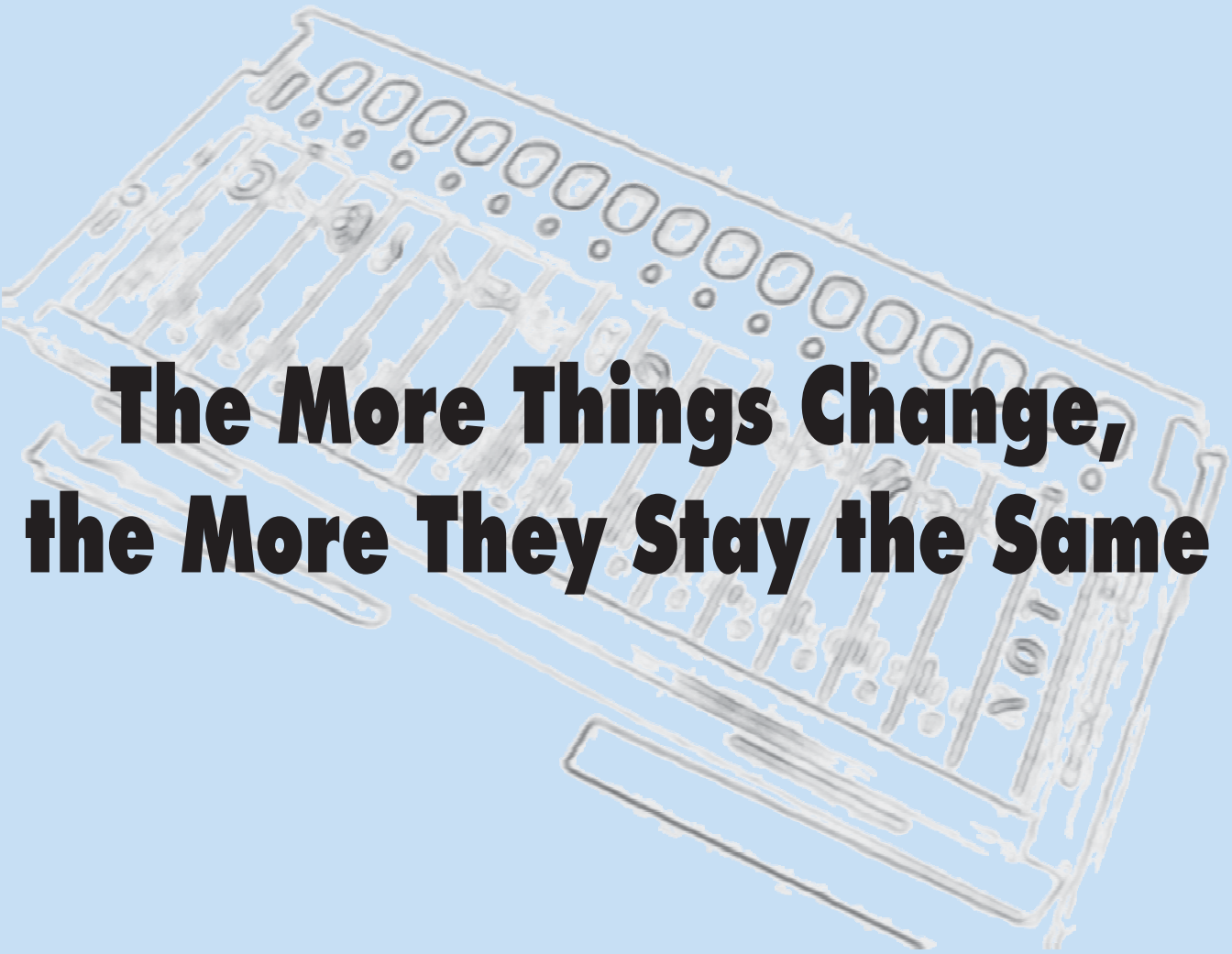


Freedom First

The Liberal Magazine



**The More Things Change,
the More They Stay the Same**

Freedom First believes in an open society based on minimum government and maximum freedom tempered by a sense of individual responsibility, in which the people's genius has a fair opportunity to develop and grow; and rejects any ideology, movement or policy that sets one group of citizens against Another, be it based on class, caste, religion or envy.

N O T E S

Infiltration At Congress H. Q.

Now that the excitement over the intemperate language and bad taste shown by the editor of the *A.I.C.C. Economic Review* has died down and the record put right by the handsome apology to the Queen tendered by Prime Minister Nehru, it might be well worth the trouble if the Congress President and members of the Working Committee were to consider whether this gaffe was just an unfortunate accident or the reflection of an un-Indian and un-Congresslike point of view held by the writer of the note.

Readers of the *Economic Review* have for many months clearly discerned a communist hand editing this Gandhian bulletin. There is any amount of evidence to convince a careful reader of the files of the journal over the last year or two that a consistently fellow-travelling strain underlies a great deal of the political and economic comment. Blatant support for the mass liquidation of peasants resisting collectivisation of land in China is only one of the shockingly anti-Gandhian attitudes repeatedly displayed in that journal. As far back as the late thirties, Mr. H. D. Malaviya was known to hold communist views. It would appear from his recent exercises that the cure, if any, is very incomplete. This is only one example of the insidious infiltration of governmental and political institutions that is proceeding. The least that the President and members of the Working Committee can do is to place the A.I.C.C. Bulletin in more dependable hands.

