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Afghan Ground Report

Dealing with Corruption

Indo-US Ties

Pros and Cons of Small States

and many more

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Editor's Note

The recent serial bomb blasts in Patna during a rally by the Prime Ministerial candidate of the principal opposition party coming close on the heels of the Muzaffarnagar violence is an indicator of the vitiating political atmosphere in the country ahead of the upcoming Assembly elections in five states as also the Lok Sabha polls next year.

What is equally unfortunate is the absence of substance in the electoral campaigns where trivia and rhetoric have become the hallmarks and the burning issues of the day including governance, corruption, inflation, foreign policy, internal security et al have been put on the backburner. Creating fear psychosis among the minorities, making emotional appeals and creating mountains out of molehills have become new mantras for success at the hustings. However, the people of India have become mature enough to see through the nefarious designs of such vote seekers and make enlightened choices based on their hopes and aspirations, rather than get swayed by specious arguments and narrow appeals.

A major highlight of the coming Assembly elections would be the option of 'None of the Above' (NOTA) given to the voters. The issue has been extensively dealt with by Dr A Surya Prakash in this issue. One sincerely hopes the political parties would take preventive step and give tickets to clean candidates so as not to force the voters to reject them outrightly.

Both the political parties and the national media would also be doing a great service to the nation if they equally highlight the issues at stake in the Mizoram elections as well and thereby help in removing the sense of alienation among the people of the North East.

In this issue, we also have a very insightful ground report on the situation in Afghanistan from two of our distinguished scholars – Lt Gen (Retd) R K Sawhney and Mr Sushant Sareen. Informative articles on corruption, smaller states, Indo-US defence trade and defence reforms are other highlights of this issue.

Wishing you all a Happy and Prosperous Deepawali!

K G Suresh

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Afghanistan Is Far from Being Lost: A Situation Report From The Ground

- Lt General (Retd) R K Sawhney & Sushant Sareen

First Impressions: Uncertainty, yes; but also Optimism about future

the War on Terror) on the Hamid Karzai led dispensation is to say the least disingenuous.

The creeping sense of despondency, even defeatism, over the future of Afghanistan post 2014 that seems to have set in among a section of the strategic community and top policy makers in New Delhi is not just ill informed but also quite unnecessary. Regardless of the line being plugged by some Western boy-scout journalists and analysts who tend to view the world from a Political Science 101 perspective in which everything is seen and evaluated from what is ideal rather than what is real, Afghanistan is not lost. While it is true that the US-led international forces haven't really succeeded in pacifying the country and eliminating the Islamist insurgency, the tendency to heap the blame of their failures (which are really the result of closing their eyes to Pakistani shenanigans and double-game in

Notwithstanding all the problems that the Afghan state faces – fragile security situation, weak economic base, governance deficit, fledgling institutions, pervasive corruption etc. – a Taliban takeover that many in India and rest of the world fear is by no means inevitable. If the international community continues to support the Afghan government with monetary and military assistance for at least another decade i.e. until 2025, then not only will the Taliban be defeated, but Afghanistan will be able to realise its potential of emerging as a fairly stable and relatively functional democratic state. Indeed, there is a far greater chance of Afghanistan pulling through than there is of its tormentor Pakistan getting out of the self created terrorist hole that it finds itself in. The caveat is, of course, that the international

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community doesn't abandon Afghanistan and undermine its tremendous achievements of the last decade. Compared to Afghanistan, pumping money into Pakistan to stabilise it is going to prove utterly counter-productive. Counter intuitive though it may sound, the fact is that pulling the plug on Pakistan rather than Afghanistan is what could lead to better results in terms of reining in and ultimately eliminating the jihadist terrorist networks in the AfPak region. This would force Pakistan to change its strategic policy framework. Continued support to Afghanistan is not throwing good money after bad; pumping money into Pakistan is.

Counter intuitive though it may sound, the fact is that pulling the plug on Pakistan rather than Afghanistan is what could lead to better results in terms of reining in and ultimately eliminating the jihadist terrorist networks in the AfPak region.

To be sure, Afghanistan faces monumental challenges. Interestingly, even top Afghan officials don't try and gloss over the enormous problems that confront their country. But unlike the outsiders who appear to be all set to throw in the towel because they think these problems are insurmountable, the Afghans are showing remarkable resoluteness in improving their capacity and

ability to grapple with the problems that their country faces. There is undoubtedly a growing sense of uncertainty that seems to be gripping many Afghans. But this isn't so much because the Afghans have given up but more because it is being fuelled by the growing apprehension among the Afghans that the rest of the world is in the process of giving up on them. There is palpable concern among Afghans that the international community is getting ready to cut and run and even turn its back on Afghanistan and write it off as a bad nightmare. More than anything else, this faux conjecture that the Afghan state will not be able to hold its own against the Taliban onslaught after the withdrawal of the Western troops' which is causing more damage than anything that the Taliban and their patrons across the Durand Line have thrown at the Afghan state. Senior Afghan officials and politicians are mindful that they need to demolish this conjecture and change the narrative in order to re-instil confidence among the public within Afghanistan and without. If they manage this,

worsting the Taliban won't be very difficult.

More difficult than getting rid of the Taliban, however, will be the task of nation building, which is still pretty much a work in progress. The institutions of state and society in Afghanistan – army, political system, judiciary, civil service, civil society etc. – are still in their infancy and therefore vulnerable. They need time to grow and strike deep roots. Any premature or hasty and ill-thought out pulling out of support, whether for reasons of political correctness, a Faustian strategic bargain, simple exhaustion with involvement in Afghanistan or even financial problems back home, will pretty much mean pushing back Afghanistan into chaos. Apart from institutions, the Afghans need to start thinking of putting their economy on more solid footing. This means steadily lowering the dependence on foreign aid and assistance and becoming self sufficient. Afghanistan has enough going for it to be able to manage without external hand-outs. But again they need time and political stability in order to develop their capacity to be able to gain economically from their mineral wealth and their geographical

location at the cross-roads of Middle-East, Central Asia, South Asia and China.

Herat Dialogue: a peek into what people, local and foreign, are thinking

The Second Herat Security Dialogue organised by the Afghan Institute of Strategic Studies offered an excellent insight into not only how the international community perceives the situation in Afghanistan but also how Afghans – politicians, officials, academics and students – see their country and its future. Even though the sense of uncertainty about the future was pervasive among the participants, both locals and outsiders, there was an underlying hope and even confidence that things would work out. The tantalising prospect of Afghanistan emerging as not just a bridge between different regions but also a regional trade and transit hub for pipelines, power lines and highways clearly suggested that Afghanistan need not be a basket case economy forever. Add to this the potential for exploiting minerals – copper, gold, oil and rare metals – and there was no reason why Afghanistan couldn't emerge as a fairly prosperous country. One

session of the Herat Dialogue dealt with the need to rediscover Afghanistan's syncretic Sufi roots and traditions of tolerance which could be a potent antidote to the poison of radicalism being spread by Al Qaeda and Taliban. But quite understandably, these positive factors seemed to be dominated by the concerns over how the security and political situation would unfold in the coming months.

No one really subscribed to the possibility that the state would collapse like a house of cards after the drawdown. A return to the Taliban rule of the 1990s was also rejected, as was the probability of another civil war breaking out. At the same time, it was openly and readily acknowledged that while the situation was evenly balanced for now, it could deteriorate very fast and spiral out of control if the political setup started unravelling. In fact, how the politics plays out in the coming months will be just as critical in deciding the future of Afghanistan as the military and monetary support from the international community. If both these things work out, then

Afghanistan will remain stable; but if even one of these two cornerstones collapses, then the whole edifice could come crashing down.

The Presidential elections due in April next are being seen as a make or break event. It is not just about who wins the election, but even more importantly the credibility of the elections that will determine the future course of events in Afghanistan. Ahmed Wali Masood, who is the brother of Afghan hero Ahmed Shah Masood,

It is not just about who wins the election, but even more importantly the credibility of the elections that will determine the future course of events in Afghanistan.

pulled no punches in declaring that if the elections fail because of widespread fraud, then everything will collapse. At the

same time, he was emphatic that a credible election could prove transformational. This was the theme that echoed throughout the conference. Western delegates were very clear that the continued financial and other support would be contingent on legitimacy of the process. Any repeat of the kind of fraud that marred the last Presidential elections or any delay in the election – there are apprehensions that President Hamid Karzai may manipulate the process to protect his interests

and remain relevant – will not be acceptable to anyone anymore. While there is enough realism that the polls process will not be ‘perfect’, what is important from both the Western as well as Afghan perspective is that the process should be ‘good enough’ for everyone to accept the outcome. As far as the international community is concerned, any result that is accepted by the Afghan people will be acceptable to it. The bar is being deliberately set pretty high so that even if the halfway mark is reached, the elections will be a resounding success.

Apart from the credibility of the election process, there are some apprehensions about how the politics will play out the day after the results are declared. In other words, the effect, impact and repercussion of who wins and who loses is also something that is being keenly discussed and debated. Will the non-Pashtuns (some of whom are feeling sidelined by the Karzai administration) accept another Pashtun President? Will the Pashtuns agree to embrace either a non-Pashtun or even a half-Pashtun President who is closely identified with the non-Pashtun ethnic groups and rides into power

on the strength of a united non-Pashtun vote and a divided Pashtun vote? Will pre-election ethnic and political alliances become a fault line that tears the country apart post elections or will the reality of results lead to a readjustment and accommodation between the main political players and ethnic groups? These are questions that to which there is no clear answer as yet. For their part, the Afghans believe that if the poll process is clean, then people will learn to live with whatever result emerges from the election.

One of the factors that is seen to be a game-changer in Afghanistan is what an Australian academic called ‘the democratic urgings of the new generation’. Alongside, he pointed to the effect of globalisation on Afghanistan which would make turning back the clock to the Taliban medievalism extremely unlikely. While a former Taliban representative who is currently a member of the High Peace Council made a strong pitch for an accommodation with the Taliban – he claimed the Taliban were neither radical nor revolutionary but simple traditional people! – and warned against excluding or ignoring them, he was not only challenged by the young Afghans

but practically hooted out. Some Western delegates spoke in favour of the 'reconciliation' process but not if it endangered the progress made during the last decade in Afghanistan. Those in favour of the 'peace process' wanted that the Taliban demonstrate on ground the claims they made in international conferences about how much the movement has changed over the years and how the mistakes they made in the past would not be repeated. What was however not clear was how the democratic system could co-exist with a movement that brooked no dissent and whose leader claimed to be the Amir-ul-Momineen (Leader of the Faithful).

But clearly this is a line of thinking that is utterly misplaced. The Afghans have placed a lot in the store of the elections.

Politics and the Presidential Elections

Sitting outside Afghanistan it is easy to dismiss the forthcoming Presidential elections as something of an irrelevant and unnecessary distraction from the looming security situation. But clearly this is a line of thinking that is utterly misplaced. The Afghans have placed a lot in the store of the elections. If well conducted, with minimum fraud

and maximum participation, the elections could prove to be a major stabilising factor. On the other hand, if the polls are marred by irregularities like the 2009 elections, then they could just as well prove to be the nemesis of the Afghan state. That all shades of political opinion (except for the Taliban) have a stake in the elections is borne out by the sheer number of candidates – 27 – who have thrown their hat in the ring. Of course, not all these candidates – in the Afghan context, a more appropriate term is 'ticket' which includes not just the presidential candidate but also his running mates – are serious contenders.

It is generally agreed that the two front-runners are going to be the former foreign minister and the runner-up in 2009, Dr Abdullah Abdullah and President Karzai's finance minister, Ashraf Ghani Ahmedzai. Dr Abdullah has roped in a faction leader of the Hizb-e-Islami, Mohammed Khan and the Hazara leader Ustad Mohammed Mohaqiq as his running mates. Ashraf Ghani has the Uzbek leader Abdul Rashid Dostum and a Hazara leader Sarwar Danish on his ticket. Interestingly, Ashraf

Ghani has not taken any Tajik as one of his running mates, something that goes a little against conventional wisdom wherein every ticket must have both a Pashtun and a Tajik (the two largest ethnic groups) to stand a winning chance. The other serious contenders are the former foreign minister Dr Zalmi Rassoul (he has roped in one brother of Ahmed Shah Masood as his running mate and a firebrand Hazara lady lawmaker as his 2nd Vice President nominee), President Karzai's brother Qayyum Karzai, the Pashtun strongman from Kandahar Gul Agha Sherzai, the former mujahideen commander Abdul Rab Rasool Sayyaf (with the Herat strongman and Tajik leader Ismail Khan as his running mate), former Defence Minister Abdul Rahim Wardak and finally Hashmat Ghani Ahmedzai, who is the brother of Ashraf Ghani.

With such an array of tickets, it is expected that the polls will go into the second round where Dr Abdullah and Ashraf Ghani will battle it out. Supporters of Dr Abdullah are quite confident that he will be able to win the elections in the second round. He has apparently been working double time since his engineered defeat in

the last Presidential elections in 2009 to sew up his alliance. Equally importantly, he is making a strong pitch to reclaim his Pashtun heritage (from his father's side) and thereby attract at least some Pashtun vote to his side. His supporters claim that he is likely to win a fair amount of votes from the South. They are also of the view that many Pashtuns have come to the conclusion that they got a raw deal from a Pashtun President and a non-Pashtun might be more compelled to cater to their needs than a Pashtun. By managing to unite all the important leaders (except for Dostum and Ahmed Zia Masood) of the erstwhile Northern Alliance behind him, Dr Abdullah is reasonably confident of winning the overwhelming majority of the non-Pashtun vote from the Tajiks, Hazaras and Uzbeks. What is more, the choice of Dostum as running mate by Ashraf Ghani is seen as a big positive for Dr Abdullah because many Pashtuns will not be inclined to vote for a ticket with Dostum on it. Many of the candidates in the first round, for instance Sayyaf-Ismail Khan, are likely to endorse the Abdullah ticket in the second round.

Ashraf is quite popular among the intellectual crowd in Kabul but

whether he will be able to win mass support is somewhat uncertain. By not including a Tajik on his ticket, Ashraf might have made a smart play for the Pashtun vote which with the Uzbek and some Hazara votes, could well turn out to be a winning combination. But many of his detractors wonder if he will be even able to reach the second round, partly because the plethora of Pashtun candidates is expected to badly split the Pashtun vote bank which increase the possibility of another candidate like Zalmi Rassoul sneaking in for the run-off election. Ashraf's own brother is also a candidate and could cut into his potential votes. The other big problem for Ashraf and any other candidate who depends on the Pashtun vote is that the climate of fear and insecurity that is hanging over the elections could result in a low voter turnout in the Pashtun belt, something that will work to the advantage of the non-Pashtun candidates by neutralising the numbers edge of the Pashtuns. Conversely, there is also a fear that the fragile security situation in the Pashtun areas could be exploited to repeat the vote fraud

and stuff ballot boxes like last time. Some political observers claim that while the Centre, West and North of the country will be where the voting will take place, the South and East is where the fraud will be perpetrated. In any case, according to them, the geography of voting has changed and even in a free and fair election the South and East will account for only around 40% of the votes.

There are also questions being asked on who President Karzai will endorse. For quite some time

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he has been keeping his options open and hasn't quite let it be known who he is backing among Ashraf, Rassoul

and his brother Qayyum. Members of the opposition believe that Karzai's endorsement is more a liability than an asset for the candidates, but there are apprehensions that he might once again misuse the state machinery to give a leg up to his favourite candidate. At the same time, by not coming out clearly in support of any candidate – he first appeared to back Sayyaf, then indicated that Ashraf was his candidate, later hinted at Rassoul and after his brother threw his hat

in the ring some thought he was backing Qayyum (though sceptics argue that in Afghanistan, brothers are generally never favoured) – he has caused a lot of heartburn among those who were looking for his endorsement. As a result, he has lost the confidence of his friends. He has also riled his non-Pashtun opponents by trying to divide their ranks by offering bribes and blandishments. In the final analysis, Karzai will back the candidate who he thinks will receive the support of the Pashtuns because the only way he remains relevant in the future politics of Afghanistan is by positioning himself as the leader of Pashtuns. There is also some talk of Karzai wanting to replicate the ‘Putin option’ by manoeuvring a light weight favourite into the Presidency and then becoming a candidate in the next election.

While fraud is one of the uppermost concerns regarding the elections, money is expected to play a major role in these elections. Fears are also being expressed that the polls will sharpen the ethnic divide because voting will primarily take place on ethnic lines. But these fears are somewhat overstated because efforts are being made by almost all the candidates to woo voters of

other ethnic groups. There is also a realisation among top candidates that winning the election is the easy part, retaining power and running the country a much more difficult task. No wonder then that some people close to Dr Abdullah are claim that if he wins the election, he could very well appoint Ashraf Ghani as his finance minister. Similar appointments could be made if Ashraf or Rassoul win the elections. In a sense then, even though politics in Afghanistan is crystallising along ethnic lines, it is also slowly maturing to a level where after the heat and dust of elections is over, the politicians make new alignments to run the government and the country.

While the Afghans appear to ready to live and adjust to whatever result is thrown up by a credible election, there is a lot of apprehension about Pakistan playing the role of spoiler. Afghan political analysts say that if Dr Abdullah wins, the Pakistanis will try and provoke the Pashtuns and Taliban to not accept the result and undermine the government. This is quite simply because the Pakistanis cannot countenance a strong Tajik presence in the government in Kabul. Even if Ashraf Ghani or Rassoul win, the

Pakistanis will continue to create instability in Afghanistan using the Taliban and Gulbadin Hekmatyar. Interestingly, some top Afghan politicians believe that Pakistan neither wants the Taliban to hold complete sway in Afghanistan nor do they want any kind of negotiated settlement between the Taliban and the Afghan government. The suspicion about Pakistani intentions is so high that the Afghans are convinced that even if the Taliban were to enter into a dialogue, the ISI will create a counter force to keep Afghanistan destabilised. One possible reason for such a policy is that the Pakistanis want to push the war that is being waged inside their country into Afghanistan, even if this means reigniting the civil war in Afghanistan. If this is indeed the Pakistani policy, then it is clearly a very short-sighted and less than inelegant policy because instability in Afghanistan will inevitably spill over into Pakistan and destabilise an already tottering state.

The Security Matrix

Even though many analysts around the world have convinced themselves that the Afghan National Army (ANA) and Afghan

National Police (ANP) will crumble after the withdrawal of the ISAF in 2014, this doomsday scenario is somewhat exaggerated. There is little doubt that the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) have serious problems of personnel, training, equipment, logistics, and intelligence. But meeting the Defence Minister, some of the top leadership of the ANA and also a few of the young officers, is quite a revelation. There is absolutely no panic among the top brass. On the contrary, it exudes a level of self-assuredness and quiet confidence that immediately dispels all doubts about the ability of the ANSF to hold their own against the enemy.

