



Vivek

Issues & Options

March - April 2014

Issue: III No: II



India After May 16, 2014

China's Emergence as IOR Power

Why India Needs a DTC?

Tracing Roots of Corruption

and many more

Published By : Vivekananda International Foundation

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

Contents

EDITOR'S NOTE

3

CENTRE STAGE

India after 16th May 2014: Challenges Before the New Government

4

- *Dr M N Buch*

NATION

India Wants a Prime Minister Who is the Anti-Thesis of Manmohan Singh

18

- *Dr A.Surya Prakash*

DIPLOMACY

Enhancing Strategic Cooperation between India, Vietnam and Japan in Larger National Interests

23

- *Maj Gen (Retired) P K Chakravorty*

As USA Pivots, Saudi Arabia Rebalances in the Middle East

27

- *Monish Gulati*

NEIGHBOURHOOD

China's Emergence as Maritime Power in IOR and its Implications

34

- *Brig (Retd) Vinod Anand*

Afghanistan: The Three Transitions and the Question of Peace and Durability

42

- *Kanwal Sibal*

DEFENCE

Why India Needs a Defence Technology Commission?

46

- *Radhakrishna Rao*

GOVERNANCE

Tracing the Roots of Corruption

53

- *RNP Singh*

MEDIA

Multilateral Dialogues for Unity and Plurality: Need of the Hour

67

- *Prof. B. K. Kuthiala*

BOOK REVIEW

Beyond NJ9842: The Siachen Saga

71

EVENTS

Interaction with Dr. Hoang Anh Tuan from Vietnam

75

Interaction with EU Ambassador to India

76

Talk by French Ambassador to India HE Francois Richier

78

Interaction with Egyptian Ambassador to India

80

Interaction with Swedish Delegation

81

Interaction with Dr. Klaus Lange, Institute of Transnational Studies, Germany

82

VIF MOU with Vietnam Think Tank

83

Editor's Note

Vox Populi, Vox Dei. In a democracy, the voice of the people is the voice of God. Come May 16, the verdict of the masses on the performance/non-performance of the different political parties would come to the fore and a new Government would assume office soon thereafter.

While Government formation is important, its stability, the maturity, vision and decisiveness of its leadership and the quality of governance that it would deliver are equally critical. In recent times, the country has witnessed crises of confidence, of credibility and one sincerely hopes that the new Government would be able to restore the faith of the people in democracy, the rule of law and institutions, which has eroded over the years.

The 2014 Lok Sabha elections witnessed unprecedented mudslinging, personalized attacks and attempts to divide the electorate on casteist, communal and linguistic lines, which is most unfortunate even six decades after independence.

The low level of discourse engaged in by sections of the political class did not behove a mature democracy at a time when all the eyes of the world are on India.

Instead of debating governance related issues, which are of core concern to the people of India, particularly the youth, attempts were made by vested interests to focus only on the cliché subject of secularism, which has come to be identified with political hypocrisy.

One can only hope and pray that once the dust of the campaigning settles down, civility would be restored back into our polity and the political class would set an example by working together, particularly to resolve major challenges confronting the nation.

In this issue, our eminent authors such as M N Buch, Dr A Surya Prakash and Prof B K Kuthiala have dealt with some of these critical issues.

We also have insightful articles on Defence, Diplomacy and Governance from our distinguished scholars.

Please keep sending us your valuable feedback to enable us to serve you better in future.

K G Suresh

[Back to Contents](#)

India after 16th May 2014: Challenges Before the New Government

- **Dr. M.N. Buch**

The political scenario unveiling before us for the period 16th May, 2014 onwards for the next five years is still somewhat blurred, but certain alternative structures of government seem to be emerging. The first is an absolute majority which, in the present context, probably centres around BJP. The Congress more or less seems to have come to terms with a situation in which it cannot aspire for a majority. Realistically speaking, an absolute majority for any single party does not seem to be on the cards in 2014.

A second alternative would be for the BJP to get somewhere around 220 Lok Sabha seats, in which case it would find no shortage of other political parties wanting to throw in their lot with BJP. What would emerge is a coalition but in which the largest single party has enough representation in Parliament to be able to have a dominant voice. Such a government, whilst being reasonably stable, would also be

reasonably firm and resolved in achieving its objective, though not all of them because some compromise would have to be made with the partners. The third alternative would be for the largest single party, most probably the BJP, to get about 180 seats and lead a coalition. However, this would be a coalition of compromise and the government would, therefore, be weak. This would not be a happy situation. The fourth alternative, which is truly horrifying, is that the BJP does not get 150 seats, the Congress reaches a figure of about 120 seats, a melange of parties then forms a government and we witness an era of having the weakest, most corrupt, most indecisive government in our history. Mulayam Singh Yadav and, perhaps, even Sonia Gandhi would be quite happy with this option. This would be very harmful for India, which certainly cannot afford yet another bout of a nonfunctioning government. By the simple logic of *reductio ad absurdum*, love BJP or hate it, one

* Dr M N Buch, Dean, Centre for Governance and Political Studies, VIF

is left hoping for either the first or the second option to come true. One says this without any political bias, but rather because instead of no government this country now needs firm government, which the Congress seems clearly unable to provide.

Are there any indications about the political composition of the new government? In the case of the Congress the party went into the elections in a clearly defeatist mood, with its Prime Minister continuing with his stance of not contesting a Lok Sabha election, its very powerful Finance Minister excusing himself from the election and its Spokesman and Minister for Information and Broadcasting fighting shy of contesting the election. To the general public, this meant that powerful ministers themselves lost their faith in themselves and their own party to successfully contest the election. One is surprised that the party did not insist that they would have to contest, regardless of the results. Certainly this has had a very demoralising effect on the party. BJP, on the other hand, came out of its corner at the bell in

One says this without any political bias, but rather because instead of no government this country now needs firm government, which the Congress seems clearly unable to provide.

fighting trim and its entire attitude towards the election has been extremely positive. Its Prime Ministerial candidate, by the energy shown by him, his body language, his careful choosing of words has shown himself to be clearly the front runner. Narendra Modi has become a very real factor in 2014 election. Perhaps that is the reason why an extremely hostile media has now veered around to showing Modi some respect and in fact conservative, traditionally pro Congress newspapers such as the Times of India, The Economic Times and the Hindustan Times have started commenting editorially on the challenges before a Modi government. This is coupled with the fact that every attempt by the so-called secular parties to drum up mass opposition to Modi by the minorities has not met with the hoped for success. Some Muslims have voiced reservation about Modi or even outright opposition, but there is no widespread anti Modi hysteria amongst the minorities. This single fact suggests that if Modi does form a government and its performance is

positive and addresses minority interests, then minority opposition to BJP may also reduce over time. It would appear that the Muslims may not vote in large numbers for BJP, but it also indicates that there is unlikely to be the level of polarisation of Muslim votes which the Congress hopes for.

Any new government, regardless of which party heads it, will have to squarely face the fact that there is a perception, which started about twenty years ago, that India does not have a worthwhile government and that it is a policy of drift which guides us. Therefore, a major challenge before the new government would be to establish its own credentials as a government which can and will govern, in the public interest, but with great firmness of purpose. Towards this end, it will take head on the law and order situation, especially in the Left Wing extremist affected districts of Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Jharkhand and Bihar. The Naxalites will be treated as what they are, that is, the enemies of India and the State will use all its resources to ensure that these lost areas are recovered, the Naxalites eliminated and proper government restored. Of course in doing so, great care will be taken to protect

the interests of the tribals and to create an environment in which a strong, highly welfare oriented development administration begins to function. In other words, the State will not stint in applying its resources to the development of these districts, but only after the Naxalites are liquidated.

There is a great deal of divisiveness in India in which caste, religion and region all seem to play a part. The new government will have to ensure that people of all religions feel secure, all religions are honoured and any attempt at disturbing communal harmony very strongly dealt with. This means that a person like Azam Khan is made to feel the full weight of the majesty of the law, are successfully prosecuted under section 153 A IPC and made to cool their heels in prison for several years. Anyone promoting communal riots, as happened in Muzaffarnagar, will be dealt with severely and the police will be suitably directed to ensure that riots do not occur and if they do, are immediately put down with a heavy hand. It is not enough for the future Prime Minister to say that he looks upon all Indians as one. By his actions, he has to prove that not only are all Indians one but also that the

State will ensure that its might will be deployed in ensuring complete protection for every single Indian. The Prime Minister has to make India completely free of communal violence and for this the country must cloak him with plenary powers. It is only then that India can become truly secular. As an extension of this doctrine of harmony and amity, the new government also has to find ways to free India from the curse of caste, irrational regionalism and linguistic chauvinism. Shiv Sena and MNS may find this hard to swallow, casteist politicians of U.P. and Bihar may find this a bitter pill, but such medicine will have to be administered if India is to unite and move forward in harmony.

There can no good government if those in power are corrupt. Today there is political corruption for the purchase of power, there is bureaucratic corruption which often results in a nexus between civil servants and politicians and there is social corruption in which standards and norms of morality and social behaviour are bypassed. Political corruption arises out of two factors, one being the high

cost of elections and the second being the temptation for making money which comes the way of politicians because we have moved away from a systems and laws based polity and entered an era of adhocism in decision making which promotes favouritism and nepotism. One is not arguing here that rules must be adhered to as rigidly as they would be in a totalitarian State. However, there should be no toleration of deviation from rules which permits the granting of individual or collective favours. For example, in the allocation of natural resources rules must be adhered to because there is a scarcity value attached to such resource and, therefore, if undue discretionary powers vest in any authority, then there can be competitive bribe giving in order to corner a particular resource. This example can be multiplied into all fields, but it suffices to illustrate how the lack of rules, violation of rules, irrational decision making all add up to an environment in which corruption is bound to be endemic. If a position of power is cloaked within a system in which ad hoc decision making is prohibited, then the likelihood of that power being used

However, there should be no toleration of deviation from rules which permits the granting of individual or collective favours.

for undue gain will be substantially reduced, if not eliminated. For us to end political corruption, therefore, the next government must seriously mull over the question of State funding of elections, coupled with electoral reforms which facilitate this, together with a greater emphasis on rationality in decision making, virtual elimination of discretionary powers except within well defined parameters and an insistence on rules being adhered to. The elected representatives have the power to change the rules, provided the Legislature accepts this, but even in the new regime of rules, the changed rules will apply evenly across the board and there will be no favouritism.

This theme needs to be carried further. One major cause of bureaucratic corruption is that there is excessive interaction between officials and citizens necessitated by unnecessary rules and regulations which force a citizen to approach the authorities even in petty matters. If corruption is to be ended, there has to be a systematic and continuous review of all rules, of all orders, of all procedures in which a citizen is required to interact with a government servant or seek permission to do

something. At every point of contact, the government servant has an opportunity to delay matters, which means that a citizen who is seeking intervention even in an absolutely routine manner is forced to pay a bribe in order to make his file move. If all such points of contact are either eliminated, or made people-friendly, or have a built in schedule which ensures smooth movement of papers, with every deviation being easy to detect and also being punished, then the need to pay a bribe to have one's legitimate work done will substantially reduce. Also, because deviations from norms will be easy to detect government servants would be in some fear that if papers do not move quickly and citizens do not find legitimate redressal, then the official can be punished and in fact will be punished. One small example of how this works is from the Delhi Development Authority which decided in early 1978 that in the matter of a completion certificate of a building, DDA would accept the certificate of any registered architect. There was a big uproar from the officials of DDA who saw a source of lucrative illegal gain slipping out of their hands, but the then head of the organisation insisted on pushing

the reform through. Architects charge a fee but certainly not an extortionist fee because had they done so people would have gone to other architects. So long as the system lasted, which was approximately two years, the level of corruption on account of completion certificates dropped very sharply. There were almost no complaints in this behalf. Of course, the reform did not survive after the departure of the then head of DDA, but it was indicative of what administrative measures can achieve in the matter of eliminating corruption. The new government, apart from following whatever policy it wants to in the matter of the Ombudsman (by whatever name called), investigation and prosecution of offences and other penal measures, must systematically, vigorously and consistently conduct department by department, office by office reform of all administrative procedures, take all administrative measures and put in place systems whereby the contact between citizens and officials is reduced to a minimum. One could commend here what the Rajkot Municipal Corporation did

Of course, the reform did not survive after the departure of the then head of DDA, but it was indicative of what administrative measures can achieve in the matter of eliminating corruption.

some years ago. It laid down norms of building construction, put these on its website and then encouraged people to seek building permission by sending online applications. These were scanned by the computers of the corporation and those applications which adhered to the prescribed norms were immediately cleared and permission granted online. Except for commercial buildings and some very large structures, almost the entire work of giving building permission was computerised and the citizens neither had to pay a bribe nor face delay in the clearance of their building applications. What is more, because a plan which did not adhere to norms would be automatically rejected, attempts to obtain permission for more than what was permissible became unsuccessful. This example shows that there is hardly any government activity which cannot be put into a system which itself discourages corruption and, perhaps, it is this, more than anything else which will eliminate corruption from this country. Kejriwal's Jan Lokpal will then become irrelevant.

No single essay can give a complete blueprint of government, nor cover every challenge which the new government will face and, therefore, this paper, too, will leave many areas untouched. Perhaps a follow up paper will be needed, perhaps subject matter specialists will come up with their own ideas and write their own papers, which the new government will at least read with care. However, one has to move beyond just administration and corruption and address economic issues also. In this regard, it might be worth starting with agriculture. This country is fortunate enough to have more than sixty percent of its land area consisting of arable soil. In China, only ten percent of the land area is arable. Considering its climate, water resources, relative environmental health with zones ranging from sub arctic to hot tropical, India should be the most important agricultural country in the world. Verghese Kurien proved that India can achieve great heights and his dream, to which he gave substance, has resulted in India being the biggest milk producer in the world. Dr. Y.V. Parmar, the first Chief Minister of Himachal Pradesh, building on the foundations laid by the Stokes family in the Simla Hills and

Major Bannon in the Kullu Valley, made India one of the biggest producers of apple in the world. We have led both the wheat and rice revolution. Given visionaries, given universities of the status the Punjab Agriculture University, Ludhiana and the G.B. Pant Agriculture University, Pant Nagar, with high priority being given to cutting edge research and development in agricultural sciences, given proper management of water resources, given a marketing system and agro based industrial system which adds value to product, India can become the greatest agricultural country in the world and agriculture can make our nation and our farmers prosperous. Almost eighty-five crore people of India are farmers or are dependent on agriculture in one way or the other. Making a few crore city dwellers prosperous will not cause India to grow and develop, especially because urban based economic activities tend to be capital friendly and are not designed for equity. Making eighty-five crore Indians prosperous, with prosperity being spread over small farms, would give us enormous growth, but with equity and distributive justice. In a paper of this type, one cannot give all the measures which

would bring about such agricultural prosperity, but certainly the new government must give very high priority to agricultural growth and for this purpose to take a holistic view of everything which goes into agriculture so that those policies can be adopted which bring about across the board agricultural development in India and distribute prosperity right down to the last hamlet.

Closely linked with agriculture is the question of nonagricultural employment and urban growth. India is fortunately placed in that it still has a reasonable equilibrium in its settlement pattern from the smallest village right up to the largest metropolitan city. For example, mega metropolitan India accounts for about six percent of the entire population of the country. There is, therefore, no primate city such as Bangkok in Thailand and Mexico City in Mexico. In fact, the greatest potential of growth lies in our middle level towns and if we have an agricultural policy and programme which uses small town India as growth centres which

India is fortunately placed in that it still has a reasonable equilibrium in its settlement pattern from the smallest village right up to the largest metropolitan city.

could promote agricultural growth and rural wealth generation, then the equilibrium in settlements can be further strengthened. Now the urban policy would come closer to what has been recommended by the National Commission on Urbanisation. Basically what the Commission has said was that there are approximately 439 towns, mainly in the small and medium towns category, which have the best potential for growth, have a defined hinterland and whose development would cause simultaneous growth of the whole

region. Urban policy should encourage the growth of these towns. The new government would have to take a fresh

look at our urbanisation policy. We need not follow the Chinese model of urbanisation at the cost of rural development and in fact our policy of growth in tandem could well become the new paradigm of urban-rural growth in the developing world.

