



Vivek

Issues & Options

Jan - Feb 2014

Issue: III No: I



The Worst Ever Lok Sabha

Rejuvenating India's Body Politic

Boosting India's Missile Power

China's New Silk Road Initiatives

and many more

Published By : Vivekananda International Foundation

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Editor's Note

The schedule for the Lok Sabha elections have been announced and the stage is set for the battle royale. In what was initially thought would be a Presidential style race between the BJP's Prime Ministerial candidate Narendra Modi and the Congress Vice-President Rahul Gandhi, General Elections 2014 is fast turning into a referendum on the Gujarat Chief Minister, a contest between Modi and others. The UPA Government has announced sops and freebies ahead of the polls in a last ditch attempt to woo the electorate disgusted with scams, price rise and lack of decisive leadership.

On the one hand, the nascent Aam Aadmi Party is trying to carve out a niche for itself through its spit and run strategy while on the other the increasingly marginalised Left is seeking to make a comeback riding piggyback on that seasonal frog called Third Front. Then there are those influential satraps such as Naveen Patnaik, Mayawati, Mamata Banerjee and Jayalalithaa who are hoping to be kingmakers if not the King (or queen).

The outcome of the elections would also be a determined by a progressive young crop of voters who want good governance, stability and development. One hopes that in the run up to the polls, the major political parties would come out with concrete plans/vision for the nation's progress rather than make baser casteist, communal and parochial appeals to woo the electorate. The level of discourse too should be in consonance with our stature as the world's largest democracy. As for the Election Commission, all we have to say is 'More Power to Your Elbow' to conduct free and fair polls.

This bi-monthly issue carries exclusive articles by eminent strategists, academics and journalists on topics ranging from diplomacy to economy. Among other topics, Mr Surya Prakash has analysed the performance of the 15th Lok Sabha while Mr Sushant Sareen has forayed into the political situation in the country by drawing comparisons between the Aam Aadmi Party and the PTI led by Imran Khan in Pakistan.

We look forward to valuable feedback from our discerning readers.

K G Suresh

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The Fifteenth Lok Sabha - It Cannot be Worse Than This !

- *Dr A. Surya Prakash*

The Fifteenth Lok Sabha, which ended its sittings a week ago should easily go down as the worst Lok Sabha the people have seen since the two Houses of Parliament were constituted in 1952 and came to embody the deep crisis in the country's democratic system and the near collapse of governance.

While MPs across political parties must take the blame for the poor image of India's highest elected body, the primary responsibility for the collapse of civility and debate in the House must be borne by the ruling United Progressive Alliance led by the Congress Party and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. While the House began work on a smooth note initially after its constitution in June, 2009, things began to fall apart after the slew of corruption scandals came to the fore.

The first such scandal that hit the UPA Government was the one relating to the Commonwealth

Games, after the Comptroller and Auditor-General (CAG) reported major deficiencies in contracts and spending. Then came the really humongous scams pertaining to sale of 2G Spectrum by Telecom Minister A.Raja and the Coalgate Scandal which was about the partisan and non-transparent manner in which coal blocks were sold to private parties. These scandals too came to the fore after the CAG submitted his reports on these matters to the President.

As each scandal tumbled out of his cupboard, MPs across political parties were perturbed over what seemed like an open loot of the exchequer, but the Prime Minister seemed unmoved by the growing public clamour for executive action to contain corruption. He refused to have the matter probed independently by a Commission or agency that enjoyed credibility in the public eye. Instead, he and his ministers decided to brazen it out and allow the anger of MPs to spill over from one session to

**Dr A. Surya Prakash, Distinguished Fellow, VIF*

another. The winter session of 2010 was washed out because the government resisted the opposition demand for a credible parliamentary probe into the 2G Spectrum Scandal. Similarly, the Monsoon Session of 2012 was hit by Coalgate because Mr. Singh, who held the coal portfolio as well when the scam took place, refused to own up responsibility for his actions and inactions.

As Parliament remained disrupted, members of the Union Cabinet felt safe. Since Parliament became dysfunctional, they were accountable to no one and that suited them. This stubborn contempt for Parliament and for probity in public life has eventually resulted in the image of Parliament taking a severe beating. Throughout this five-year period there has not been a single day when Singh has stood up, taken charge, given assurances to the Lok Sabha and led from the front. His refusal to take responsibility within the House, display leadership qualities and win the confidence of MPs has resulted in the loss of image of the House. Therefore,

However, the number of sittings began sliding down and it crashed to an all time low of just 46 days in 1998 because of the disturbed political environment and an early Lok Sabha election. In recent years, the sittings/year is just half of what it used to be 50 years ago.

the Fifteenth Lok Sabha has been a complete disaster and all that the man at the helm of government has done is to say that “his heart bleeds” when he sees what is happening!

Statistics also tell us a sad story. One can pick up any parameter and one will find that Parliament has become largely dysfunctional over the years. In the 1950s and 1960s, the two Houses of Parliament met for an average of 130-140 days in a year. In fact, in 1956, Parliament met for 151 days. However, the number of sittings began sliding down and it crashed to an all time low of just 46 days in 1998 because of the disturbed political environment and an early Lok Sabha election. In recent years, the sittings/year is just half of what it used to be 50 years ago. Parliament sat for 81 days in 2010, 73 days in 2011 and 74 days in 2012.¹ It met for just 63 days in 2013.

Overall, the Fifteenth Lok Sabha sat for just 357 days – which is the lowest among Lok Sabhas which have had a full five-year term.

But, this is not the only bit of statistic that is worrying. There is a lot more. While the number of sittings crashed by half, almost half of these days were further washed out due to protests and obstructions. Over 40 per cent of the time of Parliament was lost to disruptions in 2010 and over 55 per cent was wasted in 2013. The final session, which was the extended Winter Session was the worst. The Lok Sabha did business for only 22 of the 154 hours allocated for business during the Winter Session of 2013-14. Shockingly, the Rajya Sabha could take up a question for oral answers only on the last day of this session on February 21. ²

The effect of these disruptions can be seen in the business transacted by the House during Question Hour, discussions on Call Attention Motions and passage of Bills. The Question Hour is critical to keep the government on its toes. In the early days, Question Hour was never disrupted and some 8 to 10 questions would be answered orally by ministers. MPs would come well prepared with supplementaries, grill the ministers and get much support from the presiding officers. Such was the alertness of MPs that

ministers approached Question Hour with much trepidation. They would often fumble in their replies and would be heckled by opposition MPs. Often, the Prime Minister would stand up to defend the government and shield his minister. Such was the fear among ministers that they would plead with MPs under whose names questions were listed, to stay away from Question Hour so that a difficult question was not taken up for oral answers. However, with the passage of time, and especially during the 15th Lok Sabha, MPs began disrupting Question Hour and this has come as a big relief for ministers. The damage done to public interest because of the disruption of Question hour can be gauged from the fact that of the 1100 questions slated for oral answers in the Lok Sabha in 2013, just 56 were answered. Similarly, just 77 of the 1100 questions listed in the Rajya Sabha were answered in that House. In other words, just 133 questions (6 per cent) of the 2200 listed for oral answers in the two Houses of Parliament in 2013 were answered last year. As stated earlier, the Winter Session of 2013-14 was the worst.³

The net result of disruptions can also be seen in the number of hours that Parliament devoted to

Question Hour in the early years and now. For example, in the 1950s, 60s and 70s, there was an unwritten rule among MPs that the sanctity of Question Hour should be preserved. The quality of Question Hour mirrored the extent to which Parliament carried out its oversight responsibilities and ensured that central ministers were on their toes, understood their portfolios and responded to concerns of MPs. In those decades, the Lok Sabha devoted about 500 hours to Question Hour during a five-year term and this translated to about 15 per cent of the total time of the House. In recent times, this has crashed to less than half this time.

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Apart from Question hour and passage of Bills, this Lok Sabha has also seen a sharp decline in the number of Call Attention Motions and such other serious debates. Many other parliamentary devices like Short-Notice Questions fell into disuse. A similar fall is visible in the area of law making. The First and Second Lok Sabhas passed 333 and 327 Bills respectively. Parliament

remained as efficient in law making in the 1980s as well. The Seventh Lok Sabha, which was constituted in 1980 passed 329 Bills whereas the Eighth Lok Sabha constituted in 1984 cleared 334 Bills. Parliament began failing in its law-making responsibility in the 1990s and later, so much so that in the Fifteenth Lok Sabha, the House has passed just 177 Bills.⁴

This means that the productivity of the House has crashed by at least 50 per cent over the last 20 years. Also, while just 7 Bills lapsed when the First Lok Sabha's term ended, as many as 68 Bills will now lapse in the Fifteenth Lok Sabha. This is another barometer of this House's dysfunctionality.⁵ This is why the 15th Lok Sabha will go down as the least productive House since the two Houses came into being in 1952.

Now a word about the new lows seen in Parliament. Our parliamentarians established several new records in the final session of the 15th Lok Sabha: For the first time since independence,

MPs of the ruling party sought to move a no-confidence motion against their own government; again, for the first time, Union Ministers entered the well of the Lok Sabha and in the presence of the Prime Minister and their party president, raised slogans against a decision of their own government; again for the first time, members of the Union Cabinet, who had cleared a Bill in the Cabinet meeting, protested against its introduction in the Lok Sabha; for the first time, a junior minister in the Railway Ministry entered the well of the Lok Sabha and obstructed the presentation of the Railway Budget by his senior; again, for the first time, Union Ministers had to surround the Home Minister and offer him physical security in the Lok Sabha when he moved a Bill for consideration of the House; and finally, for the first time, MPs used pepper spray and knives to create chaos in the Lok Sabha.

The Rajya Sabha also recorded similar firsts: For several hours spread over several days MPs stood with banners and placards in the well of the House and blocked the face of the presiding officer during telecast of proceedings and they got away without punishment; an MP tried

to snatch the mike of the presiding officer and on another day, tried to snatch papers from, the hands of the Secretary-General; MPs and ministers stood by the Home Minister when he moved a Bill for consideration of the House; and for the first time, the ruling party deployed some men and women MPs to put a protective cordon around the Prime Minister when he spoke in the House on February 20.

These shameful episodes witnessed last week week in the two Houses of Parliament have shocked and shamed all citizens but it has come as no surprise to those who have been watching the cynical attitude of the political class to the fall in norms and the steady decline of parliament over the years. As head of the government, the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, must take a large share of the blame for the complete collapse of decency in parliament and for the shameful conduct of his ministers and MPs belonging to his party for the following reasons: Following the demise of Y.S.Rajashekara Reddy, the people of Andhra Pradesh moved away from the Congress Party and began supporting the former Chief Minister's son, Jaganmohan Reddy. Realising

that the party would suffer in Andhra Pradesh, the Congress leadership decided to divide the state so that it could get at least a bulk of the seats in the new state of Telangana. The Prime Minister succumbed to pressure from his party and took the decision to bifurcate Andhra Pradesh, without proper consultation with MPs and ministers from this state and without proper consideration of the implications of this decision. This led to bloodshed in that state and chaos in parliament. Secondly, he watched helplessly when ministers in his Cabinet danced in the well of the Lok Sabha and raised slogans against his government. The Prime Minister ought to have asked the President to dismiss these ministers, but Mr. Singh did not have the courage to do so. Nor did he have the courage to call for expulsion of party MPs who were disrupting Parliament over the Telangana issue for over a year. Thus, the onus is squarely on Singh for the chaos in India's apex legislature.