Unlike the Pakistani generals who are so full of bluff and bluster but who fizzle out the moment a fire-fight breaks out and the army starts bleeding, the Afghan Army Chief is very matter of fact in its appreciation of the strengths and weaknesses of their army. There is a disarming honesty in the way the Afghan Defence Minister and top brass explain the security situation. No bombast, no spin and no brushing under the carpet of inconvenient and troubling realities. And yet, a level of confidence that can only come

from faith in the fighting capability of the troops that immediately reassures the interlocutor that this army will not crumble if it continues to receive military, financial and political support.

Ever since the ISAF has transferred the security responsibilities to the Afghan Army, it has proved its mettle. Senior generals proudly claim that even though the Pakistanis opened the floodgates for the Taliban to launch fierce attacks since April this year, there is not a single engagement in which the Afghan troops have shown their back to the enemy or yielded territory to them. They have in fact opened up areas from which the ISAF had withdrawn. For instance, in Nuristan, the ANA has moved in and is in the process of opening the road for normal traffic. No doubt, the ANA has been taking serious casualties – in the last six months, around 800 dead and some 2000 injured. But morale remains fairly high. What is more, the dictum that armies that bleed emerge as solid fighting forces stands quite true for the ANA.

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Senior officials say that they haven't lost as many men in fighting as they have lost in IED explosions and suicide blasts. In other words, it is not so much the fighting prowess of the Taliban terrorists as it is their classic terrorism tactics that is causing casualties. At one level, this means that the ANA is more than a match for the Taliban; but at another level, unless the ANA can find a way to counter the IEDs and Suicide attacks, they will continue to suffer grievously. Unfortunately, there is as yet no solution that has been found to this problem. One of the reasons why the ANA officials are requesting the international community to supply them with Tanks, Armoured Personnel Carriers as well as reliable mine breaching equipment, is that it would minimise the casualties caused by IEDs. But so far, their requests have fallen on deaf ears.

The ANA brass, while quite confident of holding their own against the Taliban, is seriously worried about being unprepared to handle any external aggression by the Pakistan army on side of the Taliban. They say that on their

own the Taliban can only carry out acts of terrorism but cannot overrun the country like last time unless they have the support of the Pakistan army. This, more than anything else, is the real worry for the Afghan security establishment, and it is precisely this worry that no one – US, India, Europeans, or any other country – is willing to address. The Afghans want tanks and artillery so that they can take on a Taliban offensive supported by the Pakistan army. But even fairly obsolete equipment is being denied to them. They complain that the Americans promised them this equipment but have not only reneged on these promises, but worse, have destroyed whatever Soviet era tanks and artillery the Afghans possessed. As a result, the ANA has been reduced to a glorified paramilitary force which is in no position to handle any conventional threat from across the Durand Line.

Although Western writers have made a lot about the high attrition rates in the ANA, this isn't something that worries the Afghans very much. They admit that there is a fair amount of attrition, but say that the new recruits more than fill the gap. The attrition is not much because

of desertion as it is because of many soldiers not renewing their three-year contracts – this rate has gone up to almost 50% in recent years. But if service conditions improve, then the ANA will not only be able to attract new recruits but also retain the trained manpower. Training is yet another issue on which is occupying the attention of the brass. Even though Afghans are natural fighters, modern armies need an officer corps to lead the men into battle. While the ANA has refurbished its own academy, a number of young officers are being trained in India, and frankly they are turning out to be a real asset for the ANA – smart, crisp, brimming with confidence that the Indian Army instils in its officer corps. Although Pakistan has been offering training in its own academies, there are not many takers for this offer. One big reason is that young officers feel that if they train in Pakistan their loyalty will forever be suspect and they will always be treated as ISI agents, which will affect their careers, and worse, their reputation and self-esteem.

Apart from the equipment that ground forces need, the ANA is also feeling the pinch on managing its logistics. Until now, they have

been largely dependent on the Americans. But after the withdrawal, they will be pretty much on their own. The US is in the process of supplying the Afghans a few C130 transport aircraft. Arrangements are also being made to provide choppers which can be used for medical evacuation and supplies, in addition to playing a combat role. Some mortars and light artillery is also in the pipeline. The Afghans are also toying with the idea of converting some old passenger aircraft into transport aircraft for the army. India too has promised to supply and refurbish some AN32 transport aircraft. Of course, like in everything else, the Indians have been lagging behind in delivery, a point that was put forward by Afghan officials in a very polite manner.

India's Enigmatic Policy

In recent years, India's approach and policy on Afghanistan is so afflicted by self-doubt, strategic confusion and perhaps even an element of towing the line that is set not in New Delhi but

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elsewhere that it has all but lost the plot in a country which in many ways is critical for India's own security. So taken in is India with the inherent limitations it faces in Afghanistan – geographical, financial, diplomatic (the inability to use Iran as a conduit to Afghanistan) and military – that it has neglected the advantages it enjoys, which to an extent neutralise the limitations. No surprise then that even though there is tremendous goodwill for India, the Indian officials are virtually imprisoned in fortress-like compounds with their movement restricted because of the real threat of terrorists targeting them. There have been around three bomb attacks on the Indian mission in Kabul, Indian consulate in Jalalabad has recently been targeted, the consulates in other cities are also in the cross-hairs of terrorists (believed to be working under instructions of the ISI), Indian Army doctors have been killed and guest-houses where Indian officials stay have been attacked. On the other hand Pakistan is, to put it mildly, hated in Afghanistan and yet their

officials strut about like they own the place. Surely, something is seriously wrong with the way India handles its affairs.

Threats aside, the Indian policy is also steadily making India marginal in Afghanistan. What is really infuriating for the Afghans is that India has not just adopted a defeatist approach and seemingly reconciled to the possibility that the Afghan state will not survive very long after the withdrawal of foreign troops, but worse, that India is increasingly following a policy under which it is showing more understanding for Pakistan's concerns rather than for Afghanistan's needs. The way the Afghans see it, if even a strong country like India is ready to kowtow to Pakistan's aggressive, if also disastrous, policy in Afghanistan, then perhaps the Afghans would be better off striking their own Faustian pact with the proverbial devil. India's pusillanimity has touched such ridiculous levels that recently the Indian Foreign Secretary was advised not to visit the Jalalabad consulate lest it send out a very aggressive signal about India's Afghan policy! That she ignored this advise goes to her credit. Her visit boosted the morale of the Indian officials who are working

under enormous stress and in a very difficult and dangerous environment in places like Herat, Kandahar and Jalalabad, not to mention Mazar-e-Sharif and Kabul.

Even more galling is the line that is being peddled in some quarters, advocating that India, along with other countries, should create a sort of funding agency and which then lets Pakistan implement the development projects in Afghanistan! This, according to their thinking, will go a long way in reassuring Pakistan that India's only interest in Afghanistan is to stabilise that country. Pakistan, they say, will very graciously give credit to India for the funds it gives for a school, or hospital or any other project. Their argument, which is not just specious but also ridiculous, is that India's strategic interest lies in a peaceful Afghanistan and if this sort of policy helps to bring peace and stability in Afghanistan then it achieves the purpose for which India is assisting Afghanistan's reconstruction.

It is precisely this sort of defeatism and dissembling policy prescriptions that appear to be behind the refusal of India to supply some of the defence

equipment that the Afghans have requested. Strangely, India has always insisted that unlike other countries which always gave Afghanistan what they thought the Afghans needed and never bothered to find out what the Afghans actually wanted, India always let the Afghans give their wish list. However, when it comes to defence cooperation, India seems to have adopted the approach of other countries and rather than fulfilling the Afghan wish-list, India has taken it upon itself to decide what the Afghans need. Much of the stuff that the Afghans have requested for – old tanks, artillery pieces and some old aircraft – is no longer used by the Indian Army and can be easily refurbished and given to the ANA. But the great strategists sitting in high offices are chary of fulfilling the Afghan request because they think that if the Afghan government collapses then all this equipment will fall in the hands of the Taliban.

Why this logic is faulty is because: one, this risks becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy because by not helping the Afghan state India

would be creating conditions for the Taliban to capture power; second, even if this stuff was to fall into Taliban hands, who would they use it against? They aren't going to lug it across Pakistan to target India across the Radcliffe line. If anything, they might actually use it against the patrons across the Durand Line. The real reason therefore seems to be that India doesn't want to provide any support to the Afghan government that rubs Pakistan the wrong way and provokes it to intensify the sponsorship of terrorism not just in Afghanistan but also India. The flip side of this faulty reasoning is that even though India has desisted from providing the Afghans with the weapons they need for their protection, Pakistan has not stopped the export of terrorism. This begs the question as to why India should be bothered about Pakistan's concerns when the Pakistanis show no consideration whatsoever about Indian concerns.

What India seems to have forgotten is that the Afghans are fighting not just for saving their country but also the region from being destabilised by the radical

But the great strategists sitting in high offices are chary of fulfilling the Afghan request because they think that if the Afghan government collapses then all this equipment will fall in the hands of the Taliban.

Islamist terror groups. While the Pakistanis keep tom-toming how they are fighting for securing the world against terrorism, the fact is that it is not the Pakistanis but the Afghans who are fighting this fight. If countries like the US and India cannot fight shoulder to shoulder with the Afghans, then the least they can do is to give them the wherewithal to fight on their own. If truth be told, the enemy of the Afghans is also the enemy of India. The war that the Afghans are fighting is also India's war. The choice before India is simple: it can either fight this war on its borders or help the Afghans fight this war inside Afghanistan. India would also do well to remember the immutable principle of international politics: to inspire faith in your friends and favour them; and instil fear in your adversaries. India needs to apply

this principle while forging its Afghan policy. This means that it is no longer enough to rely upon just soft power and developmental assistance to secure Afghanistan against the onslaught of the barbaric and medieval Taliban. India must also use its hard power (without putting boots on the ground because that would be counter-productive) to assist Afghanistan.

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Indo-US Ties: Slow Yet Steady Transformation

- *Kanwal Sibal*

The most important foreign policy development in the last decade has been the remarkable improvement in India's relations with the United States. From mutual suspicion, lack of empathy and a policy of keeping the relationship at a low level to avoid giving the US too many leverages over India, we have moved to a relationship of mutual confidence, genuine engagement and belief that the two sides can develop convergent strategic interests.

The rhetoric accompanying this rapprochement is a little overblown on the US side, with President Barack Obama describing the India-US relationship as a defining one for the 21st century. What this might mean other than a strengthened relationship and greater convergence in the coming years is unclear. The vision of India becoming such a major pole in global affairs that the India-US tandem will determine the

configuration of international relations, the principles governing them, the management of global commons and the consolidation of political and human values acceptable universally seems a little grandiloquent.

India, on the other hand, uses more subdued vocabulary to describe the improving ties, emphasizing their transformed nature, which is a more realistic description of where they stand today. The Indian government, conscious that it is already being perceived as being too pro-US and aligning itself unduly with American interests, presumably feels the need to keep its rhetoric low-key so as not to invite criticism domestically and raise doubts externally about the independence of its foreign policy decision making.

Nevertheless, the fact remains that for India, its relationship with the US has become the most important one. The range of

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engagement with the US, reflected in several dialogues in diverse areas that the two countries are holding- whether it is in the field of energy, education, agriculture, health, development, science and technology, environment, trade, defence, counter-terrorism, non-proliferation, high technology and the like- far exceeds that with any other country. The objective is to build Indian capacities in a number of sectors with US technology and know-how, a process that would help India to develop and grow even as the US gets greater access to the expanding Indian economy.

India and the US have had to overcome a difficult legacy. It can be argued that, over decades, the US has done much damage to India's strategic interests by hamstringing our efforts to develop nuclear and missile technologies, imposing sanctions on us in these areas, denying us high and dual use technologies, overlooking Pakistan's acquisition of nuclear and missile technologies from China, politically subverting Indian sovereignty over Jammu and Kashmir by interventions on

Pakistan's behalf, arming Pakistan against us, and unleashing Islamic extremism in the region by its decision to use jihadi groups to fight the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. Progress has been made, even though unevenly, in overcoming this unfortunate legacy.

The change in mutual perceptions began with the NDA government, with the then Indian leadership speaking of India and the US as "natural allies" and taking the

The objective is to build Indian capacities in a number of sectors with US technology and know-how, a process that would help India to develop and grow even as the US gets greater access to the expanding Indian economy.

initiative to engage the US on divisive strategic issues, especially nuclear and high technology ones. The slow progress being made was put into really high gear by

President Bush, leading to the 2005 India-US civilian nuclear deal and the NSG exception for India, for which the US undoubtedly did the "heavy-lifting". Howsoever controversial the deal became in India because of some crucial concessions extracted from us and the misleading hype about its energy potential created by its supporters, the fact is that non-proliferation issues blighting our bilateral relationship with the US and

pitted us against the majority of the international community for decades have been removed from the agenda, which constitutes a solid political and diplomatic gain.

Flowing from this, India has been able to sign civilian co-operation agreements with several other countries, including Canada, with progress in negotiations with Australia and hopeful prospects of an agreement with Japan. India has been able to secure raw uranium for its reactors, overcoming an immediate problem that the Indian nuclear sector faced. As a result of the Indo-US nuclear deal, sanctions on almost all Indian entities have been lifted and high technology export controls for India have been eased to a degree. The US has committed itself to promoting India's membership of the four technology denial regimes, namely, the NSG, the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), the Wassenaar Agreement and the Australia Group, which when it happens will integrate India into the global non-proliferation regimes as a non-NPT member. India's task will be to prod the US to implement this commitment at the earliest and not use it as a bargaining point to extract more

concessions from India in non-proliferation related areas.

The US position on India's permanent membership of the UN has evolved positively and has contributed to the sentiment in India that the US is now ready to open the strategic space that India claims for itself. Actual membership will be a prolonged process and will not depend on US alone, though the US position on expansion will remain crucial.

The US attaches importance to the bilateral dialogue on global commons- air, space, sea and cyber. It is emphasizing partnership with India in defining the rules. The intention is to ensure that as India rises and seeks a change in the international rules so far defined by the West, it does so in close coordination with the US so that any disruptive initiatives get forestalled.

In addition, the US seeks burden-sharing in upholding the international system from which it feels others benefit without assuming responsibility. The dialogue on global commons is intended to steer India towards burden-sharing. In the maritime domain, freedom of navigation and

securing the sea lanes of communication are areas where the US would have particular interest in partnering India, given India's dominating position in the Indian Ocean and the steady expansion of its navy. In the new area of cyberspace, cyber security has become a matter of urgent international attention and India's emergence as a major IT power, along with the vast expansion of its telecommunications network, makes India a partner of choice to establish new rules of the game.

The dramatic change in India's defence ties with the US in the last decade signifies a notable reduction of the trust deficit between the two countries, given the history of US sanctions against us and its practice of imposing arms embargoes in situations of tension and conflict. In the last five years or so, the US has bagged orders worth about \$9 billion, whether for C-130 and C-17 heavy lift aircraft, advanced maritime reconnaissance aircraft, attack helicopters and VIP helicopters etc. The US lost out in the competition for the 126 combat aircraft contract, a set-back that it

did not easily absorb, as it expects a greater share of Indian defence procurements as a testimony of India's seriousness in treating it as a long term strategic partner. India has balked at signing the interoperability agreement (CISMOA), the logistics agreement (LSA) and the agreement to have access to high defence technology (BECA).

India remains reticent about tying up too much with the US in the defence domain lest we are

perceived as having moved too much into the US defence orbit and compromising the independence of its policies.

perceived as having moved too much into the US defence orbit and compromising the independence of its policies. The US is, wisely, no longer

insisting on signing them, leaving India to decide as opportune. What balances this reticence is the numerous joint military exercises with the US involving the three arms. The naval exercises in the Indian Ocean area have been particularly elaborate, involving even aircraft carriers, submarines etc on both sides, which sends an important strategic message because these waters are crucial for the trade and energy flows for China and other East Asian countries. US, India and Japan

have also held their first trilateral naval exercise off the coast of Japan in 2012, though India is inexplicably reticent about such trilateral exercises in the Indian Ocean.

The US move to establish a strategic partnership with India, symbolised by the nuclear deal, has the rise of China as an underlying motivation, though this is not acknowledged officially. Chinese commentators interpret this relationship as a move against China, though they find India's attachment to independent decision making as a re-assuring element. The US has described India as a lynchpin of its pivot or rebalancing towards Asia. While caution is exercised in not making it appear that this initiative is directed at China, the reality is that the rise of China and its growing muscle-flexing, as is evident in its conduct in the South China sea, requires the US to signal its intention to maintain and reinforce its presence in Asia to give confidence to its allies who may otherwise seek accommodation with China at the expense of the US. In this, the US clearly sees India as a vital partner given India's several attributes that makes it a credible power to rival China in the years

ahead. India, however, is wary of this re-balancing strategy as it doubts the capacity and inclination of the US to contain China beyond a certain point because of the huge economic and financial interdependence between the two countries. India would like to avoid becoming collateral damage in an unclear US strategy towards China.

On the issues of terrorism and religious extremism, while bilateral cooperation in the area of counter-terrorism has progressed, US policies have an element of ambivalence that undermines Indian interests. The principal US focus is on Al Qaida and its affiliates but not on the Taliban whom the US seems ready to accommodate so long as it commits itself to cutting off its links with Al Qaida and not permit terrorism from areas under its control directed at the West. For this reason, India and the US have difficulty in remaining on the same page on the Afghanistan issue, as well as on some aspects of US policies towards Pakistan, whether it is the reluctance to apply the kind of pressure that Pakistan merits in view of its profound terrorist affiliations to force it to break these links, or contain the ambitions of the

Pakistani military in Afghanistan. US arms aid to Pakistan remains an issue, even though India downplays it so as not to vitiate the atmosphere of the dialogue with Pakistan.

On Afghanistan, in the course of the decade, the US has moved from a seriously distorted analysis of the situation that looked for a solution through a resolution of the Kashmir issue to a more realistic position which took into account Pakistan's double-faced

Afghan policy. Initially, the US opposed any significant Indian presence in Afghanistan because of Pakistani sensitivities but

moved towards welcoming our economic assistance effort there and even seeking to do cooperative projects with India. The US has discouraged India from defence cooperation with Afghanistan other than providing training to Afghan security forces within limits, though the Afghan government is pressing India to even supply combat equipment.

India has been able to establish its presence on the ground in

Afghanistan because of the security cover provided by the US. With the impending US withdrawal, India will face new challenges from the Taliban forces. The US decision to open a dialogue with the Taliban disregards India's strong objection to any political accommodation with it without insisting on the red lines laid down by the international community on the subject. The US decision to leave Afghanistan in 2014 in conditions permitting an orderly withdrawal with the help

The US has discouraged India from defence cooperation with Afghanistan other than providing training to Afghan security forces within limits, though the Afghan government is pressing India to even supply combat equipment.

of the Pakistani military creates a potential security problem for India.