Apart from agriculture, the other primary sector is the use of natural resources and the employment it provides. India, this ancient Gondwanaland which contains the oldest hill ranges in

the world, the Satpuras, Aravallis and Vindhyas is very rich in natural resources, in particular minerals. The ore lies buried beneath another great natural resource, our forests. How does one harvest the underlying minerals without damaging the forests? This is the great challenge which technology has to face and master. Without coal we cannot generate power, without iron ore, bauxite or copper bearing rocks we cannot manufacture steel, aluminium and copper. Without power, without these metals, we cannot build a major secondary sector of manufacturing industries and without manufacture we cannot promote accelerated growth. Here the challenge which the new government will have to face is how on the one hand to promote the secondary sector and on the other to do so in a manner which does not harm the environment or disturb the planetary eco system. This is not impossible to achieve, but it has to be done with care, caution and forward planning.

India made the mistake of following the tertiary sector route to fast economic growth. Good while it lasted, but now with a big question mark against it. China followed the secondary sector

route and built up a huge industrial infrastructure and as a result thereof Chinese goods now dominate the world market. China also heavily encourages not only Foreign Direct Investment but also foreign companies setting up their industries in China. They had no inhibition about allowing multi-national companies from setting up shop in China, which accounts for China's accelerated growth. This has not been without a price, including heavy industrial pollution, but there is no doubt that the skill level of the Chinese people has increased because of the opportunities for industrial employment, the economy has grown and China is now a powerhouse driving the world economy. Without attempting to suggest the correct industrial policy to be followed, it is still felt that the new government will have to very quickly decide on the path of industrial growth that it will follow so that the secondary sector becomes the engine of economic growth, quite apart from making India a very strong country in the matter of manufacture of goods of every description.

Closely linked with both agricultural and industry is the question of fundamental research, applied research and development.

As agriculture improves, as industries grow, the need for research and development also grow, especially because in other countries the research sector is very powerful. The new government will have to adopt a research and development policy in which our research institutions move away from being organisations which merely validate imported technology and instead themselves become the centres of thinking, invention, innovation and then appropriate application. Japan's post Second World War incarnation was based on research, especially in the field of electronics, communications and other forms of electronic applications. From being a nation of copycats, Japan transformed itself into a nation of invention and innovation. We have to move in the same direction, which means that the new government will have to create an environment in which research and development are the prime movers of economic activity and growth.

All growth, all research, has to be built on two premises. The first is

On this very weak base, we have built an infrastructure of worthless colleges and universities, in which we have recognised the caste system by superimposing a few good central universities and some institutes of national importance such as the IISc, IISERs, IIMs, IITs and IIITs.

that India will be an educated nation and the second is that India will be a healthy nation. Let us face facts – our education system is in shambles. The entire school system is rotten to the core because we have steadfastly neglected all school education. There are a few good public schools; there are some good government schools of the Central School and Navodaya School genre but the majority of our government schools is ill housed, badly furnished and equipped, with very poor teachers, virtually no worthwhile pedagogy or classroom teaching and students who may become semi literate but are certainly not educated. On this very weak base, we have built an infrastructure of worthless colleges and universities, in which we have recognised the caste system by superimposing a few good central universities and some institutes of national importance such as the IISc, IISERs, IIMs, IITs and IIITs. Even these, because of expansion, are now woefully short of faculty. Almost none of our universities are engaged in any worthwhile

research and without academic research no country can prosper. America's great strength is the research and innovation which flows out of the universities. By comparison, our universities are a quagmire of sloth. The new government will have to give the highest priority to education in which funds will have to be found and measures taken to rebuild the system from school upwards. Education is not cheap but a nation which neglects education will be cheap and worthless because its manpower is uneducated. India cannot afford this.

With education comes health. One remembers how before 1950, millions of workers, mainly in agriculture, lay sick with malaria and there virtually was no one to till the fields or run the factories. It is during the Second World War, when much of the fighting took place in the jungles of South East Asia, that the army realised that malaria is a more dangerous enemy than the Japanese and, therefore, very strict anti malaria measures were adopted to protect the health of the army. The National Malaria Eradication Programme did help to bring malaria under control and since then other communicable diseases

have also received due importance. The eradication of polio and small pox are two success stories in the field of health. However, we have moved away from inexpensive health care in the public domain and are pushing more and more people into the hands of private health care. Because the private sector is expensive, the most needy are now virtually outside health coverage and, therefore, whereas our best hospitals are amongst the best in the world, government hospitals are down in the dumps. The less said about rural health care, the better. China has done much better than India in community health care and the new government will have to take a good hard look at our health care system with a view to universal coverage by affordable medical care.

One does not envy the new Prime Minister because he will carry with him the baggage of past misgovernance, which has left our infrastructure in shambles. However, if India is to prosper, its basic infrastructure will have to be vastly improved, especially in the matter of power, water supply and transport and communications. These are extremely capital intensive, but as our past experience has proved, these are

all sectors in which a public-private participation model can work. The new government will have to see the extent to which this model can be expanded and our infrastructure facilities improved to the level where they become facilitators of economic growth.

There are two areas of concern which must be addressed by the new government. The first is foreign policy, especially in the context of our neighbours and the developments in our neighbourhood.

The Americans are clearly moving out of Afghanistan because that war is not sustainable.

Will there be a democratic government in Afghanistan or, as is more likely to happen, will Pakistani backed extremist Islamic elements such as the Taliban take over the country? In the worst case scenario, where does that leave India? Will Pakistan encourage extremist elements in Afghanistan to join hands with terrorist organisations in Pakistan to target India? Is there anything that we can do in the immediate future and in the long run to protect our investment, our interests and our

Will Pakistan encourage extremist elements in Afghanistan to join hands with terrorist organisations in Pakistan to target India?

influence in Afghanistan? How do we deal with cross border terrorism? How do we counter growing Chinese influence in our neighbouring countries such as Nepal and Sri Lanka? How can we help the Tibetans to regain their autonomy and even sovereignty? How do we keep militarily aggressive China at bay in Tibet, Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh? What should be our policy towards the changing scenario in Russia and the former (now independent) republics of the Soviet Union? What should our policy be vis-à-

vis the United States of America, both in terms of Indo-US relations and in the larger context of India,

Russia and China relationships? There are many foreign affairs experts who would be only too happy to advise the new government. What the new government will have to do is put together various inputs and then arrive at the best policy which suits India's interests. One has not covered the entire field of foreign relation in the above discussions, but they do highlight the areas of immediate concern to us. Let it be noted that Kashmir is not mentioned because it, like

Arunachal Pradesh, is non-negotiable.

One might end this paper with a reference to our defence policy. Let the new government very quickly decide what form of coordination machinery we should have to ensure proper integration of the armed forces in dealing with the question of national security. This has to begin with a strengthening of the office of the National Security Advisor and the National Security Council. Let us at least ensure that there is focused intelligence gathering, analysis and input into national policy both in terms of internal security and security of the nation against external threats. Then government must address the question of whether the present arrangement of a Chiefs of Staff Committee headed by the senior most Service Chief should continue or should there be a Chief of Defence Staff who has overriding powers over the three Services and acts as Principal Military Advisor to Government. Then the government must address the question of equipment of the armed forces. It is well known that the Army is short of guns and armour, even its infantry weapons are outdated, the weapons platforms of the Navy,

whether in the air or on the surface or under water, are ageing and require very quick modernisation and replacement. The Air Force has been howling for combat aircraft, a demand not being fulfilled for years on end for lack of acquisition. Can such Forces be depended upon to protect India?

Let us completely overhaul the system of acquisition of weapons. Let it begin with each Service Chief convincing government of the need to acquire a particular weapon system. The source of acquisition should also be included in the proposal. Once government accepts the proposal, it must provide a budget and place it at the disposal of the Service Chief concerned. The rules relating to acquisition, the procedures to be followed and precautions to be taken must be clearly defined and codified. Thereafter, the Service Chief in question should set up an acquisition committee in which the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Finance must be represented. Let this committee have the final powers of acquisition and unless a convincing case is made out of irregularity or misdemeanor, let the decision of the committee be final. Every acquisition of

weapons raises complaints about corruption. We may investigate these complaints but we must not stop acquisition of a system which has been found to be best suited to the Service concerned. If there is wrongdoing let it be punished, but ex post facto. We cannot deprive our armed forces of necessary weaponry any more. That is why the new government will have to streamline the process of acquiring weapons, ensuring honesty but eliminating delay. What good does it do for the country to claim honesty whilst its submarines are sinking under the weight of their own obsolescence?

In conclusion, let it be stated unequivocally that the main challenge before the new government is to prove that it is in fact a government and not a bunch of nincompoops who have neither the will to govern, nor the authority, nor the energy.

[Back to Contents](#)

India Wants a Prime Minister Who is the Anti-Thesis of Manmohan Singh

- *Dr A Surya Prakash*

As the battle for the ballot enters the final phase and political leaders slug it out in the scorching heat of May, a few obvious trends have come to the surface across the country. While it is never easy to forecast the number of seats each party will bag in a country which has about 50 national and regional parties vying for seats in the lower House of Parliament, it is possible to pick up signals about which way the wind is blowing and also get the general drift of the arguments for or against the incumbent government or the main opposition party.

Since voting trends depend upon a host of variables in India including region, religion, caste, gender and class, some experience in assessing electoral trends in different regions of the country would be essential to avoid the minefields and get a sense of peoples' inclinations. While this writer has done pre-election surveys for media organizations for over four decades, it must be

emphasized that even the most seasoned election analyst can go wrong at times because of the political plurality that one encounters in every region and sub-region of India and the varying concerns of electors in the different states. Having put in this caveat, this writer will attempt to sum up the prevailing mood in the country following recent tours in some sample states in different regions.

One trend that has been visible since the decline of one-party rule and emergence of regional political parties in different states and the formation of coalition governments at the federal level, is that the state level electoral preferences of voters usually got reflected in a parliament election as well. In other words, if the people of Odisha voted the Biju Janata Dal to power in an election to the state assembly, they would continue to repose faith in the same party if an election to Parliament were to be held soon after the state assembly election. This could

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

however change if the election to the state assembly was held some years ago and an anti-incumbency mood set in among the electorate in that state. In such a situation, the voters would swing against that party and vote candidates put up by the principal opposition party in the state. In either case, the factor determining voter preference would be local and not national. While there have been some exceptions to this rule, this has been the general inclination of voters and the fact that it is an election to Parliament has often been glossed over.

The 2014 election, however, may be different because indications are that this time, voters may buck this trend. Unlike in the past, voters in many states in the Northern, Central, Eastern, Western and Southern regions say that state-level politics and their electoral preferences at the local level do not matter in this election. They say the question before them in this election is “Who should govern India” and they propose to answer that question through the ballot. This means that after a long time, electors in many states in the country will rise above regional and caste considerations

While there have been some exceptions to this rule, this has been the general inclination of voters and the fact that it is an election to Parliament has often been glossed over.

which influence their voting preferences locally and take a call on the kind of government they want in New Delhi.

This is one distinct trend that is visible in different regions of the country and this trend appears to have crystallised over the past year or so and has much to do with the omissions and commissions of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government in recent years. While committed supporters of the Congress Party and its allies in the UPA continue to back the

alliance, the UPA’s detractors are now legion and there is much disappointment about the performance of the

Prime Minister, Mr. Manmohan Singh, his leadership (or more correctly, the absence of it), his stony silence even in the face of calamities or even aggression from across the border and his failure to prevent blatant acts of corruption by his ministers. The barbaric treatment of Indian soldiers by the Pakistan Army and the reports of regular Chinese intrusions into Indian territory and the pusillanimous response of the Union Government to these incidents has left many voters sad

and angry. Finally, the real clincher is the nation-wide feeling that Mr Singh is not in control of his government and that he is subject to remote control. This is the general perception and assessment of the overall persona of Mr Singh among voters barring diehard supporters of the UPA coalition.

Voters in different parts of the country cite some or other of these reasons as influencing their voting decision in 2014 and say that they want a Prime Minister who has the following qualifications: He must be decisive; he must speak up for India; he must rejuvenate the economy; he must step up development; he must be in control of the government; he must provide a corruption-free government;

At first glance, this would seem like a tall order. But then one must note that the length of the peoples' wish list is directly proportional to their disillusionment with the incumbent government. There can be no doubt that there is a strong anti-incumbency wave in many parts of the country and the voters are thirsting for a change.

Apart from all this, there is another significant demand. The

voters seem to want the next Prime Minister to head a "majboot sarkar" (a strong government), meaning thereby that they are no longer comfortable with unstable coalitions at the federal level. While the people blame Mr Singh for what they see as a state of paralysis in the Union Government, they are not oblivious to the fact that he heads an unstable coalition kept afloat by greedy and unethical partners. Prime Minister Singh describes this constraint as "coalition dharma" and says that he is hamstrung by it. But the public perception is that this is actually "coalition adharna", and that a strong-willed Prime Minister call always call the bluff of his allies, discipline the fractious partners and ensure that the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) retains its authority and control over government.

In addition, the voters appear to be deeply conscious of the fact that multi-party coalitions have weakened the Union Government and virtually stripped the Prime Minister of the powers vested in him by the Constitution to choose a team of his choice and to appoint and dismiss members of his cabinet at will. This has enfeebled the PMO and reduced it to a

caricature of what it was even a decade ago. Voters' responses seem to indicate that this trend needs to be reversed if one has to have a "majboot sarkar" and a "decisive PM". This understanding of the pitfalls of electing a coalition government at the Centre gels with the desire of voters in many states and regions to rise above caste, region and such other considerations while voting in this parliamentary election, so that the primary question before them, namely, "Who should govern India?" is not confused with other local issues or considerations.

All this brings us to the final question.

What does this mean in terms of the final outcome in Lok Sabha Election 2014? Since the voters are disillusioned with an unethical coalition at the Centre which is headed by a man who is perceived to be weak, they seem to want a Prime Minister who is the very anti-thesis of Mr Singh. For a variety of reasons ranging from bitter political battles over models of governance, models of leadership, models of development and models of inclusion to the

public assessment of the persona of leaders who are willing and able to handle the top job, a substantial section of the voters appear to have zeroed in on Mr Narendra Modi, the Chief Minister of Gujarat and the Bharatiya Janata Party's nominee for the office of Prime Minister, as their choice for prime ministership. They also see him as having all the qualities needed for the top job.

While Mr Modi has contributed to the creation of this image of being

By singling him out for attack ever since the BJP anointed him as the prime ministerial candidate on September 13, 2013, they have willy-nilly made this a Modi or No-Modi election and for the moment, it appears it is working to Mr Modi's advantage.

a firm and decisive leader focused on development and governance, some credit must go to his detractors as well. By singling him out for attack ever since the BJP

anointed him as the prime ministerial candidate on September 13, 2013, they have willy-nilly made this a Modi or No-Modi election and for the moment, it appears it is working to Mr Modi's advantage. Some other factors have also been working for him. For example, the fact that he was a tea seller in a railway station during his formative years has struck a chord with the poor and dispossessed. They feel that he is living the great Indian dream

which offers equal opportunity to one and all and enables even the poorest of the poor to move up the ladder provided one has the discipline, positive energy and the gumption to overcome social and economic disabilities and dream big. Initially some members of the Congress Party mocked at his humble beginnings but clearly that seems to have boomeranged. The second factor that appears to be playing out in his favour is the fact that he belongs to a caste that is part of the Other Backward Classes (OBCs). This fact has spread silently by way of word of mouth and has made it easier for a large section of the voters within this segment to rise above their caste considerations and relate to him.