But, this is not to say that the others have no responsibility. Parliament has

become dysfunctional for the last few years and the main opposition party, the BJP, must take the blame for succumbing to Congress pressure and the Prime Minister's dinner diplomacy and seeing several legislative measures through the two Houses without adequate debate and often in the midst of chaos. Several other political parties like the SP, the BSP, the DMK, the JD(U) and others have also contributed significantly to the erosion of parliament's credibility.

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Finally, a word about the presiding officers of the two Houses. The Telangana issue has been the cause of disruptions in

Parliament for over a year now but the presiding officers failed to exercise their powers and suspend or expel the rowdy MPs. In the session that has just ended, the Rajya Sabha bulletin named MPs who were disrupting the House, but the House did not take stern action. If MPs in the Lok Sabha pepper sprayed their colleagues or brought other objectionable substances into the House one day, it was because of the leniency shown to them over the last year. Similarly, an MP snatched the

microphone of the presiding officer in the Rajya Sabha on the following day. This would never have happened if MPs had been punished severely for disorderly conduct. If the presiding officers continue to be lenient, public faith

in Parliament may be irretrievably eroded. For the sake of democracy, they must now crack the whip.

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Why must the West Blame Putin for Russia's All Ills?

- *Kanwal Sibal*

From our vantage point the vicious onslaught against President Vladimir Putin in western political circles, especially the media, is difficult to appreciate.

The media is of course reflecting prevailing political attitudes towards the Russian president in US and European political circles. Unconstrained by diplomatic fetters, it can be exceedingly harsh, with the governments having the argument of press freedom to reject any responsibility.

The fact the Western press can claim to be free and often attacks government policies does not mean that it cannot be faulted for bias, disregard of facts and poor judgment when it pronounces on affairs not its own.

More so when this media boasts of maintaining the highest standards of journalism in terms of ethics, independence and respect for

facts. In reality, this argument of independence and objectivity is exaggerated.

Media-persons are not alien implants in their own countries - they are part and parcel of the societies they live in. US and European journalists look at the world with American or European eyes, not as detached and neutral observers floating in a no man's land.

When they look at Russia, it is not with the same eyes as an Indian, for instance. Would then a more benign Indian view of Russia and Putin be less independent and objective?

During the Cold War, the Western media no doubt enjoyed greater credibility internationally than the highly controlled media of the communist block. Operating in a democratic environment of plurality, of opinion and debate, its approach had to be to win over the public to a point of view

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through plausibility of argument, not impose a view from above without discussion.

This gave the Western press a certain standing in the non-communist world, buttressed, of course, by the international political hegemony of the West and the global reach of its media backed by superior technical and management expertise.

With the rise of Asia, the loosening of the hegemonic grip of the West on international affairs, and US-European policies of military intervention which have lowered the moral standing of these countries, the deficiencies, partiality, and the self-serving nature of Western commentary on various issues are now being increasingly recognised.

In this broader context, the highly personal attacks against President Putin cause surprise. All political, economic and social deficiencies of Russia - which even Putin acknowledges - are laid at his door, whether it is uncontrolled corruption, the debilitating grip of state-owned enterprises on the economy, the stifling of market forces, the inadequacies of the

judicial system, the curbs on democratic freedoms and suppression of dissent.

If a journalist gets murdered, the Kremlin is involved. If the egregious Pussy Riot band conducts itself blasphemously in the Moscow cathedral and is punished, Putin's growing intolerance is to blame.

If Opposition figures puffed up by the West with propaganda and resources are proceeded against and information on foreign funding of NGOs is probed, it is Putin obstructing Russia's democratic evolution.

If the Russian parliament passes a law to shield children from homosexuality, it represents an inexcusable assault on personal freedoms for which Putin should be punished in some way by linking the issue to the Sochi Olympics, characterised by some Western commentators as akin to Hitler's Berlin Olympics.

No occasion is missed to recall Putin's KGB past to explain his retrograde instincts.

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All developments in Russia that do not conform to Western wish lists about how Russia should conduct itself are attributed to Putin personally.

Judging from prevailing Western commentary, there is nothing positive in Putin's Russia. This demonisation of Putin is inexplicable from any commonsensical point of view.

In reality, Putin's international conduct has been far more responsible than that of the US. He cannot be accused of military interventions in third countries in the name of democracy or combating terrorism that are enormously costly in human terms, of undermining multilateralism and the UN.

He is not the source of international financial crises that have ravaged the global economy. He was not responsible for the war in Iraq that has devastated that country, nor for the mess in Libya. He has acted responsibly in Syria, preventing not only another Western military intervention but

also midwifing the destruction of Syria's chemical weapons arsenal.

He has been constructive in promoting a peaceful solution to the Iranian nuclear issue. His approach to the US intervention in Afghanistan has been pragmatic. Unlike the US he has not played the Islamic fundamentalist card geo-politically, one that is now recoiling on the West.

If Russia intervened in Georgia because of US-incited provocations and takes defensive political and economic measures to secure its periphery constantly subjected to US/NATO/EU encroachment intended to shrivel it geo-politically permanently - as now one sees in the Ukraine - the fault is Russia's, not that of the West.

He is not the source of international financial crises that have ravaged the global economy. He was not responsible for the war in Iraq that has devastated that country, nor for the mess in Libya.

The West has the political right to try to control Russia's politics and economics from within as it is supposedly based on superior moral foundations of democracy, human freedoms and free enterprise. Putin is morally evil to resist.

All the infirmities of Russia that the West rails against exist in China as well, but the Chinese leadership is not demonised the way Putin is, and there is no geopolitical onslaught against it.

The US corporate sector is far more involved in China than in Russia, which might explain why

its balance sheets require the US to strike a more balanced posture towards China than towards Putin.

Is it the Economy, stupid?

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Geopolitics of China's New Silk Road Initiatives: An Indian Perspective

- *Brig (Retd) Vinod Anand*

At a conference held by President Xi Jinping in end October last year, he outlined the major thrust of China's foreign policy as '*to make peripheral countries kinder and more intimate to China and meanwhile more recognize and support China, thereby increasing China's affinity and influence*'. Such kind of 'periphery diplomacy' is expected to address China's need for a stable external environment which in turn would be conducive to domestic economic reform. The goal of this policy is to enhance China's overall influence in its periphery, assuage concerns of neighbours who have been at the receiving end of China's assertive policies and counter the US rebalance toward Asia.

Thus China's new initiatives of a maritime silk road initially connecting South East Asian littoral and later expanding beyond to Indian Ocean, the Bangladesh-India-China-Myanmar Economic Corridor and

new Silk Road Economic Belt linking China to Central Asia and Xianjiang-Pakistan Economic Corridor are all part and parcel of its 'periphery diplomacy'. But the moot point is whether such economic initiatives would dispel the perception among its neighbours that China's policy of 'peaceful development or rise' is merely a slogan.

Maritime Silk Road

The new push for Maritime Silk Road initiative comes in the background of new Chinese leadership's understanding that a stable environment around China's periphery was necessary for domestic economic reforms or for that matter even political reform. Further, China by its assertive claims in South China Sea which have been contested by many of the affected members of ASEAN had created apprehensions about China's muscle flexing. Therefore, this move can be seen in the context of efforts by China to assuage the

* *Brig (Retd) Vinod Anand, Senior Fellow, VIF*

concerns of ASEAN countries by offering economic benefits through port development, associated maritime infrastructure projects, currency swaps, and increased investment trade and commerce, tourism and possibly some tariff concessions. All this is expected to enhance political, economic and security relations between ASEAN and China.

But the question remains as to whether countries like Vietnam, Philippines or for that matter Indonesia would resile from their sovereignty claims in South China Sea despite the economic logic and benefits offered by China. In addition, the ASEAN countries are getting sucked into power play that has become more pronounced with the unveiling of America's 'rebalance to Asia' or its Asia-Pacific strategy that has political, economic and military components. For instance, in case of trade groupings, America has been promoting Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) which includes some of the ASEAN countries like Vietnam, Singapore, Malaysia, and Brunei while it excludes China. Beijing on the other hand

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has been promoting Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) which revolves around ASEAN plus 6 mechanism. The membership of some of the ASEAN countries in TPP, in a way, indicates the geopolitical orientation of the countries involved. Therefore, China's new move is being viewed in the above perspective as a counter to America's pivot to Asia idiom. As some of the SE Asian nations have tendencies to balance China by involving the US, the Chinese offers of economic aid and development of infrastructure projects to the SE Asian countries can also be seen as Beijing's attempts at weaning away such SE Asian countries from American influence.

So far as India is concerned, New Delhi would be comfortable with the above initiative as long as China's engagement with ASEAN remains largely commercial and navigation along sea lines of communications through South China Sea remains uninterrupted. India has supported freedom of navigation and adherence to

UNCLOS for settling disputes in SCS. However, China's extension of new maritime Silk Road to Sri Lanka and even an offer to India to join the same would definitely have negative strategic connotations for India. China has been building mega ports on the eastern coast of Africa and has shored up its defence relationship with many of the India Ocean island countries like Seychelles, Mauritius and Madagascar. The increasing activity of PLA Navy in Indian Ocean on some pretext or the other would be a cause for concern in India.

BCIM Economic Corridor

So far as Bangladesh, India, China and Myanmar (BCIM) forum is concerned, it has been in works for over a decade now (since 1999). In fact it was a Track II platform, known earlier as Kunming initiative that was formed for sub-regional cooperation revolving around trade, commerce and connectivity. The BCIM grouping gained some traction when it was first mentioned in the Joint India-China communiqué during PM Li's visit to India in May 2013 and it was again discussed between the two during PM Manmohan Singh's visit to Beijing in October 2013. Thus, it became a Track I

initiative with the prospects of the objectives of BCIM being realized.

Even though India has agreed in principle for a BCIM Economic Corridor, there are some apprehensions on the part of India which have not changed over time. There are still several insurgent and rebel groups in North East India which are involved in a host of anti national activities like gun running, drug trafficking; they are also being used by foreign intelligence agencies (e.g. Anthony Shimray incident where Chinese intelligence agencies were alleged to have been involved in fuelling insurgency by sending a huge consignment of Chinese arms to NSCN(IM) in the NE; there have also been reports of some Chinese intelligence agents being active there; ISI has also been involved in sending arms).

In addition, China lays claim to Arunachal Pradesh and therefore Indian sensitivities concerning the claims and possible insecurities on that account. Tirap district of Arunachal Pradesh is inhabited by Nagas and there is an insurgent activity there. Even though some funds for constructing Ledo/Stilwell Road have been earmarked, it would not be in India's interest to revive the old Burma/Stillwell Road linking

India's NE to Yunnan through Myanmar because of security reasons. This is despite the fact that enormous commercial benefits (especially with reduction of transportation costs) might accrue. There are apprehensions that this might give China advantage in case of a military conflict.

While there is a dire need to develop the North Eastern states of India and China can provide the wherewithal for infrastructure development including the much needed funds, the Indian government remains reticent in involving China in such projects here because of the reasons cited above and the possible strategic benefits that might accrue to China especially in influencing the local people in many ways that might be detrimental to Indian interests. If China were allowed access to this region, then Chinese economic influence would become predominant leading to strategic influence in the politically sensitive region. Further, during the visit of Japanese PM Shinzo Abe in January 2014, Japan has been invited to take part in the infrastructure development of NE

States. It also needs to be noted that China had prevented the Asian Development Bank in 2007 from giving loans for development projects in Arunachal Pradesh.