B. G. Kher

In the death of Mr. B. G. Kher India has lost a great patriot, eminent scholar and social reformer. Mr. Kher served the country in varied capacity. He was one of the ablest chief ministers whose administration could gain the reputation of being a sound one. After retiring from active politics he devoted himself almost exclusively to social welfare work. A devoted and trusted follower of Gandhiji, he was always willing to entertain fresh ideas both in politics and social reform. A great scholar and educationist himself he laid the foundations of the present educational structure in the Bombay State. By his charming manners and disarming simplicity he endeared all those who came

in his contact. His multifarious activities in the field of social work earned him a place of respect in all strata of society. He will be remembered even by his opponents for his honesty, humility and selfless service.

I. C. C. F. News

Mrs. Rita Hinden, Editor, *Socialist Commentary*, and a noted socialist thinker from Great Britain, delivered a lecture at the office of the Indian Committee on February 28. The subject of her lecture was "Recent Trends in British Labour Party Thinking." Prof. G. D. Parikh presided and Mr. V. B. Karnik introduced the speaker.

Mrs. Rita Hinden was in Bombay for five days, while she was passing through India on her way to attend a Seminar on "*Problems of the Economic Development of Underdeveloped Countries*" which is being organised by the Congress for Cultural Freedom in Tokyo in the 1st week of April. While in Bombay, Mrs. Hinden also addressed a meeting of the workers of the Praja Socialist Party and discussed with them the problems of the Indian socialist movement. From Bombay Mrs. Hinden went to New Delhi, where she delivered a lecture under the auspices of the Indian Council of World Affairs. The Asian Office of the Congress for Cultural Freedom held a reception for her. She also initiated, while in Delhi, a discussion on "What is Socialism." Calcutta was Mrs. Hinden's last stop in India. There also she was met by the members of the Indian Committee and she discussed with them about the problems of cultural freedom in India.

*

Mr. Nehru's economic thinking is a case of arrested thinking. It belongs to Laski and the London School of Economics of the thirties and the Prime Minister unfortunately continues to think and plan in this context despite the lapse of nearly thirty years.

- *Indian Express*, March 14

What you have just read is an excerpt from the article published in *Freedom First* in its issue No.59 of April 1957. For the full article and more visit our archives at www.freedomfirst.in

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From Our Readers

On *Freedom First*

I wish to reiterate my past statements on the monthly journal *Freedom First* by stating that it has remained a favourite magazine over the years and it will continue as long as I find it interesting and relevant.

Antonio Peregrine da Costa, Panjim. Goa.

Mr. da Costa has been a *Freedom First* subscriber sine 1997 – Thank you for your support. Ed.

*

Government to Foot Babus' Medical Bills Abroad

According to a report in *The Times of India* of 11 September 2013, IAS, IPS ad IFS (Indian Forest Service) officers and members of their families can now avail of medical treatment abroad at the taxpayer's expense thanks to new norms finalized by the Ministry of Personnel. This includes complex treatments like high risk cardiovascular surgery, bone marrow transplant, complex medical and oncological disorders such as leukemia and non plastic conditions. All at the State's cost. They will also be entitled to treatment in foreign hospitals for complex high risk cases. A screening committee will decide on recommending cases for treatment abroad .

While this decision is laudable, to maintain good health of the Babus and their families it also throws up several serious issues:

- A. How come the so-called Babus are so self-centred that they consider only themselves and their families and are not even prepared to consider other government services and subordinate services whose predicament may be financially much worse.
- B. It is very sad indeed that the Armed Forces are remembered only during floods, natural calamities like the recent disaster in Uttarakhand or when all avenues fail, to maintain law and order. Armed Forces are deployed in most difficult terrain at high altitudes, avalanche prone areas like Siachen Glacier, humid jungles, and burning deserts. Also think of submarine crew or Naval divers and air crew of the helicopter fleet or long range flights. Constant deployment in most difficult areas combined with imminent threat to life or limb, their families also live in perpetual fear. All this takes a very heavy toll on their health and longevity. Yet our decision makers think that only Babus and their families need help, that too very expensive premier service. This is the worst possible scenario for public servants in a democracy.
- C. Other Services forgotten by us are BSF, the CRPF,

Police forces like Assam Rifles who are also deployed in very difficult terrain and constantly under attack by Maoists. They deserve equal consideration as well.

- D. Nationals of many countries are coming to India to avail of super facilities available in our hospitals. It may be much better that we improve them even more further to come up to world class standards. This will reduce the need to travel abroad for medical purposes, be it for Babus or common citizens.

Brigadier Gautam Narain (Retired), New Delhi.
chanu87@hotmail.com

*

Malayala Manorama

This is regarding the article 'Newspapers in India' in June 2013 issue of *Freedom First*.

I did not read this article except some time back. I found no mention of *Malayala Manorama*, a newspaper in Malayalam published from many places in Kerala, Gulf and major cities of India.

It started publishing from March 22nd 1890 from Kottayam. The owner of the paper was a Public Limited Company called Malayala Manorama Ltd. which was founded in 1888.

During the freedom struggle period it was closed down by the Divan Sri C. P. Ramaswami Iyer in 1938. It was reopened only after India got freedom in 1947.

The circulation is over 2 million copies.

Mammen Varghese, Kottayam.
mamvarghese@gmail.com

*

It's Bhikhaiji Cama not Bhikaji Cama

Let me first say that I read the magazine avidly every month and have been doing so for more then 30 years. So, this letter is not written with any feeling of annoyance or displeasure.

