three pillars of the State and harmony is ensured only if each of the actors performs his functions conscientiously and in a responsible manner. There is a Head of State, the President nationally and the Governor in each State. This

functionary is entrusted with the job of ensuring that the government of the country and of the state conducts itself in accordance with the Constitution and the law, which the Head of the State is bound by solemn oath to preserve, protect and defend. The President or a

Governor who forgets his oath and acts on the advice of his Council of Ministers to do something which goes against the letter and the spirit of the Constitution, has failed to live up to the responsibilities of trusteeship. This is a very delicate area and one must tread carefully because the Constitution itself in Articles

74 and 163 requires the President or the Governor, as the case may be, to act in accordance with the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers. However, if the Council of Ministers advises the President or Governor to do something which is clearly in conflict with the Constitution, it is the duty of the Head of the State to advise the Prime Minister or Chief Minister about the constitutional impropriety of what has been proposed and to try and deter him from following an unconstitutional path. Where the advice is patently unconstitutional, for example telling the President to ignore an order of court, the President or Governor, must make it clear that this runs contrary to his oath of office and he will not go along with the advice of the Council of Ministers. Had Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed at least advised Mrs. Indira Gandhi to reconsider the proclamation of emergency under Article 352 in 1975 and had he told her that he

The concept of trusteeship applies at all levels. The Prime Minister is a trustee, his Council of Ministers is both collectively and individually in a position of trusteeship, the Supreme Court of India is a trustee in all matters judicial and every civil servant is a trustee because he is assigned a task and must conscientiously perform it. Both Parliament and the State Legislatures are placed in a position of trusteeship because people have elected their representatives and sent them

was not satisfied that such a grave emergency existed which jeopardised the security of India either by war, external aggression or armed rebellion (then 'internal disturbance'), perhaps there would have been no declaration of emergency and our democracy would have taken a very different path in which politics would not have been vitiated as it was post 1975.

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and a desire to further the public good. Defection by taking bribes, pulling down governments because whims and fancies are not catered, for interfering in executive functions whilst neglecting the legislative ones are all betrayal of trust and, therefore, of trusteeship. From Prime Minister to chaparasi, from Chief of Army Staff down to the last sepoy, all are trustees and none more so than those in whose hands the reins of power are given. If the trustees discharge their functions with integrity and diligence the social compact will live and be strengthened,

What happens when there is failure in discharge of trusteeship? Let us begin at the top and go back to what I consider a post independence watershed year, 1967. This is a year in which a spate of defections took place, engineered by bribes, for the purpose of bringing down the duly elected government and substitutes it by a government consisting of a splinter group supported by defectors. Madhya Pradesh and Haryana were the lead actors in this drama, but other States followed suit. Once defections were engineered it gave the members of the legislature a feeling of power in which they

realised that they could command a price to put people in positions of power. The scheme of the Constitution is that at the time of general elections the voter will have a choice between parties and between candidates and will select the party or the candidate who, in the opinion of the voter, will give the best government. This choice could be dictated by party ideology or by the character of the candidate. The person so elected was expected to live by the promises that he had given at the time of election and to promote the ideology which had the backing of the people, which is why he was elected. Breaking away from the party through defection, abandoning the ideology or the programme on which he was elected, taking a bribe in order to defect and helping to bring to power a group which was not favoured as the majority during the poll all amount to a betrayal of trust and of trusteeship. The Tenth Schedule of the Constitution framed under Articles 102 (2) and 191 (2) was designed to stop defections, but because it is flawed in drafting and substance and is only selectively applied it has failed to stop defections. Every Member of Parliament or State Legislature who deviates from the platform on

which he was elected betrays his trusteeship and has no business to be in the august House. Ideally he should be dismissed and even denied his franchise, but because we do not live in an ideal world such a person should be removed from the Legislature and debarred from standing for election for at least six years.

Every Minister, in effect, has one leg in the Legislature and the other in the Executive. He is required to swear an oath at the time of taking office in which he is required to uphold the sovereignty and integrity of India, faithfully and conscientiously discharge his duties as a

Every Minister, in effect, has one leg in the Legislature and the other in the Executive. He is required to swear an oath at the time of taking office in which he is required to uphold the sovereignty and integrity of India, faithfully and conscientiously discharge his duties as a Minister and do right to all manner of people in accordance with the Constitution and the law.

Minister and do right to all manner of people in accordance with the Constitution and the law. The Constitution prohibits the arbitrary exercise of authority. Conscientious and faithful discharge of duties automatically implies that the Minister will be honest both intellectually and financially. In any case the Prevention of Corruption Act

makes corruption a penal offence and a Minister cannot be a criminal and continue to be a Minister. Corruption, therefore, is a direct violation of the oath of office and the Prevention of Corruption Act apart, the Minister is liable to instantaneous dismissal on any hint of corruption. The discharge of trusteeship here by a Minister

means that he will be personally honest, he will render to the President or the Governor advice which in his judgement is appropriate and best designed to further the welfare of the people, scrupulously follow the Rules of Business framed under Articles 77

and 166 of the Constitution, listen to the advice rendered by the civil servants but take firm decisions in which the programme and policies of the party he represents may be reflected but which apply evenhandedly to all people regardless of political affiliations. The Minister will discharge his responsibility to the Legislature for the manner his department

functions, while emphasising to the civil servants that effective and prompt implementation of government policy is their responsibility and will be insisted upon. If the Minister is personally honest, does his duty conscientiously, suitably guides and leads his civil servants and discharges his responsibility towards the Legislature there would be no corruption in government and deliverance of government services to the people would be efficient and smooth. In other words, if the Minister discharges his trusteeship honestly corruption will be rooted out and there will be no need for a Lokpal.

What applies to ministers and legislators applies equally and, perhaps, more forcefully to the civil servants, including the police. Articles 53 and 154 of the Constitution vest the executive power of the Union in the President and of the State in the Governor and this power is to be exercised through officers subordinate to the President or the Governor. In the exercise of his power the President or the Governor will act strictly according to the aid and advice of his Council of Ministers, but so far as actual conduct of the business

of the government is concerned, this is done as per the rules framed under Articles 77 and 166, which distribute work amongst different ministries and departments, lay down the powers and functions of the ministers and also state how Secretaries to Government are to function and what powers they will exercise. When we read this in the context of Part XIV of the Constitution, that is, Articles 308 to 314 (Article 314 now repealed) one would find that this is the only Constitution in the world which has carved a niche for the Civil Services, prescribed their powers and functions, ensured that there is no nepotism in the appointment of civil servants and given them special protection under Article 311. What is more, under Article 312 All India Services are created which hold senior posts in both the Union and the State Governments, but whose appointing authority is the President and the ultimate cadre controlling authority is the Central Government. In other words, a trusteeship is created in which the Civil Services are also partners. Civil servants, therefore, have a very special role to play in which they are required to render advice to ministers which is well-informed, properly researched, impartial, fearless and objective.

Thereafter every lawful order of a minister has to be faithfully implemented by the civil servant concerned, but evenhandedly so that there is no complaint of bias.

During implementation the civil servant has to ensure efficiency, total integrity and an attitude of sympathy with the persons who are affected by the implementation of policy. Because ultimately the citizen is supreme, the civil servant must be acutely sensitive to how people react and, where necessary, he must go back to the minister and apprise him of what is happening during implementation. If midcourse corrections are needed he should so advise and then take necessary steps to make such corrections.

The civil servant has another equally important role to play, which is to ensure that his subordinates perform their functions properly and call them to account when they are at fault. He, in turn, has to discharge his accountability to his own superiors, thus establishing a chain of interlocking accountability in which at each level the civil servant concerned knows his duties and responsibilities, acts accordingly and then is held to account for any

failure or shortcoming. From the highest to the lowest in the Civil Service hierarchy this interlocking accountability must prevail. That is how the responsibilities of trusteeship are discharged.

If there is trusteeship then there has to be trust in those who are the trustees. Governance is basically a function of taking decisions, implementing them and standing by one's actions. Where there are mala fides wrong decisions will deliberately be taken and such decisions naturally constitute what is called corruption. Mala fide is what leads to corrupt practices. A trustee who takes mala fide decisions has to suffer the consequences of his wrongdoing and for him there can be no mercy. However, all decisions are not mala fide. In fact the majority of decisions are either bona fide or taken without due diligence and, therefore, wrong but not mala fide. Decisions in framing policy and decisions during implementation can, with the best of intentions, be proved on hindsight to be either wrong or not the best option which could have been adopted. However, the decision maker has to take a view in the context of what is here and now because no one has the gift of advanced hindsight. The

circumstances may be such that a second or third best option has to be adopted because the best is either not available or cannot give the desired results at a particular moment of time. Let me elaborate. There is a limited time frame in which a particular work has to be completed. The contractor who gives the lowest bid may not be the person who is fast enough to complete the work in time. The next lowest bidder may have the speed but is not known for the quality of his work. The third lowest bidder may have both the speed and the quality. Supposing the decision maker opts for the third contractor. The work will cost a little more, but it will be completed in time and will be of the requisite quality. If the case is reviewed a few years later an objection could be raised that the work was not completed as economically as would be done by the lowest bidder. What would be forgotten or not properly appreciated is the urgency of the work felt at the time that it was undertaken. If the time schedule factor is removed then the officer could be indicted for accepting the third lowest tender. That is what generally happens now. There were only bona fides in the case and the concerned officer actually took a decision which was

beneficial because it gave quality work within the prescribed time limit. What we need to build into the system is trust for the officer taking the decision, judging him in the context of when the decision was taken and not applying hindsight and arriving at a wrong judgement on the officer concerned.

Moving away from contracts, in the course of a day an officer may have to face different contingencies and situations, each of which calls for an administrative decision. If the officer knows that he would be rewarded for quick decision-making and punished for undue delay he will not hesitate in deciding. If, on the other hand, he feels that any decision he takes will be subjected to entertainment of complaints and ex post facto enquiry which would cause him harassment, that officer may take the path of pushing files around but ensuring that no matter comes to a stage of finality. If he takes no decision, if there is no action, then there is nothing which could be inquired into because nothing has actually happened. The officer may save his own skin, but imagine the fate of citizens who are dependent upon quick disposal of a case. Should we not give

protection to a civil servant so that his decisiveness benefits people at large? Our armed forces do face real enemies with whom right from independence we have been in a state of active belligerency, if not actual war. The armed forces need the weaponry and the preparedness level which could enable them to neutralise any threat. The Navy needs surface and underwater fighting vessels, the Army needs guns for the artillery and the Air Force needs aircraft which are weapons of war. The process of procuring these weapons is prolonged over years, sometimes for so long that the proposed weapon system becomes obsolete before it is purchased. This is a prime example of paralysis of decision making because we just cannot decide lest there be complaints of corruption. Meanwhile the armed forces remain without these weapons and are vulnerable to enemy attack. This is because we trust no one to be honest in purchasing weapons. We forget

The guidelines of purchase must be laid down by government in very clear terms and the concerned Chief must constitute a purchase committee in which there would be representation from the Defence Ministry and the Finance Ministry also. This committee should be fully empowered to finalise the deal and the Chief concerned should be authorised to issue a 'sanction of purchase' order.

that because weapon purchases are of the magnitude of thousands of crores of rupees, the vendor who does not get an order will try and delay the purchase, even abort it, if his rival is likely to get the order. That is why complaints of corruption are floated and this causes the government, which is still in a post Bofors trauma, to immediately put things on hold.

The Chiefs of our armed forces have reached the apex of their career after a long period of service in which at every stage their suitability for the next higher command is tested. If we cannot trust the three Chiefs why were they ever selected for the post? It is

submitted that the three Services have to convince government both about the need of a weapon system and the preference for a particular system based on rigorous field trials. If government is convinced then it must authorise the purchase and make the entire budgetary allocation available to the Service concerned. The

guidelines of purchase must be laid down by government in very clear terms and the concerned Chief must constitute a purchase committee in which there would be representation from the Defence Ministry and the Finance Ministry also. This committee should be fully empowered to finalise the deal and the Chief concerned should be authorised to issue a 'sanction of purchase' order. If delay is controlled not only would the armed forces get the weapons they need but possible corruption obviated because there would be no delay. Thereafter if complaints are received there should be a preliminary enquiry, without stopping the flow of equipment and only if the enquiry indicates mala fides or criminal conspiracy should action be taken. Otherwise the complaints should be thrown into the nearest waste paper basket.