There is also the question of growing trade imbalance between India and China and any free flow of trade and commerce through the envisioned economic corridor would only increase the trade imbalance against India as China has not been able to practically address India's grievances on this issue in any meaningful way

It also needs to be noted that China had prevented the Asian Development Bank in 2007 from giving loans for development projects in Arunachal Pradesh.

despite remonstrations by India to this effect during summits and other bilateral exchanges.

Additionally, India has several bilateral and multilateral initiatives with the regional countries to address precisely the same issues. For instance, India has Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), Mekong Ganga Cooperation initiative and Trilateral between India, Myanmar and Thailand all of which involve either cooperation with Bangladesh or Myanmar or both that have similar objectives to that of BICM. There is an

overlap in goals and objectives of a number of regional and sub regional groupings that remain an important sub set of India's 'Look East Policy' set in motion in the mid 1990s. Therefore, in a practical sense it is not worthwhile to add China to a regional sub-grouping that would be dominated by China taking away India's central role in some of these sub-regional initiatives. Further, while China has been developing connectivity from North to South, India has been keen to push connectivity from West to East. Therefore, the objectives of the two countries are not in sync.

Therefore, the prospects of BCIM Economic corridor or a Southern Silk Road being realized in near future do not seem to be bright. Unless there is a fundamental change in the nature of Sino-Indian relations except for hosting some Kolkata to Kunming car rallies and some other peripheral activities, the BCIM will remain a work in progress. Substantive issues of BCIM would only receive attention when the geo-politics between both nations move towards a positive resonance.

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor

Xianjiang-Gwadar multi-modal corridor can be seen as part of the growing strategic nexus between China and Pakistan. There is the question of constructing roads and hydro-projects in and through the strategically important and disputed areas of Jammu and Kashmir which are considered constitutionally as parts of India. Here, China lays itself open to the charges of practicing double standards as China had raised objection to Asian Development Bank providing funds for development projects in Arunachal Pradesh.

This corridor is perceived as realization of China's long term strategic objective of gaining access to the Indian Ocean through building a Strategic Land Bridge or Continental bridge from Xinjiang to Gwadar. The other strategic land bridge for connecting to Indian Ocean is through Myanmar. Some of the arguments like China's need for avoiding the Malacca Dilemma are well known.

Further, development of Gwadar port and its operation by China is also as part of the broader Chinese Grand Maritime Strategy. Though

Gwadar would be an economic hub mainly catering to commercial interests that would be mutually useful to both Pakistan and China yet there are strategic connotations attached to this development. Over the long term, it provides the potential to China to exercise its ever expanding military influence. The Chinese economic and military power has grown and along with its overall comprehensive national power it has begun to look for securing its interests in the far flung areas extending from the Pacific to Indian Ocean Region and beyond even to the Mediterranean.

There is also the geo political reality of post 2014 Afghanistan scenario. Once the US forces have extricated their resources and equipment from Afghanistan, Pakistan would not like the American influence to continue, which in a sense will counter balance American maritime influence – a development which both China and Pakistan would welcome.

However, besides the difficulties of terrain and weather in the Northern mountainous areas for

construction and maintenance of roads, pipelines and hydro projects, the internal security situation would also present many challenges to realization of the economic corridor. Turbulence in Baluchistan, dominance of radicalized Pashtoons in Karachi which control most of the road transportation and expanding signature of terrorist outfits are some of the factors which would have negative impact on development activities.

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Silk Road Economic Belt

China already has several programmes in improving connectivity with the Central Asian

region with further linkages to Europe both through bilateral and multilateral programmes of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC). A number of oil pipelines from Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and through Uzbekistan are already in existence. Such efforts are also an extension of China's West ward development or Go West policy and their extension to Central

Asia. Another impetus was given when a new initiative of building an economic belt along the Silk Road from China to Central Asian region was announced. President Xi has talked about building highways, railways, fiber optics and pipelines, logistics centers, manufacturing hubs and new townships. In fact, under the current circumstances, China is the only power which has the economic clout and competence to give a concrete shape to such projects. While the US and some other countries like Russia or even India have their versions of Silk Road Strategies there is not much that they have been able to achieve towards fulfillment of the objectives of their strategies. Invariably, such initiatives have geo-political motives attached to them.

However, it is not very clear that the new Silk Road Economic belt includes Afghanistan or avoids Afghanistan. The post-2014 Afghanistan situation remains of utmost importance to the countries in the region and it is here where many versions of the respective Silk Road strategies intersect.

There is also a 'Heart of Asia Conference' which is premised on regional economic integration

through building a network of multimodal corridors with Afghanistan as the hub of communications emanating in all directions. Such developmental efforts are expected to bring peace, stability and prosperity in Afghanistan.

India has its 'Connect Central Asia' policy in place. India has also been trying to find ways to connect to Central Asia and beyond. Along with Iran and Russia, India is a founding member of International North-South Transport corridor which connects India to Iran, Central Asian countries and beyond to Europe. However, there are many obstacles and impediments in realising the infrastructure projects connected with the implementation of the corridor. India has also been developing Chabahar port of Iran. India has built a road from Zaranj near Iran border to Delaram in Afghanistan.

As India has a Joint Working Group with China on Afghanistan and another Joint Secretary level bilateral Dialogue on Central Asia (first dialogue held in Beijing on August 12, 2013), there are possibilities of cooperation between India and China for developmental projects in Afghanistan, Iran and possibly

Central Asian countries. During the dialogue on Central Asia, among other things (like regional security and counter terrorism, SCO, energy security and people to people relations with the countries of the region), the issue of development partnerships was also discussed. Further, China and India have plans to exploit the mineral and allied sector in Afghanistan and here the possibilities of cooperation can also be explored. Similarly for construction of infrastructure projects in Iran and construction of multi-modal corridors linking Afghanistan and Central Asia, could be another area of cooperation. All such projects could form part of China's new Silk Road strategy and of course the Economic Belt.

Lastly, China's new silk road initiatives could also be described as putting old wine in new bottle to address its domestic and external concerns without giving up on its ever expanding list of 'core concerns' that continue to alienate its neighbours. While the economic benefits might assuage the concerns of its affected neighbours in a limited way, the better alternative for China would be to listen to its neighbours and settle sovereignty issues with them through negotiations without flaunting its military muscles.

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Towards Boosting India's Missile Strike Capability

- *Radhakrishna Rao*

The possibility of India being forced to fight a two front war and that too with countries possessing nuclear weapons delivery systems underpins the need for the country to look beyond the missile defence and deterrence to build a robust and versatile missile strike capability to take care of the multi dimensional security threat facing the country.

The Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) shield for the realization of which DRDO is now working painstakingly, could be of limited utility in insulating the entire country in one quick sweep from the missile threat from across the borders. Of course, the BMD will have a vital role to play in ensuring the safety and security of high profile strategic assets including nuclear power plants, space establishments, industrial units and defence facilities in well identified geographical pockets in the country. Clearly and apparently, the need of the hour is to put in place a quick reaction,

deep strike and highly lethal missile capability designed to deliver both the conventional and nuclear weapons to enemy targets.

Against this backdrop, the defence set up of the country should forge ahead with a thrust on creating a robust and versatile range of missile systems with cutting edge technological elements to take care of a wide variety of "threat perception" emanating from land, sea, air and even outer space. Going beyond the conventional missile systems capable of delivering a variety of warheads to designated targets, India should also initiate work on building the Directed Energy Weapons (DEW) which is all set to alter the dynamics of the war in the years ahead. Though still in the realm of future, DEW designed for a launch from a variety of platforms would turn many long range conventional missile systems totally redundant. Laser beams, sub atomic particles and high powered microwaves can be harnessed for fashioning out DEW

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for use against aircraft, ships and even satellites. In addition, it can easily neutralise any incoming missile. But as things stand now, it would be many years before the use of DEW becomes a routine affair.

Of course, India has initiated work on developing a DEW based on laser beam capable of producing 25-watts of power. This type of laser weapon could intercept a ballistic missile in its terminal phase within the range of seven kms. As it is, a DEW weapon can kill an incoming ballistic missile by bombarding it with subatomic particles or electromagnetic waves. Laser based weapons deployed on aircraft as well as seaborne platforms can be used to intercept missiles soon after they are launched. Further, laser beams can also be used as an anti-satellite weapon.

But till such time as DEW becomes a regular part of the art of warfare, India would need to fall back on technological breakthroughs to give a winning edge to its conventional missile systems. Here the Agni range of nuclear capable ballistic missiles, the development of which was initiated under the Integrated

Guided Missile Development Programme (IGMDP) launched by DRDO in 1983 could be the sinew of India's missile strike capability. Rightly and appropriately, the immediate term plan to develop a canistered version of Agni-V could enhance the effectiveness of the missile. The "missile ejection test" recently carried out by DRDO has paved the way for accomplishing the first ever canistered test firing of 5,000- km range nuclear capable Agni-V in the first quarter of 2014. Agni-V marks a major leap ahead for India in terms of strike capability and mastery of innovative missile technologies.

"After the successful tests in canistered form, we are going in for the production of Agni-V missile," said its Programme Director Dr Avinash Chander. He also revealed that DRDO is capable of extending the range of the Agni series of missiles to beyond 10,000-km in about two and half years from now in view of the technologies it has already developed for Agni-IV and Agni-V. Indeed, only an ICBM (Inter Continental Ballistic Missile) capability of beyond 10,000-km range gives India a "major edge" in so far as its missile strike

This type of laser weapon could intercept a ballistic missile in its terminal phase within the range of seven kms.

capability is concerned. Chander also revealed that all the ballistic missiles in the country's arsenal will be canistered in a phased manner to reduce the reaction time in the event of a nuclear attack. Since India has no first use policy for nuclear weapons, such a capability to retaliate to a strike by adversary assumes immense significance.

Of course, Agni-V can easily strike targets in most parts of China, most of the Europe and a large part of Africa. Agni-VI, the successor to Agni-V, with its 6,000-km range, is planned to carry a massive 3-tonne warhead. Though Agni-VI project is yet to receive final clearance from the Government of India, DRDO has done sufficient ground work to realize the missile in a fast track mode. It is in the fitness of things that DRDO has decided to equip the next generation Agni-VI with MIRV (Multiple Independently Targetable Re-entry Vehicle) capability augmented with MARV (Manoeuvrable Re-entry Vehicle) feature. While MIRV provides a missile with capability to launch warheads simultaneously to widely dispersed targets, MARV enables the warheads perform evasive manoeuvres while hurtling down towards their

targets and in the process confuse the enemy air defence missile system. As envisaged now, the three stage, road mobile Agni-VI featuring both MIRV and MARV technologies, is expected to enter service before the end of this decade. The three tonne warhead carrying capability of Agni-6 allows it to be equipped with upto ten warheads though initially it would carry lesser number of warheads.

Right now, US, Russia, UK, France and China, possess the MIRV capabilities on their long range nuclear capable missile systems. Clearly and apparently, a MIRV equipped missile can drop its warheads on various pre designated locations simultaneously with a high degree of accuracy.

All said and done, the MIRV technology is quite an old hat. First developed in 1960s, the MIRV capabilities were first deployed in the long range missiles by USA and former Soviet Union in 1970s. And China is now fast tracking the programme to expand the arsenal of its MIRV capable missiles. India happens to be the last one to work on the development of such a system. Currently, all of the US submarine

launched missiles are equipped with MIRV capabilities.