Finally, a word about the BJP.. Although Mr Modi is the BJP's Prime Ministerial candidate, the voters' focus is not on the party. Most of those who hit the lotus button on their electronic voting machines say that their vote is for Modi and not the party. So much so that in many constituencies they say they neither know the BJP candidate nor do they care as

to who it is. All they know is that they are voting Modi. Mr Modi has sensed this and therefore his television appeal to voters says "hit the lotus button and be assured that that vote is coming directly to me".

There have been few occasions in the past when such a strong and charismatic personality has dominated the discourse in a parliamentary election. The only examples one can think of are the Lok Sabha elections held in 1971 and 1980. On both these occasions, it was Indira Gandhi, the leader of her faction of the Congress versus the rest and on both occasions she came out triumphant. What does Election 2014 hold for us? We must wait till May 16 to know the extent to which the electorate has backed Mr Modi and whether India will get a "strong and decisive" government!

[Back to Contents](#)

Enhancing Strategic Cooperation between India, Vietnam and Japan in Larger National Interests

- *Maj Gen (Retired) P K Chakravorty*

Introduction

The Asia Pacific region has become strategically important due to disputes in the South China Sea and the East China Sea. Over the past decade, the region has witnessed the emergence of an assertive China. Currently China is the second largest economy in the world and is the country whose defence budget is next only to the United States. The People's Republic of China was established in 1949 and ever since China has been involved in the following conflicts:-

- Korean War which began in 1950 and lasted up to 1953.
- Sino Indian conflict of 1962.
- Ussuri River Conflict with Russia in 1969.
- Securing of Paracel Islands from Vietnam in 1974.
- Vietnam War in 1979.

Transformation of the Chinese Armed Forces began under the great visionary Deng Xiaoping and

this resulted in the Peoples Liberation Army (PLA) undertaking a Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) which has resulted in a modernised force capable of undertaking military operations in all the five dimensions comprising Land, Sea, Air, Outer Space and Cyber domain. This capability has resulted in a new assertiveness from China with regard to its territorial claims with respect to Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea, Spratly and Paracel Islands in the South China Sea as also Arunachal Pradesh (referred as Southern Tibet). China is smoothly posturing to get Taiwan into its fold and thereby further enhance its Hard and Soft Power. China is also assisting two nuclear weapon states North Korea and Pakistan as also providing weapons and economic aid to numerous Asian countries.

China's assertiveness needs to be strategically balanced. This can be done by pragmatic strategic

* *Maj Gen (Retd) P K Chakravorty, India's former Defence Attache to Vietnam*

partnerships between countries that have disputes with China. The need at this current juncture is to enhance strategic partnership between India, Japan and Vietnam to strategically balance Chinese Hard Power.

Enhancing Strategic Partnerships

China's rising assertiveness has witnessed it declaring on 23 November 2013 an Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ) covering most of East China Sea. This has resulted in air traffic restrictions over the disputed Senkaku islands and was a unilateral step. Obviously all these have caused security concerns for all countries having territorial disputes with China. There is a concern that such zones may be declared in other areas leading to creation of fear of Chinese domination over international air space.

While capabilities are easy to gauge it is indeed difficult to visualise intentions. Japan and Vietnam have detailed comprehension of Chinese thinking. India's biggest export to China has been Buddhism and has witnessed a conflict in 1962. All

these countries are reading the situation intimately leading to strategic assessment of the current situation vis a vis China. Japan has moved on to a high pitch of nationalism leading to the election of Shinzo Abe as the Prime Minister on 26 December 2012. Abe has balanced the Japanese economy and enhanced Japan's defence preparedness. Further, he has sought to broaden the interpretation of Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution in order to permit Japan to maintain de jure military forces. He also supports the Japanese alliance with United States. In December 2013, he announced a five year plan of military expansion. This was to cater for the Chinese build up and in consonance with the US pivot policy where a rebalancing would be affected resulting in six Carrier Battle Groups being deployed in Asia Pacific.

Prime Minister Abe has been forthright in stating that relations with China cannot be based on emotions. He has been interacting with US and China on all issues to arrive at a realistic solution with regard to Asia Pacific. He has comprehended the strategic

Obviously all these have caused security concerns for all countries having territorial disputes with China.

situation and accordingly made his first overseas trip to Vietnam in January 2013. Thereafter, there has been frequent interaction between the two countries leading to the visit of the Vietnamese President Truong Tan Sang to Japan from 16 to 19 March 2014. During the visit, both countries decided to have extensive strategic partnership to strengthen defence cooperation between the two countries.

Japan and India have similar views on the current situation leading to cooperation in all fields between the two countries. The intensity of the relationship was demonstrated by the six day visit of Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko to India which began on 30 November 2013. Thereafter, there was a series of exchanges which led to the visit of Prime Minister Abe on 25 and 26 January 2014. He was the Chief Guest at the Republic Day celebrations in 2014 and held important discussions with Indian authorities. There were three major areas which were agreed and steps would be taken for further action. The first is the strategic partnership which was to be made more intense by having an institutionalised mechanism of regular consultations between the

National Security Advisor (NSA) of India and the Secretary General of National Security Secretariat of Japan. The second aspect pertained to the recent Chinese policy of declaring an ADIZ. Both Governments underscored the importance of freedom of over flight and civil aviation safety in accordance with recognised policy of international law and the relevant standards of International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO). The third and most important aspect pertains to strengthen military exchanges and joint exercises as also prepare a road map in this connection. A joint exercise will be held between the two navies in the Pacific Ocean. Apart from these, there were discussions on the civil nuclear cooperation agreement and sale of US2 amphibian aircraft to India. This is the first time that Japan has agreed to undertake foreign sale of military equipment.

India and Vietnam have been on the same page with regard to strategic partnership. Defence has been a top agenda between the two countries ever since diplomatic relations were established. The primary area of cooperation is combat training which is beneficial to both sides. Intensity

of strategic cooperation between India-Vietnam and Japan is the need of the moment so as to provide strategic balance in the region. This relationship could further include the US as the fourth partner, Since December 2011, India, Japan and the US have been undertaking a trilateral dialogue which could be made quadrilateral by including Vietnam. Reports indicate that during the Abe visit in January 2014, the proposal to have quadrilateral naval exercises between these countries was discussed. This would lead to greater strategic synergy by ensuring interoperability between the Armed Forces of the four countries.

While all its White Papers profess a pacifist approach, the same may not occur when unresolved disputes flare up. There is a need for a quadrilateral partnership between India-Vietnam-Japan and the US to provide strategic balance to the region.

While all its White Papers profess a pacifist approach, the same may not occur when unresolved disputes flare up. There is a need for a quadrilateral partnership between India-Vietnam-Japan and the US to provide strategic balance to the region. However, to start with a trilateral India-Vietnam-Japan trilateral framework for cooperation on strategic issues could be formed and later it could be progressed to a multi-lateral effort depending upon the emerging strategic environment. India would stand to gain comprehensively by intensifying the existing strategic partnership with these countries.

The Way Ahead

China has modernised its Armed Forces and has recently become more assertive regarding its territorial and maritime claims.

[Back to Contents](#)

As USA Pivots, Saudi Arabia Rebalances in the Middle East

- *Monish Gulati*

Saudi Arabia's increasingly tense relations with its Western allies, calls from strategists for rethinking Saudi-Western relations and a growing distance between Saudi and its Arab Gulf neighbours within the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) on the Syrian, Iranian and Egyptian issues has bred insecurity in the region. The US President Barack Obama travelled to Saudi Arabia on 28 March for his first visit to the country since 2009 and met King Abdullah to "look him in the eyes" and explain and reassure that US-Saudi strategic interests remain very much aligned.¹ Saudi officials had warned of a "major shift" away from Washington. This article looks at how at a time of realigning strategic priorities in the Middle East, Saudi Arabia is attempting to secure its national interests.

Obama Visit

Obama and King Abdullah met for more than two hours at the King's retreat in Riyadh where Obama

reassured King Abdullah that the US remains committed to strengthening the moderate opposition in the Syrian civil war. Washington and Riyadh have bitter disagreements about US response to the "Arab Spring" uprisings, and policy towards Iran and Syria. Saudis believe it is a strategic imperative to effect a regime change in Syria and avert what they see as a threat of Iranian domination of Arab countries; a view not shared by Washington. The Kingdom's relations with Egypt and to an extent Qatar are rocked by the belief that the Muslim Brotherhood is the root cause of the politicization of Islam in Saudi Arabia. Obama and the Saudi monarch discussed "tactical differences" in their approach to some of these issues. The meeting was keenly watched by both sides for indications that the Saudi-US relations were at an even keel.

Oil has been one of the "glue" that has been holding the US-Saudi relations together. However the

* *Monish Gulati is an independent analyst based in New Delhi*

US, by importing more crude from sources such as Canada and Mexico and exploiting its own shale oil reserves, has reduced its reliance on Saudi oil. Saudi Arabia accounted for 13 percent of total imports in 2012.² In 2020, the US will have displaced Saudi Arabia as the world's biggest oil producer. US dependency on petroleum imports from the Gulf has fallen dramatically, close to 20 percent in 2012. Also, increasing internal demand means that Saudi Arabia the world's largest oil exporter has less oil to sell abroad and to the West. Saudis, now sell more than two-thirds of their oil to markets in south and East Asia. The expected US "independence" from imported oil has made the Saudis uneasy and every US strategic move in the Middle East a suspect.

Iran was another key topic of discussion between the President and the King. Obama assured that the US would not accept a bad nuclear deal with Iran. According to Gregory Gause, Professor of Political Science at the University of Vermont, during Obama's visit, US dispelled Saudi fears on "some of the more wild interpretations of American policy ... about the US

leaving the Middle East, throwing over the Saudis, and allying with Iran, were just exaggerations." While there was some consensus on how to move forward on Syria, on the issue of Iran, it appears that the Saudis have settled down to the idea that US is keen to proceed with the Iran nuclear deal and there's nothing they can do about it. Also whatever they need to do to address their concerns regarding Iran and the Shia-Sunni dynamics, they would have to do it on their own.

The expected US "independence" from imported oil has made the Saudis uneasy and every US strategic move in the Middle East a suspect.

As a possible outcome of Obama's visit to Riyadh, two moderate Syrian rebel militias, the Free Syrian Army and the Syrian Revolutionary Front, have been supplied with US weapons, including anti-tank BGM-71 TOW missiles (as Israel's Debkafile website reported on 07 April). The Hazm movement, part of the opposition Free Syrian Army, brings together mainly ex-army officers and soldiers who defected from the military to join the revolt, has for the first time received more than 20 TOW anti-tank missiles which they have used in flashpoint areas of Idlib, Aleppo and Latakia provinces in

the north³ The Obama administration had also been reportedly considering allowing shipments of shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missiles (MANPADS) to the Syrian rebels but concerns on their misuse persist.⁴

Saudi Insecurity

The Saudis see an Iranian effort to shift the balance of forces in the region in Tehran's favour, and trying to encircle them with its Quds Force active in Bahrain, Lebanon, through killing of Sunni Muslims in Syria, supporting the Shiite Muslim militias in Iraq, providing arms to the Houthi rebels in Yemen and fomenting unrest among Saudi Shiites. They also see the Egyptian military battling the Muslim Brotherhood and jihadi terrorists in the Sinai as supporting Saudi Arabia's cause and accordingly must be assisted. It was not surprising that the Saudis offered to pay for the \$2-billion to \$3-billion arms package Egypt is seeking from the Russians.⁵ Saudi Arabia has also given the Lebanese army \$3 billion in aid and some of the money is likely to be spent on weapons from France. Saudi Arabia is seeking to bolster the Lebanese army to counter the Hezbollah, which is funded by Iran.

A diminishing US presence in the Gulf is highlighting the lack of operational readiness in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). The Saudis having relied on the US as the kingdom's ultimate security guarantor and are now taking measures to compensate for the flagging US willingness and capability to intervene in Middle East. As efforts to make the critical mass of the Saudi armed forces more professional will take years, one option that Saudis are exercising is to put in place a regional collective security arrangement.

GCC Military Command

A joint Gulf military command was approved by the GCC leaders at their summit in Kuwait in December 2013.⁶ A communiqué issued at the end of the summit said that the Supreme Council had agreed to establish the joint military command and assigned the Joint Defence Council to take necessary measures to put this agreement into effect. The GCC leaders also approved a proposal for setting up the Gulf Academy for Strategic and Security Studies and welcomed the UAE proposal to host it. The GCC Defence Ministers' laid the foundation stone of the coordination centre for maritime security in Bahrain

while the central headquarters of the GCC Joint Military Command will be in Riyadh.⁷

The Gulf command, according to Saudi Minister of the National Guard Prince Miteb Bin Abdullah, will be built into a 100,000 standing military force with the Saudis contributing anywhere between 50,000 to 75,000 troops.⁸ The Saudi Arabian National Guard (SANG) trained by US advisers since 1975 appears to be the core of the envisioned GCC military command.⁹ Saudi Arabia is also contemplating bringing in 25,000-50,000 foreign fighters for training to the kingdom to deter Iran and fight in Syria.

Saudi-Pak Relations

The Saudis have a close relationship with Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, who lived in exile in the kingdom during the Musharraf dictatorship. Military and intelligence linkages between the two are also strong. Saudi Arabia has managed to elicit support from Pakistan on the Syrian crisis. Following talks with Nawaz Sharif, during the recent visit of the Saudi Crown Prince,

Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud to Islamabad, the two countries demanded 'the formation of a transitional governing body with full executive powers' to replace the Bashar al Assad regime and take charge of the affairs in Syria.¹⁰ Saudi Arabia has provided more assistance to Pakistan over the last three decades than to any other country. The Pakistan Development Fund received a gift of about \$1.5 billion Saudi aid. The first tranche of 750 million dollars was received on 19 February and the second on 07 March.¹¹

The Pakistan Development Fund received a gift of about \$1.5 billion Saudi aid. The first tranche of 750 million dollars was received on 19 February and the second on 07 March.¹¹

Media reports have emerged that Saudi Arabia has asked for Pakistani military weaponry

such as Chinese-built JF-17 Thunder fighter planes and tanks for use in Syria. Sartaj Aziz, the Pakistani Prime Minister's advisor on foreign affairs and national security though confirmed earlier reports that Pakistan is "making efforts" to sell small arms and fighter jets to Saudi Arabia but attempted to pass them off as a routine arms sales by a country with "a flourishing arms industry." He denied any link of the arms sales to Syria saying that there was no Syria-specific agreement at

this time and reiterated Pakistan's neutral stance on the four-year civil war. That arms are expected to include the Anza, a heat-seeking, shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missile designed with China and manufactured locally. It's the equivalent of the American Stinger missile.¹²

According to some reports, Riyadh has also asked for two divisions of Pakistan troops to be sent to Saudi Arabia to train Saudi troops. However, Pakistani Information Minister Pervez Rasheed has said that Pakistan is not sending its army to any other country. Pakistan has earlier reportedly helped Bahrain set up its naval forces and Pakistani personnel comprise 18 per cent of the Bahraini air force. During the Arab Spring, Bahrain is believed to have hired the services of retired Pakistani military and police officials to quell the revolt.