In your January 2014 issue you have made the common error of mis-spelling the name of Bhikhaiji Cama. There is an "i" after "a" which is frequently overlooked. Amongst we Parsis, a man's name is Bhikaji, and a lady's is Bhikhaiji. This error is quite wide spread. In Delhi, most occupant of buildings on Bhikhaiji Cama Road, misspell the name as you have done.

Minoo Mody, Mumbai. modymh@icloud.com

My apologies for the error. The correct spelling noted.– Ed.

Editorial

A highly respected southern economics journal carries an editorial article by an equally respected economist. No names now as I have not taken their permission to comment on the editorial. In any event what is important are not the names but the question he asks – and answers: “Is the AAP moving toward the economic policies of the old Swatantra Party?” Midway through his editorial it turns out to be a rhetorical question based on the single fact that Mr. Rajmohan Gandhi’s certificate to the Aam Aadmi Party and is their Lok Sabha candidate from a New Delhi constituency.

Mr. Rajmohan Gandhi is quoted as saying: “It (the AAP) is a people’s party. I was drawn to it because I felt there was something genuinely new and fresh about it...The Congress used to be an aam aadmi party. now it is the khas aadmi party. BJP is the rich man’s party”! Perhaps his description of the BJP is what prompted him to reject an offer made to him way back in 1967 when another party labelled by Mr. J. Nehru as ‘the rich man’s party’, inhibited him (to put it mildly) from accepting an offer made to him by the Swatantra Party to contest as the party’s candidate from the Junagadh Parliamentary Constituency in Gujarat (which included Porbandar, his grandfather M. K. Gandhi’s birthplace). The party even went to the extent of assuring him that he could contest as an independent but have the benefit of the Swatantra party’s election symbol, the five-pointed Star. The party would benefit by getting the votes cast for him into its kitty in exchange, he would be eligible for all the benefits offered by the Election Commission to recognised party candidates and, if elected, he would be free to sit as an independent and not with the Swatantra Group if he chose not to. This was the arrangement accepted by Purshottam Ganesh Mavlankar who was elected from Gandhinagar and by Mr. K. M. Kaushik who was elected from Chanda (now known as Chandrapur) in Vidarbha. This was part of the Swatantra Party’s policy of persuading men of integrity, character and competence to be members of the Lok Sabha. I can’t resist a smile on my face as I type this in remembering those days fruitlessly spent in persuading Rajmohanji!

I am small fry compared to these ‘giants’ (as the apology goes in Hindi ‘small mouth, big talk’) but the fact cannot be denied that he genuinely believed the canard that the Swatantra Party was a rich man’s party. He was wrong but this is not the time and place to argue this point.

Like Rajmohanji Gandhi some of us small people also expected a lot from Kejriwal and his boys and girls

(his geeks and his yuppies) all the time; from his junking Anna Hazare to his embracing the crorepati socialist and the pseudo psephologist-intellectual and forming the AAP. But when he grabbed the Congress offer of unconditional support to form the Government in Delhi, he lost our sympathy and support. That’s when small fry like us felt betrayed and discovered he was nothing more than the run of the mill politician we have been so used to. 49 days after when he quit his office, our disenchantment with his strategy and tactics was complete. This did not matter to all those poor sods, some of them from the ranks of the ‘elite’ including Rajmohanji lining up to jump on to what they think is the winning bandwagon.

Unlike the many ‘rich and famous’ who have joined AAP and could do so without fear of the establishment, it was very different in the sixties – the heydays of the J. Nehru-Indira Gandhi rule armed with the permit licence quota raj. Many come to mind – of courageous businessmen, industrialists and former princes who dared the establishment. K. Sundaram, an industrialist of Coimbatore who in his youth participated in the freedom struggle and was active in the Vedaranyam Satyagraha led by Rajaji is an outstanding example. He had much to lose and did lose by his fearless support of Rajaji and the Swatantra Party. Another was Charanjit Rai, a former Olympic hockey player and Managing Director of a company in the Khatau Group, then led by yet another courageous supporter of Swatantra, Dharamsey Khatau. Charanjit Rai wrote a small pamphlet “Why I joined Politics” which raised the ire of the Indira Gandhi establishment.

Thoughts came rushing as I read and fumed at the comparison of Swatantra with AAP. The comparison is odious.

Many years ago when Narayan Dandekar, ICS (retd.) was the General Secretary of the Swatantra Party, he murmured in despair “does Masani have to be such a purist.” He was referring to an issue that had arisen when party advantage lay in a compromise, but a stubborn Masani refused to budge. Means and ends were very important and the issue in question was settled though the party lost in the process. This was the Swatantra of C. Rajagopalachari. So please....

SVR

A group of donkeys led by a lion can defeat a group of lions led by a donkey - *Socrates*

The More Things Change, the More They Stay the Same

Bapu Satyanarayana

They still persist in their old ways unmindful of the consequences of their actions even when general elections are round the corner and all indications are that the Congress faces the dire prospect of suffering its worst electoral drubbing.

The truth of the above English translation of a French adage was never more true than the way things are happening under the UPA government's rule. It appears the government has not learned any lessons. Despite several exposé of its misdeeds by the media, scams continue to happen and it is astounding how the government spokespersons go about brazenly justifying it. In the history of governance in our country, it is difficult to find a parallel to the level to which political morality has sunk exhibiting its arrogance of power and supreme indifference to charges levelled against it and remain above the pale of accountability.