The US awareness of Pakistan's double-dealing on terrorism,

highlighted by the shelter given to Osama bin Laden on its soil and refusal to act against the Haqqani network, has not resulted in any clear US policy of dealing with the country on the basis of its duplicitous conduct. The US continues its failed policy of offering carrots to Pakistan, which include even military aid, in the hope of buying its cooperation. The result is that Pakistan is able to manipulate the US to serve its purpose in crucial areas despite

under currents of tensions between the two countries. At one stage it appeared that the US had de-hyphenated India and Pakistan, especially in nuclear matters, but the element of hyphenation has not altogether disappeared, as the US does defer to Pakistani sensitivities towards India to some extent. On the whole, though, it can be said that India-US relations have in the last decade acquired a different trajectory than US-Pakistan relations.

The Iranian issue has created wrinkles in our bilateral relationship as US sanctions have interfered with India's energy security, forcing India to reduce its oil intake from Iran quite drastically and impeding any Indian investment in attractive long-term projects in the oil and gas sector in Iran. The US linking of the nuclear deal with our policy towards Iran and India's vote against Iran in the IAEA to satisfy US expectations have been factors in creating the perception that the US relationship carries costs in terms of independence of decision-making. The talk of strategic autonomy, which is a code word for not aligning ourselves with US/Western positions on international issues,

unsurprisingly, finds disfavour in US circles, though for the first time an American leader, to wit US Vice-President Biden, during his recent visit to India declared that he saw no contradiction between strategic autonomy precious to India and our strategic partnership with the US.

The last decade has also seen a significant expansion of India-US economic ties, with trade in goods standing at \$62 billion and the total exchanges, including investment, amounting to over \$100 billion, making the US the largest economic partner of India. The India-US bilateral economic agenda is, as noted earlier, exceptionally wide-ranging. Progress has been slow in most areas, partly because the Indian reforms process has slowed down, the ceilings on FDI in sectors of the economy of interest to the US have not been raised and enabling legislation in areas like education has not been passed as yet. These are areas, however, where reforms will undoubtedly occur in time, with some movement to raise the ceilings in the financial sector.

The prospects of nuclear cooperation with the US have dimmed because of our Nuclear Liability Act, much to the

disappointment of the US side which had counted on large opportunities for its companies in this sector. The US side is pressing for signing an “early works agreement” between Westinghouse and NPCIL to register some progress in the fulfilment of India’s commitment to the US to order 10,000 MWs of nuclear power from US reactors at two sites.

Other issues have contributed to a distinct lowering of enthusiasm for the India relationship in the US, such as perceived Indian protectionism exemplified by our Preferential Market Access decision to force foreign companies to set up manufacturing facilities in the telecom sector in India, the Supreme Court judgment on the patents issue which has exacerbated concerns about IPRs and the retroactive application of our tax legislation as in the Vodafone case. The US corporate mood towards India has soured of late, and this needs to be reversed. The US is pushing for a Bilateral Investment Treaty. On climate change and WTO related issues, India and the US have unbridged differences. The general view is that the relationship is now suffering from the fatigue factor.

The slowdown in India’s growth and other structural problems that have appeared in the Indian economy have taken the shine off the India story for the time being, but the medium and longer term prospects remain very positive for the India-US relationship.

On the Indian side, we have problems with the new Comprehensive Immigration Bill that will put more restrictions on movement of personnel from India to the US in the IT sector, the increased cost of H1B and L1 visas that will impose sizable costs on the Indian IT sector and the whole campaign against outsourcing led by the White House. India has its own concerns about US protectionism and market access for some of its products, which do not receive a sympathetic response.

All in all, however, ties with the US are decidedly better than they were a decade ago. Even if the relationship has “plateau-ed” as some say, the plateau is at a high elevation today.

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South China Sea: India Should Remain Firm on Oil Exploration

- Maj Gen (Retd.) P K Chakravorty

General

China is the biggest nation in size and population in Asia. Currently it has the world's second largest economy. It has disputes over the Senkaku islands in the East China Sea and with a number of ASEAN countries on the South China Sea. The South China Sea is bounded by China in the North, the Philippines in the East, Vietnam in the West, Malaysia as also Brunei in the South East and Indonesia in the South West. The area bounded by the Sea is approximately 3,685,000 Square km and forms a

part of the Pacific Ocean.

The area includes more than 200 small islands, rocks and reefs with many of them located in the Paracel and Spratly chain of islands. The South China Sea is a highway for trade, shipping and telecommunications. The route is used by all ships heading from the Straits of Malacca to Japan, China, Cambodia, Vietnam, Malaysia, Philippines and Brunei. Thirty three percent of the world trade and 50 percent of world's traffic in oil and gas pass through the South China Sea. It is a source of fish and is expected to be rich in hydrocarbons. Oil deposits have been found in most of the littoral countries of the South China Sea. The region has proven oil reserves estimated at about seven billion barrels and oil production in the region is currently around 2.5 million barrels per day. Natural gas reserves are estimated around 266 trillion cubic feet. Being an enclosed area, there are



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difficulties with regard to conflicting claims by various countries.

Claims

Prior to analysing the claims of affected countries, it is important to understand the UN Law of the Sea. The 1982 Convention on the Law of Seas has numerous guidelines pertaining to islands, the continental shelf, enclosed seas and territorial limits. Pertinent articles as applicable to this dispute are Articles 3, 55-75, 76 and 121. Article 3 establishes that every state has the right to establish the breadth of its territorial sea up to a limit not exceeding 12 nautical miles. Articles 55-75 explain the concept of Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), which is an area up to 200 nautical miles beyond and adjacent to the territorial sea. The EEZ gives coastal states sovereign rights for the purpose of exploring, exploiting, conserving and managing the natural resources. Article 76 defines the continental shelf of a nation which comprises the sea and subsoil of the submarine areas that extend beyond its territorial sea

The EEZ gives coastal states sovereign rights for the purpose of exploring, exploiting, conserving and managing the natural resources.

throughout the natural prolongation of its land territory to the outer edge of the continental margin, or to a distance of 200 nautical miles. This is significant as it allows every nation to exploit the continental shelf. Further, Article 121 states that rocks that cannot sustain human habitation or economic life shall have no EEZ or continental shelf. In the case of South China Sea, most of the claimants have established military outposts in order to conform to Article 121 in pressing their claims. The

Convention also states that overlapping claims must be resolved in good faith.

The South China Sea contains over 250 small islands, atolls, shoals, reefs and sandbars most of which have no indigenous people, many of which are naturally under water at high tide and some of which are permanently submerged. The islands are located on a shallow continental shelf with an average depth of 250 metres. However, in the Spratly chain, the depth changes tremendously and near the Palwan trough is more than 5000 metres deep. The sea floor contains Paleozoic, Mesozoic

granite and metamorphic rocks. Out of the entire group, only one island is volcanic, otherwise the islands are made of coral reef. There are no native animals except boobies and sea gulls. There are numerous territorial issues in this region. Some of them have been settled or what could be termed as partially settled. China is the principal claimant and in the last two years has become more assertive.

The first to be dealt is the Natuna islands which contain Indonesia's natural gas fields. The area had no dispute till China released an official map with maritime boundaries including these islands. Indonesia responded by conducting a large naval exercise in the region in 1996. Since then China has not voiced any protest and drilling of natural gas continues unabated. Similarly Malampaya and Camago natural gas fields of Philippines are claimed by the Chinese. However, they have not objected to the drilling of gas. Further, many of Malaysia's natural gas fields located offshore Sarawak is claimed by the Chinese but Malaysians are drilling with no objection from the Chinese. Vietnam and China have resolved the Gulf of Tonkin dispute and

similar issues have been resolved in the Gulf of Thailand.

The present dispute mainly pertains mainly to the Paracel and Spratly group of islands. Parcel Islands were occupied by China in 1974 when Vietnam was fighting a war with the United States. Both these island groups are disputed and are claimed by countries of the region. Brunei reportedly claims area of Louisa bank and Rifleman bank near Spratley chain as part of its continental shelf. Philippines claims 53 of the maritime features in the Spratley Islands which it calls the Kalayaan island group as well as the Scarborough Shoal. Similarly, Malaysia reportedly claims sovereignty over 11 maritime features in the Spratly Islands. Vietnam claims sovereignty over all the maritime features in the Paracel and Spratly islands. China and Taiwan claim sovereignty over all the maritime features in the South China Sea. Taiwan is currently in possession of the largest maritime feature in the South China Sea, Itu Aba or Taiping.

It is of interest to note that China's occupation of Paracel Islands was a big surprise to Vietnam. This occurred while

China and Russia were both assisting North Vietnam militarily to fight the war for unification of the country. Chinese strategy is to be friendly on the diplomatic front and suddenly occupy unguarded territory. The Paracels were under the control of the South Vietnamese who were fighting alongside the US. On 19 January 1974, the Chinese frigates and submarines duly supported by fighter aircrafts defeated the South Vietnamese in the Duncan portion of the island and quickly secured the entire island. South Vietnam made mild protests which were over shadowed by the major conflict with North Vietnam.



The map above shows the Chinese claims based on the nine dash line.

China has been aggressively pursuing her claims in the South China Sea. China's claims are based on the eleven dash line drawn in 1947 by the Kuomintang Government. The claim has been made by Chinese survey team post Second World War who included all important areas of the sea as Chinese. This map was made after China's victory over Japan and Vietnam was under the French. Philippines was badly shaken by the war and the rest were British colonies. Possibly the Kuomintang perceived that this would remain unchallenged due to the disturbed set of circumstances that prevailed on termination of the Second World War. However by 1953, China had fought the Korean War and Ho Chi Minh with his Vietnamese troops were threatening Dien Bien Phu as also many of the ASEAN countries were gaining independence and viewing these aspects China reduced the boundary to the current nine dash line. Thereafter, China despite strong opposition from Vietnam moved into the Paracel Islands in 1974.

China in 1980s improved relations with the US led international community. A global sea level joint observation plan was adopted by the UNESCO Intergovernmental

Oceanographic Commission in February 1987, commissioned by the Chinese government establishing five marine observation stations. Nansha station of China is located on the Yongshu reef. In early February 1988, the Chinese launched the construction of NO.74 observatory on Yongshu reef. Vietnam learnt about this activity and its Navy began to patrol the Spratly group of islands. On 13 March 1988, three Vietnamese transport ships arrived at the reef and set up Vietnamese flags. A little later, four large Chinese warships arrived and warned the Vietnamese. The Vietnamese did not respond. The Chinese mobilised more warships and next day early morning despatched 40 marines in three motor boats to physically remove the Vietnamese flags. The Vietnamese held their ground and the Chinese had to return back to their war ships. The Chinese now fired their 37 mm anti aircraft guns destroying the lightly armed Vietnamese on the reef. About 80 Vietnamese soldiers were killed in this skirmish. Thereafter the PLA occupied several reefs in the Spratlys. Vietnam occupied other islands on the reef and the

As the area is about 130 nautical miles from Palawan in the Philippines, they objected as a part of creeping invasion by the Chinese.

Chinese war ships withdrew to avoid escalation.

The Philippines had similar problems with Mischief Reef and Scarborough Shoals which are islands in the South China Sea. Mischief Reef is a large reef in the South China Sea. In 1994, China built structures on stilts during the monsoon season. As the area is about 130 nautical miles from Palawan in the Philippines, they objected as a part of creeping invasion by the Chinese. After negotiations, Philippines did not destroy the structures to avoid escalation and the Chinese continue to occupy these positions. The next area of dispute is the Scarborough Shoal also known as Huangyan Island which is located between the Macclesfield Bank and Luzon Island of the Philippines in the South China Sea. The shoal forms a triangle shaped chain of reefs, rocks and small islands which have a circumference of 55 km and an area of about 150 square Km. The shoal and its surrounding areas are rich fishing grounds. The nearest landmass is Palauig on Luzon island in the Philippines at a distance of 137 nautical miles. China and Taiwan claim that their

people discovered the shoal centuries ago and there is a long history of Chinese fishing activity in the area. Philippine legally claims the island based on international law on sovereignty. Philippines proposed to take the matter to the International Tribunal for the Law of Seas (ITLOS) but this was not agreed by the Chinese Government as they wished to resolve it bilaterally. On 08 April 2012, a Philippine Navy surveillance plane spotted eight Chinese fishing vessels docked at Scarborough Shoal. The Philippine Navy despatched a ship which reached the location on 10 April 2012 and found that the Chinese had illegally collected corals, live sharks and giant clams. They attempted to arrest the Chinese fishermen but were prevented by two Chinese Marine Surveillance ships. There were protests by both countries and finally by July 2012 China erected a barrier to the entrance of the Shoal. Chinese surveillance ships have prevented Filipinos from fishing in the area.

In July 2010, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton called for the People's Republic of China to resolve the territorial dispute. China replied that the US keep out of the issue. The US

Department of Defence issued a statement on 18 August 2010 where it opposed the use of force to resolve disputes in the South China Sea and accused China of assertive behaviour. Issues kept simmering and in May 2011, Chinese naval ships attacked and cut the cable of a Vietnamese exploration ship. On 01 July 2013, US Secretary of State John Kerry asked all nations to resolve the disputes in the South China Sea amicably. This was accepted by all members and China has emphasised that bilateral solutions will be found.

Chinese objection to Indian oil exploration

On 22 July 2011, INS Airavat, an Indian naval amphibious assault ship was on a friendly visit to Vietnam. The ship was repeatedly contacted at a distance of 45 nautical miles from the Vietnamese coast on an open radio channel by a vessel identifying itself as Chinese Navy which warned the Indian ship that she was entering Chinese waters. Indian Navy clarified that no ship or aircraft was visible from INS Airavat and the ship moved on without paying any heed to the cautionary warning. Further, India clearly stated that she

supported freedom of navigation in international waters including the South China Sea.

India and Vietnam signed an agreement seeking to contain a dispute over the South China Sea in September 2011. Further, Oil and Natural Gas Commission's (ONGC) overseas investment arm ONGC Videsh Limited had signed a three year deal with Petro Vietnam for developing long term co-operation in the oil sector. Further it had accepted Vietnam's offer of exploration in specified blocks in the South China Sea. This was met with stiff opposition from China who claimed that no exploration could be undertaken in areas over which China has sovereign rights. The Government of India correctly responded by stating that while China had concerns but India was going by the agreement signed with Vietnam. The Chinese claim was rejected by both India and Vietnam. As per the UN, the area of exploration belongs to Vietnam. India has firmly stated that ONGC will continue to explore oil in the South China Sea. Further India has clarified that the entire Indian Ocean region stretching

Further, Oil and Natural Gas Commission's (ONGC) overseas investment arm ONGC Videsh Limited had signed a three year deal with Petro Vietnam for developing long term co-operation in the oil sector.

from East African coast to South China Sea remains crucial to its foreign trade, energy and national security. Vietnam has remained steadfast on the issue and in July 2012 the National Assembly of Vietnam passed a law demarcating Vietnamese sea borders to include the Paracel and Spratly islands.

Creation of Chinese township of Sasha

The latest development is the setting up of a prefecture by China by the name of Sasha in the Paracel islands. On 24 July 2012, the city was formally inaugurated as the centre of Government for the Spratly and Paracel islands. The government offices are located at Yongxing (Woody Island) on which some 1000 civilians currently reside. The island is the biggest island in the group and has an area of about five square miles. The island is served by an airport which was completed in July 1990 with a 2700 metre runway. It is capable of handling the Sukhoi Su-30 of the PLA Air Force. There is also a Coast Guard station and a hospital. While Vietnam strongly

contends that Paracel and Spratly islands are their territory, the Chinese have left no stone unturned to build infrastructure for militarily occupying these islands.

Resolution of the issues

All countries particularly US and ASEAN want the issues to be resolved peacefully. China has been dealing with the issue bilaterally without any success. Its occupation of territory by force is challenged particularly by Vietnam which has demonstrated their military capabilities and would counter use of force judiciously. The obvious question that arises is what the options for resolving the issue are. Broadly there are two options. The first is to resolve the problem through negotiations bilaterally or multilaterally. In the event of no success during negotiations, the parties could resort to other modalities of dispute settlement such as conciliation, arbitration and adjudication. This is a sovereignty dispute and it would be difficult to refer it to any form of third party without the consent of parties. Further, China has exercised her right under Article 298 on UN Convention of Law of Seas to opt out of compulsory

binding dispute settlement. Therefore, the case cannot go before the International Tribunal for Law of Sea. The other option would be to set aside sovereignty issues and to undertake joint development of disputed areas. Joint development has produced tangible results between Malaysia and Thailand (1979-1990), Malaysia and Vietnam (1992) as also between Australia and Timor Leste (2002). This issue can be applied to Disputed Areas. However, China has yet to clarify its claims. Thereafter the aspect of Joint Development could be analysed.

Role of Vietnam

Vietnam is the only country which has physically fought the Chinese on these islands and would not bow to China over their claims. While China holds the key to resolution of problems in the South China, it is pertinent to note that China resolves a border problem only after protracted negotiations so as to exploit time to its advantage. Paracel Islands was secured in 1974 by China without worthwhile opposition from Vietnam as they were involved in the war for unification. They would like to get a clearer perspective of hydrocarbon

availability prior to clarifying their claims. Out of all the other claimants, Vietnam would fight for its rights and settle for a judicious resolution. The new Chinese leadership has been assertive on both the East Sea and South China Sea claims. Vietnam and Japan have strongly opposed China's aggressive behaviour on these disputes. Both these countries are developing intense strategic partnerships with India to counter China's assertive posturing. India on her part has spoken of freedom of navigation in the high seas. Further, Vietnam insists that India continue offshore drilling in the blocks allotted despite Chinese opposition.

Conclusion

Resolution of disputes in the South China Sea would depend on China's keenness to clarify its claims and peacefully negotiate with other claimants. This would

possibly occur once oil exploration results are available possibly in about another five years which would allow China to provide space to other claimants leading to rapprochement between the contestants to these territories. India has taken a correct stand to explore oil in the region and should remain firm on this aspect. This would send a signal to China that it is dealing with a country that can stand up to China for projecting her energy interests. Currently all claimants must be patient and wait for China to see issues in the correct perspective.

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Economic Impact of 'People's War' in Nepal: A Study

- *Prof Hari Bansh Jha*

1.0 Background

The Communist Party of Nepal (Maoists) started 'People's War' in Nepal in 1996 with the twin objective of abolishing monarchy and establishing a communist republic. During this conflict, the nation bled and suffered heavy loss in almost all important sectors of the national economy. As many as 17,828 people were killed by the rebel Maoists and the security forces. Besides, 5,800 people were disabled, 25,000 children orphaned, 9,000 women widowed and 14,852 people disappeared.¹

The conflict lasted for a decade until the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed in November 2006. In 2007 the government of Nepal and the CPN (Maoists) agreed to keep the rebel forces in seven cantonments and 21 satellite camps in various parts of the country. As a result, the arms of the Maoists were locked. The United Nations Mission to

Nepal (UNMIN) verified the rebel forces in which out of nearly 32,000 fighters, 19,000 plus fighters qualified the test.

In a significant move in 2012, most of the rebel forces agreed to choose voluntary retirement and a few thousand joined the Nepalese army. Until this period the government of Nepal spent a colossal amount of money on the salary, ration and other infrastructural facilities of the fighters. Besides, different national and international organizations, including UNMIN also provided meaningful financial, technical, logistic and other necessary support to the government. It would not have been possible for the government to restore peace in the absence of such support.