Trusteeship demands trust because trusteeship is an enabling environment in which the benefits of governance can be delivered to the people. The process of decision making from the lowest to the highest level must be open and transparent, but it must not brook delay. Trust must be reposed on the functionaries who are required to take decisions, bona fides should be presumed and provided that every order, every decision is backed up by recorded reasons for taking it, then no further questions should be asked. Those who commit a breach of trust must be virtually obliterated, but the rest must be protected. Where there is no criminality investigating agencies which have coercive powers should not be given entry. If we want good government then we cannot have the kind of witch-hunting which Anna Hazare has suggested and his followers fine-tuned.

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Indian Maoists: The Extent Of Their External Linkages

- Dr. N. Manoharan

It is untrue to consider Left-wing Extremism as purely local and self-sustaining. The extent of external linkages of the Indian Maoists is vast. The actors with which Naxals have linkages include Maoists of Nepal, militant groups operating in the northeast India, anti-Indian actors – state and non-state – based in Pakistan, and umbrella organisations at regional and global levels. The motives for the linkages are wide-ranging: to procure different varieties of arms, obtain training assistance, strengthen finances, trade drugs, ideological affinities, and to forge a broad front against the “common enemy” – India – in achieving the overall objective of capturing state power. Contextualising and justifying external linkages within the Maoist thought, the Naxals hold that

There are two different kinds of United Fronts. One, between people, and the other between people and enemy (a

section/group/persons from enemy classes) using the contradictions among the enemy. [Maoist] Party has to do that. This scope is there to some extent on some issues. We call it the indirect reserves of the revolution which can be used carefully. If we have clear understanding that they are not our class allies, then we would not have right opportunist deviations. We need united fronts of this kind for the success of the revolution.

The Indian Maoists have of late been found more than suitable for its agenda by the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), in its attempts to rope-in India-based militant groups. The overall intention of the ISI is to give an impression to the outside world that all terror attacks in India are home-grown. Indo-Nepal and Indo-Bangladesh borders are used extensively by the Pakistan-based Islamic groups as transit routes to reach out to Naxals. At the same time, Naxals are somewhat cautious in their liaison with jihadist groups

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because of long-term consequences. Therefore, the Naxal leadership is said to be in favour of “specific and need-based exchanges” with these groups that could be restricted to “consequential solidarity”. The Maoists are aware of the fact that if the LeT-Maoists alliance is comprehensive and deep, it would be easier for the Indian state to club LWE also under anti-terrorism and respond accordingly. Naxals would not wish such a state response that could be more ruthless than the present “holistic” one. At the end of the day, ideology and objectives of these groups are quite different. However, even limited cooperation is a cause for concern, as Naxals are desperately looking outwards to enhance their military potential vis-à-vis the Indian state’s ongoing military push.

Naxal dominated areas are not only rich in minerals, but also popular drug cultivating tracts (cannabis and poppy in particular) in the states of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa and Andhra Pradesh. Apart from being world's largest producer of licit opium and the only authorised user of the gum method of opium

production for pharmaceutical preparations, India is also sandwiched between ‘Golden Crescent’ and ‘Golden Triangle’, the two major drug producing and trafficking regions of the world. This geo-economic factor has not only helped Maoists to collect protection money from drug cultivators, traders and traffickers, but also to involve themselves directly in drug-trafficking. This is evident in seizure of large contrabands of marijuana that was being brought from states and specifically areas which are Naxal-infested. They are the latest entrants in this trade to fund their activities. Drugs like marijuana from Naxal areas are found for street sale even in remote areas of southern states like Kerala. The marijuana cultivated in the Naxalite-dominated forests bordering Orissa and Andhra Pradesh (called “Sheelavathi” in local name) is said to have higher tetrahydrocannabinol content, a psychoactive compound, than that of locally produced drugs (called locally as “Neelachadayan”). These drugs are peddled by Naxal-linked middlemen in large quantities by rail and road, including on buses conducting inter-State services.

Despite in ceasefire mode and under UN monitoring, the Nepali Maoists have been extending “full support and cooperation” to their counterparts of India not only on ideological basis but also for arms procurement, drugs trade, training and resource mobilisation. The Maoists on both sides of borders have also formed the Indo-Nepal Border Region Committee to coordinate their activities in North Bihar and along the India-Nepal border. Porous open border between India and Nepal has facilitated smooth coordination between the groups. The People’s Liberation Army, the military wing of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoists), has been involved in providing military training and bomb making to sections of Naxalites. The Lashkar-e-Toiba operatives are also said to be involved in the training, especially in the use of IEDs, in Maoists-run camps of Nepal.

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Till recently, Naxals had working relations with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) especially on training. When the LTTE was active and fighting for Eelam in the northeast of Sri Lanka, it regularly supplied arms and ammunition to Naxal groups delivered mostly at the coasts of Andhra Pradesh. Naxals came to know of the LTTE through the Tamil Nadu Communist Party-Marxist-Leninist (TNCP-ML) that was formed in 1984-85 after a split between Communist Party of India – Marxist Leninist (CPI-ML) and its Tamil Nadu unit.

The Indian Maoists have good network with several key militant groups of the northeast India. In fact, with some groups, the exact modalities of working – formal, semi-formal and informal – are spelled out through “memoranda of understanding”. The Naxals get arms and training from the northeast militant groups like National Socialist Council of

Nagaland (NSCN-IM), United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA), People's Liberation Army (PLA), People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (Prepak), Revolutionary People's Front (RPF), Kamtapur Liberation Organisation (KLO), Gorkha Liberation Tiger Force (GLTF), Gurkha Liberation Organisation (GLO), Adibasi National Liberation Army and National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB). Chinese small arms find their way to the 'Red Corridor' mainly through the northeast militant groups. The mutual support between Naxals and northeast militant groups is not just restricted to material, but extends to moral aspects as well. While Naxals have strongly supported "people's movements" of the northeast, the northeast militant groups have stood by "revolutionaries". "Enemy's enemy is a friend" is the guiding maxim in this case as well. It is through the northeast groups the Maoists

have good access to militant groups of Myanmar. There are also attempts by the Naxals to set up support bases in tea garden areas in upper Assam and some of the tribal areas in the hilly interiors. Presently, the Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti of Assam is working as a front of Maoists in Assam.

According to Maoists "it is important for the success of the Indian revolution as an inseparable part of great world socialist revolution to actively defend Maoism, fight imperialism and support the class struggle throughout the world and also take the support of the International Maoist Parties/Organizations/ Forces, proletariat and people." It is for this purpose they maintain fraternal relations with Maoist and "anti-imperialist forces" through several umbrella organisations that exist at regional and global levels.

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Parties/Organizations/Forces, proletariat and people." It is for this purpose they maintain fraternal relations with Maoist and "anti-imperialist forces" through several umbrella organisations that exist at regional and global levels.

Prominent among them is CCOMPOSA (Coordination Committee of Maoist Parties and Organisations of South Asia), formed in July 2001, with a purpose to unify and coordinate the activities of “genuine” Maoist parties and organisations in South Asia. The present constituent parties of CCOMPOSA are, apart from CPI (Maoists), Purbo Banglar Movement (Bangladesh), Communist Party of Ceylon (Sri Lanka), United Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), Poorba Bangladesh Sarvahara Party (CC), Communist Party of East Bengal (ML), Red Flag Communist Party of Bhutan (MLM), Communist Party of India (MLM), and Communist Party of India (ML) (Naxalbari). The CCOMPOSA members have agreed to share each others’ experiences and strengthen one another in “fighting back the enemies in the respective countries” and “making South Asia a blazing center of world revolution.” The aim of the organisation was identified to “develop mass movements against the common enemy, i.e. Indian Expansionism, the world imperialist system, particularly US imperialism, the No. 1 enemy of the world people; and to overthrow the existing system in the countries of South Asia.”

Conferences are held from time-to-time to take stock of the situation and plan responses. So far, only five such conferences have been held since the formation of the body – once in two years on an average. However, CCOMPOSA received a setback with the Nepali Maoists joining political mainstream renouncing violence.

At the global level, FOIR is an important umbrella organisation whose representatives abroad seek to raise finances in several countries, especially that of the West, for the “cause” of the Indian “revolution”. Then there are bodies like International Conference of Marxist-Leninist Parties and Organisations (ICMLPO), Revolutionary Internationalist Movement (RIM), World People’s Resistance Movement (WPRM) and International Communist Movement (ICM) that link LWE groups located all over the world stretching from Peru in the West to Philippines in the East. They sustain fraternal ties and jointly conduct programmes that are mutually beneficial. This does not mean that the Maoists are unanimous in their opinion on linkages with international communist movements. For instance, before the merger of Maoists Communist Center (MCC)

and People's War Group (PWG) to form CPI (Maoists), the MCC had joined RIM in 2002, but the PWG

opposed the idea. After the merger, the MCC pulled out of

RIM as per the decision of the new Party. The RIM went out of action anyway.

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Analysing India's Budget For 2012-13

- *Dr. V. Anantha Nageswaran*

India's budget deficit is hardcoded into its left-liberal intellectual discourse. Most intelligent Indians comfortably straddle the views that government is corrupt, venal and inefficient and that more government spending is the answer to all development issues. This is convenient fodder for politicians who see themselves, for the most part, as feudal overlords. Launching government projects named after politicians (preferably family members) of yesteryears inflates their ego and sense of power. There will not be an end to this unless the public discourse on government spending undergoes a total transformation of emphasis from entitlement to empowerment. That might well be a long wait.

In the meantime, the humdrum and the painstaking task of managing the deficit and the media fall on the hapless Finance Ministers in the Indian government. Mr. Pranab Mukherjee, the current Finance Minister, is a veteran. He presented his seventh budget in his long and distinguished

government service on 16 March. He promised to cut the deficit from 5.9% of GDP (estimated for the year ending March 2012) to around 5.1% of GDP. The fact that the government had projected a deficit of 4.6% of GDP for 2011-12 (versus 4.9% in 2010-11) puts both the revised estimate and the target for 2012-13 in perspective. The government's budget framework document conceded that much of the deficit reduction is sought to be achieved through revenue mobilisation. Naturally, that raises questions on the impact on private sector profits, investment and growth, ironically feeding back into lower tax revenues.

More worryingly, more discretion is being given to the taxman. Where there is bureaucratic discretion, there is corruption and there is harassment. This is true worldwide and nowhere more so than in India. While the near restoration of the peak excise duty to pre-crisis levels and the hike in the service tax rate along with a negative list of services are reasonable revenue generating

measures, retrospective amendment of tax laws is not. Even if they are not used, they send a worrying signal to honest taxpayers and to foreign investors.

Further, in the few days that have passed since the budget was presented to the Parliament, worrying details have emerged on

how some of the measures might be wholly counterproductive, even if unintended. For example, monies raised by start-up ventures by individuals and institutions other than venture capital funds, might be treated as 'income from other sources'! This will be a blow to start-ups that have to, mostly, rely on angel-investor

funding. This is not the recipe to boost entrepreneurship and investment in the economy.

Besides the tax revenues and expected sale of government stakes in public sector enterprises, there is little by way of reining in government expenditure as a

Further, in the few days that have passed since the budget was presented to the Parliament, worrying details have emerged on how some of the measures might be wholly counterproductive, even if unintended. For example, monies raised by start-up ventures by individuals and institutions other than venture capital funds, might be treated as 'income from other sources'! This will be a blow to start-ups that have to, mostly, rely on angel-investor funding. This is not the recipe to boost entrepreneurship and investment in the economy.

means to cut the deficit. India's government expenditure, even if well-intended in most cases, is largely wasteful and lines individual pockets more than it serves the targeted beneficiaries. Hence, the failure to take the axe to government expenditure is not just disappointing but deeply worrying.

The big elephant in the room of budget deficit is the subsidy burden. In recent years, India's subsidy burden has grown faster than GDP to stand at 2.4% of GDP. Projected expenditure on government subsidies is less unrealistic (it is not the same as being 'more realistic') than in the 2011-12 budget. The

government intends to cap the overall subsidy burden at less than 2% of GDP. This is based on brave estimates for the major items of subsidy expenditure. For instance, the risk of the actual subsidy burden overshooting the budget allocation for petroleum products is quite high.