Assessment

The diverging nature of US-Saudi interests and the apprehension that their future foreign policy trajectories might take them further away has created this palpable air of uncertainty in the region. These developments have left Saudi Arabia with very few regional allies and increasingly

fewer policy options to shape its desired geopolitical outcomes. Saudi Arabia has threatened that it "will go it alone" in their policies towards Iran and Syria and in this regard is increasingly looking at South Asia, in particular Pakistan.¹³ Geopolitically they themselves seem to be seeking to encircle Iran by drumming up support in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

There are also reports that Saudi Arabia is attempting to cobble to gather a new military alliance which will eventually include the 6 countries of the GCC, as well as Morocco, Jordan and Egypt. The GCC (Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Bahrain and Oman), has already sent a formal request to the three countries to join the proposed military alliance. The motivation for the GCC proposal is the strengthening of the regional grouping, which seeks to secure the assistance of a total of 300,000 troops from Morocco, Egypt and Jordan, in exchange of financial aid.¹⁴

India's concern on Saudi-Pakistan cooperation would be on several counts. Firstly, the most publicly discussed security strategy for the Saudis involves acquiring nuclear weapons from Pakistan, either

purchased or under some arrangement of joint control with Pakistani forces. The nuclear warheads transferred by Pakistan could arm Saudi missiles capable of hitting Iranian targets. Second is the use of Pakistani jihadists and ex-servicemen (given the public outcry, it is unlikely that active duty servicemen will be sent to the Gulf) to bolster the Syrian opposition. Third is the proliferation of high calibre weapons and Manpads to the Middle East and their movement later back to Pakistan. Lastly and the most worrisome would be any Saudi-sponsored action to engage Iran on its eastern borders. With a large population of Shias, India is extremely wary of any internal or external move to create and exploit this faultline. The message from the ongoing general elections is clear- inclusive and sustainable development is the country's agenda and the country would eschew any distraction from this goal.

Conflicting interests and views concerning Egypt, Syria, Iran and Palestine have created big rifts in the US-Saudi relationship. There is already a view that Saudi Arabia is not a natural ally of the US and the relationship with Saudi Arabia is overdue for a

recalibration.¹⁵ India for its own interests would like Saudi insecurities addressed and the Saudi-Iranian tussle played out west of the Arabian Sea.

Endnotes

1. Why Obama Won't Give (or Get) Much in Saudi Arabia, Aaron David Miller. The American Interest, March 25, 2014
<http://www.the-american-interest.com/articles/2014/03/25/why-obama-wont-give-or-get-much-in-saudi-arabia/>
2. Joergen Oerstroem Moeller. Shale Gas Helps Fracture U.S.-Saudi Ties, Real Clear World, April 2, 2014.
http://www.realclearworld.com/articles/2014/04/02/shale_gas_helps_fracture_us_saudi_ties_110406.html
3. 'Syria rebels get US-made missiles', AFP, 16 April 2014.
<http://news.yahoo.com/syria-rebels-us-made-missiles-170846577.html>
4. Julie Pace. Obama may allow air defense help for Syria rebels, Yahoo news ,March 28, 2014 <http://news.yahoo.com/obama-may-allow-air-defense-help-syria-rebels-154054217--politics.html>
5. Dennis Ross. Next Test for Obama: Soothing The Saudis, Los Angeles Times, March 24, 2014.
<http://www.latimes.com/opinion/commentary/la-oe-ross-saudi-arabia-obama-20140325,0,4405842.story>
6. GCC military command to have 100,000-strong force, Saudi Gazette December 22, 2013.
<http://www.saudigazette.com.sa/index.cfm?method=home.regcon&contentid=20131222190259>
7. GCC military command to have 100,000-strong force, Saudi Gazette December 22, 2013.

- <http://www.saudigazette.com.sa/index.cfm?method=home.regcon&contentid=20131222190259>
8. Nawaf Obaid. The Saudi challenge to US Syria policy, Al monitor, November 28, 2013
 9. <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/12/saudi-arabia-gcc-unity-oman-opposition-king-abdullah.html>
 10. Kamran Yousaf. Ouster of Assad regime: Riyadh wins Islamabad's support on Syria , February 18, 2014. <http://tribune.com.pk/story/673146/ouster-of-assad-regime-riyadh-wins-islamabads-support-on-syria/>
 11. Tanveer Ahmed, Dar asks opposition to stop moaning about Saudi grant, daily times, March 27 <http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/national/27-Mar-2014/dar-asks-opposition-to-stop-moaning-about-saudi-grant>
 12. Umar Farooq. Pakistan and the Sunni Gulf, The Diplomat, April 17, 2014. <http://thediplomat.com/2014/04/pakistan-and-the-sunni-gulf/>
 13. Samer N Abboud. Saudi isolation could be a threat to the region, Al Jazeera, January 05, 2014. <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2013/12/saudi-isolation-could-be-threat-region-2013122465742778724.html>
 14. Larbi Arbaoui. Gulf Countries to Form a Military Alliance with Morocco, Egypt, Jordan, MoroccoWorldNews, April 10, 2014. <http://www.morocoworldnews.com/2014/04/128049/gulf-countries-to-form-a-military-alliance-with-morocco-egypt-jordan/>
 15. Saudi Arabia Isn't America's Friend, Bloomberg View, March 26, 2014. <http://www.bloombergvew.com/articles/2014-03-26/saudi-arabia-isn-t-america-s-friend?>

[Back to Contents](#)

China's Emergence as Maritime Power in IOR and its Implications

- *Brig (Retd) Vinod Anand*

China as part of its revolution in military affairs has been paying attention to developing its power projection capabilities in the shape of modernizing its armed forces, particularly its naval and air forces besides adding to its space based assets and nuclear forces. PLA has seen double digit in growth of its budget for over a decade that has added to its defensive and offensive capabilities. PLA Navy's forays into Indian Ocean Region (IOR) commenced with alacrity in 2006 when its ships were sent to Gulf of Aden on anti-piracy mission as part of international endeavours to secure Sea Lines of Communications (SLOCs). The objective was to secure the oil supply routes to bolster the energy security that is considered necessary for the economic growth. Though there could be economic logic and rationale to such a mission, the strategic connotations of this mission also need to be seen in their correct perspective. This

could be said to be the first time when the Chinese Navy carried out operations in the 'far seas' thus giving it experience in progressing towards a blue water navy.

PLA's ambitions in Indian Ocean can be gauged from the fact that some of the Chinese think tanks and analysts have suggested the need for PLA Navy to acquire bases. Huanqiu Shibao writing in Global Times on May 25, 2011 observed that if the world really wants China to take more responsibilities in Asia-Pacific region and around the world, it should allow China to participate in international military co-operations and *understand the need of China to set up overseas military bases*. Such kind of articulations gives rise to apprehensions among China's neighbours as to whether China is following its oft-stated policy of 'peaceful rise' / 'peaceful development'.

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

A report submitted by the HQ IDS last year said that submarines of PLA Navy have become increasingly active in the IOR which could pose grave threat to Indian interests. Hitherto only the US and Indian navies had been operating in the region. The 'implicit focus' of the Chinese navy appears to be undermining the Indian Navy's edge "to control highly-sensitive sea lines of communication". It also talks about China's so called "String of Pearls Strategy" i.e. China's development of ports in IOR littoral especially like Gwadar, Hambantota, and Sittwe (this has expanded to include development of big ports along eastern coast of Africa e.g. Bgamoyo in Tanzania, Lamu in Kenya) that is seen as strategic attempts to surround India with facilities that can be upgraded to naval bases. The Chinese navy is also building up "expeditionary maritime capabilities" in the form of nuclear-powered submarines and area denial weapons (anti-ship ballistic missiles) "with deployment focus in the IOR". Marked increase of PLAN activity in IOR has created apprehensions

about its negative impact on India's naval/maritime interests.

The above report comes in the background of PLA Navy deploying its state-of-the-art nuclear submarines Type 094 Yulin Naval Base in Sanya, Hainan in the South China Sea. From that location it would be easy to get deployed in the IO as and when required. The SSBN will eventually be outfitted with the JL-2 Sea Launched Ballistic Missiles (SLBMs).

The above report comes in the background of PLA Navy deploying its state-of-the-art nuclear submarines Type 094 Yulin Naval Base in Sanya, Hainan in the South China Sea.

In May 2013, a Chinese think tank came out with a "Blue Book" on India- a semi-official document- which underlines

the need for securing SLOCs passing from the western part of IO and then on to eastern part and Malacca Straits. It also warns that India is preparing for two-front war with China and Pakistan and also notes the developing strength of Indian Navy. The report talks about India's maritime deployment in recent years, the prime cause of China's worry as it regards India's fast expanding blue water navy as a major threat. The report also opines that unstable democracy/

political situation in India could lead to further tensions. The book emphasizes on the need for China being pro-active in the IOR and forging strategic partnerships with IOR littoral states for it notes *“If [China] cannot have a positive impact on these regional powers and the Indian Ocean littoral states, the future situation will be even more severe, and will affect China’s development and peace negatively.”*

A second edition of the Blue Book has been released in March this year that expands on the earlier themes and pays particular attention to Myanmar and India. It calls for a new kind of power relationship between China and India. Many of the remarks and observations made in Book indicate the intent of China is to strengthen its Indian Ocean strategy further in the coming years. Though the report talks about cooperation and the need to avoid competition what it really means that India should give in to China’s strategic interests as the rising geopolitical conflict may not suit India. The tone of the observations made in the book seems very condescending and patronizing. According to the book, 'China into the Indian Ocean' is an important part of China's marine

development strategy, but (it is) also a fait accompli.

China’s Naval Strategy

China’s long term overall national plan is to achieve the goal of becoming a modernized nation comparable to that of the US by 2049 when Chinese Communist Party celebrates its 100 years of existence. This is planned to be achieved in three stages. Modernising its military is also planned to be realized in three phases. Similarly, a maritime plan outlined by the then Vice Chairman of the Military Commission, Liu Huaqing in early 80s consisted of three stages.

In the first stage, from 2000 to 2010, China was to establish control of waters within the first island chain that links Okinawa Prefecture, Taiwan and the Philippines.

In the second stage, from 2010 to 2020, China would seek to establish control of waters within the second island chain that links the Ogasawara island chain, Guam and Indonesia.

The final stage, from 2020 until 2040, China would put an end to U.S. military dominance in the

Pacific and Indian Oceans, using aircraft carriers as a key component of their military force.

Recent Chinese military developments, and actions reflect implementation of this maritime strategy, on pace with the projections to seek control of the first island chain and the Chinese navy has also made major progress in achieving the objectives of the second stage. PLAN has acquired the capabilities of carrying out 'Far Seas' operations which is manifested in the sustained counter piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden and its naval ships undertaking joint exercises with the Russian Navy in the Mediterranean (in January 2014). The activities of PLAN's submarines in the Indian Ocean also reflect its increasing capabilities and gaining of confidence in deployment and operations in 'far seas'.

Accretion of space assets that support its naval operations in the Indian Ocean region also indicate that it has acquired the necessary wherewithal like intelligence,

surveillance, communication, navigational and other facilities that enables PLAN's deployment in 'far seas'. Long distance deployments by PLAN have also become part of its annual training. Thus PLAN has increasingly become familiar with the Indian Ocean maritime environment and has acquired a degree of experience in its far seas missions.

Further, Beijing is building a navy to handle a high-intensity conflict close to home where it can be supported by its large fleet of conventionally-powered submarines and shore-based missiles and aircraft. Such a force has been designed to respond to a number of likely contingencies both near its shores as also in the neighbourhood.

Commissioning of Liaoning, the first aircraft carrier and its sailing to South China Sea (SCS) in December last points towards PLA Navy making itself ready for potential contingencies not only in SCS but also in IOR. PLAN thus would be able to pursue both

PLAN has acquired the capabilities of carrying out 'Far Seas' operations which is manifested in the sustained counter piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden and its naval ships undertaking joint exercises with the Russian Navy in the Mediterranean (in January 2014).

traditional and non-traditional security tasks in the East Asian/Western Pacific and Indian Ocean regions such as securing of SLOCs suppression of piracy, protecting/evacuating Chinese citizens trapped abroad by violence, and disaster response.

Further, PLA Navy conducted an exercise in February this year near Lombok Straits of Indian Ocean after having passed through the Indonesian waters. Lombok Straits is deeper than the Malacca Straits and heavier ships use this passage that links Pacific and Indian Oceans. It is natural that such an exercise carried out by the Chinese Navy for the first time would cause some apprehensions in India. This event further demonstrated Chinese intent of enhancing their maritime presence in the Indian Ocean.

China's New Maritime Silk Road: New Version of String of Pearls?

China's growing inroads into South Asia and IOR is a part of larger grand strategy of China not only to expand its influence but also to restrict Indian influence regionally and stem its ambitions in the Asia – Pacific region. Over the years, China has undertaken major port development projects in

the IOR littoral exploiting its newly found wealth and converting the same into strategic capital. While India's neighbours always have had some or the other problem with India, China does not have any such problems. China has been putting money on the table and has been developing strategic corridors around India's periphery, aimed at enhancing Chinese influence and addressing the "Malacca dilemma," as part of its grand maritime strategy. The Blue Book mentioned above notes that SLOCs in the IOR are essential for its energy security which apparently gives it legal justification for enlarging its naval presence in the IOR.

Last year in October, President Xi Jinping announced a number of new Silk Road initiatives, the most important and somewhat newer one was that of new Maritime Silk Road. Seen in the prevailing geo-political context, the proposed new Maritime Silk Road which would connect mainland China with South China Sea littoral countries through development of mega ports and other infrastructure projects and also expand beyond SCS to IOR is a strategy to assuage the concerns some of the regional powers that have been at the receiving end of

China's assertive policies. This strategy is also being viewed as a counter to the American 'pivot to Asia' or Asia-Pacific strategy. According to one Chinese scholar, the route of Chinese Task Forces departing the southern Chinese coast for fighting piracy in the Indian Ocean is not dissimilar from the Maritime Silk Road that Admiral Zheng He and his fleet embarked upon in 1405. But one thing which must be remembered is that historically, traders and invaders have used the same Silk Roads.

Additionally, Chinese strategic experts and military writers lament that while

China has been developing corridors through Myanmar and Pakistan and has constructed a mega port at Hambantota.

India has its 'Look East Policy' and the US has its Asia Pacific strategy China has failed to announce any such initiative of its own. While Beijing may not have any declared strategy yet, China has been assiduously working on expanding its core interests and has not hesitated to adopt three types of warfare i.e. legal, media and psychological to justify its expanding strategic interests in IOR, SCS and the Pacific.

China's new Silk Road initiatives also include the Bangladesh-India-

China-Myanmar Economic Corridor, a new Silk Road Economic Belt linking China to Central Asia and lastly, a Xianjiang - Pakistan Economic Corridor. Sri Lanka has also been invited to join the new Silk Road initiative despite the fact ipso facto Colombo is already a member of the Maritime Silk Road Club as it is already a part of Chinese sphere of influence. But the moot point is whether there is anything new in most of the above initiatives. China has been developing corridors through

Myanmar and Pakistan and has constructed a mega port at Hambantota.

China has also invited India to join the new Maritime Silk Road, though on the face it seems to be quite harmless but this could be a strategic trap for India. Is China being condescending by offering India to become part of Beijing's strategic design in the IOR? In any case, China has already developed ports in Myanmar, Bangladesh and Pakistan; its Navy also has logistics arrangements with island countries like Mauritius and Seychelles.

Therefore, the formulation of the New Silk Road Strategy is only a consolidation of a strategic trend that commenced almost two decades back. Can it be said that it is old wine in a new bottle? Or how is it different from the String of Pearls strategy? Though, Chinese strategic experts would expound the economic and other benefits to be gained from this new formulation and denounce the 'String of Pearls' theory. The new maritime Silk Road stretches up to the farthest regions of IOR littoral till eastern coast of Africa where China is building mega ports and has undertaken a wide variety of infrastructure projects that make economic and strategic sense. It should not be difficult to conclude that new Maritime Silk Road concept is part of China's larger and still evolving Indo-Pacific Strategy.

Implications

The evolving maritime dynamics have implications for the Indian Ocean littoral nations in general and India in particular. Though India's response to Chinese forays in the Indian Ocean has been underway for sometime, it cannot be denied that there is a scope for India to upgrade its naval deterrence capabilities. While India is in the process of building

a blue water navy and has articulated its maritime strategy in 2009, there is a need for India to strengthen its political, diplomatic and security relationships not only with IOR littoral countries but also with island nations in the Indian Ocean, ASEAN countries and beyond to Pacific island nations. The trilateral meeting in March this year at the National Security Advisors' level for maritime security cooperation between India, Sri Lanka and Maldives is a step in the right direction.