2.0 Social Life during the Conflict Period

The social life of the people during the conflict period was most disturbed on account of frequent

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strikes, security checks, blockades, shutdowns, beatings, threats, humiliation, forced unethical acts, social isolation, rape and sexual harassments. Extra-judicial killings, extortions and abductions were rampant. Women were most vulnerable in the rural areas as many of the youth and male population who protected them escaped from the villages to avoid the atrocities committed by the forces. In several villages, women were forced to burn the dead bodies as there were no males left to do such traditional jobs. In order to avoid atrocities in the villages, over 70,000 of the girls aged between 15 and 30 years were compelled to leave their homes and join restaurants as dancers and waitresses. The situation turned to be so precarious that many of them had no choice but to enter into immoral practices like prostitution in major townships of the country.²

It is estimated that nearly 200,000 to 400,000 people were displaced during the conflict period.³ About two million people are estimated to have fled to overseas countries for employment. In addition,

Women were most vulnerable in the rural areas as many of the youth and male population who protected them escaped from the villages to avoid the atrocities committed by the forces.

millions of people crossed over to India for the protection of their life and also for employment. As a result, the remittance that constituted only 2.03 per cent of the GDP in 2000 reached 14.9 per cent in 2005 and furthermore to 22.09 per cent in 2010.⁴

Most significantly, the education sector was hardest hit during the conflict period. Nearly 3,000 teachers had to give up teaching and 700 schools were closed. Hence, almost 100,000 school-going children failed to get education. Also, many of the children were used in the war as human shields, porters, housekeepers, cooks and even as sex slaves.⁵

The conflict had negative impact on tourism sector as the tourists became apprehensive of the deteriorating law and order situation in the country. Likewise, there was huge destruction of forest and its resources in most part of the country. Medicinal plants, non-timber forest products and wild animals were smuggled. Poaching and hunting of wild animals were rampant.

3.0 Economic Impact of the Conflict

The economy of Nepal was hardest hit during the conflict period. Each sector of the economy including agriculture, industry, employment, and foreign aid was affected. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the country plummeted to an all time low of 0.8 per cent in 2001-2002. Between 2001 and 2005, it declined from 4.8 per cent to as low as 2.6 per cent. Also affected most was the private sector investment, which declined from 15.4 per cent to 12.6 per cent between 1996 and 2004.⁶ As a cumulative effect, the rate of economic growth of the country could not increase more than 3.5 per cent in the post-conflict period.

Since the government was almost paralyzed, parallel bodies of the Maoists came into operation in several districts of the country that levied tax, collected road tax, and extorted money from the government officials, school teachers, business communities, industrialists and other sections of the society. They also confiscated some 12,000 pieces of private properties.⁷ Besides, the rebel forces targeted the banks, particularly the state-owned

banks. Even the micro financial institutions and Small Farmer Co-operative Limited were not spared.⁸ Several banks were looted and robbed. A number of banks were forced to withdraw from the remote and rural areas and confine their activities to the safer places and district headquarters.

There was substantial decline in the development activities during the conflict period. Between 2001 and 2004, the development expenditure of the government declined from 9 per cent of the GDP to 6 per cent.⁹ In most of the Village Development Committees (VDCs) and District Development Committees (DDCs), development activities came to a halt as the resources meant for the development were diverted to other sectors.

Many of the farmers in different parts of the country left agricultural land uncultivated. Investment in agricultural sector declined to as low as 1 per cent.¹⁰ Also, certain farmers had no option but to throw their agricultural products like milk and vegetables on the roads for it was not possible to transport them to the market due to strikes and bandhs.

Because of the growth in labour militancy, industrial production was badly shattered. Nearly 20 to 25 per cent of the private sector sales in the rural market declined during the conflict period. The rate of growth of local production of goods and services declined to as low as 2 per cent in the aftermath of Royal coup of February 1, 2005. Production of carpet, garment, textile, tobacco, beverage and other products fell dramatically, which affected the export sector most. All those who were engaged in trade and commercial activities were harassed. Private investment declined from 15.4 per cent in 1996 to 12.6 per cent in 2004.

Jyoti Spinning Mills in Sarlahi was burnt; while Uniliver Nepal, Coca-Cola Company, hotels and the distilleries were frequently targeted.

Frequent strikes, blockades, shutdowns and extortions discouraged the domestic and foreign investors from making investment in Nepal.¹¹ Many of the investors, including the joint ventures and multinational companies working in Nepal were compelled to stop their production activities as their staff living particularly in the rural areas was threatened. To name a few of such investors, the Dabur Nepal, Surya Nepal, GMR working on Upper Karnali and Upper Marshyangdi

and United Telecom Limited had hard time during the conflict period; while the multinational like the Colgate Palmolive Nepal Pvt. Ltd. had to close its operations in Hetauda. Jyoti Spinning Mills in Sarlahi was burnt; while Uniliver Nepal, Coca-Cola Company, hotels and the distilleries were frequently targeted.

In many of the Maoist-controlled areas such as Rolpa, Rukum Salyan and Jajarkot, the Maoists carried out so many land transactions. In 10 Maoist-affected districts like in Palpa, Gulmi, Baglung, Parbat, Arghakhanchi, Pyuthan, Rolpa, Salyan and Rukum, there were 10,000 land transaction cases. The party used to charge two per cent of the tax on each transaction during the conflict period. On January 26, 2012, the UCPN (M) decided that the government of Nepal should not withdraw its decision to legalize the wartime transaction of properties.¹² But in view of the mounting pressure from the opposition political parties, the government of Nepal declared that it would not implement the controversial decision to recognize

wartime land and property dealings.

With regard to foreign aid, nearly \$250 million worth of aid assistance was suspended following the Royal coup of February 1, 2005. Consequently, many of the programmes related to poverty reduction, rural development, education, health and forestry were affected.¹³ Norway cancelled its investment programme worth \$500 million and the World Bank withdrew US \$ 65 million investment programme. In addition, countries like Japan, Switzerland, Canada, Finland, England, Germany, Norway, Denmark, EU and the Netherlands suspended their aid programmes in the Maoist affected areas, mostly in the mid and far western region of Nepal.¹⁴ As a result, Nepal's reputation among the international community was badly eroded and the country was almost at the brink of being declared a failed state.

4.0 Growth in Military Expenditure

As the military purchases during the conflict period shot up phenomenally, most part of the state treasury was spent on

security, particularly on activities related to fighting with the rebel forces. The defence budget tripled from Rs. 4 billion to Rs. 12 billion a year. This was largely due to the fact that the number of Nepalese Army more than doubled from 46,000 to 96,000.¹⁵ The expenditure of the state on security almost doubled from 1.6 per cent of the GDP to 3 per cent between 2001 and 2004.

Even the Maoist party was not far behind in mobilizing resources in their bid to keep alive the insurgency movement. The operation cost of the Maoists reached 15 million rupees each day, which was over and above the cost in buying the weapons. They had employed 30-35 per cent of women in their forces.

5.0 Cost of Conflict

DEFID estimated the cost of conflict between 8 and 10 per cent of the GDP; while the National Peace Campaign estimated the cost to the level of \$66.2 billion between 1996 and 2003. Also, economic costs of conflict are estimated at \$2 billion.¹⁶

Reports are that some 1,500 buildings of the VDCs were partially or completely destroyed in different parts of the country.⁵

Besides, a number of telecommunication towers, roads, air strips, bridges, government buildings, banks, police stations, school buildings and power plants were damaged, which cost the nation \$250 million until 2002. Similarly, government property worth five billion rupees was destroyed.¹⁸ An account of the cost caused by the damage or destruction of different infrastructures in the country such as police posts, roads, forest, health and other sectors is briefly presented in the following table:

Table 1: Infrastructures damaged by Maoists between February 1996 and July 2005.

Types of Infrastructures	Number
1. Police posts	570
2. District Police Offices	35
3. Post offices	641
4. Health posts	43
5. Buses	45
6. Forest office and range posts	200
7. Irrigation infrastructures	30
8. District Education Offices	34
9. Agricultural offices	140
10. Local Revenue offices	43
11. Land Reform offices	0
12. Soil conservation offices	6
13. Livestock officers	24
14. Women development offices	18
15. Revenue offices/units	22
16. Airports	14
17. Jails	7
18. Courts	18
19. Radio stations	2
20. National parks and reserves	8
21. Bridges	44
22. Dairy development units	0
23. Municipalities and wards	77
24. Village Development Committees	1621
25. Drinking water systems	22
26. Telecom towers	128
27. Powerhouses and electricity offices	96
28. Signal transport	7
29. Food depots/units	25
30. Schools	159
31. Treasury offices	5
32. Financial institutions	222
33. Land measurement offices	15
34. Family planning offices/units	18
35. Others	430
Total	5138

Source: *Samaya Weekly*, Vol.2, No 69, 28/4-2/5 2062 (12-18 August 2005) p. 38 quoted by Bishnu Raj Upreti (2010) in "Armed Conflict and Peace Process in Nepal: The Maoist insurgency, past negotiations, and opportunities for conflict transformation," New Delhi: Adroit Publishers, pp. 277-78.

5.0 State Funds for Peacebuilding

Amidst the moments of conflicts and despair, credit largely goes to the 12-point agreement signed between the CPN (Maoists) and the Seven Parties of Nepal in November 2005 and also to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the CPN (Maoists) and the government of Nepal in 2006 for bringing certain level of truce to the conflict-ridden nation. In the process of giving cushion to the peace effort, the United Nations Peace Fund for Nepal (UNPFN) was created in March 2007 in order to complement the UN wider peace building efforts in conflict monitoring, elections, mine action, transitional justice and registration/verification process in Maoist army cantonments.¹⁹ Accordingly, funding arrangement of \$10 million was made for such activities in July 2008.

As per the report, the government of Nepal spent two billion rupees

on the salary, ration and management of the Maoist combatants in 2009-10. In the same year, the government also provided Rs. 570 million for the upgradation of the infrastructural facilities in the surrounding of the camps. Each combatant was paid Rs. 5,000.00 as monthly salary in addition to the per diem of Rs. 72 to Rs. 110. On an average, the government provided Rs. 2,730 to each of the 19,525 combatants as ration allowance.

Furthermore, the Relief and Rehabilitation

Division under the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction is reported to have released Rs. 1.79 billion in 2011-12

for distribution among the families of those killed during the conflict period, which included the amount of Rs. 199.8 million disbursed for the families of the disappeared and Rs. 124.5 million for the wives of the missing persons.²⁰ The government also provided Rs. 100,000 to each of the families of those who were killed during the conflict period since 2008. However, many of the rightful claimants did not turn up to receive the relief package offered to them by the government. This

The Maoist party deducted Rs. 1,000 from the salaries of the combatants after their verification was done by the United Nation Mission to Nepal in 2007.²³

was due to the fact that many of the displaced people and also those who migrated outside for security reasons and in search of livelihood during the conflict period did not return to their land. As per the record, nearly 3,864 families of the 17,883 persons killed during the conflict period failed to receive such support. In total, the government of Nepal spent a whopping amount of Rs. 20 billion to manage those Maoist insurgents who surrendered arms in 2006.²¹

People's Liberation Army (PLA) Fund

Altogether Rs. 3 billion was deposited in the PLA fund. The first

source of PLA fund included the amount of Rs. 1.14 billion collected from the monthly salaries of the combatants, Rs. 1.34 billion drawn in the name of absentee combatants and Rs. 600 million as commissions against ration contracts.²² The Maoist party deducted Rs. 1,000 from the salaries of the combatants after their verification was done by the United Nation Mission to Nepal in 2007.²³ Thus, the total amount of money collected by deducting Rs. 1,000 from each of

the 19,525 combatants for five years formed Rs. 1.14 billion. This amount was deposited in PLA fund, which was created with the promise that 50 per cent of the money would go to the Young Communist League (YCL), the youth wing of the CPN (Maoists), and the remaining would be returned to the combatants at the time of their retirement.²⁴ Besides, the second source of PLA fund amounting to Rs. 1.34 billion had been collected from the salaries of the absentee combatants for five years. In December 2011, the Special Committee for the Supervision, Integration, and Rehabilitation of former combatants found that 2,432 combatants were missing from the cantonments. And the third source of PLA fund amounting to Rs. 600 million came from commission given by the contractors to PLA. Each month the government on average provided Rs. 2,730 to each of the 19,525 combatants as ration allowance. But the PLA commanders revealed that they had only Rs. 460 million in total in PLA fund when they were pressed by the combatants to become transparent about the money deposited in the fund.

Voluntary Retirement Scheme

In 2012, the government of Nepal offered the Maoist combatants the choice of voluntary retirement. As per this decision, the combatants who chose to retire voluntarily were offered incentives varying between Rs. 500,000 and 800,000.²⁵ In the first installment, each of the 7,365 combatants opting for voluntary retirement was offered an amount between Rs. 250,000 and Rs. 400,000.

It was a different matter that PLA commanders forced the combatant opting for voluntary retirement to share part of the amount offered to them through cheques. There were reports that those of the combatants who defied the commanders were dealt with harshly. This created dissatisfaction among the victimized combatants to such an extent that they launched a number of protest programmes at many places against the high-handedness of the commanders. But later on some attempts were made to pacify the disgruntled combatants. The Maoist party assured that the amount collected from the combatants from their voluntary retirement scheme would be used to provide relief package to the disqualified and minors who happened to be discharged earlier.

Nevertheless, the Special Committee for the Supervision, Integration, and Rehabilitation of former combatants was able to complete its job by providing cheques to 7,200 former Maoist combatants out of the total 7,365 combatants opting for voluntary retirement during the period February 2 and February 11, 2012.²⁶ Those fighters who did not receive cheques for one or the other reason were asked to do so from the secretariat in Kathmandu.

6.0 Conclusion

After the Maoists started war in the country, Nepal government had very little knowledge of conflict management. It had no prior experience in this field. Yet the government adopted some important measures that ultimately proved effective in mainstreaming the Maoist forces in the country. This enabled most of the rebel forces to take voluntary retirement. Also, this paved the way for Maoist fighters to get integrated into the Nepalese Army. Subsequently, some 70 combatants also joined Nepal Army officer cadets. The Army has now managed to get control over the camps and their weapons. This has ended the system of one

country with two armies. With this development, the peace process has come to a logical conclusion.

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Indo-US Defence Trade: Moving to a Higher Trajectory

Brig (Retd) Gurmeet Kanwal

Contrary to most of the commentary that has appeared in the Indian media, the Obama-Manmohan Singh meeting at the White House on September 26, 2013 was unexpectedly successful in setting the Indo-US strategic partnership on the path to a higher trajectory in the long term. The joint statement issued after the meeting and the Joint Declaration on Defence Cooperation endorsed by the two leaders have the potential to perceptibly shape the future contours of the relationship to mutual benefit.

The most notable achievement of the summit was in the field of defence cooperation and, more particularly, defence trade. President Barack Obama and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh called for “expanding security cooperation between the United States and India to address 21st century challenges.” In an unexpected move, the two leaders endorsed a Joint Declaration on

Defence Cooperation “as a means of enhancing their partnership in defence technology transfer, joint research, co-development and co-production.” They decided to significantly enhance cooperation in combatting terrorism. President Obama appreciated India’s decision to participate in the Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) naval exercise to be hosted by US Pacific Command in 2014.

For several decades, India’s procurement of weapons platforms and other equipment as part of its plans for defence modernisation has remained mired in disadvantageous buyer-seller, patron-client relationships like that with the erstwhile Soviet Union and now Russia. While India has been manufacturing Russian fighter aircraft and tanks under license for many years, the Russians never actually transferred weapons technology to India, though this could change with the Fifth Generation Fighter project and other similar projects.

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There is now realisation in India that future defence acquisitions must simultaneously lead to a transformative change in the country's defence technology base and manufacturing prowess.

The country has now diversified its acquisition sources beyond Russia to Western countries and Israel. From the US, India has purchased weapons platforms and other items of defence equipment worth USD 10 billion over the last five years. Major procurements have included the troop carrier ship INS Jalashva (USS Trenton), six C-130J Super Hercules aircraft for India's Special Forces, ten C-17 Globemaster heavy lift transport aircraft, 12 Boeing P-8I Poseidon long-range maritime reconnaissance aircraft and 12 AN-TPQ37 Weapon Locating Radars. Another six C-130J and seven C-17 aircraft are expected to be purchased over the next few years. Also in the acquisition pipeline are M-777 light artillery howitzers, Apache attack helicopters and Chinook medium lift helicopters.

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However, none of the recent deals with the US have included transfer-of-technology (ToT) clauses. It is imperative that whatever India procures now must be procured with a ToT clause being built into the contract even if it means having to pay a higher price. The aim is to make India a design, development, manufacturing and export hub for defence equipment in two to three decades.

The Joint Declaration on Defence Cooperation agreed during the Indian PM's visit in September 2013 is a major step forward towards greater cooperation in the defence trade relationship.

The US and India have agreed to treat each other "at the same level as their closest partners" in respect of defence technology transfer, trade, research and joint development and joint production, including the most advanced and sophisticated technologies. The two sides agreed to "identify specific opportunities for cooperative and collaborative projects in advanced defence technologies and systems."

This is indeed a landmark agreement that has codified previously expressed intentions. The major implication of this agreement is that the US will treat India just like the United Kingdom, which is an alliance partner, without India having to enter into a military alliance with the US. Also, presumably, India will not have to sign the CISMOA, BECA and LSA agreements that have been major stumbling blocks in the past and about which it has differences of perception with the US. India is hungry for cutting edge state-of-the-art defence technology and this agreement will help to a large extent to fulfil India's hi-tech requirement. On its part, the US will secure lucrative defence contracts for its leading defence companies. This will give a fillip to the flagging economy and help to create jobs.

During his visit to India shortly before the Washington summit in September 2013, Deputy Secretary of Defence Ashton Carter is reported to have offered India a "Defence Trade and Technology Initiative" under which the US will share sensitive cutting edge defence technology with India and to permit US companies to enter into joint production and co-development ventures with India.

Subsequently, it was reported that Deputy Secretary Carter had offered a list of ten key technologies to India. "These include a maritime helo, a naval gun, a surface-to-air missile system, and a scatterable anti-tank system," Carter said. "We changed our mind-set around technology transfer to India in the Department of Defence from a culture of presumptive no to one of presumptive yes," he said.

The Javelin anti-tank guided missile (ATGM) is also a key candidate for joint production though so far the US has been hesitant to offer its seeker technology. India is also looking for high-end counter-IED technologies. In future, the two countries will conduct joint research and development for new weapons systems and the US may offer even nuclear power packs for submarines and aircraft carriers and fighter aircraft engines. Cooperation of such a high order will raise India's technology base by an order of magnitude and help the country to move several notches higher in its quest for self-reliance in defence production. According to Shiv Shankar Menon, India's National Security Advisor, the two countries now have a "Full spectrum relationship... the

relationship has all the attributes of a strong and comprehensive strategic partnership.” In the years ahead, India and the US are bound to build further on the beneficial achievements of the last decade.