The biggest subsidy burden is on cooking gas which is cornered by the middle and upper income groups, in the name of the poor. From the website of the Indian Oil Corporation ([Indian Oil](#)), it is possible to find the extent of 'under-recovery' – the difference between the price charged by the oil company for petroleum products to traders and the price

that ought to be charged based on the international price of crude oil. These calculations can be found for petrol, high-speed diesel and cooking gas. This gap will, of course, change, based on changes in the imported price of crude oil for India. At 52%, the under-recovery for oil companies is in cooking gas is the highest in rupee and in percentage terms.

	High Speed Diesel	Petrol	Cooking Gas
	(INR per litre)	(INR per litre)	(INR per cylinder of 14.2 kgs)
Under-recovery	13.1	4.12	439.64
Economic Price	54.01	69.76	838.64
Under-recovery as a % Economic Price	24.3%	5.9%	52.4%
Calculation as of	3/16/2012	3/16/2012	3/7/2012

Prices are based on New Delhi retail prices. Source: Indian Oil Corporation.

Yet, there is considerable intellectual resistance to removing subsidies on energy products. The arguments are based on wrong and misleading comparisons with the developed world. India relies substantially on imported oil. Besides being a big part of our import bill, it is a security risk too. If India has to diversify its energy sources, it has to invest. That

needs to be funded. In the meantime, prices must reflect the domestic scarcity of the resource. Second, hydrocarbon products cause pollution. The user has to pay. All countries levy taxes. Further, most products attract excise duty. Petroleum products are not exceptional in this regard. Of course, other countries adjust the tax burden when prices get too

high. India is unable to do that because of, you guessed it right, its fiscal deficit. The poor can and should be given an income top-up instead of introducing and retaining distortions in the market prices of various products and services.

Another consequence of the under-recovery in petroleum products is their contribution to the persistence of high inflation expectations. Put differently, households know that there is always the likelihood that the prices of petroleum products - diesel, petrol and cooking gas - will be raised, to ease the burden on the government. The sooner the prices reflect international trends and adjust automatically, the expectation of an administered price hike lurking around the corner will fade. Therefore, with its subsidies, the government is not only adding to its deficit burden but also keeps inflation expectations high.

The Finance Minister understands the gravity of the situation. But, the political will and support - not just from within the Congress Party but from the entire political spectrum - needed to deliver on this promise is suspect. The sordid drama of the rollback of the fare increases announced in the Railway budget is a painful reminder of how politicians hurt the nation enormously, rather casually. However, the Congress is particularly guilty because it has appointed an economist as the Prime Minister and yet has turned the discourse on public spending away from sustainability and efficacy and towards entitlement.

To meet its budget deficit target, the government has to rely on luck and guts. Unfortunately, it has a big deficit on both of them too.

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Balochistan On The Boil, Pakistan In Denial

- *Sushant Sareen*

The insurgency mounted by Baloch freedom fighters has been variously described as ‘Pakistan’s Other War’, ‘The Silent War’, ‘The Dirty War’ etc. by the international media. One of the main reasons why this ‘war’ has until now not made the front pages of newspapers is the conspiracy of silence hatched, dictated and enforced by the ‘deep state’ which had muzzled Pakistan’s ‘independent’ media from any detailed reportage about the turmoil in Pakistan’s largest and poorest province – Balochistan. Let alone foreign journalists, even Pakistani media personnel are not allowed free access to most parts of Balochistan which have become virtual ‘no-go’ areas. Local journalists are intimidated – around half a dozen have been killed and many more have gone into exile – and forbidden from any bold reporting. Big media houses follow an undeclared policy of not covering the inconvenient reality of Balochistan in any great detail. But even the sketchy reports of

incidents of violence and unrest – targeted killings, ambushes of security personnel, ‘missing persons’ and the discovery of their mutilated bodies, the daily humiliated visited on the ordinary Baloch who is insulted by being forced to shout slogans in favour of Pakistan, the fleeting references to the ban imposed by Baloch freedom fighters on raising the Pakistani flag or singing the Pakistani national anthem anywhere in the province etc. – are enough to inform about the great tumult that is building up in the province.

It took a maverick US Congressman, Dana Rohrabacher, to bring Balochistan on to the centre-stage of Pakistan's political discourse. The Congressional hearing organised by Rohrabacher, followed by the resolution moved by him in the US Congress calling for the right to self-determination in Balochistan shook and shocked the Pakistani establishment – military, media, politicians and judiciary, all

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together – out of their callous reverie about Balochistan. Suddenly, Balochistan became the flavour of the season and saturation coverage was given to the dismal state of affairs in the province. Parallels were drawn with the follies committed by the Pakistani state in the erstwhile East Pakistan, doomsday scenarios were floated, conspiracy theories were conjured up and verbal self-flagellation about the sins of omission and commission committed by the Pakistani state, particularly the security establishment (Army, FC, intelligence agencies and their jihadist proxies) became the order of the day for over two weeks.

Then, just as suddenly as Balochistan erupted on air waves and newsprint as a panic word, it disappeared. This was partly the result of the cracking of the whip by the ‘deep state’ and a muzzle order issued by the media

Notwithstanding the degree of equanimity that has come into the public discourse on Balochistan, it is quite clear that Pakistan is at its wits end on how to address the sweeping anti-Pakistan and pro-independence sentiment in Balochistan. Other than resorting to Gestapo-like tactics to bludgeon the freedom seeking Baloch into submission, the Pakistani establishment is pretty clueless on what it can do to woo the Baloch and end their alienation and disaffection with Pakistan.

regulator, and partly it was the result of a realisation that the heavens were still some distance away from falling down and all was still not lost in the province. Notwithstanding the degree of equanimity that has come into the public discourse on Balochistan, it is quite clear that Pakistan is at its wits end on how to address the sweeping anti-Pakistan and pro-independence sentiment in Balochistan. Other than resorting to Gestapo-like tactics to bludgeon the freedom seeking Baloch into submission, the Pakistani establishment is pretty clueless on what it can do to woo the Baloch and end their alienation and disaffection with Pakistan. Until now, Pakistan has been following a 3 C’s policy: (1) *coercion* (illegal confinement and targeted killings by death squads run by the Pakistani intelligence agencies and paramilitary forces like the Frontier Corps), (2) *corruption* (buying off support of the local

politicians and every Pakistani party recruiting their own set of Quislings, collaborators and what Baloch freedom fighters call ‘Sarkari’ Baloch like the Lt. Gen. (retd) Abdul Qadir Baloch, Chief Minister Aslam Raisani, Sardar Sanaullah Zehri etc.), and (3) cajoling and cooption (grandiose gestures like the Aaghaz-e-Huqooq-e-Balochistan package of economic initiatives and political reforms, cosmetic gestures like making the port city Gwadar second capital, increasing recruitment of Baloch into army and paramilitary forces, some development work, and tons of propaganda) – to woo the Baloch or at least sow divisions in their ranks. But there is little by way of success that this policy has achieved.

Another tack adopted by the Pakistani establishment was to use the ‘embedded’ media to churn out a counter narrative which was a combination of an Ostrich-like approach to the problem and a deliberate attempt to play down the severity of the issue. According to this narrative, the problem in Balochistan was only of three out of around seventy odd Sardars – Bugti, Mengal and Marri – and was limited to around four to five districts, including Dera Bugti,

Kohlu, Khuzdar and Turbat. But the incongruity of this narrative is borne out by the sheer mismatch between the scale of the insurgency and panic in Islamabad. After all, if the problem in Balochistan was so small, then why was so much newsprint and airtime expended on discussing the problem? Perhaps the answer to this lies in what Sardar Akhtar Mengal called a panic created by the fact that the ‘overlord’ (read US) had suddenly taken notice of the rampant and brazen violation of human rights in Balochistan by the ‘underling’ (read Pakistani establishment)! The Pakistani spin about the fringe nature of insurgency has also been blunted by the gauntlet thrown by the leaders of the Baloch freedom movement who have challenged Pakistan to test the popularity of the demand for independence by holding a referendum under international supervision to ascertain whether the Baloch wanted to stay in Pakistan or wanted their freedom.

A clumsy effort was also made to sow ethnic and linguistic divisions by pitting the Baloch against the Pashtuns and the Balochi speaking against the Brahvi speaking people, but it did not receive much traction because the

protagonists of Baloch independence have made it very clear that they hold no claim over Pashtun lands – North Balochistan – and are not demanding independence for Balochistan province but for only the Baloch areas of the province along with Baloch areas of Punjab and Sindh. The Pakistani ‘deep state’ and its clients in the media and political establishment also tried to discredit the Baloch freedom movement by coming up with conspiracy theories and launching a propaganda campaign about how an international conspiracy masterminded by the perfidious Americans and fully supported by the Israelis and Indians was being hatched to dismember Pakistan.

Far from being fazed by this canard, leaders of the Baloch freedom movement openly welcomed any assistance that would come their way regardless

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of where it came from. One of the icons of the Baloch freedom movement, Brahmdagh Bugti, even said that they would accept the assistance from Satan himself to rid themselves of the yoke of Pakistan. Indeed, many of the Baloch activists are hoping that the propaganda about foreign

assistance becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, something that cannot be ruled out if the Pakistani paranoia gets a life of its own and ultimately forces the international community to intervene to prevent the atrocities being committed against the Baloch. In a sense, the seriousness of the situation in Balochistan can be gauged by the fact

that until now there has been practically no assistance given by any foreign power to the Baloch, something that the Pakistan military and intelligence establishment know very well. What is scaring them is how much the situation can actually

deteriorate if some foreign power did start providing 'diplomatic, political and moral support'.

The attempt to push things under the carpet, deflect attention from the real issue, and downplay the unrest and alienation in Balochistan doesn't mean that things are looking up for Pakistan and that they are not as bad as was being projected. In fact, the situation is probably a lot worse and could deteriorate further, both because the Baloch freedom fighters are already feeling enthused by their cause coming on to the radar screen of the international community and also because the Pakistani

crackdown is likely to get a lot more brutal, albeit after a bit of a lull to let things cool down. In the meantime, the Pakistani political establishment has pretended to reach out to the disgruntled Baloch leaders by announcing a

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withdrawal of cases against them and declaring an intention to hold a sincere and serious dialogue with the Baloch leadership to address their grievances. But instead of placating the Baloch, the withdrawal of cases has been

greeted with derision. As for a dialogue, the Baloch leaders have declared that they will be willing to talk to the Pakistani establishment only if the talks are centred on discussing Balochistan's independence.

The Baloch leaders – both pro-independence and pro-federation – have also rejected the All Parties Conference proposed by Prime Minister Yusuf

Raza Gilani. While the Baloch have labelled the APC as a pointless exercise, even mainstream political parties in Pakistan, in particular the main opposition party PMLN, have dismissed the APC proposal. In

fact, the PMLN has attached almost impossible to meet pre-conditions – arresting and trying the murderers of Nawab Akbar Bugti (read former military dictator Gen Pervez Musharraf), recovering and releasing all ‘missing persons’ (believed to have been picked up by the security agencies), and bringing to justice all officials involved in extra-judicial killings. Actually, the PMLN is more interested in grinding its own political axe rather than seriously address the Balochistan issue. Given such an attitude and approach, it is no surprise that the APC is a stillborn proposal in which no one is interested, certainly not the ruling PPP which is chary of doing anything that ruffles the feathers of the military establishment.

Time however could be running out for the Pakistani state in Balochistan. Things have reached such a pass that pro-federation politicians who act as toadies of the government are finding it difficult to defend, much less justify, the actions of the Pakistani state. In any case, the traditional political elite has been steadily losing ground to a new crop of middle-class youth leaders who cutting across tribal lines are forging a potent national

movement. None other than the doyen of Baloch nationalists, Sardar Attaullah Mengal, admitted this to PMLN chief Nawaz Sharif. According to Mengal, things were no longer in the control of the old leadership as a new generation of leaders were now calling the shots. The man who is believed to have become the icon of the Baloch freedom fighters is the Balochistan Liberation Front (BLF) chief, Dr Allah Nazar. Others like the Balochistan Republican Party (BRP) chief, Nawabzada Brahmdayh Bugti (grandson of the slain Baloch leader Nawab Akbar Bugti), Hyrbyair Marri (son of Nawab Khair Bux Marri), and Balochistan National Party (BNP) chief Sardar Akhtar Mengal (son of Sardar Attaullah Mengal) are also in the vanguard of the nationalist movement. But while Dr Allah Nazar is fighting against Pakistan from inside Balochistan, the other pro-independence leaders are in exile and hence their effectiveness is somewhat reduced.