We proudly say that we are the largest democracy. If democracy has any meaning, it is accountability and transparency in administration. But sadly the history of governance by the Congress Party which has been at the helm of affairs for more than fifty of the sixty-six years of the post-independence period belies this definition. It has exhibited no qualms for its actions and remains defiant. If any honest officer or minister tries to assert himself/herself, he/she is unceremoniously shifted. They still persist in their old ways unmindful of the consequences of their actions even when general elections are round the corner and all indications are that the Congress faces the dire prospect of suffering its worst electoral drubbing,

Scams Galore

A few cases of the endless scams listed below illustrate my point.

Oil minister Jaipal Reddy was replaced by Veerappa Moily when he refused to oblige the all powerful Mukesh Ambani in raising the cost of extraction to \$8 per unit. Moily after taking over approved it. Of course, he justified it, but the issue has become a contentious one.

When Jayanti Natarajan was relieved from her ministry ostensibly to work for the Party and the portfolio was handed over to Veerappa Moily, he disposed off many files held up for clearance by his predecessor in a few days of taking over giving clearance to facilitate setting up of projects in green field areas.

The sudden removal of Union Health Secretary

Keshav Desiraj, known to be an honest officer and very knowledgeable in his field, probably had something to do with his reluctance to notify the scam-tainted former Medical Council of India President, Ketan Desai's re-entry in the regulatory body. Ten prominent citizens have written to the Prime Minister questioning his removal when as Health Secretary he had initiated necessary reforms in healthcare which would now be jeopardised. However Union Health Minister Gulam Nabi Azad, unmoved, says it is a routine matter!

Another mega scam is in the making concerning the Union Urban Development Ministry's approval of change of land use of 22.95 acres situated right next to the Rashtrapati Bhawan, presently valued at Rs 10,000 crore. The land has been sold to DLF who proposes to build luxury apartments. The whole issue is mired in controversy and at various times Delhi High Court, Delhi Police, Intelligent Bureau and even CBI have intervened. Now allegation have surfaced that DLF approached the Urban Development Ministry to allow construction up to eight floors. It is not clear why the Prime Minister's Office should involve itself by writing a letter to the Ministry seeking an explanation on the height restriction. As of now the Intelligent Bureau has ruled out raising the building height due to security consideration.

A mega scam has been exposed involving major kickbacks relating to contracts worth Rs.10,000 crore between British engine manufacturing major Rolls Royce and public sector Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd when it is laid down that payment of commission to middlemen in the negotiation of contracts is illegal.

Lokpal Bill – Seriously flawed

That the Lokpal Bill passed by the Parliament suffers from grave drawbacks is evident from the fact that both the former Supreme Court Judge K.T. Thomas and the eminent lawyer Fali Nariman declined to be a part of the Search Committee for the appointment of the Lokpal. The whole process is riddled with self-serving interest of both the Congress and the BJP who were high on rhetoric congratulating themselves that the much touted bill, which drew much publicity in the media and for which Anna Hazare went on fast to fight corruption, has become a reality. But the glaring weakness of the Act has been

exposed in that the selection of members of the Lokpal committee is to be picked from a list prepared by the Department of Personnel and Training! This means it precludes many eminent people from the country. If this serious shortcoming was not enough, consider the fact that even after the members are identified by the search committee, the selection committee is not bound to pick them! In other words the passing of Lokpal bill has become an exercise in futility defeating its purpose. N. Venkatachala, the former Lokpal of Karnataka, described the recently enacted Lokpal and Lokayukta Act as the “corrupt public servants protection Act” (*Hindu*, 4/03/2014).

That Sinking Feeling

The death of two men – Lt. Commander Kapish Muwal and Lt. Manoranjan Kumar – who choked to death when fire engulfed the Navy submarine INS Sindhuratna on 26 February 2014 in the high seas is the latest in a series of eight Navy mishaps in the past six months. The worst was in August last year when the submarine Sindurakshak exploded and sank in Mumbai harbour in which 18 crew members on board were killed. It was the fourth warship to be completely written off in the past nine years. Admiral Joshi set a salutary example by resigning saying that his continuation as Chief of Naval Staff was untenable.

The depressing fact is that the babus of the Defence ministry rule the roost with the result that Generals of the Armed Forces are reduced to plead lack of military arsenal and that they are woefully ill-equipped to fight the war. It is a pity that when it comes to purchase of military equipment, archaic British rules prevail which do not give primacy to the Generals but to the babus in the ministry.

Missing Files or Scorched Earth Policy?

We already know of the missing Coalgate files. But do you know that in reply to an RTI query, the Department of Personnel and Training which acts as a nodal authority

on anti-graft matters said that files relating to the United Nations Convention against Corruption were not traceable (*The New Indian Express* - 25/11/13). It is unthinkable that important files are missing in important ministries.

An Intriguing Thought

In addition to the series of mega scams tumbling out with regularity, the case of trillions of dollars stashed away in foreign banks is very well known. The main opposition BJP has been crying hoarse about it day in and day out and even holding the Parliament to ransom but what is the net result? A big zero. It only means that both the Congress and the BJP are only putting up a grand show to fool people and behind the scene they are both comrades in arms. If that were not the case then why is nothing tangible happening to unearth the truth and persons behind it? This charade has been going on for decades and the silence is deafening.

There are Lots of Things to Cheer

If the above is a litany of complaints there are many factors that dispel this gloom. The country is on the threshold of general elections in April-May 2014. By any standard it is a mind boggling exercise involving 81.4 crore voters spread across a vast land mass peopled by diverse languages, ethnicity and religion but welded together as an Idea of India that must baffle the world. India has made long and enviable strides in communication, nuclear and space technology and created her own Silicon Valley. We have the third largest pool of scientists and engineers in the world and our 20 million diaspora spread across the world are making their presence felt. We are self-sufficient in food and have the second largest road network in the world. The fact that counting will be taken up on May 16 and results announced the same day is an indication of the massive deployment of people and technology which perhaps has no parallel in the world.