Naturally, there will occasionally be some bumps on the highway, but there is reason to believe that the institutional mechanisms that are already in place will succeed in overcoming the obstacles that come up.

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Urgent Defence Reforms including CDS Need of the Hour

- *Brig (Retd) Vinod Anand*

Higher defence management has continued to remain the focus of the politico-military establishment for last several years without much progress having been made in the key areas of defence reforms that have been underway since the Kargil conflict. A 14-member Naresh Chandra Task Force (NCTF) had reviewed the gaps in defence reforms and submitted a report to the government in August 2012.

In early April 2013, the National Security Council chaired by the Prime Minister discussed the recommendations by the NCTF on National Security. However, some of the contentious proposals were referred to yet another body for further scrutiny. The government instructed the Strategic Policy Group (SPG), chaired by National Security Advisor (NSA) Shivshankar Menon and Cabinet Secretary, to examine the contentious proposals, including those connected to the defence

ministry and armed forces. They were expected to take a view on a host of proposals ranging from a permanent Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee (COSC), cross-posting of Service officers to MOD, and the creation of Advanced Projects Agency (APA) to undertake futuristic military R&D and review of the practice of blacklisting armament companies.

The Ministry of Defence while reviewing the NCTF's recommendations has stuck to its old narrative and has not been in favour of even creating a permanent Chairman Chiefs of Staff Committee which is a much diluted version of the Chief of Defence Staff recommended by the Group of Ministers' Report of 2001 which was again based on inputs provided by Kargil Review Committee.

The MOD, true to its bureaucratic traditions has not approved of many of the other recommendations like cross-posting of officers and some other

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suggestions of the Task Force on defence reforms. Jaswant Singh, a former Defence Minister in his book 'Defending India'(Bangalore: Macmillan India, 1999,p.109) had remarked that *"-the Defence Ministry, in effect becomes the principal destroyer of the cutting edge of the military's morale; ironic considering that very reverse of it is their responsibility. The sword arm of the State gets blunted by the state itself."* In July 2013, the MOD in its recommendations

to the National Security Council Secretariat cited several reasons for its negative views on NCTF proposals.

MOD Rejects 'Permanent Chairman of COSC' Proposal

The 2001 GOM Report's main recommendations regarding management of defence included creation of Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) with a designated defence staff with a view to establish synergy and promote jointness among the armed forces. It is also true that the concept of CDS however does not evoke an unequivocal and positive response

The 2001 GOM Report's main recommendations regarding management of defence included creation of Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) with a designated defence staff with a view to establish synergy and promote jointness among the armed forces.

from the three Services. The apprehension from smaller Services being that their interests may be disregarded and perhaps the status of single Services Chiefs lowered. Though, these apprehensions need to be allayed by a providing careful balance on vesting centralised responsibility and power to CDS, the absence of CDS on the other hand leaves the field open to the civil servant to become the 'decider' instead of a uniformed person for inter-Service issues.

Recommendation for CDS based on GOM Report 2001 could not be realized because the government threw in a googly in the shape of obtaining political

consensus from respective political parties; little or no efforts were made to obtain consensus. A letter to the political parties was written and that was the end of it.

While negating the NCTF proposal for a permanent Chairman of COSC, the MOD in its recommendations to the NSCS has given the reasons in June this year as lack of consensus amongst the three services on the issue. According to the MOD

submissions to the NSCS, only the Navy supports the proposal for permanent Chairman COSC, the Army is against the proposal and the Air Force's concurrence is conditional. Further, the MOD says that the present system of the three Service chiefs and the collegiate COSC briefing the Defence Minister has been functioning well.

And to ward off further criticism of MOD's attitude, the stock reply given is that in any case the Government has as yet not decided on the issue since the NCTF proposals would be considered by the Cabinet Committee on Security. It appears that the government would continue to stall the issue in keeping with its erstwhile policy on the matter. Apparently, there was also some pressure on the members of the NCTF to not to give such a recommendation. However, wisdom prevailed and the proposal was included in the report.

However, turf battles between services have been part and parcel of even the militaries of advanced nations like the U.S. before their services were forced to move towards integration and jointness through legislative measures. The

U.S. forces were brought together under one umbrella through the Goldwater Nichols Act of 1986. When the need for creating the institution of CDS/Permanent Chairman COSC has been felt and approved by expert groups consisting of strategists, politicians and bureaucrats and endorsed many times by Parliament's Standing Committee on Defence, it is only political will that would be instrumental in fructification of this vital reform.

Not only this, a simple measure like cross-posting of officers between the MOD and Service HQs to bridge the civil-military disconnect has also been rejected for some flimsy reasons. Cross-posting of officers would have generated synergies in functioning of the MOD and without this the integration would remain 'cosmetic' even while the MOD claims that the present system has been functioning well. Many reports of the Parliament's Standing Committee on Defence have been urging the MOD to implement this recommendation of the GOM Report and the same has been endorsed by the NCTF but the bureaucrats have been adamant on not executing an already approved recommendation.

Unless there is a CDS with some degree of authority vested in him to promote interoperability, jointness and integration, the armed forces would not be able to efficiently pursue their missions in the wars of knowledge age. CDS is also necessary for commanding eventually the Integrated Theatre Commands which are inescapable for adopting a unified approach in envisaged theatre of military operations. Differences in the respective services on their approaches to a single point military advisor for the government have also enabled the bureaucrats to stymie the unification and integration of the defence services.

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Further, in our despondency on the government's approach to the institution of CDS, we should not accept the half-baked idea of the permanent Chairman, COSC.

Defence Planning

HQ IDS has prepared Technology Perspective Capability Roadmap 2013 which is somewhat of a modified version of TPCR-2010. This document identifies the military technologies needed by the armed forces in consonance

with its 15 Years Long Term Integrated Perspective Plan (LTIPP). This is an unclassified document that provides information to the defence industry (both private and public sector undertakings) as to what kind of capabilities armed forces would be looking for in the next 15 years period. According to the Defence Minister Mr. AK Antony, the objective is *"to establish a level playing field for the Indian defence industry, both public sector and private sector."*

Regular interaction between the defence industry and the MOD would help in developing 'contemporary and future technologies as well productionising equipment required by the armed forces'.

As is well known, a major modernisation programme of the armed forces is under way and it is expected that a capital budget of 150 billion US dollars is expected to be spent over the next decade or so. The question remains whether our Defence Procurement Procedures are up to the mark despite many upgrades. And what can our indigenous defence industry offer us?

Firstly, the problem of perspective plans remaining an amalgam of the individual service plans has not been overcome as yet. This is mainly because there is no CDS or permanent Chairman, COS with the necessary mandate (i.e. budgetary control) to ensure that Five Year Defence Plans (FYDP) and consequently 15 years LTIPP are in fact not integrated.

Secondly, it is rare that FYDP and LTIPP are approved by the government in time. While the Defence Acquisition Council headed by the Defence Minister approved the 12th FYDP (2012-2017) in April 2012, the same continues to await approval by the Ministry of Finance and CCS. The LTIPP (2012-2027) was also approved in principle by the MOD but continues to await the government's nod. The approval of the two vital documents by the MOD is of no consequence unless the same are approved by the government. Thus, even after introduction of the defence reforms in 2001, the defence planning process continues to suffer from inadequacies which can be surmounted if there is a political will.

Problems of defence preparedness are further compounded by the

defence acquisition woes. While the Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP) has undergone a series of modifications and iterations, the evidence on the ground does not indicate that the acquisition process has acquired any momentum. The latest version is of 2013 vintage which is said to be based on experience gained on DPP of 2002, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2008, 2009 and 2011. The saga of acquisition of 126 Medium Multi-role Combat Aircraft still continues without any aircraft being inducted so far; the defence budget is also facing cuts again in the financial year 2013-2014 due to the economic downtrend. Similarly, though a deal for import of 145 Ultra-Light 155mm was concluded with the U.S. through the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) route some years ago, it has not fructified. Meanwhile, not only the U.S. has revised its prices for the guns, the Rupee has also depreciated against the dollar thus further compounding our budgetary problems. But then these are recurring problems which our politico-bureaucratic decision-makers have been unable to address.

Another factor which needs to be paid attention is the fast rate of obsolescence of technology which

has made the operational life cycle of equipment shorter. The technology upgradations would be required in 10 years or so compared with much longer period in the earlier years. It is also being said that India has already missed two technology cycles and in the bargain two acquisition cycles. And therefore, the critical gaps in our armed forces' capabilities are widening which needs urgent attention.

Thus, the much required institution of CDS that was diluted by the NCTF to the concept of permanent Chairman COSC has also not found acceptability with our MOD mandarins. But then as mentioned earlier, there is no point in accepting any watered down version of the CDS. The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defence which had been a strong votary of the concept of CDS has omitted to take any views on the subject in the last few reports submitted to the government. Given the trend and views of politico-bureaucratic class it would be no surprise if the Naresh Chandra Task Force proposal is finally rejected by the

The critical hollowness and gaps in our capabilities are widening tempting our known adversaries to take advantage of our vulnerabilities.

CCS. The adhocism in our defence planning process and its concomitant adverse impact on the modernization programme of the Armed Forces continues. This has been so despite the cautions given by the previous and current Army chiefs as also by the Air Force and Naval Chiefs. The critical hollowness and gaps in our capabilities are widening tempting our known adversaries to take advantage of our vulnerabilities. The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defence has been pointing out to the various ills connected with our defence planning and procurement processes and mechanisms without the same being addressed meaningfully by the government.

There are many useful recommendations made by the NCTF but they are likely to meet the same fate as earlier reports. Further, optimal utilization of resources cannot be achieved unless greater emphasis and attention is given to the process of budget formulation and implementation including forecasting, monitoring and control of defence planning processes. While Technology

Capability Perspective Roadmap 2013 has been made yet there are many imponderables attached with it. Our politico-bureaucratic and military leadership needs to move fast in ushering in the recommended defence reforms to

meet the security challenges from our assertive adversaries.

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Why Mountain Strike Corps Along the India-China Border is Important?

- *Nitin Gokhale*

Following the government's recent in-principle clearance to raise a Mountain Strike Corps, a debate over the efficacy of the decision to spend over Rs 64,000 crores on the new accretion has begun. Noted Strategic Affairs expert, former Rear Admiral Raja Menon writing in *The Hindu* categorically asserted: "A geographically limited one axis offensive will not destabilise the PLA, but a flotilla of nuclear submarines and a three carrier air group in the Indian Ocean can economically cripple mainland China." Others have also weighed in with their opinion essentially making the point that India should invest more in its Navy than sinking money in troops-intensive mountain strike corps.

The nub of this argument is: a powerful blue-water Indian Navy can choke the sea lines of communication (SLOC) so vital for China by strategic interdiction on the high seas and therefore the Indian Navy's capability to enforce a blockade must be strengthened.

This theory assumes that India can unilaterally do so in case China assumes a belligerent posture across the Himalaya. If push comes to shove, India will certainly be forced to look at this option but the SLOCs are not an exclusive preserve of either India or China and the international community is therefore bound to intervene to keep the passage free to enable trade and commerce to function normally. A selective blockade of China-centric sea traffic is realistically difficult to implement even if on paper the prospect looks alluring.

However, if a conflict between India and China breaks out in the high mountains, the world is not going to be overly bothered for a while. India therefore needs to be prepared to meet this threat all along the 4,000 km long boundary with China. The likelihood of a limited skirmish in the mountains is much more than a confrontation at sea simply because the border remains un-demarcated and prone to frequent misinterpretation and

* *Nitin Gokhale, Delhi-based Security and Strategic Analyst*

misunderstanding.

The need to have more forces for the northern frontier cannot be overemphasised. This does not mean it should come at the cost of preventing the Indian Navy from expanding. Going by the information available in the open domain, the Indian Navy is in the middle of one of its most ambitious modernisation programmes. Apart from the planned—even if delayed—induction of INS Vikramaditya, the aircraft carrier built in Russia and currently under sea trials, 47 ships of different types and capability are on order in various Indian shipyards. India has activated the reactor on board the INS Arihant, the first indigenously built nuclear-powered submarine. With Navy's long-standing emphasis on acquiring indigenously-built platforms, Indian shipyards can cope only with these many numbers for at least another 10 years.

Coming back to the creation of a Mountain Strike Corps, according to available information, it is just the first step in what is needed

urgently—the addition of 40,000 new troops to the Indian Army. The budget of Rs 64,000 crore for the new corps is to be spent over seven years— which is just as well since raising new formations as large as a Corps is not an easy task. It is further difficult to make that formation capable of mountain warfare. For mountains gobble up troops; they take a heavy toll on man and machine.

The decision on the strike corps is somewhat reminiscent of a similar

choice exercised by the UPA government almost four years ago.

The then outgoing UPA-I government's Cabinet Committee

on Security (CCS) was meeting for the last time before the results of the 2009 general elections were to be announced. The sole item on the agenda: Enhancing India's military preparedness against China.

According to insiders present at that meeting, some of the members of the CCS wanted to leave the decision to the next government but better sense prevailed and days before Prime

Apart from the planned—even if delayed—induction of INS Vikramaditya, the aircraft carrier built in Russia and currently under sea trials, 47 ships of different types and capability are on order in various Indian shipyards.

Minister Manmohan Singh's first UPA government went ahead and sanctioned raising of two new Mountain Divisions for deployment in India's north eastern State of Arunachal Pradesh, an area claimed by China as South Tibet. In addition, the Indian Air Force was given the go ahead to reactivate half a dozen Advance Landing Grounds (ALGs) spread all along the Arunachal-Tibet portion of the Line of Actual Control (LAC) between the two countries and base additional squadrons of Sukhoi-30 combat jets in Assam.

The goal was to plug existing gaps in India's preparedness along the Arunachal Pradesh-China frontier. The two new divisions were to include a squadron of India's armoured spearhead—Soviet-built T-90 tanks—and a regiment of artillery.

Now four years later, the two mountain divisions have completed their recruitment, equipping and orbatting in the North-east. One of them—the 56 Mountain Division—after being raised in Nagaland's Zakhama area has been placed at Lekhabali, north of the Brahmaputra adding teeth to Indian Army's presence in East and Central Arunachal

Pradesh. The other new Division—71—headquartered at Missamari in the plains of Assam, will enhance troop deployment beyond Tawang in West Arunachal Pradesh in addition to the 5 Mountain Division already stationed at Tenga.

However, one lacuna continues to persist. Road links to forward areas remain tenuous. The China Study Group (CSG), which controls India's policy on China had sanctioned 72 tactically important roads to be built in the tough, mountainous terrain along the China border in the Eastern and the Western sectors. The roads are being built by the quasi-military Border Roads Organisation (BRO) to enhance connectivity. But a combination of lethargic BRO, obstructionist state governments and ministry of environment and forests has meant that these roads are nowhere near completion. Similarly, the half a dozen ALGs in Arunachal Pradesh are also stuck in red tape.

The recent incursion by Chinese troops in Ladakh's Depsang area should serve as a timely reminder to the government that timelines for infrastructure development along the Chinese frontier and

plans to boost military capability do not have the luxury of slippages.

Diplomacy and timing (cancellation of Chinese Premier's visit over the border standoff would have been a loss of face for Beijing) helped end the face off this time but New Delhi will do well to remember such incident is not going to be one off. The Chinese will continue to nibble at the un-demarcated border and test India's response as they have done for over 50 years.

What will be crucial for the new corps is cooperation and coordination between all stakeholders: The Defence, Finance and Environment Ministries, as well as the Army, Air Force and Border Roads Organization.

In the recent past, objections from the Environment Ministry have impeded upon the construction of crucial roads in Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Himachal Pradesh, Ladakh and Uttarakhand. In the last case, the lack of connectivity was driven home brutally when torrential rains ripped open the state last

month, leaving thousands stranded.

It is nobody's case that the environment should not be protected but a balance needs to be struck in caring for the environment and national security imperatives. The state governments will need to back the plan by facilitating the speedy allotment of land in remote areas.

The climate in most of these states means that the Border Roads Organization can leverage, at best, a four-month season to deliver new routes.

Similarly, establishing permanent infrastructure for troops, including hubs that supply ammunition and deciding strategically-placed artillery gun positions is a long - term and complicated process.

Finding the right contractors with the right skills and willingness to work on isolated, remote areas is another big challenge. The Indian Air Force, for instance, has been trying for three years to sign contracts that will lead the upgrading seven Advanced Landing Grounds or ALGS, crucial for the ability to quickly airlift

troops to strategic parts along the China border. But the deals have not been closed because expert contractors find it difficult to work in these areas.

The new mountain corps will require light artillery which can be easily transported, even airlifted in the highest mountains. Given India's painfully-slow process of weapons acquisition, empowering the Mountain Strike Corps quickly will be a big challenge.

It is all the more necessary for the government to walk the talk in making the new formation a reality by adhering to timelines.

Simultaneously, India must re-look and re-tweak its China policy. For instance:

- Insist with Beijing the need for exchanging maps for all sectors immediately so that each side knows the other's claimed LAC and border negotiations can resume
- Instead of pushing for operational control of the

Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), the Army should step up and assume responsibility to protect the disputed border.

- Ensure timely and effective information sharing mechanism with Indian media and through them the Indian people rather than let different stake holders speak in different and sometimes discordant voices during times of crisis.
- Educate and prepare the Indian people on the need for give and take on border negotiations in the future.

Policy makers in India must be mindful of the fact that military preparedness and trying to improve diplomatic relations are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

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The Telengana Issue & Pros and Cons of Smaller States

- *K G Suresh*

The Group of Ministers (GoM), set up to look into the proposed bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh, is expected to submit its report to the Union Cabinet before the winter session of Parliament.

The high-powered ministerial panel had detailed discussions over sharing of river water, power, distribution of assets and demarcation of boundaries in its two meetings held early this month.

The GoM will also look into the legal and administrative measures required to ensure that both Telangana and the residuary state of Andhra Pradesh can function efficiently from Hyderabad as the common capital for 10 years.

Earlier, following the cabinet decision to bifurcate the state in pursuance of a Congress Working Committee resolution, Andhra Pradesh was up in flames paralyzing the entire Seemandhra region, bringing even basic

services to a grinding halt and in the process causing immense hardship to the people and loss of billions to the exchequer. But for the distraction caused by Cyclone Phailin, the protests would have continued for a longer time.

The demand for Telangana, comprising the Telugu speaking areas of the erstwhile princely state of Hyderabad, has been there right since the time of India's independence. Though the language of the two regions was the same, a pre-requisite for creation of states on linguistic lines, there was and is very little in common between the peoples of Telangana and other regions of the state namely Rayalaseema and Coastal Andhra.

To begin with, Telangana was never under direct British rule, unlike the Coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema regions of Andhra Pradesh, which were part of British India's Madras Presidency.

It may be recalled that the States

* *K G Suresh, Senior Fellow & Editor, VIF*

Reorganisation Commission (SRC), appointed in 1953, to study the creation of states on linguistic basis, was not in favour of an immediate merger of Telangana region with Andhra state, despite their common language.