At the political level, moves are afoot to bring all the pro-independence elements together and forge a united national movement. The first step in this direction has been taken with

efforts underway agree on a 'Freedom Charter' which will serve as the vision statement of a future Balochistan state. But a lot will depend on how much support the international community gives to the Baloch. It is entirely possible that with tectonic changes taking place in the region, especially in relation to Afghanistan and Iran, the international community might discover that an

independent Baloch state could well be the strategic answer to all their problems. But it is equally possible that a tired and defeated international community might

recede into a shell to lick its wounds and leave the Baloch to their own devices. In case of the former, chances of an independent Balochistan which also acts as a bulwark against Islamic fanaticism and terrorism will be very bright. But in the latter case, with no help coming for the Baloch, chances are that the Baloch independence movement being smothered yet again.

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Resumption Of India Pakistan Back Channel Talks: An Uncalled For Move

- *Satish Chandra*

It is understood that the India-Pakistan back channel talks have been reactivated and are underway. It may be recalled that this back channel was initiated at the beginning of the UPA regime in 2004 and was in operation all along until its disruption following the Mumbai attack of November 2008. The main focus of the back channel dialogue, initially conducted by Mr. J.N. Dixit and Mr. Tariq Aziz and later by Mr. S.K. Lambah and Riaz Mohammad Khan, was the settlement of the Kashmir issue and accordingly Musharraf's four point proposal in this regard occupied centre stage.

The resumption of the India-Pakistan back channel at this stage though quite uncalled for is not surprising as Dr Manmohan Singh is known to be notoriously soft on Pakistan. Not only did he refrain from taking any penal action against Pakistan for its involvement in several terrorist actions against India, including

the aforesaid Mumbai attack, but it was also under his aegis that the infamous Sharm el Sheikh India Pakistan joint statement of July 16th 2009 was issued which asserted that "Action on terrorism should not be linked to the composite dialogue process and these should not be bracketed." Furthermore, he allowed this joint statement to contain a reference to terrorist threats faced by Pakistan in Baluchistan---- a first for any India-Pakistan document !!

Resumption of the India-Pakistan back channel dialogue is unfortunate for a variety of reasons some of which may be enumerated as follows:

1. Firstly, it eases the pressure on Pakistan to shut down the infrastructure of terror directed against India as it suggests that relations between the two countries have achieved a measure of normalcy. Regrettably, this is not so since Pakistan has given India no satisfaction

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on the issue of terrorism and since it misses no opportunity to try and do India down in every conceivable way. In this context, one need only refer to the fact that it continues in its export of terrorism and fake currency to India, its pursuit of an India centric nuclear weapon development programme, its opposition to India's quest for a permanent seat in the UN Security Council, and its military and political linkages with China which are clearly directed against India. In these circumstances, it is grave error to send out signals that there has been a normalization of ties with Pakistan, particularly at a time when the rest of the world, more than ever before, has begun to accept that Pakistan is the fount of terror.

2. Secondly, it goes against the grain of repeated assertions made by the government that a resumption of the dialogue process with Pakistan would only take place after the latter gave us satisfaction on terrorism and in particular brought the

perpetrators of the Mumbai attack to book. Indeed, the Prime Minister himself asserted in Parliament on July 29, 2009 that "Pakistan has to act and act effectively on terrorism before there can be a comprehensive dialogue covering all areas of disagreement or concerns of the two countries". As regards the back channel dialogue, the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Krishna, following his meeting with his Pakistani counterpart on the margins of the UN General Assembly in September 2009 asserted that "When we have a front channel, there's no need for a back channel," adding that India would want more "concrete" actions against the Mumbai terror suspects before agreeing to resume the dialogue. Accordingly, the resumption of the back channel dialogue with Pakistan following our resumption of a comprehensive dialogue on the "front channel" in clear contravention of our categorical statements to the contrary in the matter will convince leaders in that country that India is a soft

state and will, therefore, only embolden them to continue to use terror against us in a business as usual mode. As Mumtaz Khan, a migrant from PoK, who runs the International Centre for Peace and Democracy in Toronto, is reported to have stated recently “I don’t know when India is going to learn. Pakistan is smart...it has initiated wars and terrorist attacks. But New Delhi still wants to talk with them.” In a similar vein Senge Sering who heads the Institute of Gilgit-Baltistan Studies in Washington is reported to have stated that “Pakistan is only buying time. India has the memory of a goldfish, which lasts only seven seconds. New Delhi should realize that they are dealing with a State which is not trustworthy.”

It is sometimes argued that Kashmir is the core issue in India-Pakistani differences and it is, therefore, imperative that it be resolved in order to normalize relations between the countries. This is fallacious. Even if the Kashmir issue is somehow resolved India-Pakistan relations will not be normalized and other differences on issues such as water will be manufactured by the Pakistani military leadership which has a vested interest in maintaining an inimical relationship with India in order to perpetuate itself in power.

3. Thirdly, this move will give the Kashmir issue a much higher profile as the back channel is primarily concerned with it. This is obviously not in our interest as the Kashmir issue which is currently dormant will be revived. Pakistan’s meddling in the matter will receive a fillip and secessionists will up the ante in respect of their demands. Indeed, with the revival of the back channel dialogue Pakistan has been quick to invite the Hurriyat leaders to visit Pakistan and to announce that the Kashmir issue should be resolved in accordance with relevant UN resolutions and that Pakistan would continue to extend moral, political and diplomatic support to Kashmir’s struggle for self determination. It is for this reason that India has always avoided, and Pakistan has

always sought, to give a high profile to the Kashmir issue. It is sometimes argued that Kashmir is the core issue in India-Pakistani differences and it is, therefore, imperative that it be resolved in order to normalize relations between the countries. This is fallacious. Even if the Kashmir issue is somehow resolved India-Pakistan relations will not be normalized and other differences on issues such as water will be manufactured by the Pakistani military leadership which has a vested interest in maintaining an inimical relationship with India in order to perpetuate itself in power.

Finally, the back channel dialogue with Pakistan on the Kashmir issue centering around Musharraf's four point proposal

which envisages soft borders, demilitarization, devolution, and joint control/joint management, is something that we should never have encouraged as it flies in the face of the unanimously adopted February 1994 Parliament resolution on Kashmir. This resolution categorically called for the vacation of aggression by Pakistan in Kashmir and an end to its use of terror against us. The logic behind the resolution was that Kashmir is an integral part of India and Pakistan has no locus standi in the matter. Any understanding with Pakistan by India on the basis of the Musharraf proposal is, therefore, unlikely to be accepted by the nation.

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An Insider's Perspective

- *Kanwal Sibal*

Riaz Mohammed Khan's book "Afghanistan and Pakistan" adds to the already numerous books available on the shelves on the linked Afghanistan-Pakistan situation. The Taliban-takeover of Afghanistan, the 9/11 terror attack that provoked US military intervention leading to Taliban's ouster from power, US failure to consolidate its success because of the distraction of the Iraq war, the resurgence of the Taliban and Pakistan's collusion in this, have all been analysed by diverse authors from different perspectives. So when a new book appears it has to offer more than a pastiche of facts, views and analyses that the reader is already familiar with.

The author, who was Pakistan's Foreign Secretary from 2005 to

2008, offers an insider's perspective on the subject. His book is not a work of scholarship based on "rigorous or extensive" research, as the author avows in the introduction. He offers, as he says, a "broad-brush treatment of events", weaving "personal experiences, perspectives, and evaluation into the larger narrative", derived from his various assignments in the Pakistani Foreign Office.

A former Pakistani diplomat who has officially handled Afghanistan related issues, analysed them on file and in internal discussions, and contributed in some measure to policy making, can be expected to adhere largely to the standard Pakistani view that we know. While this undercurrent is not absent from the book, the sobriety with which the author

The Taliban-takeover of Afghanistan, the 9/11 terror attack that provoked US military intervention leading to Taliban's ouster from power, US failure to consolidate its success because of the distraction of the Iraq war, the resurgence of the Taliban and Pakistan's collusion in this, have all been analysed by diverse authors from different perspectives.

* *Kanwal Sibal - Member Advisory Board, VIF*

expounds his views and the penetrating reflections he makes on many aspects of Pakistani thinking and policies is striking.

The first part of the book covers the post-Soviet withdrawal phase of the Afghanistan conflict from 1989 to 1995, the advent of the Taliban from 1996 to 2001, the developments in Afghanistan post-9/11, with the interests and concerns of the external powers examined in a separate chapter. The second part deals with the Pakistan context of the Afghan situation, with focus on the grave challenge of religious militancy and extremism that the country faces. The intellectual crisis and weak governance in Pakistan is examined with great acuity in chapter 6 of the book. The book ends with the author's "Conclusions" that pinpoint the mistakes made and opportunities missed by western powers in dealing with the developments in Afghanistan at critical moments. This section assesses the exit strategy, the prospects of stabilizing Afghanistan, the reconciliation and reconstruction agenda and the challenge of rebuilding of the Afghan National Army. The December 10 review of the US

counter-insurgency strategy is examined, recommendations are made for an Afghanistan-Pakistan modus vivendi, the conundrum of US-Pakistan relations is looked at, with a glance at the expectations of Pakistan whose dearth of political and intellectual leadership is highlighted.

The author does not believe that Pakistan bears the major responsibility for the mess in Afghanistan, though he does expose the disruptive aspects of its policies and actions. The Pakistan Army and the ISI, he acknowledges, have supported the Afghan insurgents at the highest levels, and at the middle levels have admired their piety and intransigence. He rejects, however, the idea that the ISI created the Taliban, arguing that they were a phenomenon waiting to happen after 10 years of Soviet occupation and 5 years of internecine conflict, with President Zia's islamization policies, the mushrooming of madrassahs and muslim charities from the Gulf under the influence of Wahhabi and Deobandi ideology acting as catalysts. He concedes that in the 1990s the Pakistanis did believe that the Taliban offered

the best hope for stabilization as they drew strength from ethnic Pashtuns straddling the border, and that once settled in power they would become more moderate. Hence, Pakistan favoured engaging the Taliban before and after 9/11, but the international community isolated them in the 1990s because of their human rights record, treatment of women, the bombing of the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania embassies and the Al Qaida connection, pushing the Taliban therefore towards greater dependence on foreign elements.

After 9/11 Pakistan's earlier policy of supporting the Taliban was of course in shambles, with the Northern Alliance in Kabul and Al Qaida and Taliban elements moving into FATA. President Musharraf pressed the US not to allow a government in Kabul unfriendly to Pakistan and pleaded for the inclusion of some moderate Taliban elements in it, but the Bonn Agreement excluded the Taliban and all hardline Mujaheddin groups, which, for the author, was a mistake.

The author argues that Pakistan is not responsible for the post

9/11 resurgence of the Taliban. They had been routed but not destroyed. Later developments, according to the author, including America's war on Iraq which strengthened the Al Qaida and deflected US attention away from Afghanistan, lack of economic support for Afghanistan after Bonn and the meagre results of the Tokyo Donors Conference that only helped to foster the opium economy, the ineffectiveness of aid programmes, poor governance, the absence of government at local levels, the neglect of agriculture as a result, the non-Pashtun character of the Afghan National Army, the perception that the Taliban were fighting for Pashtun rights, the overweening US and UN presence that hurt President Karzai's image and no accretion to his authority after the 2004 Presidential election, all contributed to the steady resurgence of the Taliban.

Afghanistan holds Pakistan responsible for this development as the insurgents operate from Pakistani territory. Pakistan, however, believes it is a victim of the unsettled situation in Afghanistan. The author refutes the widely made charge that

because Pakistan views the Taliban as a long term asset for recovering political influence in Kabul, it is reluctant to act against the group. Pakistan, in his view, can be blamed for half-hearted cooperation but not such calculation. He sees the conflict as fundamentally an Afghan issue. However, with US counter-insurgency efforts failing to produce wanted results, Pakistan has come under greater pressure, with the drone attacks exacerbating US-Pakistan tensions. Lack of trust now marks the military relations between the two countries, with a growing disconnect between the US and Pakistan perceptions and approaches at the operational level.