H. R. BAPU SATYANARAYANA is a freelance writer based in Mysore. Email: what_options@yahoo.co.in.

Exercise or Military Coup (Continued from page 20)

of the Head of the Council of Ministers headed by the Prime Minister. The issue whether the COAS is obliged to carry out the orders of the Supreme Commander i.e. the President has not been debated and well defined. In the USA, the Congress failed in imposing restriction on the President to declare war without the approval of the Congress. The President stated that the Congress could not deny the Supreme Commander his right to give commands to his forces. The Congress can deny any budget to the forces if they so decided. All that the Congress was able to achieve was to pass a resolution that if the war lasts for more than six months, the President

should submit a report to the Congress. In practice, the President takes the approval of the Congress if a war is likely to take more than six months, otherwise not. Can an ambitious President create a constitutional crisis due to lack of clarity on this issue?

BRIG. SURESH C. SHARMA (retd). is adviser to the telecom industry, and a member of the Advisory Board of *Freedom First*. Email: brigscs@gmail.com

Politics is the gentle art of getting votes from the poor and campaign funds from the rich, by promising each to protect him from the other. - *Mark Twain*

Contributed by Melanie Silveira

The Economic Legacy of the UPA II Government

Sunil S. Bhandare

In recent years we have been mute spectators to the progressive industrial deceleration and virtual stagnation in manufacturing employment. The obvious fault-lines are in the UPA II government's prolonged policy paralysis; and its sheer complacency that the industrial sector will take care of itself.

With the election process for the 16th Lok Sabha gaining rapid momentum, it is a most opportune time to reflect upon the top ten features [or failures] of the UPA II government's economic legacy. Hopefully, this would offer some significant learning for the new government, which is expected to take office by early June 2014. It is certainly not going to be a bed of roses for any complexion of the government. There are bound to be many thorns strewn around, as the new government starts unraveling crucial policy formulation and its implementation. Very smartly, however, the incumbent Finance Minister, Mr. P. Chidambaram has laid down a 10-point Vision for the Future in his Interim Budget. This, in our view, represents an admission of the failure of the UPA II Government in those very areas. Hence, this critical narrative!

One: Fiscal Consolidation: The vision statement starts with the much touted [and perhaps much maligned] exhortation that we must achieve the target of fiscal deficit of 3% of GDP by 2016-17, and this should remain below that level always. But witness the UPA II government's own performance. With all sorts of what euphemistically can be called as financial engineering" the FM has managed to keep the fiscal deficit to GDP ratio at 4.6% in his revised budget estimates for 2013-14. This ratio conceals maneuvering of several budgetary provisions. Thus, shortfalls in tax and non-tax revenues have been made good by squeezing profits or surpluses of PSUs and the RBI by way of extra dividends and transfers to the coffers of the government. There is a virtual plan holiday with huge cutbacks in the required Plan and capital expenditures.

At the same time, in the name of inclusive development, huge allocations have been made for subsidies and social sector extravaganza – MNREGA, National Food Security, etc and subsidies. While some of these programs can be justified on grounds of more equitable developmental strategy, we cannot be oblivious of the fact of to various instances of large-scale misdirected resource allocations and leakages in the system. Not only have quantitative dimensions of fiscal management been impaired, but even the quality of fiscal discipline has been severely damaged. The restoration of genuine fiscal consolidation will thus have to be the top priority of the next

government.

Two: Current Account Deficit (CAD): The FM sets sanctimonious guidelines that India will run a CAD every year for some more years and this can be financed only by foreign investment, whether it is FDI or FII or ECB or any other kind of foreign inflow. Hence, there is no room for any aversion to foreign investment. What a self-evident truth it is! But the crucial issue is about how much CAD to GDP ratio is sustainable. We have observed that during the UPA II regime, this ratio was allowed to drift progressively from a healthy 1% of GDP in 2006-07 [almost a balanced position] to as much as 4.8% in 2012-13. This led to huge external imbalances, flight of capital and eventual sharp depreciation of the rupee between May and September 2013, thereby forcing both the Government and the RBI to engage in serious "fire-fighting" operations.

Going forward, despite the recent significant recovery in CAD and strengthening of the rupee, the next Government cannot remain complacent about the long-term structural vulnerability in India's external sector, be it excessive dependency on import of energy goods or lack of export competitiveness. Thus, from the viewpoint of import substitution and export capability, the creation of investment-friendly [both domestic and FDI] policy environment has to become an integral part of the next government's economic policy.

Three: Price Stability and Growth: The FM is very good in the art of sermonizing. He states that "in a developing economy we must accept that when our aim is high growth there will be a moderate level of inflation. RBI must strike a balance between price stability and growth while formulating monetary policy". Passing on the burden of resolving the trade-off between price stability and growth to the RBI has truly become his favorite pastime!

But how can the UPA II government absolve itself of any responsibility? It has neither achieved price stability nor restored high economic growth. We strongly contend that surging inflation at double digit rate during 2009-13 – beyond the tolerance norm of 3 to 4% per annum – has been predominantly due to its fiscal misadventures, over-enthusiastic social welfare programs, excessive increases in minimum support prices of key agricultural commodities, widespread corruption and public sector leakages. Surely,

the next government will have to swear by the objective of sustainable relative price stability and build the confidence of consumers and investors to restore the lost economic growth momentum.