Evidently, India has its own compulsion to go in for a MIRVed missile development programme. In the context of an extremely disturbed security environment in the immediate neighbourhood of the country and the proximity of two potentially hostile nuclear armed states possessing well evolved missile hit back capabilities, India cannot afford to remain insulated from the nuclear threat environment all around. Moreover, China is known to be clandestinely but actively assisting Pakistan to bolster its nuclear hit back capability. By all means, a MIRVed Agni-6 cannot be considered a destabilizing factor because of India's commitment to both a no first use of nuclear weapons and credible minimum deterrence. There is no denying the point that an arsenal of MIRVed long range missiles fits well within India's nuclear weapons doctrine. The policy of "no first use of nuclear weapons" implies that India needs to have a robust and quick response hit back capability in case of a surprise

attack .It is here that MIRV capable nuclear weapons delivery system would ensure both the survivability of Indian nuclear assets as well as sustain its hit back capability aimed at inflicting "unacceptable levels of damage" on an adversary preferring to go in for a nuclear misadventure.

The critical challenge ahead of DRDO in its quest of building India's home grown MIRV capability will be the development of a booster rocket that can propel and navigate the warhead to its pre determined target with precision and accuracy. The crux of the problem is how to optimize the weight of Agni-6 without sacrificing the performance in terms of warhead lifting and delivering capability. Perhaps DRDO could realize this objective in a speedier manner by accessing some of the technological elements developed by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) in the areas of propulsion, materials, micro miniaturization as well as guidance and navigation. For many technologies are common both for a strategic missile and a civilian launch vehicle.

The critical challenge ahead of DRDO in its quest of building India's home grown MIRV capability will be the development of a booster rocket that can propel and navigate the warhead to its pre determined target with precision and accuracy.

MIRVed Agni-6 will definitely serve as a “game changer and force multiplier” for India’s strategic stability. Indeed, the mastery of MIRV technology is expected to boost India’s defence preparedness. In order to enhance the performance of its MIRVed missile system, India would need to develop smarter seekers while mastering the art of weight optimization through the use of improved materials and micro miniaturization. Further, India should upgrade its skill and expertise in the areas of nano technology, electro optics and micro electro mechanical systems (MEMS) to enhance the smartness of its nuclear delivery systems.

A submarine launched version of Agni-6 with 6,000-km range and one tonne payload capability is also planned to be developed. Here DRDO would need to develop a technology capable of delivering a higher performance from smaller rockets so that an SLBM that is no longer than 13-metres can be accommodated within the cramped confines of a submarine. In the backdrop of India’s policy of “no first use of nuclear weapons”, the submarine based arm of the nuclear triad will provide India with a sturdy and robust “credible second strike capability”. The

submarine based nuclear tipped missiles are considered the most difficult to detect weapon delivery system.

To further buttress its nuclear strike back capability, India is now in the process of expanding its SLBM (Submarine Launched Ballistic Missiles) capability. India’s nuclear powered submarine Arihant, currently undergoing trials as a prelude to its induction into service, will be an important component of the undersea strike capability being built up by India. DRDO is developing K-4 submarine launched ballistic missile capable of carrying a nuclear payload of 2,500-kg. with a strike range of more than 3,500-km for use on Arihant. The new missile would enable India to target China and Pakistan from the oceanic depths.

Incidentally, the multiple warheads delivery enabled by a strategic missile is somewhat similar to the multiple satellite launch atop a single launch vehicle. Incidentally, India’s four stage space workhorse Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) has already proved its multiple launch capability. In April 2008, it created a sort of record by placing into orbit as many as ten satellites in one go. Indeed, PSLV continues

to be used for multiple spacecraft missions with a high degree of precision. But in the case of MIRV, the warhead re-enters the atmosphere to hit the target. This implies that the guidance and navigation system of a missile should be highly accurate for hitting the target with unfailing precision. On the other hand, in a mission involving the launch of satellites there is always a scope for "flexibility" in that there is a clear room for minor deviation in orbital position. For the orbital position of a satellite can be fine tuned after the launch. In the case of a MIRVed missile, there is no room for such a flexibility. Thus a major challenge ahead of DRDO will be to build a highly sophisticated navigation and guidance system. Significantly, US deployed its first MIRVed ICBM Minuteman-III in 1970 and the first MIRVed SLBM—the Poseidon—in 1971. The USSR followed suit in 1975 with a land based MIRVed ICBM and MIRVed SLBM in 1978 respectively.

The Indo Russian supersonic cruise missile BrahMos, capable of hitting a target 290-kms away

with a high degree of precision and massive destructive power, could very well become an Indian Brahmastra when it comes to facing the Chinese challenge in the Himalayan heights. The recent test firing of an advanced version of the land attack Block-III BrahMos, considered a formidable weapon and war winner, has validated the deep penetration capability of the missile designed and developed by BrahMos Aerospace, the Indo-Russian joint venture. The successful test firing of the missile at Pokhran test

This implies that the guidance and navigation system of a missile should be highly accurate for hitting the target with unfailing precision.

range in Rajasthan has demonstrated how the missile could pierce through the concrete structure

with supersonic speed. Already the Block III variant of BrahMos meant for land attack operations has displayed its ability to achieve supersonic steep dive with precision strike capability in mountain operations. The uniqueness of this variant of BrahMos lies in the fact that it can take a steep dive across the mountain ranges to hit the identified targets in one quick sweep. While the Indian Army has already two regiments of the missile, the process is on for inducting the third regiment of

BrahMos. Meanwhile, the clearance of the Government for deploying the fourth regiment of this highly manoeuvrable missile in the hilly terrain is awaited

Indian Navy was the first to induct BrahMos, which was originally developed as a missile for operations in a maritime environment. Meanwhile, there are plans to develop a submarine launched version of the missile. The six conventional submarines that India Navy is planning to acquire will have provision for accommodating the under sea version of BrahMos. BrahMos Aerospace is now preparing the ground for qualifying an air launched version of the missile with Su-30MKI combat aircraft as the test platform. This missile expected to be inducted in 2015 would be capable hitting strategic targets, warships, nuclear power plants and aircraft carriers. According to A.Sivathanu Pillai, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Managing Director of BrahMos Aerospace, BrahMos is the quickest deployable weapon in the warfare. As it is, in a salvo operation with multiple missiles in a regiment or on-board a ship, every other BrahMos missile will be fired at three seconds intervals. This step implies that a

barrage of missiles get released against different targets almost at the same time, all in supersonic speed with no reaction time for the enemy to respond back. To stay in step with advances in missile technology, BrahMos Aerospace has initiated work on the development of a hypersonic avatar of BrahMos.

But looking beyond Agni and BrahMos, DRDO is developing a range of missile systems with “a wide spectrum of specific mission objectives.” For instance Shaurya, a canistered, hypersonic hybrid missile that has both ballistic and cruise missile capabilities, can carry a one ton nuclear or conventional warhead over a range of about 750-km. Considered the twin of the indigenous submarine launched K-15 nuclear tipped missile, this two stage solid fuel driven missile gives the potential to hit back in short or intermediate ranges against any adversary. It is reckoned as “one of the top 10 missiles in the world in its class”.

On the other hand, Nirbhay long range, subsonic cruise missile, which has now entered the testing phase, will be capable of picking up a target from a group of targets and attacking it. It would be capable of delivering 24 different

types of warheads depending upon the mission requirement. The 1,000-km range Nirbhay will supplement BrahMos by delivering warheads farther than 290-km range of BrahMos. Like BrahMos, it is a universal missile good enough for use from a variety of platforms. Nirbhay is considered India's answer to American Tomahawk and Pakistan's Babur.

On the other hand, Prahar now under development, is a solid fuel driven surface to surface, guided, short range tactical battlefield missile which has the potential to replace Akash which is fast losing its relevance in the context of the present day battlefield scenario. It is a quick reaction, all weather, all terrain, highly accurate battlefield support missile with an operational range of 150-km.

To strengthen the missile defence and strike capability, DRDO in tie up with Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) is now developing medium range surface to air missile for Indian Air Force(IAF) and long range surface to air missile for the Indian Navy. India's need for a versatile naval

missile defence as well as joint forces tactical missile defence is crucial and inevitable in addition to its ballistic missile defence efforts in a region where nuclear proliferation is an inescapable reality. India's air combat missile capability will stand enhanced with the home grown Astra air to air missile expected to get inducted by 2015. The Astra which weighs 154-kgs can intercept most modern fighters in tail chase mode at distances of 20-kms or less and up to 110 kms away in an head on mode. It is also planned to develop

India's air combat missile capability will stand enhanced with the home grown Astra air to air missile expected to get inducted by 2015.

a longer range version of the Astra Beyond Visual Range(BVR) that could take on AWACS (Advanced

Warning and Control System) sized targets from a distance of 300-kms.

But then there is no finish line to what a missile can achieve in both its defensive and offensive roles. And India's missile development programme should take cognisance of this reality and strive to develop innovative, futuristic missiles that can insulate the country against any type of missile threat in addition to giving the country a robust

capability for a deep strike mission
on a real time basis.

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Hard Decisions Needed to Rejuvenate India's Body Politic

- *Dr M N Buch*

The Oudh and Tirhut (O and T) Railway preceded the North Eastern and Northern Frontier Railways. So inefficient was it that it was generally referred to as the Old And Tired Railway. The question is, has our republic, too, become old and tired? As a concept, as a culture, as the land of the Sanatan Dharma, India is thousands of years old. As a modern nation state, however, India is only sixty six years and two months old. In the cosmic time frame, this is but the fraction of a fraction of the smallest unit of time. Metaphorically, the baby has yet to learn to walk and it has no business to feel or look old, become frail, stumble or otherwise show the symptoms of extreme old age when body systems shut down in rapid, sometimes cascading, succession. Age catches up with all of us, but if we live regular and healthy lives, the symptoms of old age, fading eyesight, impaired hearing, body aches and pains, creaking joints, loss of memory can always be kept at bay. But a

nation which allows systems and institutions to decay is in deep trouble, especially if it is as young as India.

Empires rise and fall. That happened to the Roman Empire, the British Empire and the short lived Third Reich. It is in the nature of empire, or conquest by one nation over another, that initial vigor is replaced by enjoyment of empire, then complacency, then the indolence induced by over-indulgence, then the uprising of slaves and vassals, finally the collapse of empire. But nations which are strong but avoid domination over others not only survive, they actually renew and reinvent themselves to always remain contemporary. Some, like Britain, do this by genetic re-engineering through infusion of new blood, either of Romans, the Anglo Saxons, the Vikings or the Normans, or by immigration and the infusion of new races. The United States of America is a prime example of renewal through immigration. What this does is not

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only to reinvigorate what exists, but also infuse new blood which by hybridisation constantly rejuvenates the rootstock. This is biological reversal of the decay of old age and a psychological renovation of the mind by injecting new ideas. Such nations both age over time and restore youth simultaneously. The whole of Scandinavia is a fine example of this phenomenon. These are the nations which maintain continuity, but equally importantly keep modernising.

Why do I call India prematurely aged? We started in 1947 as a supremely confident nation, partition notwithstanding.

Our leadership had been tempered by the furnace of the independence movement and deeply influenced by Mahatma Gandhi's austerity, honesty and his mantra of satyagrah and ahimsa, or the persuasive power of truth and active non-violence. They were patriots, men of integrity, dedicated to the nation, frugal, austere and deeply committed to the welfare of the people. From 1947 to 1967, India was so governed that in every field of endeavor we succeeded beyond

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our initial dreams. Almost overnight great dams and irrigation projects, power stations, capital goods industries, fine education institutions, hospitals, agriculture universities, scientific establishments were created, built and made operational. A single Bhakra-Nangal Project made a hitherto backward East Punjab the granary of India. India was a forward looking, extremely exciting nation and it felt good to be an Indian.