The Commission found that the people of Telangana had several concerns including a less-developed economy than Andhra, but with a larger revenue base, which people of Telangana feared might be diverted for use in Andhra.

In fact, in paragraph 382 of its report, the Commission Report said “opinion in Andhra is overwhelmingly in favour of the larger unit; public opinion in Telangana has still to crystallise itself. Important leaders of public opinion in Andhra themselves seem to appreciate that the unification of Telangana with Andhra, though desirable, should be based on a voluntary and willing association of the people and that it is primarily for the people of Telangana to take a decision about their future”.

Finally, the new state of Andhra Pradesh came into being on November 1, 1956 with assurances to Telangana in terms of power-sharing as well as administrative domicile rules and distribution of expenses of various regions.

The then Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was initially skeptical of merging Telangana with Andhra State, fearing a “tint of expansionist imperialism” in it. He reportedly compared the merger to a matrimonial alliance having “provisions for divorce” if the partners in the alliance cannot get on well.

Finally, the new state of Andhra Pradesh came into being on November 1, 1956 with assurances to Telangana in terms of power-sharing as well as administrative domicile rules and distribution of expenses of various regions.

However, the honeymoon did not last long with the people of Telangana expressing dissatisfaction over the implementation of the agreements and guarantees, made at the time of the state’s merger.

Following the Jai Andhra agitation in the Seemandhra region in 1973, against the protections (mulki rules) given for Telangana region, the Government of India diluted the guarantees provided in the pre-merger

Gentlemen's agreement, thereby leading to massive agitations across the Telangana regions.

According to proponents of a separate state, Telangana is not only the largest of the three regions of Andhra Pradesh state, covering 41.47% of its total area and inhabited by 40.54% of the state's population but also contributes about 76% of the state's revenues, excluding the contribution of the central government.

They also cite perceived injustices in the distribution of water, budget allocations, and jobs. They allege that Budget allocations to Telangana are generally less than 1/3 of the total Andhra Pradesh budget. There are also allegations that in most years, funds allocated to Telangana were never spent. According to the proponents of separate statehood, only 20% of the total Government employees, less than 10% of employees in the secretariat, and less than 5% of department heads in the Andhra Pradesh government are from Telangana.

Following widespread protests, the UPA Government had announced a five-member committee on Telangana headed by retired

Justice B N Srikrishna to look into the issue.

But instead of coming out with a strong recommendation, the Committee, in its report, offered six options ranging from maintaining the status quo to creation of a separate state with the contentious Hyderabad as a Union Territory as also acceptance of the demand for carving out a separate state with Hyderabad as its capital in toto.

Continuing with its dilly dallying tactics, the Centre sat on the recommendations till recently.

Over the years, with an eye on the Telangana voters, almost all political parties have at one point or the other supported the creation of a separate state. Therefore, political parties such as Telugu Desam Party (TDP), whose leader Chandrababu Naidu want on a protest fast against the move, which had favoured the creation of Telangana earlier, are only protesting against the manner in which the ruling UPA had gone about the de-merger. Having kept the issue on the backburner during its decade long rule at the Centre and even renegeing on its promise, prompting KCR of Telangana Rashtra Samiti (TRS)

to walk out of UPA-1, the Centre had suddenly woken up to the demand ahead of the Lok Sabha elections and announced the creation of the state in a hurry, which clearly smacks of political motives.

United Andhra Pradesh led by the charismatic YSR had contributed much to the formation of UPA-2 and in his absence and following the emergence of Jaganmohan Reddy as a force to reckon with in Seemandhra, the Congress apparently felt it could gain lost grounds by ceding Telangana. With TRS likely to merge with Congress in the new state, party strategists are hoping for Jagan's homecoming post-polls, thereby retaining its entire base in the region.

Apparently, the biggest loser would be TDP, having lost its base in Telangana and staring a wipe out before the Jagan juggernaut. Therefore, Naidu was forced to sit on a fast while Jagan is trying to encash hard on the anti-Telangana sentiment to consolidate his base.

Apart from the major bone of contention, i.e Hyderabad, there are also key issues such as the status of Government employees, water and power sharing, distribution of assets et al which need to be sorted out ahead of the proposed de-merger. The Centre would have done well to take into confidence all stake holders on both sides of the divide as also regional and national political parties, before taking such a major unilateral decision. In the absence of clarity, the utterances of TRS

The Centre would have done well to take into confidence all stake holders on both sides of the divide as also regional and national political parties, before taking such a major unilateral decision.

leaders on contentious issues such as the fate of Government employees is only adding to the anger and confusion among the people.

At stake are not just political fortunes but also the fate of millions of citizens, which remains uncertain in the present scenario.

Three states were created during the NDA regime – Uttarakhand, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh but the process was peaceful with no bitterness between the parent states and the new states. In fact, Bihar virtually lost all its natural resources and Uttar Pradesh its massive revenue from tourism.

Yet, there were no complaints. In fact, following the recent Uttarakhand tragedy, it was Uttar Pradesh which announced Rs 25 crore aid, much more than any other state.

The announcement pertaining to Telangana has also once again sparked off a nation wide demand for smaller states and a debate on their viability, with both its advocates and opponents taking extreme stands.

While political parties such as the BJP and BSP are in favour of small states on the grounds that such states are administratively more convenient and give greater say to the local populace in matters of governance, states such as Jharkhand, where independent MLAs like Madhu Kora became Chief Ministers and amassed wealth vastly disproportionate to their income, showed the inherent fragility of polity in the newly carved out utopias often touted as the ultimate panacea for misgovernance and mal-administration in large states.

There are also fears that creation of small states can lead to increased regionalism or parochialism which can fuel separatist sub-national tendencies.

Some of the demands are based purely on irredentist claims. For example, the demand for Gorkhaland on ethno-linguistic grounds. A look into the history would reveal that in the late 18th century, Darjeeling was part of the Sikkim Chogyal's territory, which

A look into the history would reveal that in the late 18th century, Darjeeling was part of the Sikkim Chogyal's territory, which was overrun by the Gorkhas of Nepal at the beginning of the 19th century.

was overrun by the Gorkhas of Nepal at the beginning of the 19th century. Following the Anglo-Gorkha war in 1814, Nepal had to cede all the territories annexed by the Gorkhas from the Chogyal, who subsequently gave it to the British East India Company. The question is how far do we go into history?

Going by that logic, perhaps some decades later, illegal Bangladeshi immigrants settled in Assam and elsewhere in the country can seek separate statehood.

As for language, dialect and cultural issues, there cannot ever be an end to such demands. From

Bodoland to Karbi-Anglong, Assam is up for grabs. Kumaonis and Garhwalis in Uttarakhand too are different in terms of language and culture though there is no such demand till now. By conceding to such demands, will we be undoing the Herculean efforts made by Sardar Patel to integrate the country into a single entity?

Even as many political and militant groups in Nagaland have been demanding creation of a Greater Nagaland or Nagalim including Naga inhabited areas of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur, four districts of eastern Nagaland — Tuensang, Mon, Longleng and Kiphire — have placed a demand for a separate state citing neglect by the "stronger Naga tribes".

With 28 states alone, India has so many regional parties that fractured verdicts and consequent instability have become an integral part of polity, both at the Centre and the states. A dozen more states going by the demands, including those made by letterhead organizations with no ground support, would mean scores of regional parties and thereby more blackmail, more fractured mandates and a more

fragmented polity. Will it ultimately lead to the balkanization of India?

Though some of the demands including for Gorkhaland are not new, many have emerged over the last few decades, which witnessed the Central Government increasingly becoming weaker and heavily dependent on the regional parties for their very survival. Does this augur well for the country is the million dollar question?

On the other hand, larger states also pose several challenges. Notwithstanding the fact that the UPA has been reduced to a minority, they are surviving just on the support of two mutually antagonistic parties from a single state. Thus, with their brute Parliamentary strength, large states can determine not only the fate of Governments at the Centre but also influence policies. Smaller states including those in the North East are victims of neglect to a great extent due to their poor presence in the Parliament.

Even the most bitter opponent of the Central Government in small states like Chhattisgarh or Goa would not think of daring the Centre to withdraw all its civil

servants from their state, as has been done by the SP Government in Uttar Pradesh.

Smaller states created by the NDA Government including Chhattisgarh and Uttarakhand have done comparatively well in contrast to their situation as part of Madhya Pradesh and UP respectively.

The smaller the states, the lesser would be their monopolistic or hegemonistic tendencies and political clout as is the case with larger states. Moreover, all states would be equal partners in progress.

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As for Telangana, the proposed bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh is more of a 'de-merger' than the creation of a separate state.

If the creation of Bangladesh has busted the myth that people belonging to the same religion constitute a nation, the de-merger of Telangana has proved that language alone cannot be the basis for creation of a separate state, thereby questioning the very linguistic basis on which the states were reorganized in the first place.

It is pertinent to ponder over whether it is time to review this basis in view of the demands for statehood coming from across the country.

Both small and large states have their advantages and disadvantages. Therefore, the demand for statehood has to be studied on a case to case basis. Certain parameters such as developmental yardstick, aspirations of the local population, economic and administrative

viability and convenience are aspects that have to be factored into before taking a call. Political gains, as is apparent from the UPA decision on Telangana,

should not be the guiding factor in such critical decisions. In any case, more states cannot replace decentralisation and devolution of powers to the grassroots as the ultimate guarantor of good governance.

Moreover, irrespective of the size of the states, the need of the hour is undoubtedly a stronger Centre in the wake of threats to national unity and security from internal insurgents and external enemies.

It has to be ensured that demands for smaller states do not dilute the powers of the Centre, which would be detrimental to national interests.

Last but not the least, it has to be ensured that while land may be divided for administrative convenience, hearts should not be

divided at any cost. Consensus and not confrontation should be the guiding mantra, for at stake is the very unity and integrity of the nation.

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Corruption: Ten Ways to Deal with the Malaise

- *Dr M N Buch*

From a society of hope, India has suddenly gained notoriety as one of the most corrupt countries in the world. Whether it be in trade, industry, the election process, government, in all its branches, even education and health, domestically the belief is that nothing is done in India without a bribe having to be paid. This has created an enormous crisis of confidence in which we as Indians trust no one because every one of our institutions has lost credibility. Internationally the reputation that we have earned for being a corrupt society has shaken the confidence of the world market in India's viability as a good place to do business and this has seriously and adversely affected our economy. For every Indian, this is a situation which is not only fraught with danger, it is a situation which threatens to damage the very fabric of India beyond repair.

Corruption takes many forms and is facilitated and promoted by various factors. Our general

approach to tackling corruption is to enact a law to prevent corruption, create an organisation for investigating cases of corruption and then leaving it to the courts to punish the corrupt. The Delhi Special Police Establishment, the various States Lokayuktas and the Central Vigilance Commission and the investigating agencies functioning in the States have not so far inspired confidence either by their professional competence, impartiality, integrity or their intention to actually book the corrupt. Consequently, there are allegations of investigating agencies functioning according to political diktats, themselves becoming a part of the system of corruption by being corrupt during investigation and by failing to produce convincing evidence in the courts, have a conviction record which is miserable. The penal approach to tackling corruption can succeed only if government has a firm political commitment to eradicating corruption, the

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

investigating agencies are competent, unbiased and immunised from political or other interference and the functioning of these agencies is so efficient that investigation is prompt, prosecution is relentless and the conviction rate is high. Otherwise, the penal approach has no deterrent effect.

One could classify corruption on the following lines:-

(a) Political corruption which arises from the need to make money to meet the high cost of election. It also arises from a practice which has now become fairly common whereby politicians are purchased through actual cash payment and by such purchase governments are formed and power snatched. Once power is a purchasable commodity, it no longer remains a means of serving the people and promoting their welfare. It becomes a means of acquiring ill gotten personal wealth. The need for money to buy power ultimately corrupts the whole system of government and this is the phenomenon which we are witnessing in India. Therefore, the first set of remedies for corruption must begin by attacking the problem of political corruption head on.

(b) Corruption which has traditionally been described as 'Jabarana' or extortion, 'Nazarana', or tribute and 'Shukrana', that is gratitude. This is the most rampant form of corruption prevalent at bureaucratic level. In fact, it is generally believed that nothing moves in India without money being paid on one or the other of these counts and it is this which is hurting the common man. Political corruption also hurts the common man, but more than that it derails the economy at national level. Both types of corruption need to be tackled.

Can we remedy the situation? We have to begin with tackling political corruption, which means that we have to restore a situation in which corruption carries a heavy price, power is no longer a purchasable commodity and power is to be enjoyed only for the promotion of the welfare of the people. In a democracy, the holders of power must periodically change so that dynastic or coterie based politics is eliminated from the system. Let us make a start by looking at how we can make the process of elections open, subject to scrutiny, not very expensive but with an equal opportunity being available to persons who are

otherwise desirable but cannot afford even the normal cost of campaigning in our very large and populous constituencies. Let us recognise, therefore, that we have to pare the cost of elections down to the bare bones so that the need to spend money to be elected is substantially reduced and elections become affordable.

The first step in this behalf, therefore, would be that we should have a system of State funding of a prescribed minimum amount of expenditure by candidates for State Legislature and Parliamentary elections. This would include funding of every aspect of canvassing for a period of one month, including cost of transport, miscellaneous expenditure and incidental expenditure. It is suggested that:

1. Every nominee be given vehicles, drivers, P/D/OL and incidentals at the rate of one vehicle per assembly segment, one for the election agent of the candidate, one vehicle for the candidate and one spare vehicle for a Parliamentary election; and one vehicle for the candidate,

one for his election agent and two other vehicles for an Assembly election at State cost.

2. Prescribed incidental expenses be reimbursed on the day of the poll and the counting day at the rate of two polling agents per booth per candidate.
3. Miscellaneous and incidental expenses for covering other costs, including a prescribed quantum of publicity material, for each candidate.
4. Because once there is State spending, all other expenditure by the candidate must be barred, therefore, the District and Sessions Judge of the District in which the constituency is located should have the authority to summarily hear and dispose of complaints of excess expenditure by candidates or their supporters on their behalf, with the Judge having the power to debar the candidate from seeking election from that constituency if the charges are proved. This process would be from the date of announcement of the poll schedule and continue

This would include funding of every aspect of canvassing for a period of one month, including cost of transport, miscellaneous expenditure and incidental expenditure.

up to the date of actual voting.

The second step would aim at ensuring that the elections result in the possibility of forming a stable government, free from undue pressure from small or regional parties which have an agenda of self promotion rather than good government. For this the major political parties have to be strengthened and, therefore, the importance of small groups has to be reduced. It is suggested that in order to do this, we have to:-

(a) Prohibit an independent from standing for a State Assembly election until he has successfully contested a local government election at panchayat or municipal level.

(b) Prohibit an independent from contesting a parliamentary election unless he has successfully contested both a local government and a State Assembly election. That would leave only serious independent contenders in the fray.

(c) Prohibit any political party from contesting parliamentary election unless it holds at least five seats each in the State Legislatures of at least three

States. Regional parties would then either have to merge with larger parties, increasing their viability, or would have to expand their horizon beyond just one State, or would be kept out of Parliament, thus preventing them from exerting disproportionate pressure in a situation where the major parties are delicately balanced in Parliament.

The third point is that we have to eliminate the monster created by the politics of defection. In 1967 politicians such as Devi Lal and Bhajan Lal in Haryana and Govind Narain Singh in Madhya Pradesh discovered that it is possible to purchase legislators and thus induce them to defect from the party on whose ticket they were elected. In Madhya Pradesh, 38 MLAs were thus made to defect from the Congress and the government headed by Pt. D.P. Mishra was reduced to a minority. Because D.P. Mishra was not liked by Indira Gandhi, she told the Governor of Madhya Pradesh not to accept the Chief Minister's advice to dissolve the House and hold fresh elections. Had that been done, this malpractice of defection would have been nipped in the bud. Instead, to satisfy her own likes and dislikes, Indira Gandhi chose

to make defections a premium activity and since then India has neither had honest politicians nor stable government. The blame for our present unstable coalitions rests fairly and squarely on Indira Gandhi's decision in 1967. Therefore, to curb political corruption we have to eliminate defection. In order to do this, the following measures are recommended:-

(a) If there is a total prohibition on switch of loyalty from the ticket on which one is elected, with a change of loyalty automatically inviting removal from the Legislature and being debarred for six years from contesting an election, then power cannot be purchased by defection and governments would tend to be stable.

(b) If defections jeopardise the government by reducing the government to a minority, then the President or the Governor, as the case may be, should be constitutionally bound to dissolve the House and order fresh elections. Every member who

defected would stand barred from contesting elections for six years.

Jabarana, Nazarana and Shukrana forms of corruption arise out of administrative factors, in which arbitrary executive decisions, excessive discretion, deliberate delay and procrastination are causal factors, especially if they deny justice to those who have a genuine case and benefit those who take advantage of arbitrariness in decision

The fourth point is that if corruption by officials is to be curbed or eliminated, we should attempt to reduce personal interaction between the citizens and officials to a bare minimum, so that citizen does not have to run to government office to get even his routine work done.

making. To the extent that a system is governed by a set of rules and norms which apply equally to all, thus reducing the power of officials to extort money from applicants,

Jabarana can be curbed or even eliminated. To the extent that a person's office does not give him the authority to make people fear him, Nazarana or tribute can be eliminated.

The fourth point is that if corruption by officials is to be curbed or eliminated, we should attempt to reduce personal interaction between the citizens and officials to a bare minimum, so that citizen does not have to

run to government office to get even his routine work done. Rules, then become a benchmark against which a citizen can himself judge the merit of his own case, with a guarantee that if the case fits within the rules it will be approved and if it does not then no one can approve it. It is suggested that we review all rules and regulations, as also procedures, which bring the citizen in contact with officials, simplify them as far as possible, widely publicise the procedure and then put in place the mechanism by which the citizen can obtain remedy for anything in which he requires government intervention and that, too, through a system which, because of the way in which it is constructed, brooks no delay. Two examples of how this would work are

(a) In 1978, the Delhi Development Authority reviewed the system of obtaining completion certificates after construction of a building. The citizen had the option of either approaching the City Planning Department for such a certificate, or he could go to an architect who could issue a certificate in accordance with a prescribed checklist. The DDA officials extorted sums for issuing a completion certificate, without

which the owner could not use the building. The architects were in no position to extort money as they had no official post. What is more, they were in competition with each other and, therefore, they could only charge a reasonable fee. In two years not a single complaint was received on account of delay or non-issuance of completion certificate, though the illegal earnings of DDA planners plummeted. The minute the officer who headed the DDA and had introduced this reform was moved out, the old system was restored and corruption came flooding back.

(b) The Rajkot Municipal Corporation some years ago made all building permission applications on line. If a plan confirmed to the permissible norms, building permission was issued on line the same day. As this covered more than 90 percent of applications, the process became largely corruption free.