There is also a need to infuse fresh energy in many of the existing multilateral frameworks for promoting security, trade and commerce and peace and stability in the region. For instance, Indian Ocean Naval Symposium has become an important platform for exchange of views on maritime affairs. Similarly, Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC) has a wide charter that includes maritime security and safety, non-traditional threats to security besides cooperation in host of other areas.

India's multi-pronged policy also includes defence and security cooperation with countries in the Indian Ocean littoral, ASEAN,

Japan, Australia, US and others besides strengthening its political and economic relations with the countries in the region. However, this needs to be given a degree of substance. For instance, in its maritime strategy, India considers Indonesia as an important lynchpin which can contribute greatly to the security of IOR on the eastern flank. Malacca Straits are important to both India and Indonesia; the Maritime Strategy of 2009 also articulates that the Sunda Straits located between the Indonesian islands of Java and Sumatra and Lombok straits located between the islands of Bali and Lombok in Indonesia (and

also near Andaman & Nicobar Islands of India) as falling within the Indian Navy's area of strategic interest.

Additionally, Myanmar and Thailand also remain important for maritime security in the IOR. There is, thus, a need to involve both Indonesia and Australia in trilateral or quadrilateral initiatives for ensuring peace and security in the IOR.

[Back to Contents](#)

Afghanistan: The Three Transitions and the Question of Peace and Durability

- *Kanwal Sibal*

The first round of the presidential election in Afghanistan raises cautious hopes for the country's future, with impressive voter participation at around 60 per cent, including that of women at around 35 per cent, and the Taliban's failure to disrupt the elections to the extent feared, given that just a little over 200 out of 6000 polling booths were affected. Many were forewarning that even more dangerous than the Taliban threat would be the dire consequences for internal peace if the elections were not free and fair. Rigged elections also risked alienating external powers whose political and financial support the new Afghan government needed for survival. In the event, such fears have been belied as the election process has been fairly credible.

If, as expected, no candidate obtains 50 per cent of the vote in the first round, the second round is slated for later. The next Afghan president will be either Abdullah

Abdullah or Ashraf Ghani, with the odds in favour of the latter. While the peaceful democratic transition in turbulent circumstances from the President, Hamid Karzai, in power since December 2001, to his successor is a considerable achievement in itself, it should also help in improving the political dialogue between Washington and Kabul that has been considerably perturbed by the thorny personal relations between Karzai and Barack Obama. So far so good. The presidential election in Afghanistan is, however, only the first of the three transitions that the country must undergo before it can begin to function on its own.

The second transition — the security one — is being effected for some time already with the steady drawdown of foreign troops in Afghanistan (52,000 at present) and the progressive transfer of security duties to the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces whose number stands today at around 332,000, but is

* *Kanwal Sibal, Dean, Centre for International Relations and Diplomacy, VIF*

planned to be reduced to 280,000 because of resource constraints. The United States of America and Afghanistan have agreed in November 2013 on the text of a bilateral security and defence agreement, but President Karzai has baulked at signing it, leaving it to his successor to do so. Possibly he does want to take the historic responsibility for permitting foreign military bases on Afghan soil. His view that this agreement does not protect Afghanistan against Pakistan — the primary source of the threat to its peace and stability — is not without substance. If the US, he well understands, will not fight Pakistan on Afghanistan's behalf, would US bases then serve US geo-political interests more than those of Afghanistan?

All the contending presidential candidates have, however, voiced their support for this agreement, which means that about 10,000 US and allied forces should remain in Afghanistan in several bases until the end of 2024 with the declared intention to advise, train and equip the ANDSF.

The United States of America and Afghanistan have agreed in November 2013 on the text of a bilateral security and defence agreement, but President Karzai has baulked at signing it, leaving it to his successor to do so.

The agreement does not rule out the possibility of the US conducting combat operations if both sides agree. The US will decide whether or not it will support the ANDSF in meeting the threats to the country's security. It has created room for itself to conduct operations against Al-Qaida and its affiliates as part of its counter-terrorism operations, though in close coordination with Afghan government and not unilaterally.

The third transition, the economic one, is, of course, crucial for Afghanistan's future stability. Here, too, the prospects are uncertain unless the internal and external situation of the country improves decisively. Funded substantially by the presence of foreign forces until now, the economy will need other revenue sources as military withdrawals progress. Even though in July 2012, donors in Tokyo committed themselves to provide \$16 billion as aid to Afghanistan between 2012 and 2016, it is not improbable that as foreign forces leave, political interest in Afghanistan will

decline, which, in turn, will erode financial pledges, especially given the West's own economic difficulties.

Agriculture, the mainstay of the Afghan economy, has to be revived, which cannot be done in insecure conditions. Poppy cultivation and opium production have to be controlled and the drug smuggling networks that are causing social havoc in Russia and Iran, in particular, have to be broken. That the Afghan economy grew only by 3.1 per cent in 2013 is not a hopeful sign. The resource gap in Afghanistan, which was 40 per cent of the gross domestic product in 2012, will, according to studies, remain as high as 20 per cent till 2025. Although Afghanistan is rich in mineral resources, including hydrocarbons, exploiting them will need huge investments, for which, again, peace and security are a necessity. India's plans to invest huge amounts in developing the iron ore sector and those of the Chinese in developing copper mining will fructify only in conditions of peace. Regional integration can no doubt open up economic opportunities for Afghanistan by way of, for example, transit fees for projects like Casa-1000 and TAPI, but this prospect, too, is contingent on the

establishment of peaceful conditions in and around Afghanistan.

India's role in these three transitions is inherently limited. Because India enjoys enormous goodwill in Afghanistan, with all the Afghan presidential candidates valuing India's friendship and support, India does not have to play favourites and promote its 'own' candidate. On the subject of 'national reconciliation', which essentially means reaching out to the Taliban forces, India has taken a supportive position so long as the process is Afghan-led and Afghan-owned. While we have aligned ourselves to Karzai's political strategy towards the Taliban, we have serious concerns about independent US/United Kingdom efforts to deal directly with the Taliban for accomplishing their withdrawal from Afghanistan in an orderly enough manner. Because the Taliban, with sanctuaries in Pakistan, cannot be dealt with if Pakistan is excluded from the equation, the switch in US withdrawal strategy from treating Pakistan as the core of the Afghan problem to a partner of sorts in maintaining some level of stability after the US drawdown hurts India's interests. Pakistan's

current posture of ‘reasonableness’ towards Afghanistan is tactical, given its core belief that Afghanistan lies in its sphere of influence and its cardinal objective of limiting India’s influence in that country.

India remains reticent about extending any sizeable military assistance to Afghanistan by way of combat equipment, in spite of our strategic partnership and Afghan entreaties. Realistically speaking, our role in the security transition will remain limited, though useful, in any scenario. We have sent some additional security personnel to guard our assets in Afghanistan, which points to concerns about the security situation as US forces withdraw and uncertainties about the ability of ANDSF to assume the security burden fully because of equipment deficiencies, lack of air assets and financial constraints.

On the economic side, lack of direct access to land-locked

Afghanistan prevents India from playing a role commensurate with Afghanistan’s needs in terms of investment and trade. Transit rights overland through Pakistan to Afghanistan will be denied us in the foreseeable future, which makes access through Chabahar in Iran to Afghanistan strategically critical. Here, the pace at which the project will be implemented will be determined essentially by Iran.

Beyond the three transitions in Afghanistan looms the larger question of durable peace and stability there on which the future well-being of the region depends. The answer has to come mainly from Pakistan.

[Back to Contents](#)

Why India Needs a Defence Technology Commission?

- **Radhakrishna Rao**

There is a well conceived law in Russia which forbids the use of imported military hardware by the Russian defence forces. On the face of it, this law may look frivolous in the context of globalization that has seriously eroded the concept of self-reliance in every field of human endeavour including defence. But then in the context of India's own experience, this law can be considered a well thought out initiative to insulate the defence forces against the "pitfalls and dangers involved" in using the imported defence hardware. For instance, behind the late March shocking crash of one of the brand new C-130J Super Hercules Special Operations Aircraft of US origin in service with the Indian Air Force (IAF), the possibility of counterfeit Chinese components in the display system having caused the catastrophe is not ruled out. The display system plays a critical role in monitoring the health of the entire aircraft including its power plants. A far from efficient display system with poor quality

components could prove detrimental to the safety of an aircraft in flight. Whether the Indian Defence Ministry did get any guarantee from the aircraft manufacturer Lockheed Martin stating that the aircraft did not incorporate any inferior quality components, no one is sure as yet. In distinct contrast, is a statement that the Indian Defence Minister A K Antony had made to the Indian Parliament way back in December 2012 that India did get a guarantee from Boeing-- whose P81- long range maritime surveillance aircraft was acquired by the Indian navy-- that no inferior quality components were installed in the aircraft.

Incidentally, a US Senate Armed Services Committee had in an in-depth probe carried out in 2012 did hint at the possibility of the fake Chinese origin electronic components finding their way into the C-130J and many other military aircraft. The source of these components was subsequently traced to Hong Dark

* Radhakrishna Rao, Visiting Fellow, VIF

Electronic Trade Company based in Shenzhen, China. India had acquired six C-130 J aircraft at a cost of Rs.60, 000-million as part of the contract sealed in 2010. In December 2012, Antony had told the Indian Parliament that in the “last four years” of operations of the US origin defence and aerospace products, which included C-130 J transport aircraft, had not encountered the problem of faulty components. Clearly and apparently, the Government that will take over the reins of power in New Delhi on conclusion of the general elections in New Delhi should immediately annul the plan for the acquisition of six more of this aircraft. Further, it should also take a serious call on the issue of blindly importing defence and aerospace equipment not only from USA but also from other major vendors in Russia and Israel.

The moral of the story is that India’s overwhelming dependence on imported military hardware could prove dangerous for India’s military preparedness in the long run. For our defence forces can be

“confident and comfortable” only with the home grown defence hardware. For the quality and operational efficiency of indigenous defence products can easily be checked out with the local producers and corrective measures initiated in the event of problems. Further, the supply of spares in a timely and cost efficient manner can easily be assured. Similarly, for the maintenance and life cycle support of the equipment, the country need

In December 2012, Antony had told the Indian Parliament that in the “last four years” of operations of the US origin defence and aerospace products, which included C-130 J transport aircraft, had not encountered the problem of faulty components.

not sweat it out with foreign OEMs (Original Equipment Manufacturers) and that too with a huge foreign exchange outgo. In particular, Indian defence forces had

trouble sourcing right type of spares at an affordable cost for the Soviet era fighting hardware. With the US defence equipment, India would also need to factor in the possibility of trade sanction leading to technology denial. For the US sanction would mean that all the US origin defence equipment being used by the Indian defence forces would not be serviced with the clear cut instructions to deny them spares.. The US sanction that came in the

wake of India's twin Pokhran nuclear blasts of 1998 had prevented the country from getting spares and maintenance services for the US origin defence equipment. Recent media reports suggest that Israel too is trying to extract a "heavier price" from India for its defence hardware. The massive outgo of foreign exchange for the arms import constitutes a major setback to the Indian economy.

Perhaps the biggest dark spot of Indian defence hardware import is the "scams and scandals" topped by the notorious role of the "shady and shadowy" middlemen who somehow succeed in manipulating the final price of the imported product that too with the serious compromise of terms and conditions. The kickback associated with many of the high ticket defence acquisition contracts has besmirched the fair image of India. Though Antony is known for his personal integrity and incorruptible image, his failure to prevent "scams and scandals" happening under his very nose has now come under the scanner. For the view is that as a longest serving Defence Minister battling for defence self reliance with a robust patriotic flavour, he should not have remained a silent

spectator to the unedifying spectacle of the kickbacks and corrupt practices besmirching the defence import process. The argument is that he could have played a far more proactive role in preventing such scams and scandals. Indeed, corruption and wrong doings involved in the defence import implies the country shelling down more than the prevailing market price for an imported defence product. As it is, media has questioned Antony's initial silence on the controversial contract involving the supply of 12 VVIP helicopters by Anglo Italian enterprise Augusta Westland to the Indian Air Force (IAF). It is said that Antony was cornered by unfavourable circumstances to admit the wrong doings in the implementation of the contract followed by the cancellation of the contract.

The delay in the acquisition of defence hardware, cancellation of contracts on the charges of kickbacks and corruption followed by the blacklisting of defence and aerospace vendors had resulted in Indian armed forces being denied vital fighting equipment. For instance, the Indian failure to acquire artillery after the infamous Bofors scandal of mid 1980s has seriously compromised

the fighting capability and combat spirit of the Indian defence forces. Equally glaring is the failure of the Defence Ministry to equip the Indian defence forces with the latest genre, state of the night vision devices to sustain the fighting spirit of the army under the cover of darkness.

Even a section of the men in uniform have not exactly covered themselves with glory in giving a boost to the indigenous defence production capability. The spat between the Indian Air Force (IAF) and the state owned Hindustan Aeronautical Limited (HAL) over the delay in the qualification and production of military aircraft sends a negative signal in so far as enhancing the Indian defence production capability is concerned. As it is, late last year, the former IAF Chief NAK Browne had stirred a controversy by asking the Defence Ministry to procure “additional basic trainer” aircraft instead of asking HAL to design and develop a basic trainer. The argument of IAF was that the imported trainer aircraft would be 25% less expensive in comparison to the home grown trainer.

For a home grown equipment, besides being a big morale booster to the Indian defence forces could also help sharpen the production skill of the Indian defence industry in a big way.

However, this logic seems terribly flawed. For one cannot overlook the long term, multiple benefits flowing from developing technology indigenously for a particular aircraft, by pointing out to the initial cost of the product. For a home grown equipment, besides being a big morale booster to the Indian defence forces could also help sharpen the production skill of the Indian defence industry in a big way. Further the spin off benefits of defence technology can be exploited to enrich the civilian sector in a number of ways.

HAL while disputing the argument of IAF states that the basic trainer it would be developing will be a far more advanced than the Swiss origin Pilatus basic trainer—75 of which have been ordered by IAF with the possibility of importing another 106—as it would have weapons firing capability along with many other advanced technological features. HAL is also sour that the top brass of the Indian defence establishment finds a convenient argument to dilute the “qualitative staff requirements” for the imported

fighting equipment. HAL also blames IAF for changing the product specifications mid way through the course of development which is responsible for delay in delivery.

The proposal to import additional 106 Pilatus basic trainer from Switzerland should be scrapped by the new Indian Government with the firm directive to HAL to design and develop basic trainer and deliver the same to IAF within specified time frame. It is in the fitness of things that HAL and iAF have agreed for a “joint plan” covering the defence aerospace projects. One of the objectives of this is the move to ensure prompt delivery of projects without cost escalation. Further, it would be appropriate to involve the services in the development of products from scratch with the commitment to buy them. Constant field trials and feedback could alone lead to improvement in the quality of the product and as such services cannot expect a fool proof and 100% efficient product at one go.

That a country which has sent probes to Moon and Mars, built and qualified a cryogenic propulsion driven launch vehicle and developed a nuclear powered submarine continues to depend on imports to meet the two third

requirements of its defence forces cannot lay claim to the position of being a “military super power.” For only a vibrant indigenous military industrial complex capable of not only meeting the needs of Indian defence forces but also making it big in the global arms market could make India a well recognised technological power. According to Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), India has become the world’s largest arms importer over the last one decade. The failure to involve the Indian industries in private sector—through incentives and proper hand holding—has been a major factor behind India’s failure to produce much of the fighting equipment required by its armed forces. Despite many initiatives of the Indian Defence Ministry, Indian industries in the private sector are far from enthusiastic in contributing to the defence production scenario of the country. State owned public sector enterprises including HAL and BEL (Bharat Electronics Limited) and facilities under the Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) continue to dominate the Indian defence production with the laboratories under Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) concentrating on basic

research, design and development. On a more practical plane, India's obsession with "licence production" has delivered a big blow to the creation of a self reliant base for the development of fighting equipment. As pointed out by G.Parthasarathy, India's former High Commissioner to Pakistan, "Defence production must not involve a predominant emphasis on imports and assembly as at present. There has to be a large measure of import substitution of vast array of critical raw materials, components and sub systems, amounting to billions of dollars each year, now imported for regular production by the defence PSUs (Public Sector Units), under the umbrella of "licence manufacture". The private sector, with help from DRDO could play a significant role in this area".