1967 changed all that, as the old leadership faded and new power equations were created by bribing legislators to overthrow elected governments through the machination of defection. Every value we stood for was pummelled into the ground as politicians jockeyed for power through money, blackmail or even physical liquidation. This loss of innocence, of moral values did not lead only to bad politics, it led to downright bad government. The austere became ostentatious, the honest became corrupt, the truthful became liars and everywhere amorality replaced morality. The nation, the people and their

welfare had no place in the new scheme of things.

To expand on the theme, the politics of defection was fine-tuned so that suddenly our legislators found that they can command a price. In other words, though they were elected on a particular party ticket, which means that they accepted the ideology of the party, they were even more willing to sell themselves to the highest bidder, change their political loyalty, cause a government to fall and a new government to come to power and, what is more, to repeat the process ad infinitum so long as every move gave them personal profit. This inevitably led to the whole system becoming corrupt and for the instruments of State being used as a means of collecting the funds necessary to meet the demands of such corruption. 1967, therefore, is the watershed year in which everything which keeps a country healthy was abandoned and a form of political debauchery took over which, like every other form of debauchery, is bound to cause the debauch to age prematurely.

There is another episode in our history which the Congress Party glosses over but which was one of the major causes of the present sorry stage of politics that we

observe in India today. In 1975 a judge of the Allahabad High Court, in his capacity as an election tribunal, set aside the election of Mrs. Indira Gandhi to Parliament on grounds of corrupt practices adopted by her during the election. India is a country whose Constitution mandates the rule of law. If legislation is the function of the Legislature and if implementation of laws and the governing of the country according to these laws and the directions given by Parliament is the function of the Executive, then adjudication between the citizen and the State, the Union and the States and between States, as also between citizens falls within the domain of the Judiciary. That is why Article 138 confers writ jurisdiction on the Supreme Court and Article 226 on the High Courts. Article 141 states that the law declared by the Supreme Court is binding on all courts in India and Article 142 makes every decree and order of the Supreme Court enforceable throughout India and for this purpose Article 144 directs all civil and judicial authorities to act in aid of the Supreme Court. Articles 129 and 215 make the Supreme Court and High Courts courts of records, with the power to punish for contempt of the court. Under

every High Court Chapter 6 of Part VI of the Constitution provides for the constitution of district courts and subordinate courts of civil judges and magistrates, thus making the entire judiciary part of a hierarchical system of providing justice. This point is made because an order of a court is binding on every citizen, unless it is set aside by an appellate court.

The day that the Allahabad High Court ruled against Indira Gandhi, her election became void and as a good citizen she should have immediately vacated office in obedience of the order of the court, while exercising her right to appeal against the order.

The day that the Allahabad High Court ruled against Indira Gandhi, her election became void and as a good citizen she should have immediately vacated office in obedience of the order of the court, while exercising her right to appeal against the order.

But Indira Gandhi instead of obeying the order took recourse to Article 352 of the Constitution to declare a State of Emergency, with the President acquiescing to the issuing of a proclamation in this behalf. Indira Gandhi thereby virtually nullified the Constitution itself and set at naught the order of the Allahabad High Court. Thereafter, of course, the Supreme Court was virtually bulldozed into

setting aside the Allahabad High Court order. But this decision is suspect of colourable exercise of jurisdiction in the same manner as the President's approval of the Proclamation of Emergency. India did not face external aggression, widespread armed rebellion or disorder of a nature so grave that it threatened the very existence of the nation. Therefore, the Proclamation of Emergency itself was an act of extreme dishonesty.

It is a fact of history that whereas democracies for ever remain young, all dictatorships are liable to premature ageing because they contain within themselves the

seed of their own destruction. The rise and fall of the Roman Empire is well documented and it began when the democratic system was first replaced by a pro-consular system and ultimately by the authoritarian rule of the Caesar, or Emperor. William Shirer's 'Reich and Fall of the Third Reich' is one of the finest accounts of how a dictator created a great empire in 1933, but which lasted only for twelve years, collapsing in 1945,

because the tyranny of a dictator can never lend greatness to a country. Indira Gandhi's foray into authoritarianism lasted only two years before the people routed her in an election. Her misdeed in proclaiming an Emergency caused something within India to die, but despite the gross abuse of the human form of India by the politicians since 1967, India still had the resilience to renew itself in the form of a democracy in 1977. This gives hope to a country which otherwise has every reason to feel pessimistic.

If 1977 give us hope the way we have governed ourselves since then once again should make us wonder whether we will ever achieve a level of good health. Ageing can be caused by the flux of time, but if the body is sick then the process would be hastened. Today the body politic of India is sick. Healthy democracy requires the existence of political parties which have their own ideology, their own agenda, their own programme, all of which are offered to the people who then decide periodically which ideology and programme would be best for them and who then vote a party or group of parties to power so that they may govern. Unfortunately in India today ideology has taken a

complete back seat and instead political parties only offer a pie in the sky rather than a programme which is capable of implementation in a five-year period and which forms part of a larger whole which represents the ideology and the goal of the party. For example, Margaret Thatcher offered as her party's ideology the dismantling of the socialist state in Britain. Regardless of whether this would win her party popularity and votes, she proceeded with her agenda and ensured that the socialist state was by and large dismantled while retaining the programme of national health, social security and the benefits which socialism had brought to the average citizen. That is how a party has to function in a democracy. However, in a democracy which has become decrepit, ideology is replaced by a base desire to somehow gain and retain power, the purpose of which is not the promotion of an ideology or of the welfare of the people, but rather it is the promotion of one's own selfish interests even if this is at the cost of every moral value which should govern the country.

What is the position today? For many years now we have been governed by loose coalitions in

which components of the coalition, especially those with very few members in Parliament or the State Legislatures, have called the shots because the lead partner is unwilling to take the risk of losing power if the smaller parties withdraw their support. The support is virtually purchased by outright bribery, by pressure exerted through agencies such as CBI and the Income Tax Department, by unprincipled withdrawal of criminal cases against the leaders of such parties and by surrender on almost every issue in which coalition partners have made a demand and which, while causing harm nationally, benefits the coalition partners in the short term. Therefore, on vital issues of national importance decisions are not taken. We lack the will to combating terrorism, separatism and the violence that goes therewith, whether it be in Kashmir, the Naxal affected districts or in the North East. Prices rise because we do not take anti hoarding measures lest some vested mercantile interests be annoyed. The rupee is in decline, but our economic policies neither attack the parallel market nor

Education and health standards decline because the State refuses to adopt a positive role in order to encourage these services in the public sector.

positively co-opt it so that the right kind of investment strengthens the system. There is unemployment, but instead of taking steps to generate gainful employment we resort to the cheap gimmickry of giving doles even if this is done through deficit financing. Education and health standards decline because the State refuses to adopt a positive role in order to encourage these services in the public sector. Government becomes ineffective as executive decision making goes into decline, officers refuse to take hard decisions because even honest decisions can lead them into trouble and as paralysis overtakes government bribery becomes the only way by which people can have their work done. Paralysis is quite often the fall out of extreme age and whereas as human beings we have to learn to live with our ageing bodies, in the matter of government this is to be firmly rejected.

For India to prevent ageing as a nation and to continually renew itself, we need to go back to a system of government in which honesty is at a premium, decision making is swift and firm and

government is effective in implementing the policies laid down by Parliament, the laws enacted by it and the programmes of welfare of the people adopted by government as a whole. For this purpose, we have to reduce the role of money in gaining and retaining power and instead replace it by the ideology and programmes of political parties which have the nation's interests at heart. For this purpose, the political parties have to reform themselves and if they do not do so, the people must punish them at the polls. For the politicians being in office should not be the 'be all and end all' of politics, nor should a period out of office be deemed to be a tragedy. Once this happens it is a specific programme which will govern how a party functions and there will be no room for irrational, cheap populism in such a system. If this leads to good government then this would be the elixir which will prevent premature ageing because good government creates the

environment of creative government.

One political reform needed to make government workable is to end the tyranny of individuals and small parties, who hold government to ransom under threat of withdrawing support. If we debar from parliament parties which are confined only to a particular area they will be unable to threaten the government by fear of defection. Let us make it mandatory for a political party to have at least five representatives each in the legislatures of at least three states. That will keep much of the lunatic fringe out of parliament and enable it to function. Perhaps it will also give the ruling group the desire to govern well and take hard decisions and on that very day India's ageing process will be reversed.

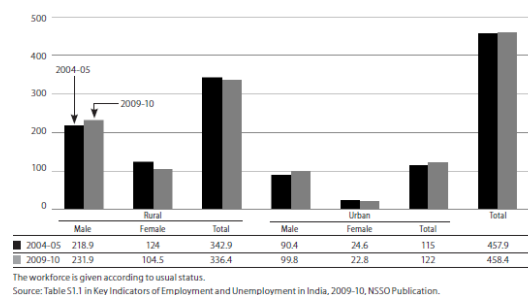
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Parties Must Factor in Impact of Price Rise, Unemployment while Formulating Initiatives

- *Dr S Narayan*

In 2013, the National Sample Survey Organization of India released key results of a large sample survey relating to employment and unemployment. They have revealed some interesting data¹.

First, there has hardly been any change in the workforce between 2004-05 and 2009-10. The total number of those employed stood at 457.9 million in 2004-05, and was 458.4 million in 2009-10. There was a significant deceleration in employment growth measured on a usual principal status basis. (Chart)



the type of deceleration. There has been a decline in employment in the rural areas, led by a sharp fall in the employment of rural females. The deceleration was small in the case of rural males (1.7% to 1.2%), but much considerable in the case of all the other three categories: rural females (2.2 to 1.8 percent), urban males (3.0 to 1.9 per cent) and urban females (4.7 to 0.1 per cent). In absolute numbers, while 50 million additional jobs were created between 1999 and 2005, only 17 million jobs were created between 2004 and 2010.

The decline in rural employment took place in spite of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, indicating that there is a steep fall in rural work. In particular, the steep fall in the employment of rural females is a significant development. The labour force participation rate

Even more significant has been

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(LFPR) for women shows a clear decline. This is quite surprising. It is unlikely that social conservatism has been the cause of this withdrawal, for there has been a steady increase in female participation prior to this period. It is also difficult to argue that this is due to more women pursuing higher education, and hence not available to the labor force.

The percentage of persons aged 15-19 attending educational institutions as their usual status was 25.9% for rural females in 1999-

The data reveals yet another important issue with regard to the type of employment that is being generated. Between 2004 and 2010, the proportion of those in self-employment has decreased, most notably among female workers.

2000, and went up to 47.1% in 2009-2010. For urban females, it went up from² 51.7% to 68.2% over the same period. In the age group 20 to 24, the change was from 2.9% in 1999-2000 to 7.5% in 2009-2010 and for rural females, from 15.8% to 23.4%. However, this does not appear to be a complete explanation, as the drop in participation is much higher than the percentage increases of those

pursuing higher education. More importantly, the decline in LFPR for women has happened for all age groups above the age of 15.

This decline could well be because of a decline in overall employment opportunities. In 2004-05, there had been an increase in female LFPR, but subsequently, with a decline in employment opportunities overall, these women could not find employment

and withdrew from the labour force.