The author makes the familiar argument that Pakistan does not target the Afghan Taliban as they do not fight Pakistani troops or carry on acts of violence within the country, that Pakistan's primary concern is

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the Pakistani Taliban and that apart from Pakistani empathy with the Taliban, Pakistan has limited capacity to interdict and control them. According to him, Pakistan has been soft on the Haqqanis and Mullah Nazir with a view to squeezing Baitullah Masud. However, even as suicide bombings in Pakistan are rising, the US asks Pakistan to do more. The author denies any double dealing by Pakistan; even pro-US elements in Pakistan, according to him, are disappointed that the US does not see the complexity of the problem facing Pakistan. The general feeling in Pakistan is that the war on terror is not that of Pakistan and that Pakistan is being used as hired help. The author tries to persuade but fails to convince.

Looking ahead at prospects of stability in Afghanistan, the author sees the US military presence in Afghanistan a problem as well as a solution.

The Afghan population is tired of violence and conflict. If the US forces begin withdrawing and other improvements on the ground occur, the rationale for fighting would weaken. Hearts and minds cannot be won by intensification of military efforts. But then, until the Afghan National Security Forces(ANSF) are built, the militancy cannot be pacified.

The chapter on the role of external powers provides some useful insights into the thinking of China and Iran as shared with the Pakistanis. The author sees the rivalry between India, Iran and Pakistan as a source of problems. While recognizing that Pakistan and Afghanistan cannot be detached because of intense informal linkages between the two countries, he sees Pakistan's posture of treating Afghanistan as its backyard as being deeply offensive to the Afghans. He is scornful of the concept of strategic depth that has animated the thinking of the Pakistani military towards Afghanistan and finds Pakistani pleas for a friendly government in Kabul politically unwarranted as Afghanistan has never posed

a conventional military threat to Pakistan.

Backing the Taliban is no longer a viable option for Pakistan today, he says, as that would give the Pakistani Taliban more strength. The author realistically notes that the Taliban had earlier risen to power in Afghanistan because of unique developments, but today opposition to them is strong, Afghanistan is not the war torn country of the mid-1990s and the non-Pashtuns are not willing to accept Taliban rule. Pakistan can at best exert local influence in a fragmented Afghanistan.

It is difficult to believe that, as the author claims, Pakistan will not pursue factional politics in Afghanistan to balance Indian influence. General Musharraf, who no doubt reflects sentiments prevailing in the Pakistani military, still proclaims at all forums that India is in close alliance with the erstwhile Northern Alliance groups and that the Afghan intelligence cooperates with R&AW in Pakistani frontier areas and Balochistan. The author is even less persuasive when he argues that in Pakistan's soft environment(!) contacts between

the Afghan Taliban and retired military officials do exist but the latter are not acting in accordance with official policy. According to him, a stable Afghanistan would require a balance between different groups and not domination by any particular one.

India's interest in Afghanistan is not presented by the author with the usual Pakistani distortions. He sees India maintaining good relations with the Northern Alliance and building goodwill among the Pashtuns. He believes, rightly, that some understanding between India and Pakistan could have a positive impact on Afghanistan, recalling that in 2006 India had approached Pakistan to help Afghanistan settle down but Pakistan took it as a bid to raise the transit issue and did not respond.

For Iran the Taliban are, the author recognizes, a challenge because of their salafist ideology. The Iranians recall the killing of their personnel by Pakistani anti-shia elements amongst the Taliban. Iran has concern about US support for Iranian dissident groups. They haven't made Pak-US military co-operation an

issue in Pakistan-Iran bilateral relations. The author considers the Iranian policy pragmatic and circumspect.

The author is critical of Saudi Arabia's role in financing madrassahs in Pakistan and Afghanistan with salafist ideology and making no effort to reverse this policy. The Russians cannot overlook the fact that the Taliban were the only government to recognize Chechnya. The author has detected no concern in Russia about US bases in Afghanistan. China has expressed no adverse reaction to US military intervention in Afghanistan either. However, beyond curbing terrorism and religious extremism, China would not want a consolidation of US presence in Afghanistan. China has shown no anxiety in bilateral discussions with Pakistan about Nato presence in Afghanistan or its use of Pakistani facilities. In the author's view tension between US and Pakistan is a liability for China, but he does not explain why.

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The chapter on Pakistan in the book is possibly the most revealing as the author is clinical in dissecting Pakistan's shortcomings and failings. An Indian observer making similar assessment of the state of affairs in Pakistan would have been accused of a deep anti Pakistan bias. The author confirms all the negative Indian perceptions of Pakistan. For him, the challenge in Pakistan is a combination of religious motivation, madrassah education, Afghanistan and Kashmir related rhetoric and official patronage for religious militancy. The Pakistani sunni groups have participated in Taliban campaigns. The LeT has been involved in the Kashmir insurgency, but while the group has avoided violence in Pakistan it has fostered an environment of intolerance in Pakistan.

In the 90s sectarian violence was seen as a bane, but jihadi groups despite their sectarian affiliations were cossetted by the

In the 90s sectarian violence was seen as a bane, but jihadi groups despite their sectarian affiliations were cossetted by the military, while the Nawaz Sharif government, whose supporters in the business community who believe in Islamization, saw jihadi groups with equanimity. Benazir Bhutto did not take on the religious constituency, Musharraf was cautious not to touch the army's sensitivities on Kashmir and ruffle orthodoxy.

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There is ambiguity in Pakistan towards the threat of religious extremism, he notes. A lot of ground has been ceded to conservative islamic thinking and to religious parties. Musharraf's concept of enlightened moderation was

simplicistic. He failed to achieve madrassah and mosque reforms and the banning militant sectarian groups. The attempt to revise the blasphemy laws created some anxiety amongst the ranks, which points to the spread of extremist thinking in the lower echelons of the military.

Pakistan shows a strong trans-national impulse rooted in the Ummah, with jihadi groups showing no respect for national boundaries, including in Afghanistan says the author. The Tableeghi Jamat has created a dense religious environment. The influence of the jamaat e islami, religious vigilantism, politicisation of education has stifled culture. Zia ul Haque policy of islamisation and the Saudi inspired salafist thinking has taken root.

The author is candid about the backing the jihadi groups have received from the Pakistani military with a view to compelling india to negotiate on Kashmir. The Pakistani military has believed that the liberation struggle in Kashmir could be successfully supported. The ISI was deeply involved with Kashmir groups. Pakistan is in permanent confrontation with India. Mistrust of india, he says ominously, is part of Pakistan army's institutional culture

which can be softened but not changed.

The ideas of security, religiosity and patriotism suit the military. There is aggressive patriotism at retired mid level military and civilian official level. Jihad, piety and faith is the motto of army, The ranks of the armed forces are not immune to extremism.

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The author confirms the many syndromes his country suffers from. Pakistan has a beseiged mentality, with conspiracy theories rampant. It externalizes blame, blaming India and the US for supporting the Taliban, even Mahsud, as well as suicide bombings. Pakistan resorts to denial with facility, saying the Kashmir struggle is indigenous, denying the presence of Mullah

Omar or the Al Qaida in Pakistan. There is a streak of anti-modernity in popular thinking, an antipathy towards secularism, modernization and liberalism, a tendency to condone the Al Qaida and Taliban's excesses as a consequence of the US presence in Afghanistan.

The author's conclusions cover the past and the future. Many of

his recommendations for the future are eminently sensible, even if his analysis of the past can be questioned in parts.

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Voting Against Sri Lanka

- *PP Shukla*

Fighting an insurgency is a dirty business. We in India know that. In the west, this is understood with the cold-blooded acceptance that is typical of them. And they have never hesitated to draw blood when their interests required it. It is only when their plans are thwarted by the other side successfully applying force that we hear the cry of human rights and war crimes. These are obvious points, and we have been – still are in some areas - at the receiving of the double standards. It would be reasonable to expect that the Government would appreciate this reality and frame its policies accordingly. Evidently not, as the recent vote on Sri Lanka at the UN Human Rights Council shows.

On the draft Resolution naming Sri Lanka, we began with the eminently sensible assertion that we have never supported country-specific resolutions on human rights. The logic is that we have ourselves been the target of such attempts in the past, and have drawn the right lesson – never

support the condemnation of any country by name. In large measure, this is because we all know that such resolutions are really political in nature, and the human rights issue is just a thin veneer to make the adoption of such resolutions more palatable in multilateral settings. It is, for example, highly unlikely that we shall see any resolution naming Bahrain for human rights violations – or Pakistan, where Hindus and other minorities literally live in terror.

In addition, Sri Lanka is an area of vital interest to us, and one of the better bilateral relationships among our South Asian neighbours. Not just that, the LTTE – as distinct from the Tamil population of Sri Lanka – has given us nothing but grief since the days of the IPKF. In short, there were many reasons for GOI to adhere the time-tested policy of not supporting country-specific resolutions.

But the Prime Minister reversed that stand under pressure from

* *PP Shukla - Joint Director, VIF*

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e Dravida parties, even though it is difficult to understand what kind of pressure these two parties were able to bring; one is weak and needs the Congress, rather than the other way around; the other is not a supporter at all and is not likely to be one any time soon.

The Resolution itself is straightforward enough. Its demands are, however, such that we would not countenance any such demand being placed on us. It requests the Government of Sri Lanka, inter alia, “to present, as expeditiously as possible, a comprehensive action plan detailing the steps that the Government has taken and will take to implement the recommendations made in the [Lessons Learned and Reconciliation] Commission’s report, and also to address alleged violations of international law”. Not many Governments in the world would like to be at the receiving end of such a demand, no

There is a Tamil problem in Sri Lanka. And India alone has the knowledge, the standing, and the commitment to both the Sri Lankans and the Tamils to play a fair and effective role in righting this situation. But not for the first time, we are flunking our role and our destiny. This is a pity, for we have covered the hard yards over the last three decades.

matter that it is couched in polite language.

The proceedings themselves are also revealing: China and Cuba spoke in defence of the Sri Lankan position. The Americans, supported by the EU countries, expressed support for the Draft Resolution. Sri Lanka thanked China and Cuba for their support.

Many countries gave explanations of vote, including the above countries, as well as Russia. India did not speak in the debate, or provide an explanation of vote. Russia, China, Bangladesh, Maldives all voted against the Resolution. Malaysia was among the eight countries that abstained. India voted in favour, and was also the only Asian country that did so.

There is a Tamil problem in Sri Lanka. And India alone has the knowledge, the standing, and the commitment to both the Sri Lankans and the Tamils to play a fair and effective role in righting this situation. But not for the first

time, we are flunking our role and our destiny. This is a pity, for we have covered the hard yards over the last three decades. The framework for a solution has been worked out, largely under Indian prodding. It only needs to be implemented in good faith now. India is in a position to contribute to this process too, and ensure a positive outcome. We have made some efforts, but obviously not serious enough to make the critical difference. Events such as the vote will only complicate our task; fortunately, the Prime Minister is reported to have written to the Sri Lankan President after the vote, so it is to be hoped that that will smooth things over. It would also be wise for Sri Lanka also not to make a long-term grievance of this matter, and agree to put it behind us.

However, the Tamil problem should not be allowed to become an LTTE problem. This was the

mistake we made in the 1980's, when the LTTE physically eliminated all rival groups, and we acquiesced in this. The bitter experience of the later years, including the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, should serve as a reminder against allowing the LTTE – and its western

supporters, lay and ecclesiastical – to become the sole voice of Tamil aspirations again. Their agenda is not in our interest. Eelam is not in our interest in today's circumstances.