Four: Financial Sector Reforms: The FM suggests that the recommendations of the Financial Sector Legislative Reforms Commission, which require no change in legislation must be implemented immediately, and for other recommendations, we must draw a timetable for passing legislation. Doubtless, this is a good strategic intention, but one wonders why during his tenure no action plan in this direction was formulated.

We believe that based on (a) experiences of India's economic reforms of the past over two decades, (b) the aftermath of the global financial crisis, and (c) reports of various expert committees that the new RBI Governor has set up, the next government will have a massive task cut out for itself. There are multiple dimensions of deepening and strengthening the financial sector. There are formidable issues of financial inclusion and creation of vibrant financial sector for promoting investment and growth in the economy. But above all, the most challenging task is how to tackle the growing phenomenon of non-performing assets of banks. In no small measure this is attributable to failures of the economic policies of the UPA II government and its tolerance, nay, even its tacit intervention in supporting bank advances to certain class of dubious borrowers.

Five: Infrastructure: The FM sounds somewhat naïve when he suggests that “we must rebuild our infrastructure and considerably expand the area of new infrastructure. Every proven model must be adopted and the PPP model must be more widely used. New financing structures must be created for long term funds and pooling of investments”. No one can doubt the veracity of such propositions, but the point is that large parts of infrastructure development programs have been stalled during the UPA II government's tenure at the altar of environmental and forest clearances, land acquisition and several deficiencies in the PPP models. This is going to be yet another tough challenge for the next government: on how to re-start debottlenecking stalled infrastructure development programs?

Six: Manufacturing: Doubtless, there would be virtual unanimity on the suggestion to focus on manufacturing and especially on manufacturing for export. For this purpose, the FM proposes that all taxes, Central and the state present, that go into an exported product should be waived or rebated. He further suggests that there should be a minimum tariff protection so that there is an incentive to manufacture goods in India rather than import them into India.

These are well-meaning policy statements. But what

baffles most keen observers and entrepreneurs (both existing and potential) is the current status of the National Manufacturing Policy. The key objectives of this policy announced about three years ago are: (a) to accelerate manufacturing growth at the annual rate of 12 to 13%; (b) raise its share in the national economy to 25% from the present about 15%; and (c) create 100 million additional manufacturing jobs over the next decade or so. But in recent years we have been mute spectators to progressive industrial deceleration and virtual stagnation in manufacturing employment. The obvious fault-lines are in the UPA II government's prolonged policy paralysis; and its sheer complacency that industrial sector will take care of itself.

The next government will have to strive hard to restore confidence of industrial enterprises and build manufacturing competitiveness. Acceleration of industrial growth is a condition precedent to (a) achieving tax buoyancy and shoring up budgetary arithmetic; (b) generating export surpluses; (c) creation of job opportunities for a growing young labour force; and (d) promoting balanced regional development.

Seven: Subsidies: It has become ritualistic for the FM to proclaim that “given the limited resources, and the many claims on the resources, we must choose the subsidies that are absolutely necessary and give them only to the absolutely deserving”. But the record of the UPA II government has been truly pathetic in this area. Despite all the proclamations of technology-based solutions [*a la* AADHAR cards] for reforming subsidies and shifting progressively towards direct cash transfers, the efforts so far have proved to be counter-productive. We have spent huge amounts on technology-based solutions, and simultaneously allowed expansion of existing and creation of new subsidy-based social welfare programs. How would the next government reverse these trends in the wake of limited fiscal space, without being branded as anti-poor, anti-common man?

Eight: Urbanization: The vision statement warns that “our cities will become ungovernable, and perhaps unlivable, if we do not address the decay in our cities. Cities have wealth, cities also create wealth. That wealth should be tapped for resources to rebuild the cities with a new model of governance”. But what is going to be the new model of governance? Various expert committees and eminent urban planners have from time to time unfolded alternative strategies to deal with challenges of rapid urbanization. Over the next quarter century, India will become more urban and its urban population is likely to exceed the rural population in numbers.

But alongside the challenges of managing urban infrastructure and various related problems, there will

equally be the daunting tasks of dealing with the growing demands and aspirations of the rural sector. The next government cannot afford to ignore the urgency of overcoming the widespread inadequacies of rural infrastructure and imperatives of creating millions of off-farm employment opportunities in rural areas for the rural labour force. Or else there will be more distressed rural migrants crowding the already overcrowded cities.

Nine: Skill Development: Once again, there are pious intentions of making skill development rank high in the priorities of the government alongside secondary education, university education, total sanitation and universal health care. For the past over a decade, we have been under the delusion that India would automatically reap the “demographic dividend” being endowed with the prospect of the largest youth labour-force. But the missing link is capacity building for skill development. And this, despite various efforts to promote vocational education and training programs. The next government will have to make this as one its major focus areas of developmental strategy.

Ten: Ssharing Responsibility Between States and Centre: The FM would have us believe that states have the fiscal space to bear a reasonable proportion of the financial costs of implementing flagship programmes and must willingly do so, so that the Central Government can allocate more resources for subjects such as defence, railways, national highways and telecommunications that are its exclusive responsibility. One wonders whether even the Congress-

ruled states would easily accept this proposition, even granting its legitimacy. More importantly, with the rise of local/regional political leadership, the Center-states relationship needs to be evolved on a more harmonious basis. This has to go beyond the existing format either as the Finance Commission’s award [enshrined by the Constitution] or that of the Planning Commission [within the planning framework]. Surely, the next government must show political sagacity to deal with such a complex task.