The data reveals yet another important issue with regard to the type of employment that is being

generated. Between 2004 and 2010, the proportion of those in self-employment has decreased, most notably among female workers. Casual workers have increased significantly in the rural areas compared to 2004, perhaps because of the impact of NREGA. There has only been a marginal increase in regular salaried workers.

This reveals a worrying phenomenon. If youth are not finding work, and if female workers are dropping off the employment spectrum, there is likely to be serious pressure from the youth against established institutions and governance mechanisms. This could be one of the reasons that youth are trying to move away from established political parties.

The other reason is of course the price rise, felt most intensely by the urban middle class.

This is important before current initiatives of the regional as the

national parties continue to be in the traditional way, without recognizing the big impact of price rise and unemployment.

Endnotes:

¹ Employment in India: What does the latest data show? By Subhanil Chowdhury, Economic and Political Weekly August 6,2011

² “Key indicators of employment and unemployment in India, 2009-10” and other NSS reports on Employment and Unemployment.

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2014 Election is Poised for Big Surprises

- *RNP Singh*

As the current Parliament completes its constitutional term on 31 May 2014, the general election for the 16th Lok Sabha will be held between April and May in different phases.

The 2014 election will provide an opportunity in each Lok Sabha constituency to almost 90, 000 voters aged between 18 and 22 years who will be eligible to vote for the first time. This underlines the importance of young voters for all political parties. The election will see over 1.79 lakh new voters, on an average in each constituency

The opinion polls suggest that the Narendra Modi led BJP is all set to emerge as the single largest party while the ruling Congress faces an uphill task at the hustings due to public anger over a string of corruption scandals, economic growth hitting an all time low, rising prices and high inflation. There has been paralysis in government decision making. Grave national security concerns, both internal and external, have not been adequately addressed. The poll forecasts also suggest

that the BJP would win the lion's share of votes in many of the big states that typically decide the fate of elections.

Modi, who has been attracting massive crowds in his rallies, has been wooing voters by pointing to his track record as the Chief Minister of Gujarat for twelve years.

Though the BJP has named Modi as its Prime Ministerial candidate, the Congress decided not to name its nominee for the top post until after the election, inspite of the fact that a large section among the party workers had wanted Rahul Gandhi, a scion of Nehru- Gandhi dynasty that leads the party, to take on the mantle. Till a few months back, there were speculations in the political circles that the 2014 elections would be a presidential type of race between Modi and Rahul Gandhi but with the Congress playing safe on Rahul, the election is turning out to be more of a referendum on Modi.

Opinion polls conducted till now

**RNP Singh, Senior Fellow, VIF*

predict that BJP would gain over 200 seats and with NDA (Shiv Sena and Akali Dal) around 237 seats. If NDA alone, with its latest addition of Lok Janshakti Party of Ram Vilas Paswan, fail to get 272 seats, it will have to struggle to find coalition partners as all attempts continue to tarnish Modi's image over the 2002 post-Godhra violence in Gujarat. The Congress and other parties are bent upon attaching the communal stigma to Modi in spite of the fact that the Supreme Court monitored SIT and the lower courts have found no evidence to prosecute him.

With the BJP sweeping its bastions in the recently concluded assembly elections in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh, and given its limited presence in the southern states, chances of a Narendra Modi led NDA government assuming office at the Centre would largely depend on the two largest states in the Hindi heartland (UP- 80, Bihar-40) which together account for 120 Lok Sabha seats, or 22% percent of the total 543 seats in Lok Sabha.

Almost everything seems to have fallen in place for the BJP in Uttar

Pradesh and Bihar, and there is a massive support for Modi in UP where the party is gaining from double anti-incumbency- both BSP and SP have ruled the state over the last ten years and people are yearning for change with Modi as their automatic choice. In Bihar too, there is an undercurrent of support for Modi even though Chief Minister Nitish Kumar has a track record for good governance. But after falling apart with NDA after 17 years of honeymoon with it, Kumar's reputation is on the downslide with every passing day,

In Bihar too, there is an undercurrent of support for Modi even though Chief Minister Nitish Kumar has a track record for good governance.

giving an edge to the BJP.

2014 election will see over 1.79 lakh new voters, on an average, in each

Lok Sabha constituency. The BJP is up heat about these statistics, as they expect the new voters to be unmoved by political/ideological baggages of the past and boost the anti- incumbency mood against the ruling Congress. Moreover, these new voters simply want development and corruption free governance which most of them find only possible under a decisive leader like Modi.

The election strategy of the Congress is most intriguing as their plans are apparently not for

victory but to keep Narendra Modi and NDA out of power. It seems that after seeing the results of all surveys carried out so far, the Congress has come to the conclusion about its dismal performance in this election and has therefore, made it their goal not to win but to stop the Modi juggernaut.

The key to the Congress party's anti-BJP strategy is formation of 'secular' alliances. However, the leadership is not confident about the success of these alliances and hence plan B is to strengthen any third party or front so that the Congress can play the role of Kingmaker by supporting it from the outside, as they did in Delhi with AAP to keep BJP out of power. Towards this goal, in states like UP and Bihar, the Congress is likely to put up weak candidates, when required to consolidate the anti-BJP vote behind the third party- rather than play a spoiler.

The big challenge before BJP is to increase its vote share. The BJP got a modest 18.8 per cent votes in the 2009 Lok Sabha elections- the lowest since 1991. The conventional wisdom is that if the party has to come any where close to winning 200 Lok Sabha seats in the next Lok Sabha elections, it has to grab 25-26 per cent vote

share. Such a massive positive swing in excess of six per cent has rarely happened in the country's electoral history. The 1984 Lok Sabha elections, held in the immediate aftermath of the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's assassination, had seen a positive swing of more than six percent for the Congress. The BJP, too, has seen its vote share increase from 11.4 per cent in 1989 to 20 percent in 1991, a swing of early 9 percent. However, that happened when the Ayodhya movement was at its peak.

The BJP did manage a positive swing of five percent of votes yet again in the 1998 Lok Sabha elections when it managed to get 25.59 per cent votes and 182 seats. Analysts attribute the BJP's 1998 performance, the best ever by the party, till date, to two factors: political instability of the preceding two years which saw two prime ministers and the party's association with more than a dozen allies. To come anywhere close to the 1998 mark, Modi has to ensure a record breaking positive swing of at least six per cent or roughly 30 million votes at a time when his party's vote share has been falling for the past three elections. However, ground reports

suggest favourable conditions for the BJP.

Going by the currently popular narrative, Congress is passing through its worst electoral phase and hence the 2014 election is poised to deliver some big surprises. But the biggest shocker may be reserved for the aftermath,

as India's oldest political party and dynasty, face their real moment of reckoning.

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AAP & Imran Khan's Tehreek-e-Insaaf: Uncanny Resemblance

- *Sushant Sareen*

Political rhetoric and posturing during election campaigns not only tends to obfuscate issues but also helps to expose and lay bare the vacuity of many of the pretenders to the throne, if only for the discerning. This is precisely what has started happening with the phenomenon called the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP). Starting with immense goodwill of ordinary people who were disgusted with the venality, arrogance, malfeasance, misgovernance and sense of entitlement (all of it undeserved) of the UPA regime, the AAP has bit by bit started to expose itself. And as the layers peel, the emerging image is not at all pleasant. If anything, it increasingly is becoming clear that the AAP is fast transforming into an epitome of the very political culture which it so passionately railed against. Far from being the 'party with a difference', the AAP is turning into what the aam aadmi (common man) in India colloquially would call 'party with

same difference'.

Like other political parties, the AAP too has developed a cult around its chief, Arvind Kejriwal. The cult worship that is so visible in family and individual based parties like Congress, BSP, SP etc. is also visible in the AAP where the ruling deity is Kejriwal. His word is treated as gospel and even the most inane things he says are projected as a quotable quote. Along with the cult worship has come the coterie culture. A small group has today started dominating and controlling access to Kejriwal. This bunch derives its power and influence from their closeness with the cult figure. That this is so Congress, SP, BSP, DMK et al. should be apparent for all to see. But like in other parties, the cult worship makes people ignore the coterie. With the coterie has come the culture of quelling any dissent or counterview to what the Great Leader and cabal have decided. Disagreements are not only frowned upon but lead to

* *Sushant Sareen, Senior Fellow, VIF*

either dissenters being side-lined or ousted from the party. Debates are as animated and free as in the Congress Working Committee, which really means that the only debate is about how good the proposal or decision taken by the First Family is.

There is more that makes AAP 'same difference' with other mainstream parties. The most glaring is of course the vote-bank politics which the AAP practises rather

unabashedly. The USP of the AAP was that it appeared to be a party that cut across caste, communal and even class divides and spoke about issues that

The most glaring is of course the vote-bank politics which the AAP practises rather unabashedly. The USP of the AAP was that it appeared to be a party that cut across caste, communal and even class divides and spoke about issues that concerned ordinary citizens.

concerned ordinary citizens. This, in fact, was one of the remarkable attributes of AAP that endeared it to modern, progressive and forward looking Indians. But as the ambitions of the AAP soared, this attribute became one of the first casualties. The hobnobbing with dubious and fundamentalist Muslim clerics and the endorsement to Khap Panchayats are just but a couple of examples of the path taken by the AAP.

Other than vote bank politics, the AAP also took recourse to celebrity candidates, or if you will, 'khaas aadmi' (privileged people). Overnight, a number of big names made a bee-line for the party and not only were they enrolled but also were given tickets, ignoring the claims of the aam aadmi who had stood by the party. Many of these celebrities had absolutely no contribution to make to the growth of the AAP and also have no real support base at the grass root

level. Worse, most of these people live in a rarefied atmosphere and have no truck or touch with the aam aadmi.

Another similarity which the AAP shares with many

of the mainstream parties is that it has no policy on anything. It has slogans on everything, but clarity on nothing. In many ways, the AAP has a single agenda – corruption – and even on this it has no real idea on how to deliver. Like the Taliban in Pakistan who claim that once Shariah is imposed everything will improve, the AAP insists that merely the passing of the Jan Lokpal bill will solve the issue of corruption. On

other issues that affect the public – law and order, national security, foreign policy, economic policy, development programs etc. the AAP has really nothing cogent or coherent to offer. Depending on what is the flavour of the season or what will be popular and get it a few more votes, it makes a statement. But it never explains the logic or rationale behind the stand it has taken. Essentially the policy is to ‘shoot and scoot’. This same policy is adopted in bad-mouthing people and hurling calumny on someone because it will be popular among that section of the aam aadmi which loves the spectacle of people who have done well being pulled down and their names dragged through mud. Prosecutable evidence is an inconvenience that AAP doesn’t bother with before it sullies someone’s reputation.

While there are clear and obvious similarities between the AAP and some other mainstream parties in India, an even more apt parallel can be drawn between AAP and the Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaaf (PTI) of Imran Khan (also known as Im the Dim or Taliban Khan). So remarkable are the parallels that can be drawn between Kejriwal and Khan, that it almost seems

that they are clones of each other.

Both Khan and Kejriwal represented a change from traditional politics when they first emerged as serious political players and both have belied those expectations. Both have zero credentials as administrators but have sterling personal achievements to their credit – Imran Khan was a world class cricketer who led his nation to victory in the World Cup; Kejriwal is a graduate from India’s premier institution, IIT, and also qualified in the civil services exam to join the Indian Revenue Service, and later winning the prestigious Magsaysay Award. Both can trace their arrival on the political stage to successful rallies – Imran Khan’s rally in Lahore in October 2011 and Kejriwal’s anti-corruption dharna in Delhi in 2012. Both exploited the public angst against the shenanigans of the political class. Both latched on to corruption as their single point agenda on which they based their campaign and on which issue they stuck a chord with the people of their countries.