In the ultimate analysis, the need for revolutionary changes in India's defence set up is called for to free India from its far from edifying dependence on imported military hardware .The beginning in this direction can be made by the setting up a Defence

Technology Commission (DTC) on the lines of the highly successful Space Commission which has been able to steer the implementation of the Indian space programme with a high degree of self reliance and domestic expertise. One of the mandates of DTC should be to put in place a vibrant domestic defence production industry and turn India from an importer to the exporter of arms and ammunition. To begin with, DTC should be invested with the powers to issues directives to DRDO to take up military projects on behalf of the Indian Defence Ministry and implement them with stipulated timeframe and without any substantial cost overrun. Similarly, the industrial units—whether in private or public sector—should also be directed to produce the equipment on time and adhering to the quality standards stipulated by the users .The top most priority of the new Indian Government that would assume power in May this year should be to give green signal to the creation of DTC as a first step towards ending the spectre of

In the ultimate analysis, the need for revolutionary changes in India's defence set up is called for to free India from its far from edifying dependence on imported military hardware .

arms import haunting India for many decades now.

In a development that could speed up the process of self reliance, DRDO has expressed its keenness to involve the Indian industry, both in the private and public sector, to take up the up-gradation programme so that it would be free to focus fully on high end research and development with a view to stay in step with the global developments in the area of defence technology. But then the involvement of the Indian industry in the business of upgrade would entail the need to address issues centring round IPR (Intellectual Property Rights). Further, sufficient incentives should be made available to the private industries taking up defence production since to a large extent the volume of defence production is not sizeable and continuous enough to be a commercially and

economically viable proposition. On another front, DTC should also focus on the need to reduce the volume of imported contents in many of the home grown products. All said and done, in this age of globalisation, it does not make sense to produce 100% components domestically. The ultimate aim should be that the critical and vital components going into the equipment should be produced within the country and India should master the nuances of final “assembly and integration” of subsystems forming a part of the complex military hardware.

[Back to Contents](#)

Tracing the Roots of Corruption

- *RNP Singh*

Fighting corruption has emerged as a key development issue in India in recent years. More and more policy makers, businessmen, and civil society organizations have begun to confront the issue openly. At the same time, the general level of understanding about corruption has risen markedly. Until recently, it was uncommon to hear some one discuss anti-corruption strictly in law enforcement terms. By contrast, now most people working in the field acknowledge that to check corruption public education and prevention are equally important.

India is facing the problem of corruption since the beginning of independence. During India's first General Election in 1951-52 news papers and party offices, particularly those of the Congress party, were bombarded with allegations about corrupt electoral candidates. The system of food and supplies was subject to commodity controls and rationing – a legacy of war years which had generated a complex system of patronage.

These involved deeply entrenched black markets in lucrative industrial and agricultural concerns. This was the background to what was later know as 'Permit-Licence-Quota Raj' – linking the business interests with the political brokers. It is partly this nexus that underpins the protests in post-liberalization India.

In post-independent India, the malaise of corruption which started with the 'Permit-Licence-Quota Raj' took an alarming shape in 1980s with the allegations that a \$ 50 million kickback had been paid on an Indian arms deal by the Swedish firm Bofors which engulfed the government of Rajiv Gandhi. The increasing trend of corruption got further strengthened after liberalization which began in 1991. Thereafter, there had been number of huge scandals which made people to lose faith in political and other institutions of the country.

Now the question arises as to who is to be blamed for the trap of this grave sickness of the country in

* *RNP Singh, Senior Fellow, VIF (Excerpts from the book - Jawaharlal Nehru: A Troubled Legacy forthcoming VIF Publication)*

which it is placed today. In fact, the prime responsibility for giving proper direction to build a new India had squarely fallen on the shoulders of Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, who had by then become the ‘only leader’ in the dominant Congress Party and had enjoyed unbridled supremacy over both the party and the government for the first seventeen years of independence. Even though all the ills of the present day cannot be laid at his door, yet it would be in fitness of things to trace their roots to the valiant freedom fighter that Nehru undoubtedly was, before being unquestioned ruler of the country. Nehru’s handling the issue of corruption has been discussed in detail in my forthcoming book “Jawaharlal Nehru: A Troubled Legacy”, the extract of which is reproduced here: -

Even though all the ills of the present day cannot be laid at his door, yet it would be in fitness of things to trace their roots to the valiant freedom fighter that Nehru undoubtedly was, before being unquestioned ruler of the country.

Ostrich-like Policy on the Issue of Corruption

An innocuous looking little item in The Hindu of Jan 9, 2010 says:

“Prime Minister Nehru categorically ruled out any

proposal for appointing a high power tribunal to enquire into and investigate charges of corruption against ministers or persons in high authority, for the main reason that, in India, or for that matter any other country where there was a democratic setup, he could not see how such a tribunal could function. The appointment of such a high tribunal, Mr. Nehru felt, would ‘produce an atmosphere of mutual recrimination, suspicion, condemnation, charges and counter-charges and pulling each other down, in a way that would become impossible for normal administration to function’. More than half a time of the press conference was devoted by Mr. Nehru to deal with this question of appointing a tribunal to enquire into cases of corruption as recently urged by India’s former Finance Minister, Mr C D Deshmukh. The original item was published exactly 50 years earlier in the Hindu: January 9 1960: Enquiry into Charges”.

Nehru’s attitude on corruption can be gauged from his astonishing

statement made after more than fifteen years of independence in his reply to the charges about it; “Corruption is, if I may say so, a result of the democratic process; and I am a little afraid that as this process grows, corruption is going down to the villages.”⁹²

From the very beginning, Nehru did not pay any attention towards adoption of moral values and the issue of corruption. At the 1948 session of the Congress Party, when Shankar Rao Deo had moved a resolution on ‘standards of public conduct’, a member from Bihar moved an amendment which sought to exhort “all Congressmen, members of the central and provincial legislatures and more especially members of the Cabinets...to set an example and maintain a high standard of conduct.” The amendment was accepted by the Congress by a majority of 107 votes to 52. On the following day, Nehru threatened to resign unless it was rescinded, as he considered that it amounted to censure against his Government. A specially convened meeting of the All India Congress Committee dutifully revised the resolution by omitting all references to members of legislatures and Ministers.⁹³ Nehru not only did not pay any

attention to the charges of corruption against legislators and ministers but presumed that the charges were always motivated and had no factual basis. In the words of S. Gopal “Believing that there was less corruption in India than elsewhere, he (Nehru) suspected that opposition parties exaggerated the extent of corruption in order to belabour the government and the Congress.”⁹⁴

Nehru was not prepared to hear complaints about corruption; sometimes he even showed marked displeasure. While addressing a press conference in 1954, he had said ungraciously. “There is hardly a day when I do not see some headline about the corruption and ineptitude of government....I think quite honestly, that this conception of wide spread corruption in the government is totally wrong. Not that there is no corruption in this government, but...I am prepared to compare my country with other countries of the world. There are very few which are better off in this respect and the vast majority is infinitely worse.”⁹⁵ Nehru’s statement might have been, to some extent, correct but what was surprising was his annoyance over it. Even Gandhi was aware of increasing corruption and in

January 1948 had read out at his prayer meeting a letter received from a respected Andhra leader, Konda Venkatapayya “The taste of power had turned their heads. Several MLAs and MLCs are following the policy of making hay while the sun shines...the weakness of ministers has been creating a rebellious spirit amongst the people at large. The people have begun to say that the British Government was much better; and they are even cursing the Congress.”⁹⁶ Nehru, instead of expressing annoyance over the common talk about the corruption, should have recalled his own words which he had written earlier about “the ostrich like policy of refusing to see a conflict and a disorder, which not only exist but are eating into society’s vitals and to blind oneself to reality, will not end the disorder, or suddenly change reality into unreality; for a politician or a man of action such a policy can only end in disaster.”⁹⁷

In fact, the disadvantage of what was effectively a personalized government was that seemingly smaller things were left to be handled by the persons, whose conduct was not above board. By

late 1950s, public rumblings of dissatisfaction at governmental corruption around Nehru were beginning to emerge, although they did not affect Nehru himself, but were indicators that Nehru’s reputation was not likely to be a permanent shield against his colleagues’ activities. More dangerously however, was his unwillingness to take seriously charges of corruption levelled against those close to him, believing them to be indirect attacks on him. When his personal secretary, M.O. Mathai, was accused of corruption in February 1959, Nehru defended him in public, although an informal enquiry had revealed that he could not account for his disproportionate wealth and had been paid by both Indian businessmen and the CIA for information.

Mohan Lal Saksena, Nehru’s long-time colleague, had complained to Nehru that a rule followed before independence that a government servant was not permitted to seek employment in any private organization within two years of retirement was being flouted. His complaint stated that “The

The people have begun to say that the British Government was much better; and they are even cursing the Congress.”⁹⁶

impression has gone abroad that Congressmen and government are being influenced by capitalists and big businessmen; they are able to have their own way either through influence with ministers or high officers who have always the temptation of appointments after retirement with one or the other capitalists.”⁹⁸ Nehru did not agree and no action was taken. Nehru often shied away from taking any action against any of his favourite politicians. As early as 1951, a senior Member of Parliament brought to Nehru’s notice a “case from the second Report of the Income Tax Investigation Commission, which had reported that an assessee who had considerable status in public life as also in business organizations in the country used high position to feather his own nest; while pretending to serve the government without remuneration he paid himself with the profits made at the cost of the government in transactions he was entrusted with. Even after he was discovered with these profits by the authorized special officer of the Commission, he continued to tell untruths in attempts to reduce his liability to tax even at that stage. Now the Commission (i.e. the first one) might not have liked to publish the name of this person

for its own reasons. But if no action to punish him or the government is unwilling to publish his name, the public cannot but wonder how such things can happen with you at the helm.”⁹⁹ Nehru turned a deaf ear to the allegation and took no action.

Sometime Nehru gave peculiar arguments to protect corrupt politicians. A senior Congress member, who had held the post of General Secretary of the Congress organization, remarked in early 1960’s that “while as many as 44,000 government servants have been punished on the charges of bribery, corruption etc during last five years, not a single minister has been brought to book”¹⁰⁰. Surprisingly, Nehru did not bother to enquire about the names of those ministers and instead he told a friend, “I have tried to work through honest people; but the country did not go far. These two or three Chief Ministers you mentioned, well, I know they are corrupt; but they are efficient. And for the progress of the country I am prepared to pay the price.”¹⁰¹ Nehru perhaps forgot that corruption is such a contagious disease that if it catches at the top, it spreads like tsunami at lower level. While showing such attitude towards corruption,

Nehru forgot his own declaration in Parliament ten years earlier that “if only we can meet corruption and black-marketing with severest measures possible, you will find that we have done rather well.”¹⁰²

Political and Administrative Corruption

There were major signs during the Nehru era that political and administrative corruption, including large-scale tax evasion, was beginning to expand. Strong and timely steps could, however, have checked further erosion of the system as also reversed the trend. In the 1950’s, the tentacles of corruption were not yet far reaching and major barriers to it existed in the form of a political leadership and cadre with their roots in the freedom struggle and Gandhian ethos, a largely honest bureaucracy, especially in its middle and higher cadres, and a Judiciary with high integrity. Nehru did take up individual cases of corruption but no strategy was evolved to deal with the roots of the problem and to act expeditiously.

With added fillip provided by political patronage, rampant and all-pervading corruption began to engulf and corrode the administration. Corruption was however, no longer the preserve of bureaucrats and politicians.

As a result, the scale of corruption went on increasing as the government began to assume an increasingly larger role in the life of the people. Over time, the political system too began to fall prey to corruption. Not tackled at the right time, corruption gradually reached the higher levels of administration and politics. With added fillip provided by political patronage, rampant and all-pervading corruption began to engulf and corrode the administration. Corruption was however, no longer the preserve of bureaucrats and politicians. No section of society was free from it; the media, academia, other professions and the judiciary had also got tainted by it.

“Nehru often burst into fury against the anti-social activities of the black marketers and threatened to send them to gallows. But nothing of the kind happened. Today the country abounds in such men whose unaccounted wealth has become a great corruptor of national morals. None among Nehru’s colleagues on the Planning Commission ventured to suggest to him that

action against the new menace was imperative. They, like the ministers, felt paralysed in the presence of the great man.”¹⁰³

The following excerpt from the report of the Committee on the Prevention of Corruption is revealing. It says: “There is a large consensus of opinion that a new tradition of integrity can be established only if the example is set by those who have ultimate responsibility for the governance of India, namely, the Ministers of the Central and State Governments ...There is a wide spread impression that failure of integrity is not uncommon among Ministers and that some Ministers who have held office during the last sixteen years have enriched themselves illegitimately, obtained good jobs for their sons and relations through nepotism, and have reaped other advantages inconsistent with any notion of purity of public life...We are convinced that ensuring absolute integrity on the part of Ministers at the Centre and the States is an indispensable condition for the establishment of a tradition of purity in public services.”¹⁰⁴

Nehru criticized nepotism and corruption in the administration and politics but did not act

effectively against them. He castigated black-marketeering and other nefarious activities of Indian businessmen. In fact, the seed of corruption started finding its roots when the Congress Party changed its style of austerity to grandeur and luxury. Congress sessions and also other programmes of the party became shows of extravagant expenditure. All this pomp and show required money as also huge expenditure on elections to Parliament, state legislatures, municipal corporations, Zila Parishads and various other bodies. Neither Nehru nor his senior lieutenants in the Congress took any serious notice of this development.

Besides other reasons, political corruption found its roots in the heavy expenditure on elections which started from the very beginning of Nehru’s government. Nehru never made any effort to cut expenditure in elections and instead gave the justification that money had been coming in small sums from primary members. But even Nehru could not deny that most of these primary members were non-existent and the money or purses presented to him as collections from the general public or the party members, actually came from rich men who had

vested interest in the party or the government. He stoutly asserted that “the election purse has been collected through the sale of one-rupee and five-rupee tickets...it does not come from rich men... I see no reason why I should not accept such a purse.”¹⁰⁵

In view of increasing requirements of funds, the Congress Party chose to rope in industrialists and big businessmen into the net and for this purpose it amended the Companies Act to permit them to make open donations to political parties. Besides amending the Companies Act, a provision was also made in the Income Tax laws to exempt these donations from income tax on the pattern of those for charitable purposes.