To sum up, almost all the facets of the FM’s 10-point Vision for the Future have found their reflections from time to time in various official and expert committee reports, including those of the Planning Commission. The only creditable aspect is that it has been put together very succinctly. Whether this Vision is of the UPA coalition partners or only of the Congress Party, one is not sure! Whether this would find place in their election manifesto is also not clear. From our perspective, it is implicit acceptance of the fault-lines in the economic legacy of the UPA II government and a belated effort to envision course correction in case it is re-elected for a third time to form the government. The nagging question still remains: how and who will drive this vision! For this, we, the people of India must, indeed, have to be fortunate enough to have a better outcome from the forthcoming general election – ushering in a responsible and responsive, stable government!

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Towards a New Tax Regime

Dattatraya R. Pendse

I will restrict to a small area viz. fiscal policy; [and be brief, with its own limitations].

1. Our tax regime is beyond repair. It has to be replaced.
2. Nets kill the fish. Tax paying citizens loathe entering the tax-net. Welcome them on genuine tax carpets instead.

A sampler:

3. Lower the marginal personal income tax rate from 30% to say, 25% after incomes exceeded, say, Rs.2 crores. Enjoy the tax flood from the rich.
4. Any tax payer who has paid promptly and fully his total tax liability for five consecutive years should be given a totally tax free sixth year.
5. Abolish the individual tax altogether, close down the Income Tax Departments promptly and permit the affected staff to receive their salaries at home until they are absorbed elsewhere against future retirements.
6. [Even a duly sophisticated version of the recently talked about Banking Transaction Tax (BTT) should be favorably considered.]
7. Honour the high tax payers by Kar-Ratna awards; or in suitable cases by issuing postage stamps in their honour.

8. The Corporate tax rate should be declared to be reduced by one percentage point every year for five years. Any other changes in the corporate tax structure should be effective three years after being made...
9. We do not need additional revenue, or additional modes of collecting it. There should in fact be an absolute ceiling on total government expenditure at the 2013-14 Revised Estimates. Within the government, inter-ministerial transactions, on commercial lines, should be encouraged at the discretion of concerned Ministers
10. One can go on. But please do not panic. There is no fear of any of these being put in practice. For two reasons: First, the vested interests benefitting from the current corrupt and damaging regime are so powerful that they will ensure such thoughts are nipped in the bud. Secondly, despite free speech in our free country, there prevails something like a censorship of fashion. Anyone who challenges the wishy washy conventional wisdom will be frowned upon and derided as being ignorant or reactionary.
11. Alas!

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Why Different Yardsticks for the Farmer Community?

Sharad Joshi

The Deputy Governor of RBI, K.C. Chakravarty, disclosed at a conference that the data collected by RBI showed that in 2008 when the finance minister announced loan waivers of Rs.60,000 crores for the farmers, certain big corporates complained and protested against this decision. Interestingly loans amounting to Rs.11,000 crores overdue from the same Corporates were waived by the banks subsequently!

The farmers might have wondered who this new avatar is taking the side of farmers. It was nothing but one more proof given by the Deputy Governor of the application of a separate set of norms for the farmers and others in the society. However, this information is incomplete. One cannot compare the loans overdue from farmers with the ones overdue from Corporates.

The main reason behind the indebtedness of farmers is non-remunerative prices given to agricultural produce because of government policies which always ensure that the farmers do not get remunerative prices under any circumstances. The abysmal poverty of farmers is caused by the fact that the proceeds of the crops do not cover even the bare minimum cost of production, let alone the repayment of loans. The government does provide loans to farmers, but by imposing negative subsidy, it creates a situation where the farmers are unable to pay even the electricity bills which constitute the major expense in agriculture. Thus a situation is created where the contract of loan repayment becomes impossible to honour. The Indian Contract Act provides that if a party to a contract creates a situation which makes the performance of contract by other party impossible, then it is discharged and comes to an end. Therefore the loans due from the farmers are not only unlawful but also immoral. By this definition the farmers' loans and the overdue electricity bills both become illicit.

Due to the policy of negative subsidy, the Government was liable to the extent of Rs.3 lac crores to the farmers during the 20 year period 1981-2000. The overdue loans from the farmers were Rs.1.30 lac crores as reported by Radhakrishna Committee which are much less compared to the

Government's liability towards the farmers because of negative subsidy. The loan waiver of Rs.60,000 to Rs.70,000 crore is also negligible. There is nothing illegitimate if a farmer refuses to repay this loan by declaring himself bankrupt or by any other means. Corporates do not have to bear the burden of negative subsidy. Instead they get concessions in the form of export subsidy from the government. Therefore it is incorrect to compare the loan waiver of farmers with that of the Corporates. The farmers have now become used to this kind of discriminating treatment. The ill effects of this policy are manifested in some form or the other.

"All are equal before the Judiciary" is a common principle of law. However, this is not true in the case of farmers. I made a small study of all the prisoners in the jail when I was put behind bars during the farmers' agitation. I found that most prisoners were farmers who were facing life imprisonment. In many cases they had hit the heads of the neighbouring farmers with an axe or lathi in the course of a quarrel over dispute over farm borders. I did not find a single person who was literate or who knew English. They might have been booked for



trials but were set free by the courts. This study showed me how deep rooted the conflict was between India and Bharat. I then started delivering lectures for the advocates who practiced in the High Courts of various states on the subject of “Whether the judiciary is non discriminating towards the farmers”.

It is amazing that the same day when Mr. Chakravarty made his statement, the announcement was made of bestowing “*Bharat Ratna*” on Sachin Tendulkar.