If Imran Khan targeted Nawaz Sharif during the campaign because he was the man to beat (Asif Zardari already been written

off as a has-been), Kejriwal has trained his guns on Narendra Modi (Congress and Rahul Gandhi being virtual write-offs in the forthcoming elections). Just as Imran Khan also took pot shots at Zardari but obliquely, Kejriwal takes pot shots at the Queen Mother and Heir Apparent, but obliquely. In Imran Khan's case the youth voter was seen as the x-factor and it was widely believed that he was the youth icon. Similarly, the AAP is seen to be finding resonance among the youth which is the visible face of his support base. But just as when the votes were counted in Pakistan it turned out that most of the young people had in fact voted for Nawaz Sharif, so it is likely to turn out in India where by all accounts Modi is seen as a more solid candidate with an established track record of good governance and as someone with a clear development program that will create jobs and opportunities.

Kejriwal has also followed Imran Khan in roping in the so-called 'electables'. The difference is that while Imran Khan made a Faustian bargain with feudal

lords, industrialists and high profile professionals, Kejriwal has done the same with Page 3 characters, NGO mafia, low level failed politicians from other parties and other such characters. While Imran Khan was accused of being propped up by the 'Deep State' of Pakistan to muddy the waters for Nawaz Sharif, in Kejriwal's case there is no Pakistan style 'Deep State' backing him but there is a 'dying regime' which is seen as having

While Imran Khan was accused of being propped up by the 'Deep State' of Pakistan to muddy the waters for Nawaz Sharif, in Kejriwal's case there is no Pakistan style 'Deep State' backing him but there is a 'dying regime' which is seen as having backed him to play the spoiler for a resurgent BJP.

backed him to play the spoiler for a resurgent BJP. Of course, like Imran Khan who soon seemed to go out of control of his minders, so too with Kejriwal who seems to have

damaged his backers more than anyone else. Also, if Imran Khan was seen to have the hidden support of the ISI and other 'Deep State' elements, Kejriwal has never convincingly answered charges of his connections with foreign donors like the Ford Foundation. What is more, many of the NGOs that have become a part of the AAP campaign are believed to be surviving on funds that they receive from overseas.

While both Imran Khan and Kejriwal are quick to hurl abuse and accusations of wrongdoing against their opponents and their pet objects of hate, they seem to just clam up when it comes to accusations against their own close aides. If Kejriwal has never really been able to take a convincing stand on the serious charges that his aide and former minister Somnath Bharti faced, Imran Khan has failed in acting against people like Ayla Malik who were disqualified on charges of fraud because they possessed a fake graduation degree. Both Imran Khan and Kejriwal have made good use of the social media to garner support and connect with the people. And their supporters often use the social media to intimidate, abuse and insult anyone who is seen as opposing them. In this the supporters take a cue from the 'great leaders' who are abrasive and often obnoxious and always offensive in the way they indulge in muckraking against people. Anyone who questions Imran Khan's puerile Taliban policy is immediately accused of being a 'Dollar worshipper' and an American agent' anyone who questions Kejriwal's wonky economic policies and his administrative and political

decisions is accused of being 'on Ambani's payroll'.

As long as the media unquestioningly lapped up everything Kejriwal said and did, he never accused it of being 'Ambani's agent', but no sooner that he came under critical scrutiny, he started accusing the media of playing to 'Ambani's tune'. Similarly with Imran Khan who has targeted journalists who question his policies and expose his vacuity. Both Imran and Kejriwal have brazened it out in defence of their lieutenants who made politically unacceptable remarks. For instance, there wasn't a peep out of Imran Khan when the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister (a classic lota who has been a member of practically every party in the province before finally landing up in PTI and being elevated to the post of CM not because of any great administrative ability but because he was a school mate of Imran Khan in Aitchison College) remarked that menial jobs should be reserved only for Pakistani Christians because they were good in cleaning sewers. Kejriwal too did not really disassociate himself from Kumar Vishwas' racist and misogynist comments against Kerala nurses (he thought he was

being funny and AAP explained away the remarks as having been made a couple of years back as if that made them kosher).

On national security, both Imran Khan and Kejriwal and AAP are extremely dangerous for their countries. If Imran Khan is an apologist for the Taliban and Al Qaeda, Kejriwal has adopted an ambiguous stand on Maoist terrorists, Kashmiri separatists and Islamist terror groups like Indian Mujahideen (remember his stand on the Batla House encounter?). Finally, both Khan and Kejriwal have proved themselves to be absolute disasters in administration.

The governance deficit is visible in both Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Delhi, where instead of rolling up their sleeves and getting down to the tough business of cleaning the mess, both Khan and Kejriwal have resorted to political populism and tamasha. Fortunately, Delhi got deliverance from demagogic Kejriwal and his gang in just under two months; Khyber Pakhtunkhwa however is still bearing the cross of having trusted a demagogue like Imran Khan.

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Indian Media Need to Take Cue from Our Scriptures

- *Prof. B. K. Kuthiala*

Media-hype is a situation when the news media creates a mountain out of a molehill and simultaneously becomes blind to a huge hill. Suicide by a farmer is not news at all, but rape of a girl in Delhi occupies the maximum time and space. A cult figure's alleged misadventure becomes the subject of major discourse in media but the floods affecting millions of lives become an ignorable truth. Rape of 14 minor girls by a trader in Arunachal does not figure anywhere in the media but an attempted molestation in Mumbai is hyped beyond all proportions. The emphasis on the non-events or minor events are not only misplaced but also inappropriate.

It is a strange situation in media today. Everyone is unhappy with the media in our country. Or to say it differently, no section of the stakeholders wants the kind of media that we have today. The most potent stakeholder of the media, the people, are

disillusioned and feel cheated by the media. The masses wonder about what media should be doing, what it can do and what it is doing. The entire structure of governance, with its tongue in the cheeks position, want to drastically alter the media by direct or indirect regulations, threats and freebies. The systems those ought to be effectively intervening in the functioning of the media like the Press Council of India, the Editors Guild, various trade unions of the media persons as also the Wage Board have given up and hardly create any noise. It may appear that the owners of the media are a happy lot, but they are not. As the costs are rising and it is becoming more and more difficult to make profits. Media owners have no hesitation in publically stating that they are in the business of mass communication and charity or social responsibility is not on their charter.

Advertisers are also worried about

* *Prof B K Kuthiala , Vice-Chancellor, MCRPSV, Bhopal*

the dwindling dividends that every rupee of advertising bring to them. Most of all, the primary stakeholders of media, the media persons of today are the most restless and unsatisfied lot even if compared to pre independence era. Yet, the irony is that not only media is surviving but is expanding as well. New channels, new newspaper registrations, new editions, expanding circulations and readership are also a fact of the current Indian media scenario. To comprehend this complex situation, perhaps a peep into the history of our media is required.

The advent of media including the news media has been late in our country. Early twentieth century witnessed a rapid explosion of newspapers in the USA and Europe. In India it made its modest beginning during that period. But to begin with we evolved our own media structures. The motive was to inform and mobilize the masses to join the national cause of throwing the British out. The activist engaged in anti-British campaigns created newspapers to reach and teach the ordinary people. The task of

Yet, the irony is that not only media is surviving but is expanding as well. New channels, new newspaper registrations, new editions, expanding circulations and readership are also a fact of the current Indian media scenario.

running the newspapers was tough and dangerous. Freedom of expression was a distant cry. Capital for running the newspapers was scarce. British regime came down heavily on actual or imagined violations. Yet, newspapers and periodicals played a crucial role in galvanizing the Indian people to join hands against the British, to explicitly exhibit the unity of cause and the zeal to sacrifice, even to die for the nation. India created its own media ignoring perhaps what was

happening in the West. But once we became free from the British, our media became the blind follower of the Western media in structure, functions and aims.

In the 1920s the Western society was hotly debating about the kind of media that they wanted for their countries. Two major streams of arguments were seen. Walter Lippmann, who died in 1974, was a renowned American journalist and a political philosopher. His writings about the role and functions of journalism more than ninety years ago still make a lot of sense and the answers to the questions he

raised at that time still remain elusive. His main argument was that journalists at the most can point a flash light rather than show a mirror to the society. They cannot tell the truth objectively because the truth is always subjective and requires much more probing than the hectic pace of news dissemination allows. If we take Lippmann's postulation as a statement of fact then obviously not only the expectation from the media goes down but the responsibility of media as the seeker and distributor of truth is also obliterated.

John Dewey, an American philosopher, psychologist, and educational reformer opined that the journalists are the facilitators between the public and the elite. He argued that the truth is a matter of perception and is best discovered by informed dialogue. Dewey's concepts have been incorporated in journalistic practices of the West in the form of community journalism. While Lippmann argued that democracy does require informed voters but media alone is not enough to create adequate perceptions. It appears that Lippmann considered journalism as an innovative societal communication system, Dewey presented media as an

extension of the natural human communication essentialities. It appears that the journalism that supported India's independence movement was unknowingly working as suggested by Dewey by involving the masses in the societal dialogue and then creating a common perception and opinion. But the post independence media has truly become elitist in structure and function. It is the characteristic of the elite to work for the maximum benefits for its own class. Most of the content of the media, more so of the news media today serves the major and minor interests of the elite only and the aspirations, anxieties, needs and problems of the large number of common men and women hardly becomes the subject matter of news, discussions or campaigns.

It is not only Americans like Lippmann or Dewey who have visualized the ideal media for the society, our own leaders have also stressed upon the importance of socially relevant media. Mahatma Gandhi was strongly against the sensationalization of news. He wanted the newspapers to talk about and talk to the last man in the society. When a friend wanted the blessings before launching a newspaper, Guru Golwalkar, the

second Sarsanghachalak (Chief) of RSS wrote back "I am sure national interests will always be your primary priority". Former President Dr A P J Abdul Kalam too in his books and discourses has repeatedly asked media to celebrate the little success stories of the common man.

But we should not forget two harsh realities. One, we as a nation follow the USA blindly, more so after 1990. Second, America by its inherent nature is a society of business and trade.

Thus despite Lippmann and Dewey, American media right from its inception is a business. The news is a commodity, a product that needs to be marketed. Moreover, like any other product, news cannot be sold in its raw form. It is to be packaged adequately so that the packing becomes more attractive and more important than the product inside. All tools and methods of marketing a product like toothpaste must also be used to sell news without any prick in the conscience of the producers and the distributors. Since we follow US in letter and spirit, sometimes a bad imitation, our media has

Second, America by its inherent nature is a society of business and trade. Thus despite Lippmann and Dewey, American media right from its inception is a business.

also become a business. Today, financial data has repeatedly proved that investment in Indian media is more beneficial than investing in other sectors. The nation must take a serious note when our own Minister of Information and Broadcasting publically declares that media is a trade and its interests must be safeguarded. Therefore 12 minutes per hour advertisements cap on the television channels is not going to be implemented.

The Government is supposed to be the strongest protector of the rights of the citizens but our Government is more worried about the interests of the traders of the information. Till the time the governance is more responsive to the needs and welfare of the people, the people of India will have to bear with the untruths, half truths, white lies and trash churned out by a sizeable section of the media 24X7. Who can save us from these merchants of garbage?

One option, as in many other spheres of our public life is to go back to our ancient storehouse of information and wisdom and seek answers for the current problems.