Further, we have serious challenges emerging afresh in the neighbourhood. China is making steady progress in Sri Lanka. Some of it is a result of our incompetence, some of it is the Sri

Lankan attitude of trying to outsmart us – a common affliction in South Asia. But we have vital stakes in the country, and cannot fashion our responses out of pique, or because of pressure from within and without. Pakistan is similarly fishing in the troubled waters. If

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And that is the second point worth making. Just as we should have resisted all kinds of pressures over the Sri Lanka vote, we need to be more pragmatic, and less perverse, over Iran. There are important interests in Iran, no doubt, but there is less substance to them than our current policy would seem to suggest. Oil imports are undoubtedly important, but that about sums it all up. All the rest, particularly the route to Afghanistan and beyond to Central Asia, is a very remote possibility. This is because Iran is itself not quite clear where it stands – with the Taliban and Pakistan, or against this alliance. It is an active participant in all the regional summits hosted by Pakistan. This is because it is driven basically by a visceral opposition to America, even though it is far from clear that this represents the popular view of America within Iran. It is also

Moreover, the investigations by the Delhi Police into the bombing of the Israeli diplomat's car make it clear that there was Iranian involvement. This is a serious breach of all diplomatic norms and even by the standards of the special agencies, this is an unfriendly act. Iran must be called to account for this.

worth remembering that the regime itself is unpopular and devoid of legitimacy.

Equally important, it is far from clear that India has the will to pursue any serious interest or stake in this region. There are legitimate grounds to doubt whether we have the stamina for any long-term commitment even to Afghanistan. The test of all this is to be found in the willingness - or otherwise – of GOI to stand up to Pakistan's bare-knuckles policies in Afghanistan. For instance, Pakistan will not allow Indian goods to transit to Afghanistan; and yet, we have unilaterally given Pakistani goods MFN treatment, when they have not done so for Indian goods, as they are required to do under the WTO rules. We are also now planning, if press reports are to be believed, to allow for easier Pakistani investments – investments from Pakistan! – in India even though they have not yet finalised their position on MFN status for India.

Moreover, the investigations by the Delhi Police into the bombing of the Israeli diplomat's car make it clear that there was Iranian involvement. This is a serious breach of all diplomatic norms and even by the standards of the special agencies, this is an unfriendly act. Iran must be called to account for this. We have approached the country for help in bringing the accused to justice; their willingness to cooperate will be the litmus test of their true intent vis-à-vis India.

As against this, we have real, immediate, and substantive interests in the west and Israel and the west, as has been set out in an earlier piece in this space. For far too long, we have neglected our national interests while pursuing mistaken policies. High time to set things right.

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Better Government To Government Efforts Needed To Rejuvenate Nepal-India Relations

- Hari Bansh Jha

Background

People-to-people relations are always pivotal for maintaining long-term bilateral relations between two countries. But such a relation gets new lease of life if it is backed by due understanding at the level of heads of government of two countries. This is true anywhere in the world, but it is more so with context to Nepal and India.

Relations at people-to-people level between the two countries have remained harmonious since time immemorial. But at times jerks have been experienced at the government-to-government level in the relations between the two countries to the great disadvantage of the people of the two countries.

In view of the proximity between Nepal and India, any development in Nepal would have far reaching implications in India and vice versa. Hence, it bestows greater responsibility to the heads of governments of Nepal and India

for developing better understanding at the government-to-government level. Such an understanding might not only prove potential in opening new vistas of economic cooperation, but it might also remove distrust, if any, in the relations between the two countries. It is all the more necessary to develop due understanding at the government-to-government level between the two countries as Nepal is constrained by political logjam and there is growing influence of foreign forces in the country.

Unique relation

No two countries in the world is bound as much by cultural, religious, geo-economic, political and strategic ties as Nepal and India. Therefore, people in India regard the Nepalese as closest to them and so is the attitude of people of Nepal towards the Indian people. Such people-to-people relation is unique, which is also made possible through the open border system for the people of one country to the other.

* Hari Bansh Jha – Senior ICCR Fellow, IDAS

Thousands of Nepalese and Indians marry each other taking advantage of the open border regime. Millions of Nepalese benefit from employment opportunities across the border in India. Many Indians also work in Nepal. Each day, the Nepalese go for shopping in India and the Indians come to Nepal. This uniqueness in relations between the two countries has really made the Nepal-India border as borderless.

It is this unique relation between Nepal and India that gave way to 1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship. Security interests of the two countries were locked through this Treaty. Each country made commitment for taking joint initiative in case there was external threat to any of them. Perhaps, this bound of common security made the Nepalese Prime Minister Martika Prasad Koirala to publicly announce in 1950s that the defence of India was the defence of Nepal. Equally, true is the fact that the defence of Nepal is the defence of India.

No less remarkable are the views expressed by the Nepalese Prime Minister K.I. Singh on Nepal-India relations. A foreign journalist asked him, “Why is it

that the Nepalese value India so high when the Western countries and multilateral institutions pour so much money in Nepal in the form of foreign aid?” In his reply, Singh asked, “Why is it that Sita, the daughter of Nepal, had none else than Ram, son of India, to marry? Why is it that Ram had no one else other than Sita to marry?”

For the purity of one’s household chores or religious activities in Nepal, it is unavoidable to sprinkle *Gangajal* i.e. the holy water of the *Ganga* river flowing through the Indian territory. No ritual is possible from birth to the death in this country without *gangajal*. Even the ashes of dead bodies in Nepal have to be emerged into the Ganga. Souls of the ancestors in this country rest in peace until certain rituals are performed in Gaya in India. People in Nepal have as much faith in Kashi, Ayodhya, Mathura, Vrindavan, Balaju or Rameshwar in India as the people in India have in Janakpur (the birthplace of Sita), Pashupatinath and Muktinath in Nepal.

Long Gap in Visit by Indian Prime Minister

However, it is a pity that there has been a long gap in high-level visit of Indian Prime Minister to Nepal.

For nearly 15 years, no Indian Prime Minister visited Nepal. I.K. Gujral was the last Prime Minister of India to visit Nepal. Of course, Atal Bihari Vajpayee visited Nepal in January 2002, but the purpose of his visit to Nepal at that time was merely to participate in 11th SAARC summit.

Turbulence in Nepal

Coincidentally, the last 15 years has been the most turbulent period in Nepal's history. Official records show that 17,828 people were killed during the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) lead People's war between 1996 and 2006. There was colossal loss of property and widespread destruction of government schools, offices, roads and other infrastructural facilities in the country during that time.

Following the historical Peace Accord between the government and the Maoists in 2006, the 239-year old monarchical institution

collapsed in 2008. But even after six years of signing of the Peace Accord, the Maoist combatants are only partially laid off under the voluntary retirement scheme. The law and order situation in the country is still in fragile state. Armed groups have proliferated, particularly in the Terai region of Nepal. Most of the industries are

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closed on account of growing labour militancy, political instability, strikes, *bandh*, inadequate supply of power and raw materials. Forced donations and abductions have plagued the entire society. Because of the lack of employment opportunities at home, the number of youth fleeing the country for

overseas employment (countries other than India) formed 600 per day until 2010, which more than doubled to 1,500 in 2011-12.

Nepal's Challenges

The greatest challenge that Nepal is facing today is the failure of the

Constituent Assembly to draft the constitution. As it is well known, the elections for 601-member Constituent Assembly were held in 2008 to make constitution within two years. Yet there is no substantial progress in constitution making despite the fact that the tenure of the Constituent Assembly was extended several times in last two years. If the Constituent Assembly is not able to make constitution until May 27, 2012 when perhaps its final tenure expires, it would be a great set back to political stability in Nepal.

According to World Development Report 2012, Nepal's per capita income is as low as \$490. Even in Nepal's neighborhood, the per capita income in India is \$1,340 – almost three times more than what Nepal does have. In 2010, Bangladesh's per capita income was \$640, Pakistan's per capita income was \$1,050 and Sri Lanka's per capita income was \$2,290.

Though many of the schools, colleges and universities have been opened in Nepal, the quality of the academic institutions is often questioned. They do not meet the expectations of the students. So there is a tendency on the part of many of the students to pursue education in countries outside Nepal. However, certain country/countries admit Nepalese students not for imparting quality education but for other political interests.

Nepal recorded economic growth rate of 2.7 per cent in 2009-10; whereas during that period India's rate of economic growth was 8.3 per cent and China's rate of economic growth was 9.9 per cent.

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Issues of Concern between Nepal and India

Even after more than one-and-half decade of the signing of 6000 MW Mahakali Treaty between Nepal and India in 1996, it has not been implemented. So much so that even the hydropower projects with Indian investments, including the

GMR Group working on 900 MW Upper Karnali and Upper Marshyangdi has been targeted despite the fact that the nation is finding acute load shedding of 14 hours a day. At the moment, Nepal produces power to the extent of 692 MW in the summer season against the demand for 860 MW. In the winter, the country produces only 393 MW of power when the demand is 588 MW.

Some other joint venture projects between Nepal and India, including Dabur Nepal and Surya Nepal have also been targeted. For last several years, no new joint venture project has come from India to Nepal. Even those joint ventures which are in operation in Nepal increasingly feel insecure. Unfortunately, the investment climate in Nepal could not improve despite the fact that Bilateral Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (BIPPA) aimed at protecting investment was duly signed between Nepal and India on October 21, 2011

The shortage of Indian currency (IC) has seriously affected trade and increased hardships to the common people, travelers and consumers all along the Nepalese-Indian border. In 2008-09, Nepal sold \$1.5 million to buy IC

amounting to Rs. 73.4 billion.⁴ Furthermore, Nepal Rastra Bank sold \$2.7 million in 2010-11 to buy IC worth Rs. 123.8 billion. In view of the shortage of IC, the Nepalese bankers have asked Nepal Rastra Bank, the central bank of Nepal, to allow them to purchase IC either directly from the market in Nepal or from across the border in India. The IC is in short supply in Nepal partly due to the trade deficit with India and partly for its demand to finance illegal imports mainly in the form of gold. Nepal Rastra Bank directive allows banks to exchange IC up to IRs. 25,000 in a day or up to IRs. 200,000 in a month. But it hardly complies this directive.

Nepal's trade deficit with India almost doubled from Rs. 121 billion in 2008-09 to Rs. 218 billion in 2010-11. The country imports goods worth Rs. 261 billion from India against its exports of Rs. 43 billion to that country.

Of particular concern are the growing cases of duplication of popular Indian trademarks by some unscrupulous elements in Nepal. This not only harmed Indian interest but also harmed the interests of Nepalese consumers. The Nepalese consumers have had to

compromise with the quality of such products, which is detrimental to their health. Cases of duplication of popular trademarks of India by the local Nepalese companies are found in all such areas as the soap, detergent, shampoo, adhesive, T.V. sets, hair oil, cosmetics, powder, stationery, toilet paper, furniture, textile and garment, footwear, vegetable ghee, oil, razor, incense, medicines, toothbrush, battery, fan, electric bulb, pressure cooker, tobacco, chocolate, saving cream, alcohol, Gutkha, spices, Pan Masala, biscuits, rice, *atta*, etc. Such activities also create negative environment for investment in Nepal.

Quite often, the cases of smuggling of fake Indian Currency Notes through the Nepalese territory to India are published in the media, which by all accounts is counter-productive and against the interests of both the countries. There are reports that about Rs. 20 crore worth of fake Indian

currency is smuggled through the Nepalese territory to India each year.

Development of Nepal-India border region is neglected all through the history, though it is of crucial interest to the growth of the two countries. Because of the British legacy to keep this region underdeveloped, very little could

Development of Nepal-India border region is neglected all through the history, though it is of crucial interest to the growth of the two countries. Because of the British legacy to keep this region underdeveloped, very little could be done by the Indian government even after its independence for the growth of the region. In Nepal, too, the rulers have been reluctant in developing the peripheral border region of the Terai for their own vested interests.

be done by the Indian government even after its independence for the growth of the region. In Nepal, too, the rulers have been reluctant in developing the peripheral border region of the Terai for their own vested interests.

In the pretext of launching development work,

there are NGOs, INGOs and foreign missionaries that have been luring mostly the weaker sections of the population in Nepal for religious conversion. If they are not tamed, it is likely that more than half of Nepal's total population would be converted into alien faith in next 20 years. Such activities could have far

reaching implications on Nepal-India relations in the long-term perspective.

Besides, certain groups of people in Nepal suffer from the notion of 'small country' syndrome vis-à-vis India. They do not want to have any positive deal with India – be it in water resources or other sectors.

These are the people who target infrastructural facilities, including hydro-power projects in Nepal, even at the cost of plunging the country in dark. The government has no control on elements who want to make the country hostage of perpetual poverty. Even on the Indian part, many of the bureaucrats

dealing Nepal suffer from 'big country syndrome' mentality. They take it for granted that Nepal should do all at their command. In fact, both the 'small country syndrome' and 'big country syndrome' mentality among certain elite groups in Nepal and India are detrimental to initiating

new era of economic cooperation between the two countries.