The fifth issue is that though there is separation between the Executive and the Legislature, at individual level legislators hanker for executive power or at least for the authority to interfere with executive decision making and implementation. The legislators then neglect their legislative

duties and because of their constant interference, the efficiency and impartiality of the administration erodes. This also leads to a great deal of corruption as the citizen runs from politicians to officer and back in order to have even his legitimate work done. Therefore, we have to strengthen the separation of functions between the Executive and Legislature and to keep the legislators away from executive administration, whilst calling the Executive to account through the Legislature. For this purpose, we have to insist that executive officers should function strictly in accordance with the law and mandate given to them and to do this without fear or favour, bias or personal prejudice, with a guarantee of support for all bona fide actions. Once the legislators know that they cannot influence the Executive to function according to their whims, corruption by politicians to force officers to take the wrong decisions in favour of their clients will cease.

Therefore, we have to strengthen the separation of functions between the Executive and Legislature and to keep the legislators away from executive administration, whilst calling the Executive to account through the Legislature.

The sixth issue relates to the use of discretionary powers by officers and ministers. When I took over as the Head of the Delhi Development Authority in early 1978, I found that in the allotment of houses built by D.D.A. ninety-two percent of all allotment was done on discretionary or preferential decisions and that only eight per cent of those who applied for a D.D.A. house were served on a first-come-first-served basis. I went to the then Prime Minister, Shri Morarji Desai and he agreed that all such discretionary powers should be withdrawn. Though my minister, Sikandar Bakht, was supremely unhappy because now he no longer had any discretion to make out of turn allotments, this single step dramatically reduced corruption in the allotment of houses.

If the rules are unambiguous, if the policy of government is properly pronounced and publicised, if the citizen has confidence that the decisions of government will be rational and issued within the confines of the rules and the pronounced policy,

then no one can expect preferential treatment and corruption will sharply decline. The problem with allocation of coal blocks or of 2G spectrum is not that government had used discretion and that, too, unwisely; the problem was that the rules and policies kept changing and the excessive discretion available at the decision making level had either been exercised correctly or there was a public perception that it has been done corruptly. Therefore, in every matter there must be a policy framework, prescribed criteria and universally applicable rules and regulations so that no one from the Prime Minister downward can exercise a discretion which is obviously whimsical or based on corruption.

The seventh issue is that the Executive seems to have lost sight of the fact that it exists only in order to ensure that the right to justice, liberty and equality enshrined in the Preamble to the Constitution is actually secured to all citizens and that the State endeavours to secure a social order for the promotion of welfare of the people as enshrined in Article 38 of the Constitution. To end corruption, therefore, every action of every officer must be judged by his superiors in the light of

whether this promotes welfare and whether the matter has been dealt with judiciously. If the answer is in the negative, there should be a presumption of corruption on the part of the officer concerned and he must be immediately brought under disciplinary action.

The eighth issue is one of delay in dealing with a matter which almost inevitably leads to the asking of a bribe and, secondly, the giving of a bribe just to expedite matters. Therefore, in every single matter in which there is interaction between the citizen and the officials, a time limit should be prescribed on the application or proposal itself, responsibility for dealing with that case should be assigned to a particular officer and if the matter has not been disposed of within the time limit, there should be a presumption of corruption by the officer concerned, who should be immediately call to account and punished where he is found wanting.

The ninth issue is one of accountability. Whether it be the Police Manual, the General Book Circulars or the Revenue Book Circulars, in a State such as Madhya Pradesh there is a regular system of inspections prescribed,

whereby superior officers constantly supervise the work of their subordinates, who were thereby forced to attend to their duties diligently. The system is virtually abandoned. What we need to do, therefore, is to create a system of interlocking accountability whereby at every level of government from the Prime Minister down officials of the executive government are assigned specific duties and areas of operation and are held accountable for lapses, failures, mischief or downright corrupt practices.

Interlocking accountability means that the immediate superior would be held as

This means that if wrong doing is not punished then wrongdoing is at a premium and this encourages others also to indulge in wrongdoing.

liable for the actions of his immediate subordinate as that subordinate himself. Under the British Police Act, a superior police officer is liable for the action of his subordinate in the same way as an employer is liable for torts and malfeasance committed by his subordinates. If the interlocking accountability, a strong system of inspection, monitoring and evaluation and immediate action against errant officials is set in place, the citizen will certainly benefit and corruption will be reduced.

A tenth area of concern is that in India we have virtually given up on the concept of 'paap' and 'prayaschit' or sin and atonement. This means that if wrong doing is not punished then wrongdoing is at a premium and this encourages others also to indulge in wrongdoing. Therefore, the system of interlocking accountability also demands a parallel system whereby good work as adjudged by a performance index is immediately rewarded and lack of performance, delay, harassment of citizens and bribery are

immediately punished. In order to do this, we shall have to tighten discipline, allow superior officers to

take swift departmental action against errant officials, speed up the process of investigation and prosecution of criminal offences pertaining to corruption, simplify processes so that justice is swift and quickly eliminate by a process of weeding out those officials who fail to perform or are corrupt.

We can certainly eliminate 'Nazarana' if we give up our darbari style of sycophancy towards superiors and instead establish a relationship of equality in which it is not misinterpreted

as familiarity and what goes with but discipline is not impaired. If officials and ministers are viewed as ordinary mortals, there would be no question of paying them tribute and would thus end the practice of 'Nazarana'. As for 'Shukrana', which means gratitude, one cannot eliminate it nor should try to do so. However, a gift given by way of gratitude has

to be of very nominal value and not more than a token. If its value exceeds a prescribed amount, it should be treated as a bribe and the officer concerned called to account.

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The Right to Reject: A Major Step Towards Cleansing Public Life

- Dr. A Surya Prakash

Voters in the five states going to polls this November-December viz Madhya Pradesh, Chattisgarh, Rajasthan, Delhi and Mizoram, will, for the first time have the right to press the NOTA (None Of The Above) button on their voting machines if they are disappointed with all the candidates in the fray in their constituencies.

The Election Commission has announced that it will provide voters the NOTA option following the recent Supreme Court verdict on the issue. This will constitute a major improvement on the situation that prevailed prior to the apex court verdict. Earlier, voters had the right not to vote after registering their presence in a polling booth. However, under the Conduct of Election Rules, their decision would be recorded in a register. Thus, the election law did not ensure secrecy for the voter who preferred not to vote. The apex court's verdict will now ensure secrecy. Candidates and political parties will not know who

all pressed the NOTA button in the voting machines. The court has hoped that this will have a salutary effect on the process of selection of candidates by political parties.

This judgement of the Supreme Court has been welcomed by electors and opinion makers across the country. Coming as it does in the wake of the court's historic judgement last July to bar criminals from entering legislative chambers, this judgement is seen as yet another major step towards cleansing public life in the country.

In its judgement, the three-judge bench headed by the Chief Justice Mr. P.Sathasivam said that giving the voter the right not to vote for any candidate while protecting his right of secrecy was "extremely important". When voters got the right to reject, it would bring about "systemic change", force political parties to field persons of integrity in elections and foster the purity of the electoral process.

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It said the absence of the right to cast the negative vote would defeat the freedom of expression and right to liberty. The judgement comes in the wake of a sustained campaign by citizens' groups for the NOTA option in ballot papers and voting machines. The court has directed the Election Commission to make necessary changes in the Electronic Voting Machines and ballot papers to give voters the power to stamp NOTA.

The timing of this judgement could not have been better. Despite mounting criticism of the quality of persons chosen by political parties to contest elections, parties seemed unwilling to clean up their act. The only criteria adopted by political parties for dispensing tickets is "winnability", meaning that only those with money power and muscle power stood a chance of securing a ticket.

While every political party must take the blame for choosing less-desirable persons as candidates and for the growing frustration among people regarding the democratic system, the ruling United Progressive Alliance

government at the Centre must take the blame for behaving in the most irresponsible manner in this regard. The Supreme Court decided last July to strike down Section 8 (4) of the Representation of People (RP) Act, 1951 which enabled criminals to continue their tenures in Parliament and state assemblies if they filed appeals against their conviction in a higher court. Though the court did not bar politicians who are charge-sheeted from contesting polls, it declared that a person convicted and sentenced in

The court has directed the Election Commission to make necessary changes in the Electronic Voting Machines and ballot papers to give voters the power to stamp NOTA.

heinous cases, should be kept out of legislature, even if his appeal is pending in a higher court. The court also barred persons

in jail from contesting elections because such persons lose the right to vote. We all know the desperate measures the Union Government took to try and protect criminal-politicians, including introduction of bills in Parliament and drafting an ordinance thereafter. When these decisions caused public revulsion, the government backtracked.

The court's order also comes in the wake of valuable research data put out by the Association of

Democratic Rights (ADR) and National Election Watch on the quality of persons who enter our legislative bodies. These organizations found that as many as 30 per cent of the sitting MPs and MLAs in the country (1460 out of 4807 MPs and MLAs) had criminal cases against them. Out of them, as many as 688 (14%) sitting MPs and MLAs have declared serious criminal cases against themselves. One realizes the value of Supreme Court's judgements when one sees these figures, which would put political leaders in most countries, except India, to shame. Since one-third of the elected representatives have criminal records, it is only fair that voters have the right to reject and that is what the court has granted them in the latest order.

The Election Commission is already considering alterations to the EVMs to provide for a paper trail that gives proof of voting to every voter. This demand came about because of allegations that EVMs could be rigged. In any case the commission should be happy with the apex court's judgement because the Commission had itself proposed NOTA way back in 2001 and reiterated it in the Chief Election Commissioner Mr.T.S.Krishna Murthy's

recommendation to the Prime Minister in 2004. In that letter, the CEC said "Although, Rule 49-O of the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961 provides that an elector may refuse to vote after he has been identified and necessary entries made in the Register of Electors and the marked copy of the electoral roll, the secrecy of voting is not protected here inasmuch as the polling officials and the polling agents in the polling station get to know about the decision of such a voter". He therefore recommended that the Conduct of Election Rules be Amended. The government however did not act on this recommendation, prompting this direction from the Supreme Court.

The NOTA right is basically the right to cast a negative vote. However, this is not the complete solution, because even if a majority of the voters press this button, the election process will not be void. The Election Commission will count the remaining votes cast and declare the candidate who got the highest votes as the winner. Therefore, a bigger battle may lie ahead in order to find the ultimate solution to the problem posed by the quality of persons entering the electoral fray.

Long years ago, the former Vice-President Mr. Krishan Kant had demanded that such a provision be made in the ballot paper to enable electors to exercise their right to reject candidates in an election. The Law Commission too had supported this proposal. But the political system has become so corrupt and immoral that it refuses to consider anything other than “winnability”. It has been dismissive of all such proposals which aim to cleanse the political process as impractical or as proposals coming from individuals

who are disconnected from the reality of electoral politics. The citizens have no option but to knock on the doors of the Supreme Court and the apex court, which is aware of the deteriorating environment, has stepped in to protect the right of citizens to better representation in democratic bodies.

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Vote Bank Politics: A Serious Threat to India's Unity

- *RNP Singh*

Indian polity has been witnessing inter-religious hostility since before the country's independence. This hostility has sometimes caused immense damage, including bloodshed, arson, rape and other brutalities to the Indian society. Time to time some saner elements had been coming forward to ensure religious harmony but they were challenged by those religious groups who were interested in maintaining their own identities. Such groups, instead of listening to those saner elements, organized militant movements to preserve their separate identity. Thus, the country was being driven in two directions - one towards secularism of politics and integration of communities and the other towards sectarianism and separatism. As far as the nature of modern Indian society is concerned, its multi-religious character is not confined to only man and God relations but is intimately connected with the exercise of powers. Multiplicity

leads to inter-religious strife but combined with the issue of political power, inter-religious confrontation in India creates explosive social and political situations.

India is a pluralist country and hence all major religions of the world- Christianity, Islam and Judaism found a place here even though Hinduism remained the dominant belief system. All religions have a value system and separate religious texts, which serve as a guide to what is right and wrong.

While the basic tenet of Hinduism is peaceful co-existence, the belief system of Islam and Christianity is intricately linked to political power and hence history is witness to their indulgence in wars and the use of sword for the spread of their religion in different geographical areas. Thus, for Islam and Christianity, religion and political power have either worked as a great combination or

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a workable compromise.

In India, the two major religious communities - Hindus and Muslims have little in common in terms of religious beliefs. In the twentieth century, the problems in Hindu-Muslim relationship had to be resolved so as to put up a united fight against the foreign ruler. While Gandhi and Nehru, in their own ways were spearheading and attempting to bring Hindus and Muslims together in the mainstream of the struggle for independence, the Muslim elite was divided in its approach to the problems of inter-religious relationships.

While one section of the Muslim elite jumped into the national movement under the leadership of Gandhi and Nehru, the majority of the Muslim community in India came under the influence of separatist leaders who thought that the interests of Muslims could not be safeguarded in a united India which in reality would be a Hindu-majority India. Hence, during the freedom struggle this section of Muslim leadership pressurized the British to recognize the separate identity of

the Indian Muslims and safeguard it by partitioning the country into two parts. The partition of India and emergence of Pakistan added a new dimension to the problem of secularism in the Indian sub-continent. In the pre-independence period, India saw three models of secularism provided by Gandhi, Nehru and Jinnah.

Gandhi believed in the essential unity of religions and emphasised that the points which divided the major religions were peripheral

While Gandhi and Nehru, in their own ways were spearheading and attempting to bring Hindus and Muslims together in the mainstream of the struggle for independence, the Muslim elite was divided in its approach to the problems of inter-religious relationships.

while unity was the basic and important point. In a multi-religious society, with history of inter-religious competition and confrontation,

perhaps this confederal character of religion seemed a proper approach to Gandhi. But this approach to religion-politics relationship was inadequate because by emphasizing the essential unity of religions, new consciousness among the mass of illiterate people, particularly whose religious faith was dependent on political power, could not be created. Also Gandhian approach could not make any abiding impact on the

masses whose beliefs were based on the principle that their own religion was different and superior to others.

Secondly, the issue was not about religions and their beliefs but about the place of religion in politics and society. Gandhi tried to tackle the problem without relating them to the history of religion-state power alliance in India. Hence in spite of honest and sincere efforts, Gandhi could not improve inter-religious relationship in India. For Gandhi, secularism would be ensured if all religions are respected.

Nehru's approach to the problem of religion and politics in India was fundamentally different from that of Gandhi. Unlike Gandhi, Nehru rejected religion in his personal life. Nehru was influenced by science and his rational and materialist outlook impelled him to reject all organized religions. Nehru wanted a society where religious beliefs had no place, and if people believed in some religions it should be their private affair. But the question at stake was not the question of religion but power politics in which religion played an important role. According to Nehru, the remedial measures for

the situation were economic development and industrialization of the country. Nehru believed that the processes of change generated by economic development and science and technology would generate a new consciousness of citizenship and the existing religious loyalties may then be replaced by secular and modern outlook.

In pre-independent India, while Gandhi and Nehru were spearheading the nationalist movement in their own ways and were attempting to bring Hindus and Muslims together in the mainstream of struggle of freedom, the Muslim elite was divided in its approach to the problem of inter-religious relationship. Though a section of Muslim elite jumped into the national movement under the leadership of Gandhi and Nehru, the Muslim community in general, in absence of any effective integrationist leader, felt that the interest of Muslims would not be secure in a united India, which would be Hindu dominant. The Muslims found a separatist leader in Mohammad Ali Jinnah who articulated the idea of a separate Muslim state under the banner of Muslim League. The ultimate

result was the partition of India into two parts.

After independence, the views of Nehru prevailed and the Constitution of India separated religion from politics in the fundamental law of the land. But the separation of religion from politics in the Constitution itself could not ensure practice of secularism in the country because the public functionaries in the pyramid of power continued to be influenced by religious consideration in the performance of public responsibilities.

Most importantly, practice of secularism added a new dimension when some of the political parties started to use the term secularism to form vote banks. Since by now it has become an effective tool to create and strengthen vote banks, the political parties are leaving no stone unturned to appease the minorities in the name of secularism, even at the cost of the majority's interest which has resulted into the widening of gap between the majority and minority. Such political parties have brought the term secular and

communal in common use and all those who believe in the welfare of all are branded as communal. The so called secular parties' appeasement have moved a step further wherein they try to impress upon the minorities that they (secular parties) are their only saviour as they face danger from the majority community. Thus, secular-communal debate is taking the country back to pre-independence days. In fact, the vote bank politics has reached a stage where the pseudo-secularists

Thus, secular-communal debate is taking the country back to pre-independence days. In fact, the vote bank politics has reached a stage where the pseudo-secularists are playing with fire forgetting the nation's past history.

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Being the oldest and biggest political party in India, it was the

responsibility of the Congress party not to enter into the arena of vote bank politics and thereby set an example for other political parties. But it failed to do so with the result that other political groups also adopted the same means to compete with it. Congress from Nehru's days till now had been trying to inculcate a sense of insecurity in the minds of minorities and appease them with a view to project itself as their only well-wisher. Even for the next

Lok Sabha polls to be held in 2014, Congress leaders including its Vice President Rahul Gandhi have made it a point to repeat the slogan of secularism explicitly to instill a sense of insecurity in the minds of minorities particularly Muslims. The desperate attempt to create and strengthen vote bank in the name of secularism is a dangerous divisive trend. Thus, the concept of nationalism with which secularism is intrinsically connected is facing a serious challenge from vote bank politics

and if this trend is not curbed, it is perhaps going to be a long battle for all those for whom the concept of 'India First' is the prime slogan.

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India's Foreign Policy: A Reader



Perceptive but Dated Look at India's Foreign Policy

- *Kanwal Sibal*

Kanti Bajpai and Harsh V. Pant have edited this book for the benefit of graduate students studying Indian foreign policy, those teaching the subject as well as the general reader interested in its key aspects. It is a compilation of 14 essays, apart from the introduction, written over the last 15 years by noted scholars and specialists, mostly people of Indian origin.

The focus of the book is contemporary foreign policy, which is why the editors have excluded historical writing. India's relations with Europe, Africa, Latin America, West Asia, Japan, Russia or the UN are excluded too because all these relations are considered of secondary importance in India's foreign policy, the core of which, in the

view of the editors, is relations with China, Pakistan, the US, the extended neighbourhood in Asia as well as WTO and climate change issues. This is a highly contestable view.

The European Union is our largest trading partner and a key player in WTO and climate change negotiations; Russia is our biggest defence partner, 80% of our energy supplies as well as massive remittances come from West Asia, besides this region being critical with regard to issues of terrorism and religious extremism. The geopolitical view of the editors would restrict India essentially to Asia, which also raises the question whether its partnership with the US is in the narrow Asian context or a larger global one.

The book has been structured in

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four parts, the first dealing with Indian conceptions on how to deal with the world, the second with its power and foreign policy infrastructure, the third with relations with Pakistan, China, the US and the larger neighbourhood encompassing East Asia, Southeast Asia, Central Asia and the Indian Ocean. The fourth focuses on global diplomacy, specifically climate change and WTO negotiations.