Our scriptures are full of clear guidelines, anecdotes and words of wisdom for societal dialogues that the media is supposed to create. One, all prevailing principle is that of speaking nothing but the truth. Innumerable *shlokas* wish that human beings must seek the truth and also utter the truth only. Scriptures also are full of research methodologies for seeking the truth.

In addition to reading, studying, discussing, learning from the learned, the scriptures advise the seekers of truth to do *dhayana* that helps to clear the webs and gives the feeling of truthfulness, a step further to the knowledge of truth. A journalist will perform much better if these methods of seeking the truth becomes an accepted practice. Then there is a prescription for the cancerous ailment of breaking news, flash news and sensalization. The scriptures advise to keep mum if the truth is not known. There seems to be no logic in broadcasting unconfirmed and incomplete news. The rush is not only undesirable, it is an unsocial act amounting to committing a sin.

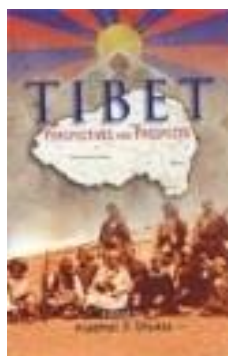
Can every kind of fact and information be a news worth disseminating? NO. The scriptures again are very lucid about it. The

Sastras say '*sathaym vada, priyam vada, hitam vada, mitham vada*'. Speak the truth, speak that will be liked by all, speak what is good, speak within limit. Truth is the ornament of throat so says a Hari Dasa. *Sastras* also give a motive for being responsibly truthful. *Sataysaya vachanama shreya* Telling the truth will lead to goodness. But again it has been prescribed that speaking the truth is the real dharma but speak the truth that is pleasant, but do not speak what is not pleasant also do not give information which is not true. We can conclude with an anecdote regarding the kind of truth that the media needs to say. There was a sage who did not utter a single lie in his life. Once, a merchant was being chased by the dacoits. To avoid the dacoits, the merchant took shelter in the ashram of the sage. The dacoits came and inquired about the merchant and the sage told the truth and the merchant was robbed and killed. After death, the sage found himself in the hell. He asked Yama, "Why am I in hell, I have always spoken the truth". The Yama replied, "Yes, our records show that you never told a lie, but records also show that you have caused the death of a noble merchant". Can our media switch to truth, relevant truth and

socially useful truth? Can it stop being the merchant of sleaze, misery and distress? Can it become the purveyor of wellness, happiness and godliness?

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Tibet: Perspectives and Prospects



A Wake Up Call for India and the World

- *R N Ravi*

Among the major man-inflicted mass tragedies of the 20th century, Tibet stands out as the one that received the world's least attention for post-event rehabilitation and trauma mitigation. A country with all the internationally accepted trappings of sovereignty—territory, people, currency, flag and treaty making authority etc it exercised for centuries was militarily smashed and grabbed in 1950 by its ultra-nationalist neighbour bent upon fulfilling its imperial dreams of the

Middle kingdom. This epochal event unleashed profound geo-strategic and security implications for all the Tibet's neighbours, more so for India. India's friendly border with Tibet turned into a hostile frontier with China that erupted into a full-scale war in 1962 and that remains intractable to a resolution anytime soon. Yet much of the dynamics of these developments is misty largely owing to scarcity of definitive materials and that too at one place on the subject. *Tibet: Perspectives and Prospects*, a

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Vivekananda International Foundation publication seeks to remove much of the mist around the subject of the status of Tibet, brings much needed perspectives for a dispassionate study of it and is a valuable addition to the existing literature on the subject that is risking fading out in the din and glare of the so-called rising China.

The book is a collection of speeches and analytical essays by contributors who relate closely to the past, present and future of Tibet and have been deeply interested in the study of the subject. The book is divided into three main sections beginning with “the historical and civilisational setting”, followed by an examination of the “current situation and trends”, and ending with a broad analysis of the “humanitarian and socio-economic aspect” of the problems of Tibetans. It concludes with suggestions though far from being

prescriptive on how to revive India’s Tibet policy.

The book highlights some critical issues as far as India’s stand on Tibet is concerned. It argues that India, independent or under the British rule, has not stood by Tibet at its unfortunate times. Be it Nehru’s ignorance of the possibilities of Chinese attack via Tibet or India’s position while Chinese troops invaded Tibet. Ironically, India was the first country to recognize Chinese sovereignty over Tibet. And while Nehru, with much enthusiasm than called for, approached the UN for Jammu and Kashmir settlement, he blocked all efforts to raise the Tibet issue at the UN. This was a tremendous setback to the territorial security interests of India, providing the prologue to the Sino-Indian war of 1962.

It examines and reveals the current simmering situation in Tibet and broadly covers the environmental concerns,

human right issues, and the resolution on self-determination for Tibet. It delves well into a geographical study of Tibet and has recognized various military and civilian activities pursued by China that imperils the delicate and precious environment of Tibet. The project to dam river Yarlung-Tsangpo (Brahmaputra in India) is seen as an alarming development in the north-eastern states of India and Bangladesh. Other rivers that reach South East Asian nations too are being dammed and diverted. Meanwhile, heavy military build up in Tibet is causing much environmental instability and its consequences will be shared by many of the Asian countries. Known as the water tank of Asia, Tibet and its environment demands sensitivity and care for millions of lives, besides those of Tibetans depend on it.

The issues of human and socio economic rights have been

examined on the basis of documented facts rarely available in public domain. The endless accounts of self-immolation reflect the intensity of anguish the Tibetans are going through. The cultural genocide, as His Holiness the Dalai Lama calls it, is being carried out systematically while the world looks the other way. The book also studies the 1959 published reports of the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) that highlights the fact that the Chinese military advance was “a prima facie case of systematic intention...to destroy in whole or in part the Tibetans as a separate nation and the Buddhist religion in Tibet.” Another report by ICJ in 1959 concluded that “acts of genocide had been committed”, and that “Tibet was at the very least a de facto independent State” before its forcible annexation by the Chinese government in 1951. Following the release of the reports by the ICJ, a

UNGA Resolution 1353 (XVI) addressing the question of Tibet was passed. Subsequently, with the support of 56 member states, another UNGA Resolution 1723 (XVI) on self-determination for Tibet was passed on 20 December 1961. The book argues to revive the Resolution in order to protect the rights and values of Tibetans.

It belabors the point that India's Tibet policy so far has been to the detriment of not only Tibetans but continues to debilitate India in several ways and undermines its national security and thus calls for urgent course correction. Authors with long experience in international diplomacy and geo-strategy suggest the way forward. Interestingly, the book also dwells on the nuances of the growing concept of the responsibility to protect (R2P), with the argument that a state practicing sovereignty

needs to act responsible to the people.

The book has made a sincere effort in bringing out the terminal threats to the cultural survival of Tibetans and their tenacity to save their spirituality permeated culture and identity in the face of heavy odds from China. India, as the motherland wherein this culture and dharma was born, has the moral responsibility to protect it by preserving and promoting the Tibetan cultural centers and practitioners, not just in India or Tibet Autonomous Region but also in the rest of the world. The book exhorts India for a muscular response to the Tibet issue.

It bursts many myths concerning Tibet, for instance, the fact that Cultural and Historical Tibet is not just TAR of China but also includes the provinces of Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan and Yunnan. It reveals the historical and civilisational

backdrop to detail and capture quite accurately the current political, cultural and environmental undercurrents of Tibet. But most importantly, it calls for the people of India, who are closely related to Tibetans, along with the international community, to reach out to the people to Tibet, hear their plight, and help them in their struggle for survival. The book

is a must read for the strategic community and fulfills the quest of the general reader interested in Tibet, its geo-politics and India's security concerns with China.

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Interaction with Prof Stephen Cohen

Prof Stephen Cohen, Senior Fellow at Brookings Institution interacted with members of the strategic community at VIF on 8 January 2014. He spoke on likely scenarios that could unfold in Afghanistan post the withdrawal of US troops

and their impact on the regional security environment. He also shared his perspectives on various aspects pertaining to civil-military relations in Pakistan and Indo-Pak relations.

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Interaction with UK MOD Team on Global Strategic Trends and Implications

A British team from Development of Concepts and Doctrine Centre of UK Ministry of Defence led by Brig. Matt Holmes made a presentation on 'Global Strategic Trends: Setting the Strategic Context for Defence and Security' and interacted with the VIF faculty on 10th February, 2014. Brig. Holmes explained at length the strategic trends and their trajectory over a period of 20 to 25 years which was considered somewhat as a very long period by the VIF analysts especially where it may not be possible to extrapolate trends in a linear manner. Point about some wild cards or unexpected events upsetting the entire projections

were also emphasized. The UK team mentioned that it had worked with and drawn on a similar project by the National Intelligence Council of the US i.e. Global Trends 2030: Alternate Words. During the interaction, the VIF faculty mentioned adding of some additional trends like increasing radicalization and fundamentalisation which would continue to impact the defence and security policies of the nations. The overall objective of the interaction by the UK, MOD team was to validate their findings through peer view.

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Release of India Uninc

India Uninc, authored by noted economist Prof R Vaidyanathan, was released by former Deputy Prime Minister L K Advani, former Union Minister Dr Subramanian Swamy and Ajit Doval, Director, VIF at a function at the Foundation's auditorium on February 14, 2013.

Speaking on the occasion, Prof Vaidyanathan lamented that the so-called unorganized sector in the country which accounted for 40-50% of the country's income was being treated as a residual sector. He listed regulations and non-availability of credit among the factors hindering the growth of this sector.

In his address, Dr Swamy blamed lack of infrastructure, multi-tier Governmental hierarchy and corruption among other factors for hindering the growth of the Indian industry vis a vis its Chinese counterparts.

Advani held the last ten years of misgovernance by the UPA responsible for the all time low witnessed in all aspects of national life while Ajit Doval praised Prof Vaidyanathan for highlighting the hitherto neglected aspect of Indian economy in his book.

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Release of Defining Hindutva

‘**D**efining Hindutva’, authored by Amb O P Gupta, was released at the VIF on February 24, 2014 by Dr Mohan Rao Bhagwat, Sarsanghchalak, RSS in the presence of Ajit Doval, Director, VIF and Santosh Taneja, Coordinator, Sankalp.

Listing out the manifold intellectual challenges before the nation, Doval, in his introductory remarks, emphasised on the importance of a common past and a common vision to build a strong nation. For this, the current ideology would have to change, he said.

In his address, the RSS Chief elaborated on the Sangh’s vision of Hindutva and sought to allay many a misapprehension and confusion in this regard. He said Hindu was a geographical term to begin with and it has been scientifically established that the DNA of all the people living on the Indo-Iranian plateau has been the same over the last 40,000 years. He said Hindus were equally responsible for the misinterpretation of the term Hindutva as they themselves were

not aware of the concept. He agreed with Doval that Hindutva was infinite and cannot be defined. He praised Amb Gupta for bringing out the book and suggested that it be read widely.

Speaking on the occasion, Amb Gupta asserted that Hindutva was akin to genuine secularism and Hinduism and Hindutva were not contradictory to each other.

The concept of Hindu Rashtra, he said, was as old as Rig Veda itself. While listing out the various grievances of the Hindu community, he said Hindutva was neither anti-minority nor anti-Muslim.

Several dignitaries including former Rajya Sabha Chairperson Najma Heptulla, former Union Minister Arif Mohd Khan and Rajya Sabha member Justice Rama Jois were present on the occasion.

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