What is that India should do?

India could establish a few Delhi Public Schools in Nepal. Besides, academic institutions like that of Jawaharlal Nehru University, Indian Institute of Technology and

Indian Institute of Management could be established in Nepal. Even India could establish medical colleges of same standard as the one established by this country at Dharan. Besides, India might think of opening standard journalism courses as there is no any such institution throughout the Terai region of Nepal. With the opening of such

world class academic institutions, much of the resources that are spent by Nepal on the education of the students in third countries will be saved.

Since India has made outstanding performance in Information Technology (IT) sector, it could

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establish its unit/units in Nepal. In 1996-97, India exported software to the tune of \$1 billion, which increased spectacularly to \$23.4 billion in 2005-6⁷ and \$63 billion as of March 31, 2008.

Prospects are also quite high for the development Export Processing Zones along the Terai region of Nepal to take the advantage of proximity factor with India. Such zones, if established along the dry port region and having backing of all the infrastructural facilities as road, rail and air connectivity, apart from the availability of electricity, raw materials and cheap labour, could accelerate the pace of industrialization and generate huge employment opportunities in the country. Prospects are also high for the growth of such industries in Nepal as pharmaceuticals, water resource based ventures like water supply and sanitation, fruit and vegetable processing, textiles, carpet, garment and local handicrafts.

In order to help Nepal reduce its balance of trade with India, there could be provision of free trade with common tariff with India. With this development, many of the Indian industries would make further investment in Nepal.

Goods thus produced in Nepal could be exported to India. Besides, the consumers in Nepal would be getting products at the same price as it is available to the Indian consumers.

Nepal's rate of economic growth largely depends on the growth of infrastructural facilities. India, therefore, should speed up the construction of its projects in Nepal, which include Postal/Hulaqi highway, Broad Gauze Railway line connecting Jaynagar (India) to Bardibas (Nepal) via Janakpur and Mechi-Mahakali railway line, and Kamala diversion project. India could also speed up construction of link roads connecting the Terai region of Nepal with India along such points as Janakpur-Pipraun-Darbhanga, Japakpur-Bhitamore-Sitamadhi and Birgunj-Raxaul-Motihari. Besides, Indian government could complete the work of Brihattar Janakpur Parikrama Sadak (Larger Janakpur Circumulation Road) that covers part of Nepalese territory and part of Indian territory. India might also think of developing such religious cum historical regions of Nepalese Terai as Birat, Baraha, Salhesh, Simraungadh and Lumbini and try to link them with the other

religious spots in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh for the growth of religious tourism in both parts of Nepal and India.

India could talk to the Nepalese authorities for setting up a high level umbrella organization of the two countries “Nepal-India Border Authority” with a view to addressing such problems as flood, drought, crimes, counterfeit currency, smuggling and other such activities along the border region. There should also be increased cooperation between the security agencies of the two countries to address some of these problems.

Both Nepal and India should see to it that political instability and weak socio-economic structure in Nepal should not give room to certain external power/powers to have free play in the country. Such foreign powers in their game plan have

been trying to erode, if not eliminate, the age-old special relations existing between Nepal and India.

A Way Forward

There is a tremendous scope for improving government-to-

There is a tremendous scope for improving government-to-government level cooperation between Nepal and India at various levels. Considering India’s growing strength in economic front, the country needs to share part of its resources for the establishment of academic institutions of excellence at all the levels from school, college to the university levels in Nepal. Both Nepal and India should see to it that the bottlenecks in implementation of hydro-power projects, including in Pancheshwor project and Upper Karnali are removed.

government level cooperation between Nepal and India at various levels. Considering India’s growing strength in economic front, the country needs to share part of its resources for the establishment of academic institutions of excellence at all the levels from school, college to the university levels in Nepal. Both Nepal and India should see to it that the bottlenecks in

implementation of hydro-power projects, including in Pancheshwor project and Upper Karnali are removed. Free trade area with provision of common tariff regime is established to address the problem of growing trade deficit

between the two countries. Work in the Indian aided projects in roads, rail and other sector is speeded up. Focus is given to the development of Nepal-India border region by establishing high level body such as “Nepal-India Border Authority.” However, the road map for Nepal-India cooperation does not appear to be that smooth given the turmoil in Nepalese polity. Yet the Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh should use his diplomatic acumen in

order to bring the war-torn and underdeveloped Nepal on the forefront of economic growth of South Asian countries through cooperation at all the levels. Peace and prosperity of Nepal is in best interest of India and therefore India should extend all possible support to Nepal even if certain cost is involved in it.

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Recent Political Turmoil inside The Communist Party Of China

- *Dr. Binod Singh*

The Downfall of Bo Xilai

While the world is busy in finding a peaceful solution for Syrian crisis, and saving the Euro Zone, the world's largest Communist Party of China (CPC) is currently undergoing a power struggle where one of the most ambitious party leaders of Chongqing, Mr. Bo Xilai was removed last week. The outgoing Hu-Wen administration seems determined to clean the house before handing over the power to new generation of Chinese leaders in the late autumn this year.

This incident has generated a huge debate behind the fire walls on the Chinese internet. The demise of Bo Xilai has been termed as one of the most significant event after the downfall of reform minded Chinese Premier Zhao Ziyang in 1989. After all, Bo Xilai was seen as the rising star of the princeling group in China. He was the son of Bo Yibo, another reformist leader during the time of Deng Xiaoping.

Before shifting to Chongqing, Bo Xilai was the commerce minister of China (2002-2007). Earlier he has been at the helm of affairs in the province of Liaoning. Mr. Wang Dejinag, currently a vice premier has been assigned to look after the Chongqing Municipality.

The story unfolded when one of the Vice Mayor of the Chongqing city, Mr. Wang Lijun was denied asylum when he entered the American consulate in Chengdu.¹ Wang was the head of Chongqing public security bureau and instrumental in cleaning the city from 3000 brothels and 100 of city gangs. He was especially shifted from Liaoning province (the den of all the major gangs in northern China) to the Chongqing municipality by the leader Bo Xilai, when the latter joined as the party secretary in 2007. Currently Mr. Wang is under surveillance and was not allowed to take part in the recently concluded NPC and CPPCC sessions. He had applied for asylum fearing threat to his life by making him political

* *Dr. Binod Singh*

scapegoat by certain leaders in the party. But why the United States, the only champion of human rights in the world, has denied him asylum is yet not clear. Perhaps Vice President Xi Jinping was expected to travel to the United States on the invitation of Joe Biden. Giving asylum to Wang would have given a quite wrong signal to the China's president in- waiting.

What will be the fate of Wang Lijun is very obvious to any observer of Chinese Communist party Politics. If not executed, he will be charged with serious crime of sedition and conspiracy and may spend rest of his life behind bars.

But during his trial what all the revelations he will make will certainly decide the fate of many small or big party leaders. Mr. Bo Xilai always liked the media lime light and since he shifted to Chongqing, he has been credited with major economic and social reform. He attempted to bridge the rural urban poverty gap by including the rural dwellers into

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the city benefit facilities. He organized Red-Singing campaigns which had been popular during the cultural revolution of Mao's time. What has evolved as Chongqing model in the recent media reports was bitten to dust in a fort night. The indication was very clear in the Premier Wen's press conference on 15th March after the end of NPC session. In

response to a question from AFP journalist, Wen indicated very clearly that a proper investigation will take place and law will take its own course.

Political Reform not on the Cards

On the issue of democracy and popular elections in China, Mr. Li Zhao Xing, the spokesperson for the 12th NPC & CPPCC, made it very clear that it is too early for China to go for direct election of its leaders, with universal suffrage. China is the largest nation in the world and geographically it is very diverse. There are hundreds of villages still not connected by any transport

communication. Currently the Chinese society is also very imbalanced economically; hence it is early for China to go for popular voting.

Now, what would the next course of political reforms in the country is not yet clear. But one thing is very clear that the Chinese Communist Party is intolerant of any disciplinary misbehavior by whosoever it may be. It is premature to conclude that the downfall of Bo Xilai has already exposed the factional struggle inside the party. Earlier the false news of Jiang Zemin (ex Chinese President) had created similar controversies but the party managed to get hold of the editor of Hong Kong Based magazine, who is currently facing trial. Bo many not find any sympathizer in the top leadership who can openly come in his support, but his demise will make sure that the party is united and still far from disintegrating as some observers have predicted. Factionalism inside the party is

China's current vice president, is expected to replace Hu Jintao as general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party and as president of China. With this change comes a new generation of Chinese leaders, the rise of "fifth generation". Seven out of nine members of the Standing Committee—China's most powerful decision-making body—will also be replaced.

prevalent from the very beginning, as it is the nature of any political party in the world. Some time it is less visible, but some time it is more when heads roll.

The Rise of Fifth Generation Leaders

In the fall of 2012, China will undergo a major transition in leadership. Xi Jinping, China's current vice president, is expected to replace Hu Jintao as general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party and as president of China. With this change comes a new generation of Chinese leaders, the rise of "fifth generation". Seven out of nine members of the Standing Committee—China's most powerful decision-making body—will also be replaced. It is yet too early to write an obituary for the demise of Mr. Bo Xilai as he still continues to be a member of the politbureau. But it is clear that he is out of the race for the nine-member standing committee members of the politbureau. Only

two members, Mr. Xi Jinping and Li Keqiang are confirmed, as they are all set to take over as president and prime minister of the country later next year. For the rest seven members of the standing committee, the competition is still open. It is believed that the downfall of Mr. Bo Xilai will only make the case of Wang Yang, party secretary of Guangdong province stronger.

As of now it seems that the leadership transition in China will be peaceful and will take place later this year. But what kind of governance this fifth generation of leadership will undertake and how they will keep the party intact is yet unclear.

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Chinese Chequers

- Vice Admiral (ret'd) Barry Barathan

Shi lang, the latest addition to the PLA Navy has triggered speculation, concern, and some anxiety about what next by China as America the lone super power and the supposed to be guardian of the Free World seems to crawl into a fetal position into an embryo of self inflicted economic woes. History teaches those who want to learn and hence it may be worth our while to seek to look at China first and then its Navy next

Historical Realities

China is an ancient civilization with a history of an occupation by Japan and, also subjugation by the English. China is also fairly insular despite various dynastic divisions and sectarian influences. Its memory is long and never fleeting. Sun Tzu's has been the guiding light of the Chinese leadership.

“Be extremely subtle to the point of being formless. Be extremely mysterious to the point of being soundless. Thereby you can be the

director of the opponent's fate” - Sun Tzu

English Penetration of China

The first opium war of 1839 saw the subjugation of China in being forced to award concessions to Great Britain. Hong Kong was ceded, with ports of Shanghai and Ghuangzou opened up to trade. The second Opium war in 1858 also resulted in Chinese defeat. More ports were opened up along with rights for foreigners to travel into interior China. To date the Chinese remember this with a quiet but intense outrage.

Japanese Occupation

The rape of Nanking, Japanese occupation of China in early 20th century during the Second World War, was perhaps the darkest period in East Asian history. The Chinese claim to have lost around 25 million people in this conflict. It is replete with stories of unimaginable atrocities by the occupying Japanese military. China is still quietly licking its

* Vice Admiral (ret'd) Barry Barathan - Distinguished Fellow, VIF

wounds.

Communist China –Emerging Definiteness

October 1949 is the watershed for the Chinese with the advent of Communism. Whatever happened or did not happen, an emerging definiteness became the start point of Chinese rise in the 20th century. In six decades the Middle kingdom has arrived on the International arena. Its leadership is consistent with a constancy of purpose. Mostly phlegmatic in style, the Chinese polity has osmotic ally optimized its position in the World's stage. The World may not like its posturing or its new wealth but can no longer discount its positioning! Therein remains the denouement of the red dragon.