In the first section on ideas perfusing Indian foreign policy choices, Raja Mohan, in an article written in 2003, derides India's nonaligned policy as having been fundamentally wrong and unrealistic in seeking to challenge the domination of the West. It got its comeuppance with the end of the Cold War, with India ending up by being on the losing side. The underlying logic of his argument is that the supremacy of the West is the natural order of things, which NAM tried vainly to resist. Treating NAM contemptuously is one thing, but outlining an alternative policy that India could pursue more profitably after Independence is another, and Raja Mohan offers no ideas on that score. His view that after the end of the Cold War, India actively pursued a multi polar world with

the ambition of establishing itself as a pole is questionable. His conclusion that India will look for strategic space within a framework of broad support to the West rather than in an anti-western framework is perceptive, but his belief that India is now open to the idea of alliances and seeks an alliance-like relationship with the US seems more wishful thinking than reality.

Stephen Cohen's 2001 essay on the worldview of India's strategic elite captures extraordinarily well in part the nuances of this view, but also goes astray in some respects. His neat classification of ideas permeating India's strategic thinking as militant Nehruvians who formulated policies on the basis of security threats India faced, realists who give priority to India developing its own economic strength and look upon the US as a potential friend, and revivalists who are influenced by RSS thinking, is questionable. The last seems an invention as the RSS is hardly steering the debate on India's foreign policy. Cohen's reference to a Delhi-centric India view of the world fashioned by dispossessed high caste elites mostly from southern India is hardly serious. His belief that there are emerging signs of

differing western, eastern, southern and northern perspectives about Indian foreign policy interests is exaggerated. It is not clear how these supposedly geographically well differentiated views are coherently emerging in conflict with the thinking at the Centre. His view that India's nuclear programme emerged from a debate without clear purpose or direction reflects, of course, known American prejudiced thinking on India's nuclear ambitions that persists in some sections of the US strategic establishment even after the India-US nuclear deal.

On the other hand, Cohen's analysis that Indian officials believe that they represent a civilization and that their multi-ethnic, multi-cultural state is very well suited to the modern world is not wrong. That in Indian leadership pragmatism, realism and idealism exist side by side is an acute observation, as is Cohen's ability to perceive how Indian history and culture explains our otherwise baffling understanding of the relationship between poverty and national greatness. Indian thought, he says, is both idealist and realist, Gandhian and Machiavellian, and individuals who hold such views can be found across the spectrum, with many

holding such seemingly incompatible views simultaneously, reflecting a diversity of national interests typical of great powers.

Kanti Bajpai in his 2002 essay on Indian strategic culture tries to systematize Indian strategic thinking by classifying it as Nehruvianism, neo-liberalism and hyper-realism. While this can be a tool of analysis, it cannot be said that a large enough corpus of foreign policy experts reflecting and writing on strategic issues in the universities, think tanks, foundations, the media, political groupings and amongst former government officials exists and it can be meaningfully classified into these three distinct categories. To suggest that these three schools of thought are vying with each other to exert meaningful influence on actual government policy would be misleading. A less pretentious way to classify different strands of foreign policy thinking would be that Nehruvian ideas dominated such thinking till Indira Gandhi's time, with neo-liberal thinking gaining ground with Rajiv Gandhi and becoming the dominant thinking after 1991 with the policies of economic liberalism. As regards the hyper-realists who supposedly believe in achieving

peace and stability through the accumulation of military power and the willingness to use force, their votaries in India are not particularly influential. He examines the approach of these three strands of strategic thinking to our relations with Pakistan, China, the US and the nuclear deterrent, noting that it is with respect to relations with the US that Indian policy is the most neo-liberal.

The first article in the next section written in 2004 by Baldev Raj Nayar and T.V. Paul examines the ingredients of major power status, both hard and soft power, and examines how India compares with other major powers, reaching the obvious conclusion that in terms of military, economic, technological/knowledge and demographic power—characterized as hard power—and norms, leadership role in international institutions, culture, state capacity, strategy/ diplomacy and national leadership—the ingredients of soft power—India is the leading candidate amongst the regional powers to obtain a second tier major power status in the years ahead, behind the P-5.

Sanjay Baru's article of 2006 on the strategic consequences of

India's economic performance makes the point that even with nuclear capability India will remain a regional power unless it closes the gap between promise and performance through sustained economic growth necessary to generate enough resources for its defence and security to ensure peace in the neighbourhood. He is right in arguing that India's economic performance, along with its nuclear status, changed how the West, particularly the US, began to look at it at the end of the 20th century. The other two factors are jihadi terrorism and the rise of China. The de-hyphenation between India and Pakistan has also occurred because of India's impressive growth in recent years and Pakistan's economic decline. He is also right in saying that to change the strategic balance in Asia, India must continue to grow economically and increase its share in the world trade. He is wrong however to give credit to China for a growing economic relationship with India notwithstanding persisting political differences, when the opposite is the case. It is also not quite true that Indonesia decided to put business above politics and religion to pursue closer relations with India. It is also not clear how

India's economic performance in the 1990s helped to redefine its political relations with Russia.

Daniel Markey's 2009 article on the inadequacies of the Indian Foreign service to bear the burden of India's rise as a great power has generated much debate. His central point is valid—India needs a larger diplomatic service, with better social science research by think tanks and universities. Markey proposes that social science research be done in partnership with US investors, universities and foundations and that US-India exchange programmes should help to build capacity for foreign policy research. He warns, rather exaggeratedly, that without this a wealthier and more powerful India will remain politically inconsequential and that India's worldview will remain parochial, reactive, dominated by business interests rather than political or strategic concerns. He affirms quite absurdly that this will steer the country closer to Burma, Iran, Russia, Sudan or other states that pose regional or global threats but offer ready access to fossil fuels. All this, he affirms, will disappoint those US strategists who seek in India a powerful, democratic Asian partner.

In the third section, T.V. Paul examines in a 2006 article why India-Pakistan rivalry is so enduring. He does not think that the usual explanation that this is on account of territorial differences and national identity is sufficient. He ascribes this to 'truncated asymmetry', a fancy term for Pakistan's aggressive stance towards India despite being a weaker power because of strong alliance partners like the US and China and the use of terrorism under the cover of its nuclear capability. Of the many errors in his article, he mentions China and Pakistan settling their conflict over Kashmir. What conflict? He also says that Pakistan was founded on the basis of religious and ethnic nationalism. This is surprising because West Pakistan is not ethnically homogenous and East Pakistan was ethnically totally different. To say that identity based on religion became a dividing issue in the Indian case as well, given the rise of Hindu fundamentalism since the 1980s, overlooks the two-nation theory. He is right in believing that so long as geopolitical rivalry for strategic party animates Pakistan, even the resolution of the Kashmir issue may not end the India-Pakistan conflict.

Manjari Chatterjee Miller's 2009 article on the India-China conflict is perhaps the most unsatisfactory one in the book. She believes that 'post imperial ideology'—whatever it means—is the cause of this conflict as the foreign policies of both countries, suffering from a strong sense of colonial trauma, is driven by a desire to be acknowledged as a victim in the international system. This reliance on political psychoanalysis to explain the inability of India and China to resolve the conflict does not frankly make one cry 'Eureka'.

Surjit Mansingh's 2007 article on rising China and emergent India summarizes very well the positive developments in India-China relations, noting the trend towards normalization. One could take issue with the optimism of her piece and question China's strategic intentions with greater skepticism, but that would be a debate outside the purview of this review.

The 2005 article by Ashley Tellis on the transforming India-US relationship and its significance for American interests is a masterly one, probably the best in the book. It is a highly sophisticated analysis of the

mutuality of interests that brought India and the US together after the end of the Cold War and the logic underlying the India-US nuclear deal. For the US, Ashley argues, the ultimate value of the India relationship is that it helps to preserve US primacy by preserving the balance of power in Asia, enhances American competitiveness through deepening linkages with the growing Indian economy and strengthens the American vision of a concert of democratic states by incorporating India. Ashley recognizes that India will not become an alliance partner of the US and that it will not be an uncritical partner of the US in its global endeavour. The question is whether a strong, democratic and independent India is in the US national interest. If yes, then the real issue is how the US can assist the growth of Indian power. The aim would not be to contain China; the best way to counter Chinese power would be the complete and permanent revitalization of Indian national strength. The nuclear agreement is intended to convey abiding US interest in crafting a full partnership with India.

Harsh V. Pant's 2011 article on the US-India nuclear pact pales by comparison. It looks at it in the

context of policy, process and great power politics, tracing the developments that eventually led to the pact, without, however, offering any new insights.

David Scott's 2009 article on India's extended neighbourhood concept and its hard and soft power projection there is very well researched and informative. It examines India's trade patterns in this area, the energy dimension, the security concerns and military outreach, especially the widening activities of the Indian Navy in the Indian Ocean with the objective of deterring hostile powers from operating against India, maintaining the sea lanes of communication open for trade and energy supplies and projecting India's general presence and power. The expanding range of the Indian Navy's exercises with major powers as well as select ASEAN countries, as well as its southwest-ward thrust towards the African littoral are noted. On the economic side, apart from ASEAN, India's northwards thrust towards Central Asian countries as well as westwards to Iran and the Gulf as part of our extended neighbourhood policies is examined.

In the last section on Global Diplomacy, Sandeep Sengupta's 2010 article on India's policy on climate change from Rio to Copenhagen traces its essential continuity and success in defending the concept of 'differentiation' in the highly complex and thorny negotiations on the subject. He explains the policy with lucidity and shows how at each stage India resisted any weakening of the core concept of 'differentiation' rooted in the principle of fairness and equity. He believes that India's voice in global climate negotiations matters because neither can the problem of climate change be practically solved without its participation, nor can any solution be considered globally legitimate without its consent.

Amrita Narlikar's 2008 article on India and the WTO is another poor article like Manjari Chatterjee Miller's and did not deserve inclusion in this anthology. It examines India's emergence as a core player in the WTO after learning how to negotiate within the specific multilateral rules of the organization. India has proved its ability, she notes, to block the negotiation process until its demands are met and how no deal

would be possible without Indians on board. The writer goes off at a tangent to discuss what she considers are some of the schizophrenic aspects of India's foreign policy expressed in the contradiction between its policies in the security areas and in the economic ones. She sees India holding traditional Third Worldist positions in the WTO as against its pragmatic bilateralism on nuclear weapons—a point difficult to understand. She also believes that the bureaucracies in both the Ministries of External Affairs and Commerce are rooted in an old anti-colonial view that resents the western powers.

While containing much perceptive material on elements of Indian foreign policy, a major deficiency of the book, especially as it deals with contemporary foreign policy,

is that many of the articles were written several years ago and developments have occurred since then that bear on their content. For instance, India's growth rates have fallen, the economic mood has soured, the current account deficit is going out of control, the India-US relationship is not living up to its promise in the eyes of many Americans, with India being vigorously accused of protectionism and violation of IPRs. The Indian nuclear liability law has put a spanner in the wheel of India-US civil nuclear cooperation. President Obama is not pressing India to sign the CTBT and the FMCT. The India-China trade has vastly expanded; the India-Pakistan relationship has evolved, with any talk of India abrogating the Indus Waters Treaty and revoking MFN appearing imaginary today.

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Debating Culture



Highlighting Contributions of National Thinkers

- *Dr Dilip K. Chakrabarti*

Dr Anirban Ganguly's book *Debating Culture* discusses the concept of culture in the writings of several outstanding national thinkers.

He begins with Swami Vivekananda who had a very catholic and wide interest in both world and Indian art. His emphasis was on the great principles underlying the phenomenon of Indian art. Ananda Coomaraswamy thought that Indian art and craftsmanship should have a central role in Indian national feelings. Ganguly points out that Coomaraswamy called upon all political nationalists of the period to "believe in the regeneration of India through art and not by politics and economics alone". According to Rishi Aurobindo

,aesthetic education was important to develop Indian spirit. Sister Nivedita argued that "a combination of the past historical-cultural memory could serve to reinforce not only a national sense in the people but would equally awaken their cultural sensitivity and quest". As Ganguly argues, this was essential "for developing and recreating a binding national unity".

John Woodroffe, who is known for his researches in *tantra*, defended Indian culture against harsh criticism and thought that this was due to ignorance. Ganguly draws attention to K M Munshi's concern for the rejuvenation of the Somnath temple and his idea that this was important to highlight the continuity of Indian culture. Syama Prasad Mookerji was

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deeply conscious of India's cultural interaction with the neighbouring lands and so was Jawaharlal Nehru who was fascinated by Buddhism and its wide impact.

In Chapter 9 of this volume, the author points out the sorry state of affairs to which the study of culture has officially sunk in India. This, if I may say so, is mostly due to the incompetence and unwillingness of the concerned people to perform their official duties. The recent CAG reports on Indian Museum, Victoria Memorial, Viswabharati and the Archaeological Survey of India are sharp pointers in this

direction. In the context of the CAG reports, one is forced to ask if these organizations serve any national purpose and should continue to exist in their present forms.

Indian professional historians have by and large ignored the thoughts of the persons whose writings have been highlighted in this book. Dr Ganguly's emphasis on their relevance to the development of cultural awareness in this country is a path breaking effort.

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Interaction with Australian Associate Secretary of Defence

On October 3, 2013, Vivekananda International Foundation (VIF) organized a Round Table Discussion with the Australian Associate Secretary and Chief Operating Officer in the Ministry of Defence Mr Brendan Sargeant. In his welcoming remarks, Mr Prabhat P Shukla, Joint Director, VIF, pointed out that the two countries were among each other's top 10 trading partners and the Indian Ocean was drawing the two nations closer. Besides, the burgeoning Indian diaspora and the common interest in cricket were also key factors in fostering people to people relations between the two countries, he said. He also added that there were frictions in the past between the two countries, but these were now well and truly behind us, and the future looked promising. He added that while India was working closely with its partner-countries in the Asia-Pacific Region, it also had concerns regarding its land borders, and hoped for understanding of these concerns on the part of its partners.

Mr Sargeant, who led the six member Australian delegation, said his country was deeply conscious of the growing importance of the Indo-Pacific region, the significance of the Indian Ocean, and was drawing closer to Asian security structures. He said that the Asia-Pacific Region had seen unprecedentedly high rates of growth in recent decades, not only in China, but India and other countries too. The architecture of the region was not ready to deal with the challenges, posed by these developments, as well as those raised by the political and other disputes in the region. It was the Australian assessment that there was no reason to believe that these issues would inevitably lead to tensions, particularly among the major states in Asia. He specifically said that there was no reason to expect that there would necessarily be antagonism between the US and China.

Australia also had a special role in the South Pacific, where it was the main source of aid and development assistance, and

provided stability to the best of its ability.

In the discussions that followed, the two sides touched upon whether history provided any example of a peaceful shift of power from one country to another, if indeed a shift were to happen; they also touched on the likely scenarios to emerge in and

around Afghanistan after the draw-down of ISAF forces in 2014. Terrorism was a source of common concern to both countries. The two delegations agreed that Indo-Australian relations were developing satisfactorily, and were a source of stability in the region.

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VIF at Herat Security Dialogue –II

Lt. Gen Ravi Sawhney, Distinguished Fellow and Sushant Sareen, Senior Fellow, VIF, were invited by the Afghan Institute of Strategic Studies to attend the prestigious Second Herat Security Dialogue on 5-6, October, 2013. Around 80 foreign delegates from countries of the region and beyond and a similar number of Afghan delegates participated in the conference. The Dialogue was organized with the cooperation of the Afghan government and the local authorities at the historic 3000 year fort, Ikhtiyaruddin Citadel. Notable among the absentees were the US and Pakistani delegations. Despite specific security threats, seven Indian delegates participated in the conference to not only show solidarity with the Afghan organisers but also demonstrate India's abiding commitment to peace, security and stability of Afghanistan, which was the underlying theme of the Dialogue.

The wide ranging deliberations and excellent presentations made in the Dialogue dispelled the pessimism and sense of insecurity and uncertainty that seems to have crept in about the future of Afghanistan. To be sure, Afghanistan faces monumental challenges - security, economic, political and governance related. But the Afghans appear to be ready to meet these challenges and not just protect but also build upon the achievements and accomplishments of the last decade. Of course, Afghanistan will need to be supported politically, diplomatically, financially and to an extent militarily by the international community. The Herat Dialogue is an initiative that needs to be supported and institutionalised so that it emerges as a forum where officials and non-officials can exchange ideas and flag issues that serve the interests of Afghanistan.

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Launch of “Debating Culture” at VIF

“**D**ebating Culture”, authored by Dr Anirban Ganguly was launched at the VIF on October 8, 2013, by Prof. Dilip Kr Chakrabarti, Professor Emeritus at the University of Cambridge, Prof. Kapil Kapoor, Former Pro-Vice Chancellor of the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi and Shri Ajit Doval, KC, Director VIF.

Initiating the discussions, Shri Doval observed that nations need to initiate and continue the exploration of their civilisational and cultural identity. Shri Doval also asserted that there was a need to strike the right balance between soft and hard power.

Prof. Chakrabarti while reviewing the book read out some relevant passages and observed that the book discusses some crucial issues and questions regarding our cultural awareness and identity. Calling it a path breaking effort,

Prof. Chakrabarti decried the neglect of our heritage and called for a wider debate on the issue.

Prof. Kapoor, in his address, covered a broad spectrum of issues. He discussed the state of cultural affairs in the country today, the lack of cultural education, the larger questions of identity and civilisational perspectives and dwelt at some length on the process of deculturisation and observed that the book had discussed all of these while examining the cultural debate in India.

Dr Ganguly discussed the relevance of the book and the broad objective of the work. He pointed out that his purpose was to present the rich and multidimensional cultural debate of the past while arguing for initiating such a debate in the present.

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Round Table Discussion on Afghanistan

VIF organized a round table discussion focusing on Afghanistan on 11th October 2013. Participants in the discussion included Mr. Ajit Doval, KC, Director VIF, Gen. (retd) N. C. Vij, Lt. Gen. (retd) Ravi Sawhney, Amb G. Parthasarathy, Amb Satish Chandra, Amb Prabhat P Shukla, Amb Arvind Gupta, Amb Vivek Katju, Amb T.C. Rangachari, Maj. Gen. (retd) S. Thapliyal, Brig. (Retd) Ravi Bhonsle, Brig. (Retd) Vinod Anand, and Mr. Sushant Sareen.

The discussion began with opening remarks from Mr. Doval, pitching in the agenda for the discussion. It was followed by brief presentations by Amb G. Parthasarathy, Amb Vivek Katju

and Brig. (Retd) Rahul Bhonsle. These presentations focused on the political equations and environment in Afghanistan and its periphery, keeping in mind the upcoming elections and the Western draw-down. Also assessed were the security situation and the levels of insurgency in Afghanistan. There was a unanimous agreement to the argument that India must assist the Afghanistan Government in more capacities and ways in order to ensure that the democratic forces survive. The situation in Pakistan and their engagement with Afghanistan was also put under scrutiny. Amb Arvind Gupta summed up the issues discussed.

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