Nehru’s Minister for Commerce and Industries and an important election organiser Lal Bahadur Shastri was, however, brutally frank about it: “The Congress Party has set up the highest number of candidates. So, the party has to find funds and if it has to find funds it has to collect money.”¹⁰⁶ While giving details of

companies which donated to the Congress Party, Shastri informed the Lok Sabha that “The Tata Iron and Steel company contributed 10.3 Lakhs rupees to the Central Congress funds; the Indian Iron and Steel company donated 2.5 Lakhs rupees to the West Bengal Congress Party.”¹⁰⁷ What was the motive behind industrialists to donate for the Congress Party was made clear by one of the industrial companies in an application submitted to the Bombay High Court to amend its articles: “In

He stoutly asserted that “the election purse has been collected through the sale of one-rupee and five-rupee tickets...it does not come from rich men... I see no reason why I should not accept such a purse.”¹⁰⁵

order to carry on its business more efficiently it is necessary that the company should be enabled to contribute to the funds of the political parties

which will advance policies conducive to the interests of industries in general and of the company in particular.”¹⁰⁸

It was all within the knowledge of Nehru that the industrialists were providing funds to the Congress Party. In this regard, the case of Hari Das Mundhra, a capitalist from Kanpur, needs special mention in some detail as he had stated that “so far as I know the reputation of this gentleman is not

good”¹⁰⁹ but Nehru’s Cabinet colleague, Finance Minister TT Krishnamachari had leveled charges against him for favouring Mundhra in September 1957 when during a discussion in parliament about the propriety of large investment made by the state owned Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) in a private firm in Kanpur owned by Mundhra was questioned. When Krishnamachari gave an equivocal reply, dissident Congress MPs began to ask sharper questions. Prominent in the debate was the Prime Minister’s estranged son-in-law, Feroz Gandhi. He claimed that Mundhra shares had been bought to boost their price well above their true market value. He wondered how the LIC became a willing party to this questionable transaction with the mystery man of India’s business underworld. Gandhi alleged “a conspiracy to beguile the (State owned) Corporation of its funds.”¹¹⁰

Bowing to the criticism, the government announced a Commission of Inquiry into the affair. In fact, there were two successive enquiries, each headed by an eminent Judge. The findings were not complimentary to the Congress government. Justice Vivian Bose in his findings held

“Mr. Mundhra is proved to have obliged the Congress Party and two Congress governments (the Central and Uttar Pradesh Governments) in a large way on two occasions for political reasons. He paid the UP Congress Party a lakh and a half of rupees and the Central Party a lakh of rupees on the eve of elections...Mr Mundra obliged the Central and State Governments by inducing the British India Corporation’s Board of Directors to recall their closure notice to the Kanpur Mills in spite of the fact that he knew that the British India Corporation would suffer anything from 20 to 25 lakhs as a consequenceIn the case of donations he said that he gave because he had ‘faith’ in them. In case of mills he says that he was promised assistance...And we have the fact that he did receive over a crore and a quarter of rupees not long after.”¹¹¹

The final reports of the Judges were damning and exacted a price; both Finance Minister Krishnamachari and his Secretary were forced to demit office.¹¹² The Mundhra Scandal made the first serious dent in the Congress halo of Gandhian morality.

Even prior to Mundhra Scandal, the tone and tenor of political

corruption in independent India was set in motion with what has been known as Jeep Scandal. The manner in which the case was handled and the way guilty were shielded, created an impression that the corrupt could get away with anything provided they were on the right side of the rulers. There was great deal of dithering on the part of the Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru to appoint a Commission of Inquiry to inquire into the scandal because a close man of Nehru, Krishna Menon who was the High Commissioner in London, figured in it. However, under the pressure of its own members, the Congress Parliamentary Party constituted a sub-committee headed by Ananthasayanam Ayyangar. The Ayyangar Committee submitted its report in April 1951 to Jawaharlal Nehru but it did not see the light of the day. In the meantime, the Public Accounts Committee of Parliament in its 9th report recommended to get the deal of the purchase of jeeps to be assessed by a high-level committee comprising of one or two High Court Judges. In December 1954, the Government

There was great deal of dithering on the part of the Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru to appoint a Commission of Inquiry to inquire into the scandal because a close man of Nehru, Krishna Menon who was the High Commissioner in London, figured in it.

of India, however, asked the Public Accounts Committee to reconsider its recommendation which was refused by it. In spite of this unimplemented recommendation of the Public Accounts Committee of the Parliament, Krishna Menon was appointed Union Cabinet Minister without portfolio in February 1956 when the Government also announced closure of the case.¹¹³

It is an irony that in the same High Commission in London, an employee held responsible for the serious loss of Mahatma Gandhi Memorial postage stamps (not worth more than Rs 1000) was prosecuted and sentenced to imprisonment. The Public Accounts Committee in its report observed that it was distressing to note the contrast in the handling of cases of losses in the same department in as much as no action was taken in the matter of Jeep Scandal.¹¹⁴

The seed of corruption in independent India which was sown during Nehru era went on flowering after Nehru during successive Congress regimes.

Besides others, the politicians in power became the main beneficiaries of the ongoing process of corruption. The Jeep and Mundhra scandals were followed by numerous other episodes and Commissions of Inquiry formed against them, whose findings clearly revealed the connivance and nexus of public servants with politicians and business houses. To name only some of them, following Commissions of Inquiry were setup against politicians in power.

1. “Das Commission of Inquiry against Pratap Singh Kairon, Chief Minister of Punjab (1963)
2. Ayyangar Commission against Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir (1965)
3. Khanna Commission of Inquiry against Biju Patnaik, Chief Minister of Orissa (1967)
4. Madholker Commission against Dr. H. K. Mahtab, Chief Minister of Orissa (1968)
5. Sarjoo Prasad Commission of Inquiry

against H. K. Mahtab, Chief Minister of Orissa (1971)

6. Aiyar Commission of Inquiry against K B Sahai, Chief Minister of Bihar (1970)
7. Reddy Commission of Inquiry against Bansi Lal, Chief Minister of Haryana (1977)
8. Mitter Commission of Inquiry against R N Singh Deo, Chief Minister of Orissa, and other ministers. (1973)
9. Sarkaria Commission of Inquiry against Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu and some of his cabinet colleagues (1976)
10. Grover Commission of Inquiry against Congress Government of Tripura headed by S N Sengupta”¹¹⁵

The following charges were proved by various Commissions of Inquiries, mentioned above, against the politicians concerned:

1. “That they abused their influence and power for

- enriching themselves directly or indirectly;
2. That they personally and/or by or through their colleagues or subordinates helped their sons or relatives in their business transactions;
 3. That their position and power were exploited by their kith and kin for securing undue favours or advantages from government officials in their business dealings,
 4. That they accepted illegal gratifications for granting licenses, renewing of agreements, giving rebates, concessions and/or exemptions, including giving undue pecuniary benefits to private firms, affecting adversely the interests of the common people and the revenue of the state;
 5. That they acquired wealth much beyond ostensible sources of income through unauthorized and illegal sources;
 6. That they exercised favouritism,
7. That they launched enterprises with undue government support and then enriched themselves;
 8. That they misused official machinery to further the ends of their respective parties;
 9. That they did business with government in the name of firms owned in reality by them but nominally shown as managed by their kith and kin;
 10. That they accepted huge sums of money as compensation in awarding contracts and placing orders to national and international firms; and
 11. That they accepted huge sums of money from industrialists as overt and covert donations for elections purposes.”¹¹⁶

The reports submitted by the Inquiry Commissions made recommendations for action to be taken against the defaulters. Though some ministers and Chief Ministers had to resign but no

criminal charges were brought up against them, giving the impression that this special category of citizens were above the law of the land. As a consequence, the whole exercise of the setting up of Inquiry Commissions, by and large, proved to be ineffective in either bringing the culprits to book or stemming the rot, with the result that politicians continued to develop both subtle and blatant ways of institutionalising corruption. Thus, between the Jeep Scandal of the Nehru era, the Bofors Scandal of Rajiv era and CWG, Coalgate, 2G/3G scandals of Man Mohan Singh's regime, the country in terms of corruption has travelled up at an unparalleled speed.

Thus, between the Jeep Scandal of the Nehru era, the Bofors Scandal of Rajiv era and CWG, Coalgate, 2G/3G scandals of Man Mohan Singh's regime, the country in terms of corruption has travelled up at an unparalleled speed.

Thus, the belied hope of independence frustrated the political stalwarts to the extent that they held Nehru and his family's identification to the nation as the sole reason for the emergence of undemocratic culture forgetting the Indian ethos of the newly born independent India. Durga Das writes: "Shyama Prasad Mookerjee used to tell me that the only way to create an

alternative to the Congress was to demolish Nehru's image...Kripalani too believed the evils in the country emanated from the top and that Nehru was the pace-setter in abusing patronage and power. Lohia believed that the Nehru family's identification with the nation was not only undemocratic but harmful and that Nehru's acceptance of Anglo-Indian cultural values led to his opposing anything that would give the nation a sense of Indianness."¹¹⁷

References:-

93. The Hindustan Times, 20.12.1948.
94. S Gopal, Jawaharlal Nehru, Vol-III, Harvard University Press, 1976, p-122.
95. Nehru's speeches, Vol-II, p-279.
96. Delhi Diary, MK Gandhi, Navjivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1948.
97. Nehru J, India's Freedom, Unwin Books, London, 1965, 22.
98. Mohan Lal Saksena's letter to Nehru, 13.3.1951, cited in Six Thousand Days, Amiya Rao-BG Rao, p-400.
99. Ibid.
100. The Times of India, Bombay, 20.8.1963.

101. Amiya Rao-BG Rao, sterling Publishers, New Delhi, 1974, p-405.
102. Lok Sabha Debates, 12.2.1952.
103. The Indian Triumvirate, Kulkarni VB, Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1969, p-568.
104. Report of the Committee on Prevention of Corruption, p-101.
105. Unpublished Nehru's letter dated 21.9.1961 addressed to Mohan Lal Saxena, cited in Six Thousand Days, Amiya Rao-BG Rao, p-460.
106. Lok Sabha Debates 19.9.1958.
107. Ibid.
108. Ibid.
109. Dwivedy SN & Bhargava GS, Political Corruption in India, Popular Book Service, New Delhi, 1967, p-72.
110. Tarun Kumar Mukhopadhyaya, Feroz Gandhi: A Crusader in Parliament, Allied Publishers, New Delhi, 1992, pp-109-23.
111. Lok Sabha Debates, 18.11.1960.
112. MC Chagla, Roses in December: An Autobiography, 1973, revised edition, Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan, 1994, pp-203-11. Justice Chagla headed one of the Commissions, Justice Vivan Bose the other.
113. Bhan Susheela, ed, Criminalisation of Politis, Shipra Publications, Delhi, 1995, pp-16-17.
114. Ibid.
115. Bhan Susheela, ed, Criminalisation of Politis, Shipra Publications, Delhi, 1995, pp-16-17.
116. Ibid, pp-17-18.
117. Durga Das, India from Nehru to Curzon and after, Collins, London, 1969, p-373.

[Back to Contents](#)

Multilateral Dialogues for Unity and Plurality: Need of the Hour

- **Prof. B. K. Kuthiala**

A perception that the intellectual world of India has gradually grown into a clear bipolar condition has gained ground. Either one is for or against a public issue. At least, the communicating intellectual sections appear to have no ambiguities or second thoughts. If a speaker or a writer finds some fault with AAP, it would be assumed that he or she is against the emerging socio-political force. Public discourse leaves no scope for an objective and impartial analysis. Hardly there is a discourse where one can afford to analyze and present merits, demerits and unknown elements of an issue. A recent example is that of pulping of Wendy Doniger's 'The Hindus-An Alternative History' by Penguin and later withdrawal of another book 'On Hinduism' by the same author by Aleph Book Company promoted by Rupa. The public discourse that should have also focused on the content of the books is diverted to mudslinging on the groups for and

against the ban. Curiosity of a common reader or a viewer of the television debate is arisen but not catered to. Only alternative is to go for the book which is not available through the traditional sources. Moreover, not all curious persons are inclined to read books. A bipolar debate leaves the receiver in dilemma and the purpose of informing and educating the people through media gets defeated.

Many scholars have pondered over the need, purpose and methodologies of public debates to arrive at consensus on variety of issues. In fact, free and purposeful debate is the precondition of a functional democracy. Bipolarized public discourse is extremely damaging for democracy as the 'will of the people' is not adequately formed by the learned of the society. The majority remains ill informed or uninformed. Habermas who is considered to be the father of the theories of public discourse had

* Prof B K Kuthiala, Vice-Chancellor, Makhanlal Chaturvedi National University of Journalism & Communication

emphasized that the validity of a moral norm cannot be justified in the mind of an isolated individual reflecting on the world. He advocated dialectics as a social process for validating an opinion or attitude by argumentation between individuals in a condition of intersubjectivity. In the televised debates today, every participant's stand and argument is predictable. Debaters who are either for both or for no side of argument are conspicuous by their absence. The same holds good for the analysis and comments in print media. It is ironic that debates in Indian media never witnesses an occasion where a writer or debater admits ignorance. More worrisome is the absence of a situation where a person admits that he or she was wrong and now stands corrected. The result of such public discourses is that the audiences also tend to be with one or the other side of argument and reconciliation or even appreciation of the counter argument are never achieved. Issues like beheading of soldiers on the borders by the army of the neighboring country remain dichotomous. Debate on killing of personnel of paramilitary

In the televised debates today, every participant's stand and argument is predictable. Debaters who are either for both or for no side of argument are conspicuous by their absence.

forces in Chhattisgarh completely ignores the plight of the local population because the writers and debaters are either sympathetic to Naxal movement or their job is to condemn it.

Habermas' intersubjectivity emphasizes that shared cognition and consensus is essential in the shaping of our ideas and relations. It appears that the people responsible for guiding the thought processes of the masses do not have any inclination to try to achieve consensus even on mundane issues of hunger, shelter and primary education. Two of the presuppositions of Habermas seem relevant for consideration : 'no force except that of the better argument is exerted' and 'all the participants are motivated only by a concern for the better argument'.

Live telecast of debates on hundreds of channels is a very potent source of societal dialogue. The purpose of these debates is never to learn from each other but the only objective seems to prove others wrong by any means including shouting. The moderator's task seems to corner the panelists and to convey the

impression that all participants representing various aspects of an issue are wrong and motivated by self interest. The very purpose of the debate gets defeated when the moderator speaks more than the invited experts. It is still more damaging when the moderator is highly opinionated and attempts to establish a particular viewpoint by all means, not excluding coercion. The moderators of the television debates may improve their abilities if they care to pay attention to Habermas' stipulations.

Another useful reference on this subject is of *Reconciling Unity and Plurality Through Dialogue* by Fred Dallmayr (2013) of the University of Notre Dame. Opposing undifferentiated universalism, Fred argues that the dialogue can contribute to the clarification of contested issues, to the reduction of prejudices and mutual animosities. He further proposes cultivated and fostered multilateral experiences and engagements through interactive dialogue.

It would have been a normal situation if our all pervasive media were providing platforms for exchange of information and opinions. On the contrary Indian media seeks unipolar statements

and thrives upon the controversies thus raised. There are only few newspapers and magazines that allow multiple ideologies to be projected in print. Like many writers and media persons who are known for their ideological leanings and are predictable, the media houses are also aligned either with or against the ideology, parties and individuals. The practice of media houses taking on the task of establishing or demolishing groups and individuals is accepted without even a frown.

Universities by their composition and nature are expected to serve as melting pots for all possible variety of thought and ideal conduct. Their task is not only to transfer the knowledge and skills, they are also expected to analyze and evaluate objectively without any inherent prejudices. Society should expect innovative leads both in thinking and practice from these temples of learning. They also provide opportunities for the scholars to share each other's opposing viewpoints and also to learn from each other. Many such occasions are being created in more than six hundred universities of our country, but unfortunately the platforms are unipolar. Universities also have

their identities established not for free creation of scholarship but for propagating a given streams of thought.

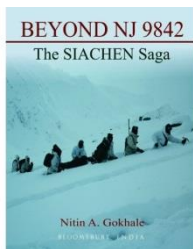
Internet on mobile platform has thrown open an omnipotent instrument for infinite number of multilateral dialogues. The platforms for personal dialogues and also for group dialogues are increasing in numbers every moment. All issues arising in the traditional media of print and television become the subjects of comment and discussion. Social media also raises many issues of its own that exercise the intellect of the masses. Yet, a difference has to be made between information, knowledge and wisdom. The division of tasks in the society is well defined and the intellectual class is supposed to be both knowledgeable and wise. The intervention of wisdom in the process of healthy perception formation of the society is an essential requirement.