The Middle Kingdom Response

When the communists took power, the official name for China has been “ZHONGHNA RENMIN GONGHEGUO” (Middle Glorious

People's Republican Country or in English; the People's Republic of China). It believes itself and in its destiny with a resolve never to allow history to repeat the aberration of occupation in its land that was after all between “Heaven and Earth”

The World did not take any serious notice; The West flush with success in World War II was pre occupied with the Soviet and Warsaw pact. Post collapse of the Soviet Union, the war on terrorism kept it on its toes. The East on an economic high, though conscious of China, was confident that the West would guard its backwaters. It

also believed that a backward China would not pose any immediate threat. The South led by India and Nehru felt that Panchsheel was the answer to Asia. The sixties changed all that with the PRC carving out an independent path for itself away from the Soviet style of communism and economic strategy. The brief Indo-China

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1962 conflict changed the statics of South Asia. India and Russia on one side with China Pakistan aligned against them. The admittance of China in the UN Security Council, its military nuclear stature, growing global economic clout and de-recognition of Taiwan were all part of a well directed, and orchestrated Chinese strategy. China for now, seems well suited to its oligarchic leadership style of combining, osmosis of patient effort and optimizing opportunity across the span of International Relationships. Its maritime strategy is embedded within this approach. It believes its sovereign security lies in the Oceans of the World.

China has framed its macro objectives in the context of five-year plans, with clearly defined targets and policy initiatives designed to achieve targets with a high degree of accountability. It is unique, that Communist China follows liberal economic policies with flexibility. The recently enacted 12th Five-Year Plan that has shifted from the highly successful producer model of the past 30 years to a flourishing consumer society is an illustrious example.

wherever and whenever necessary, is remarkable. China's leadership places the highest priority on stability post the turmoil of the Cultural Revolution of the 1970's. It internally uses an iron hand with an iron gauntlet.

Sustained Strategy

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shifted from the highly successful producer model of the past 30 years to a flourishing consumer society is an illustrious example.

Aligned Policies

Despite vastness of geography and immensity, all its policies are aligned with its strategy of sustaining itself in the long term

Even a cursory analysis of the Middle kingdom's performance today highlights continuity and constancy in:

A National Commitment to Stability

Its commitment to internal stability even by use of force,

Liberal Economics

In six decades, it has displayed a strong economic dynamism with sound regulation and market reforms. Willingness to learn from within and outside is a key characteristic of its regimes openness to change.

Domestic Thrift

A domestic saving rate in excess of 50% has shielded China from external shocks. It has swelled the foreign-exchange reserves that has served China well and aided economic development. The Country now stands ready to absorb some of that surplus saving to focus on internal demand.

Domestic Servicing and Consumption

Robust plans are afoot to increase both service and consumption percentages of China with a salutary impact on its overall GDP. Rural to urban migration is also on the increase with a positive

impact on accelerated infrastructural growth.

Education

China is well on its way to a, knowledge- and industry based economy. English, mathematics, sciences, computer learning and history are part of Chinese schools and colleges. Literacy rates are

growing rapidly. Chinese universities now graduate more than 1.5 million engineers and scientists annually. The country regularly sends its PLA officer in the guise of students to America, the West, Europe and Russia. Interestingly, more PLA officers know Hindi than what India realizes.

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Foreign Direct Investment

PRC attracts FDI. In 2010 the foreign direct investment in China was estimated to be around 106 billion US dollars and rising. In stark comparison India's FDI is about 4.5 billion dollars. This Huge FDI is the catalyst to its accelerated growth.

Innovation and Cloning

China innovates and clones unmindful of IPR violations. China is fourth and rising in terms of international patent applications. Its research-and-development share of GDP is projected to be 2.5 % by 2015, twice of what was in 2002. It is focusing on innovation-based “strategic emerging industries” – energy conservation, new-generation information technology, biotechnology, high-end equipment manufacturing, renewable energy, alternative materials, and autos running on alternative fuels. Its consciousness resource management strategy is equally sound as evident in its R&D investment.

An Evolving Military Strategy

“China is a riddle, wrapped in an enigma and encircled, (as the Internet gurus inform us) by The Great Firewall of China” Joel Bowman

This is integral in China’s mind set and its continuum of

comprehensive National Power. It encompasses a maritime vision in both the short and long term. The Chinese understanding of short, being around 30/40 years and long about 100 years. Embedded in this is a resolve never to be occupied as happened twice in their long history. Its increasing Global reach is complimentary to this idea.

It is subtly adopting a strategy of influence and hold through, arms transfer, military assistance, and aid in direct defiance of American Global interests. It knows that its trade surplus with the latter provides it a position of strength and power to play then game and guard its interests.

A grand master in International relationships the red dragon skillfully uses its ancient cultural instinct, its potent economic strength, it’s rising military potential, nuclear weapons capability to let the World know that the China can no longer be taken lightly less alone ignored.

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Interaction with Mr. Michel Miraillet, Director Strategic Affairs, Govt. Of France

As part of what could be described as an exercise in Track 1.5 diplomacy, Mr. Michel Miraillet, Director Strategic Affairs in France's Ministry of Defence, held wide-ranging and intense interaction with the VIF's battery of policy experts on March 1, 2012. The visit by Mr. Miraillet ostensibly aimed at finding ways to broaden further the scope for strategic convergence between the two countries. The panel of Indian discussants was led by Mr. Ajit Doval KC, Director VIF and included, among others, Ambassador PP Shukla, Joint Director VIF, Mr. Vijai Kapoor, former Lieutenant Governor Delhi, Ambassador Satish Chandra, formerly Deputy National Security Advisor, Admiral KK Nyaar, a former Vice Chief of the Indian Navy, Shri CD Sahay, a former Secretary R&AW,

Lt Gen Ravi Sawhney, a former DG Military Intelligence and, General VN Sharma and General NC Vij, both former chiefs of the Indian Army.

Welcoming Mr. Miraillet to the



foundation, Mr. Doval said that India's strategic partnership with France was based on a solid foundation, appreciating, in particular, the position adopted by

France after the nuclear tests were conducted by India in 1998 and its support for India's permanent membership at the UN Security Council. Painting India's security scenario with a broad brush, he said that India lived in a dangerous neighbourhood where terrorism, ethnic strife, drug trafficking, sea piracy and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) etc. were posing grave threats to nation states. The ensuing interaction

which followed after a detailed presentation by Mr. Miraillet focused on the regional security situation including the broader West Asia region. The importance of close Indo-French understanding and partnership in the face of new emerging situations was the backdrop to a substantive and detailed exchange.

Mr. Miraillet opined that while defence and civil-nuclear agreements as also technology transfers formed the base for both the countries to work together in the future, they also needed to share a common vision of the world. He, however, underlined the fact that unlike in the past when the French perception of India was largely shaped by its commercial and business interests, India is now increasingly viewed as one of the important stakeholders in security. Mr. Miraillet also outlined the Franco-British efforts to consolidate their respective defence capabilities against the background of growing uncertainties in the global economy. Both sides agreed that asymmetries in the defence spending in the region could have consequences that they would need to work together to address.

The Indian side emphasized the need for Europe to maintain its arms embargo on supplies to China.

Complexities in the present geo-strategic environment arising mostly from Iran's nuclear programme, unrest in the Middle East, China's aggressive posture in the Asia-Pacific region, Pakistan's growing radicalization, the eastward expansion of NATO, the European missile defence, and a resurgent Russia were discussed and debated extensively during the interaction. The Indian interlocutors were of the view that NATO's apprehensions as regards Russia needed to be re-assessed, as they stemmed from a mindset which existed during the Cold War. In their opinion, Russia could be leveraged effectively to become an important partner in the Eurasian region. China, on the other hand, could end up being a big winner in Afghanistan should the drawdown lead to a situation of a strategic vacuum there, a prospect fraught with serious implications not only for the US but also for the region as a whole.

While agreeing to the fact that there existed perceptual differences in certain areas, both Mr Miraillet and the Indian

panelists evinced their keen desire to move forward in the relationship. With investment in the Scorpene submarines for the Indian Navy and Rafale fighter jets for the Indian Air Force amounting to approximately USD 25-30 billion and another USD 2 billion a year in maintenance for both over the next twenty years, India certainly is committed to a strategic partnership with France on a long term basis. One of the best ways to narrow down the

perceptual differences, where they exist, between the two countries is to carry out sustained dialogues at both the levels of diplomacy - Track I & II. Mr. Doval appreciated Mr. Miraillet for articulating his government's perceptions on several key issues in a forthright manner.

Report prepared by Mr. Sanjay Kumar

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Vimarsha: A Talk On 'Functioning Of Parliamentary Democracy In India'

The focus of VIF's *Vimarsha* (a series in monthly talks on subjects of national importance with contemporary relevance) for the month of March 2012 was 'Functioning of Parliamentary Democracy in India', a subject which has agitated minds of a large section of the people in our country in recent times. The talk by Mr. Purno A. Sangma, a veteran politician from India's northeast and an erstwhile Speaker of the Eleventh Lok Sabha was attended by a group of well-informed citizenry which comprised, among others, members of academia, former high-ranking civil-military officials, and media personnel. The evening session was chaired by Mr. Ajit Doval KC, Director VIF with Mr. A Suryaprakash, a noted



journalist, and also a Senior Fellow at the foundation sharing the platform. Dr. Subhash C. Kashyap, well-known constitution expert and the former Secretary-General of Lok Sabha, Mr. AK Verma, Ex-Chief RAW, Mr. Ved Prakash Marwah, former Governor of Manipur, Mizoram and Jharkhand, and Mr. Vijai Kapoor, former Lieutenant Governor Delhi were among few important luminaries who attended Mr. Sangma's talk at the VIF.

Mr. Doval's incisive remarks, parts of his welcome speech, set the tone for the evening's discussion. The quality of a nation is largely determined by the type of discourses which usually take place in that nation, Mr. Doval said. He remarked rather ruefully

that some of the recent discourses in the public domains of India were often a poignant reminder to the crumbling of India's vital institutions. The erosion of people's faith in these institutions, especially the Parliament, does not bode well for the future of our country. He also felt strongly that it was imperative to restore the people's faith in the Parliament of India or else our significant achievements as a vibrant democracy would be lost.

Known for his genial persona and a smile that never deserts him, Mr. Purno A. Sangma was clearly visibly perturbed at the growing political instability in India. A Member of Parliament for nine times, Mr. Sangma first entered the Lok Sabha in 1977 when the rule of a single party ended. Ideally, Mr. Sangma should have contested five general elections during the phase from 1977 to the present. Instead he had faced nine general elections.

Mr. Sangma felt that the higher frequency of general elections in India, besides being a burden on the exchequer, was a worrying

trend for India's democracy. He also supported the proposals for the Right to recall and the Right to reject as being necessary for the sustenance of parliamentary democracy in India. It is unfortunate that parliamentarians resort to disturbing the proceedings in the Parliament often to address their own narrow constituencies. Unlike in the past when the financing and functioning of all the important ministries were discussed in the Budget Session of the Parliament, a new trend has emerged over the past ten-fifteen years. The federal budgets of India are being passed by the Parliament without any ministry being discussed at all.

Mr. Sangma expressed serious concern that the biggest challenge facing India today is the crisis of national leadership. Even worse, the elected members of Lok Sabha can't even reach a consensus to choose a Prime Minister who is a member of the Lok Sabha. Failures in reaching a consensus among the elected representatives has often led to a situation where the Prime Minister had to be chosen either from the Rajya

Sabha or from among the Chief Ministers of the states, a trend which began with Mr. Deve Gowda and continues to the present Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh. A veteran parliamentarian, Mr. Sangma insisted that electing a Prime Minister from the Lower House of the Parliament remains one of the key responsibilities of the elected MPs.

In so far as the current state of political instability in India is concerned, Mr. Sangma went on to suggest the idea of a national government with both Congress and the BJP sharing power for the sake of stability. Although Mr. Sangma did not support the idea of Presidential form of government, he said that direct election of the Prime Minister could be a better option. Not happy with No Confidence Motions which could create further instability, Mr. Sangma suggested the German model of a No

Confidence Motion which is always backed the naming of an alternative candidate for the post of Chancellor. He remained equally upset with the growing levels of corruption, particularly at high places. While he favoured the idea of an anti-corruption watchdog Lokpal, he said that the Prime Minister should be kept out of its purview. However, corruption needed to be tackled with a firm hand as it was destroying the vitals of our system.

That Mr. Sangma's talk generated lively interest among the audience was clear from the barrage of questions thrown at him. He answered all the questions with his usual calm and deftness. The Vote of Thanks was proposed by Mr. A. Suryaprakash.

Report prepared by Mr. Sanjay Kumar

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