What our country needs most today is multilateral engagements of the thought leaders and policy makers.

What our country needs most today is multilateral engagements of the thought leaders and policy makers. It is a sad state of affairs that the country has almost no platforms where thinking people from all shades of right and left can talk to each other with an open mind. The political groups are in a mode of 'no communication' except in parliament and committees. It is a rarest of rare occasion where the Prime Minister and the leaders of opposition in the two Houses of Parliament engage in mutual consultation on issues of the people. Without meaningful abundance of dialogues, how can we charter the path of the nation and help the people realize their dreams?

[Back to Contents](#)

Beyond NJ9842: The Siachen Saga



An Emphatic Statement on Siachen's Non-Negotiability

- ***Sushant Sareen***

So much has been written about the Siachen issue over the last thirty years that one thought all that had to be said had been said. But on the thirtieth anniversary of Siachen becoming what is inarguably the coldest and toughest battlefield known to mankind comes a book which gives a graphic and gripping account of what fighting the enemies of the country and elements of nature at 21000 feet above sea level entails for man, machine and materiel. It is a book that not just lays out the strategic calculations, political constraints and diplomatic compulsions that prompted India to send its troops into an area which India considers its own, but also the astounding stories of what the soldiers have to bear in ensuring that this area remains with India.

It was perhaps just a coincidence that the revelation that Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was all set to do a deal with Pakistan on the Siachen issue came just days after the publication of Nitin Gokhale's unputdownable book on the superhuman feat of the Indian Army in keeping the Tricolour flying on the roof of the world. The book not only brings a lump to the throat by recounting stories of the unimaginable sacrifices that the armed forces make, but also makes the chest swell with pride over self-less heroics of the Indian soldier. Most of all, the 'Siachen Saga' is an emphatic statement about why the highest battlefield on earth can and should never become the 'low-hanging fruit' which professional seminarists and track-II activists are so eager to pluck and hand over to the

* *Sushant Sareen, Senior Fellow, VIF*

enemy.

The Siachen story is compelling; Gokhale's book makes it even more so. He narrates the story by brilliantly weaving together first person accounts of serving and retired soldiers who first ventured on to the forbidding heights, those who secured this area by not just beating back repeated assaults by the Pakistani forces but also wresting control of positions occupied by the Pakistanis, and those who over the last three decades have protected this strategic piece of Indian territory against any intrusion by the enemy. Without indulging in any jingoism or mindless chest thumping, the book pays tribute to the gallantry, raw courage, intrepidity, commitment, initiative, innovativeness and most of all camaraderie of the soldiers. It leaves the reader awestruck by the extra-ordinary heroism that every foot soldier (including doctors) and air warrior displays every single day in the most inhospitable and hostile terrain imaginable to mankind. Take for instance Man Bahadur, who refuses to go on leave even after hearing that his mother has passed away and his wife and twin kids are struck by an epidemic in his village. The reason: he cannot

leave his team which was being deployed the next day on the glacier; Or take the case of the Sikh LI troops who overnight built a snow-wall to provide cover to a stranded chopper from hostile fire from Pakistani forces and then physically lift the heavy motor to help the engineers fix the chopper, and all this in -60oC temperature; or the eight Kumaoni soldiers who despite suffering from severe frostbite go back to their post to fight off the Pakistanis (four of them get martyred).

Gokhale doesn't glamorise war. Quite to the contrary, he gives a very human touch to a war (against both man and nature) by narrating stories of real men in what, sitting in the comfort of our homes, can only be described as unreal situations, leaving the reader shaking his head in sheer disbelief at the grit, guts and gumption of the Indian soldier to do what needs to be done even at the cost of life and limb. Something that would be seen as macabre in normal conditions – breaking the bones of a dead body to fit it in a body bag so it can be transported back in the chopper – becomes the natural thing to do in conditions like Siachen where rigor mortis and the small size of the Cheetah helicopter makes this

necessary. Also imagine having to live next to a dead body for days on end because the weather doesn't allow the evacuation of the body. And all this in a place where there is not the slightest margin for error or because even the most minor lapse could transform life into death. One of the most distinguished soldiers in the Indian Army and a former Commander of the Siachen Brigade nearly lost his ears to frostbite (within the space of an hour or so) because he made the mistake of not taking proper precautions. Others have suffered much worse.

Thirty years after the first Indian posts were set up on the glacier and the Salto ridge, things have improved tremendously for the soldiers in terms of equipment, facilities, systems and procedures. But one can only wonder in amazement at the army and air force personnel who went in practically 'blind' – there were no proper maps, the challenges posed by weather and terrain were unknown (more so because when the first deployment took place to pre-empt the Pakistanis, no one had imagined that these heights were going to be manned 365 days a year for the next 30 years), the equipment (weapons, medical,

survival) was untested in those mind-boggling conditions, its an endless list – and yet had the determination to stay the course.

Having weathered the worst, and despite weather and war casualties down to single figures and deployment cost being a fraction of the defence budget, it is surprising that there is a clamour from some quarters (the usual suspects, really) for pulling back from Siachen. Gokhale competently lays out why withdrawal is no longer an option unless the Pakistanis agree to an authentication of the actual ground position of troops. But even with authentication, troops cannot be pulled back. After all, the LoC was not just authenticated but also delineated and yet the Pakistanis intruded in Kargil. What is the guarantee that something similar will not happen in Siachen, if not now then a few years later? The logic of escalation is such that once it is triggered off, it cannot be wished away. This became clear in Siachen where what was initially thought to be a short operation for showing the flag steadily grew in both scale and scope into a massive, unending deployment.

To all those who question the strategic significance of Siachen,

all that needs to be pointed out is that the very fact that India could go and occupy these heights stands testimony to the possible use of this area by India's adversaries. Over 2000 years back, no one could have imagined Hannibal's march across the Alps into ancient Rome was possible. Therefore, for anyone in India to imagine that the Chinese and Pakistanis will never be able to use Siachen against India is only strategic self-deception of the worst kind. Former Army chief, Gen. VP Malik who has laid out the strategic compulsions and imperatives for remaining deployed in Siachen in his foreword to Gokhale's book, cautions against any give away on

this issue for ephemeral diplomatic gains.

One can only hope and pray that the next government junks the rose-tinted glasses with which the Manmohan Singh government saw Siachen – peace park and other such drivel - and takes a more hard-headed, cold-hearted and realistic view of this critical issue. Finally, Gokhale is right when he says the book 'will force you to stand up and just say "Salute"'; only, the Salute is not just to the army but also the author for writing a most awe-inspiring book.

[Back to Contents](#)

Interaction with Dr. Hoang Anh Tuan from Vietnam

Dr. Hoang Anh Tuan, Director General, Institute for Foreign Policy and Strategic Studies, Hanoi accompanied by Dr Vo Xuan Vinh, Institute for South East Asian Studies, Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences had an interaction with VIF faculty on 06 March 2014. Dr. Tuan spoke on the regional security situation in Asia-Pacific and how Vietnam was coping with the emerging strategic environment. He said that the challenges in the South China Sea have made Vietnam more resolute in defending its interests. Though the U.S. has announced its pivot to Asia strategy yet there were doubts among the ASEAN and other regional countries as to whether the Americans would unambiguously stick to its Asia-Pacific strategy when the push comes to a shove by China. He also spoke on Indo-Vietnam relations

and the need to strengthen the same. There was also a need for India to impart more content and substance to its Look East Policy.

The VIF faculty appreciated the detailed presentation made by Dr Tuan and stressed the need for enhancing Indo-Vietnam defence and security cooperation besides economic cooperation. India supports the freedom of navigation through South China Sea and adherence to UNCLOS. Chinese assertive policies were not only visible in South and East China Seas but they have also been aggressive on the Sino-Indian border. Both Vietnam and India share many interests in the region and cooperation between the two would be conducive to peace and stability in the region.

[Back to Contents](#)

Interaction with EU Ambassador to India

Vivekananda International Foundation hosted an interaction with His Excellency Mr. João Cravinho, Ambassador and Head of the Delegation of the European Union to India on 13 March 2014, under its ongoing series of interactions with Ambassadors based in India. The closed-door interaction was chaired by Ambassador P P Shukla, Joint Director VIF, and included veteran Indian diplomats and former chiefs of Armed Services and Intelligence agencies of the country as participants.

Ambassador Cravinho began the session with his introductory talk focusing on issues such as EU's Common Security and Foreign Policy (CSFP), EU's Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), the situation in Ukraine, and the prospects of Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with India. While talking about bilateral relations between India and the EU, Ambassador Cravinho observed that things were moving in a positive direction, even if the pace was a little slow. Despite a few minor setbacks, he said that the India-EU trade volumes will multiply in the next few years. He was hopeful that the process of

negotiation will regain momentum and would be concluded within a year. He underlined the fact that India is one of EU's most important economic and strategic partners and that both the EU and India are set to reap huge benefits the stronger this partnership gets.

On Ukraine, Ambassador Cravinho expressed his concern over what he called the "violation of sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine" by the Russian military presence in the Crimean peninsula. When asked about EU's role in Ukraine prior to the ousting of President Yanukovich, Ambassador Cravinho argued that the EU's neighbourly relations with Ukraine cannot be equated with Russia's military presence in the country.

Speaking on the prospects of improving relations with Iran, Ambassador Cravinho strongly believed that a deal on the nuclear programme would be successfully worked out and Iran would emerge as a responsible power in Asia in the next four to five years.

The presentation was followed by a session of Q&A where many other issues were discussed,

including the matter of immigration of radicals in Europe and its impact on European societies, the collective agenda of EU and its recent successes and failures as an entity in international relations, as also the military missions of EU and its role in the realization of security and stability in its neighbourhood.

[Back to Contents](#)

Talk by French Ambassador to India HE Francois Richier

In his interaction with the VIF faculty on March 26, Ambassador of France to India H E Francois Richier began by identifying the similarities between India and France – above all, the commitment to maintaining strategic autonomy. This did not mean isolation, for no nation could afford to function entirely on its own in this day and age. But it did mean that where their vital interests were involved, they would act with or without external support.

The Ambassador added that India and France were the first strategic partners to each other, and this was a reflection of the close understanding that existed between them, especially in defence cooperation and counter-terrorism. Since the late 1990's, the two countries had shown understanding of each other's concerns – France had been proactive on India's behalf during the Kargil War, and earlier over the question of sanctions against India after its nuclear tests; in turn, France had enjoyed Indian support during the recent French action in Mali.

The French nuclear doctrine was also quite clear. The nuclear assets were a deterrent, and only to be used in defence of vital interests of the country should deterrence fail. Their doctrine was silent on the issue of first use. A Special Forces contingent was available for overseas deployment – it was now 15000 strong, but used to be 60,000 strong in earlier times. France also had some bases in the Asian and African regions.

There were three types of international crises that particularly concerned France. The first was where the balance of power was being eroded, and could tempt some powers to resort to force. The second was where there would be external interference in another country. And the third was where a country was imploding, and could become a problem for the region around it.

India and France were cooperating over a range of issues, reflecting the strategic nature of their partnership. In the defence field, they were moving to a genuine partnership, away from the buyer-seller relationship that was more typical of the past. Civil nuclear

cooperation was another important area – and the Ambassador emphasised that France was quite willing to work within the framework of the Indian law on liability. In France, nuclear power contributed 75% of the electricity generated, compared to India's 3%. Counter-terrorism was also going well. France had invested a cumulative US\$ 19 billion worth in India, and was one of its major trade partners in the EU.

During the Question-&-Answer session that followed, Ambassador Richier touched upon some of the current issues such as Ukraine, Syria, the broader West Asian region, Europe and politics in the light of the coming elections to the European Parliament.

[Back to Contents](#)

Interaction with Egyptian Ambassador to India

H.E. Khaled Ali Moustafa El-Bakly, Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt interacted with members of the strategic community at the VIF on April 02, 2014. The Ambassador spoke on the current situation and the upcoming elections in Egypt. He elaborated on the challenges posed by radical extremists of the Muslim Brotherhood and how the state is coping with them. The spiral of violence in Egypt has given a fresh

impetus to Al Qaeda linked terror groups particularly in the Sinai, which could have far wider regional ramifications if left unchecked. The Ambassador also offered his perspectives on various aspects relating to Indo-Egypt relations and the situation in Syria.

[Back to Contents](#)

Interaction with Swedish Delegation

A 17 member Swedish delegation led by Mr Henrik Haggstorm from the Swedish Armed Forces HQ interacted with the VIF faculty on 03 April 2014 on the regional and international security scenario. The Swedish delegation included Swedish Defence Attaches in Beijing, Washington, Seoul, Canberra Bangkok, and Islamabad among others. Officials from the Swedish Foreign Affairs ministry also formed part of the group. The delegation was keen to learn about India's perspective on strategic and security environment in the region in general and about terrorism in particular. VIF Director Mr Ajit Doval briefed the visitors on international terrorism and how India was affected by terrorism much before the US and the West commenced its war on terrorism after the 9/11 terrorist attack. He emphasized that the epicenter of terrorism continues to be in the

Af-Pak region as adequate steps have not been taken to meet the challenge. VIF Joint Director Amb. PP Shukla gave his perspective on the likelihood of Chinese economy not doing well and its possible consequences on the internal situation in China and its implications for its neighbours and rest of the world. Former Chief of Army Staff and Dean, Centre for Defence Studies, VIF, Gen NC Vij outlined his perspective on security challenges in the Asia Pacific and what it means for India. VIF Distinguished Fellow Lt. Gen. Ravi Sawhney made a presentation on challenges of post 2014 Afghanistan and its implications on security for the region and for the international community.

[Back to Contents](#)

Interaction with Dr. Klaus Lange, Institute of Transnational Studies, Germany

Dr Klaus Lange, Director of the Institute of Transnational Studies, Munich with branches in Italy and Gurgaon, India and Dr Klara Knapp, Deputy Director of ITS interacted with the VIF faculty on 04 April, 2014. Dr Lange shared his perspective on Ukrainian crisis which was different from the official European view being articulated. The Indian perspective on the Ukrainian crisis was presented by VIF Joint Director Amb PP Shukla, who had served earlier as India's Ambassador to Russia. He postulated that the Americans and western countries were attempting

to deprive Russia its access to the Black Sea thus restricting its strategic options.

Talking about the regional security situation, Lt Gen. Ravi Sawhney outlined the challenges of the post 2014 situation in Afghanistan. Developing the Afghan National Security Forces and continued engagement by the international community through economic and military aid would be imperative if gains made in Afghanistan are not to be lost, he said.

[Back to Contents](#)

VIF MOU with Vietnam Think Tank

A ten member Vietnamese delegation visited Vivekananda International Foundation on 16 April 2014 for discussions and signing of an MOU between the Institute of Foreign Policy and Strategic Studies (IFPSS), Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam and the VIF for academic exchanges. Dr. Hoang Anh Tuan, Director General of the Institute and Mr. Ajit Doval, Director VIF signed the MOU in the presence of visiting Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam H.E. Pham Quang Vinh.

The principal objective of the MOU is to promote intellectual and educational exchanges and enhance cooperation between think tanks of the two countries in the areas of international affairs and establish a long-term collaborative relation in the areas of regional and international security between the VIF and IFPSS. Both the think tanks would organize international conferences, workshops, seminars on issues of common interests.

After signing of the MOU, Mr Doval reviewed the status of India-Vietnam relations in the

light of emerging strategic environment in the Asia Pacific. He noted that while the ties between the two countries have become strong yet there was a potential to enhance the relationship in economic and security fields. Similarly, Dr Hoang Tuan pointed out the need for further political, economic and security dialogue between the think tanks of the two nations as the regional situation continues to be in a state of flux. Vietnam's Deputy Foreign Minister also stressed on strengthening the Indo-Vietnamese relationship and stated that he would support the efforts of cooperation between both the think tanks in any manner he could.

[Back to Contents](#)