If you glimpse through the list of persons in the field of agriculture or who worked for farmers and have got “*Padma*” award you will understand the government’s abhorrence of the farmers. It is not that there were no claimants for the award; people who have worked for the cause of Indian farmers in pre-independent era have also not been awarded any “*Padma*”. Here I am reminded of Sir Chhotu Ram – one of the most prominent pre-partition politicians in Punjab who tried to create a non-sectarian peasant group consciousness. His Unionist Party of India ruled Punjab for many years. It demonstrated a cross-communal alliance of Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims which is evident from the fact that Mr. Jinnah could not enter Punjab till the time Sir Chhotu Ram was alive. Possibly that could have been the reason why Sir Chhotu Ram was not honoured.

Sir Chhoturam had deep insight into the conditions then prevailing in India. He had suggested two important things to Mahatma Gandhi the first of which was not to bring religion into social life. Sir Chhoturam was a follower of Arya Samaj. He always used to say “I am an Arya Samaji within the four walls of my house; once I step out of my home, my religion and caste have no relevance”. Because of these principles the Unionist Party could succeed in Punjab. The second suggestion was about the adoption of civil disobedience movement as a method in the freedom struggle. He told Gandhiji that the British had established the rule of law in the country after a very long time. It was a gift of the British to India. Therefore, he requested Gandhiji to choose any method for the freedom struggle other than civil disobedience which involved breaking of law by the people.

Sir Chhoturam got the ‘Land Alienation Act’ passed in Punjab whereby money lenders could not forfeit farmers’ land. It was designed to protect the land ownership of the peasantry by forbidding any kind of transfer of property or land to a member of a non-agricultural class like moneylenders. Ironically Lala Lajpatrai had opposed this law.

Let’s see other great personalities in the field of

agriculture made a contribution to the country. Lal Bahadur Shastri sowed the seeds of the Green Revolution in India during the decade 1966-70 and freed India of its dependence on the USA for food. He tackled several problems such as food shortages, unemployment and poverty. To overcome acute food shortage, he initially imported food grains and distributed them throughout the country. He also drew long-term plans to render the country self-sufficient in food grains production. In 1965 during the India-Pakistan War, Lal Bahadur Shastri gave us the slogan “*Jai Jawan Jai Kisan*”. He also called on the people of the country to fast at least once in a week to lessen the burden on food grains.

Due to the Green Revolution he initiated, India became self-sufficient in food grains. He should have been conferred the *Bharat Ratna* award, but you will never hear his name being considered for the award; reason could be that he was representing farmers’ class. There are so many farmers and scientists who have done commendable research in agriculture but never come into the limelight and go unnoticed. Even Dr. M. S. Swaminathan, an advocate of the Green Revolution technology who contributed the lion’s share in making India self-sufficient in the food grains, was conferred with many awards but not the Bharat Ratna.

What could be the reason for the Government’s as well as the society’s abhorrence of farmers? The caste system might be one of them. It is unfair to judge the farmers community with a different yard stick.

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Cornucopia

Firoze Hirjika

Manmohan Singh – A Political Obituary

*He discovered that as long as he implicitly obeyed the diktats of the high command;
and turned a blind eye to what his Ministers were doing, he could avoid
the confrontation he found so abhorrent.*

So the time has come to write the political obituary of one of India's most enigmatic Prime Ministers. In the words of Roger Erbert, Manmohan Singh is a "riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma". He is a one-time financial wizard now sunk into a somnolent stupor from which he shows no sign of awaking. If he once had dreams of leaving behind an enduring legacy, he has long since abandoned them. Having enjoyed a decade of pomp and privilege associated with the position of Prime Minister, he now seems content to retire into comfortable obscurity.

In his heyday in the early 1990s, Manmohan Singh was regarded as something of a magician who almost completely transformed the lives of ordinary Indians, particularly those residing in cities and towns. Indians in their thirties and younger probably have no concept of what conditions were like for the previous generation. Nehruvian socialism had a stranglehold on not just the economy, but every aspect of daily life. Forget about the nation's horrendous balance of payment deficit. India was a backwoods country where people drove just two models of cars which had long become obsolete in the rest of the world; and even for those clunkers there was a year long waiting list. It took months to get a telephone or electricity connection. Foreign brands were unattainable luxuries worth their weight in gold. As Finance Minister in the Narasimha Rao government, Singh junked Nehru's policies and opened up India to the rest of the world. It was a bold and revolutionary move by a Congressman, and the Dynasty had to grin and bear it because there was no alternative. Capitalism, which had hitherto been a bad word, became acceptable. Indians perceived its benefits and embraced it wholeheartedly.

I believe Manmohan Singh's decline began when he was appointed as Prime Minister. Singh is essentially a career bureaucrat reluctantly thrust into politics. When Sonia Gandhi magnanimously "sacrificed" the PM *gaddi*, she probably thought that Singh was a safe bet who could be relied to toe the Dynasty's line and not get ideas above his station. She proved to be absolutely right. As Finance Minister and Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, Singh was in a milieu he was comfortable with. He had to deal mainly with others who spoke his

language and that brought out the best in him. Singh has always been uncomfortable with confrontation even with satraps of his own Party, let alone the Opposition.

Being PM was a novel experience for him, and he started out tentatively. He soon discovered however, that the job wasn't too bad after all. State visits where important world leaders ostensibly treated him as an equal; one on one meeting with American Presidents who showered praise on him; these were very gratifying. He also discovered that as long as he implicitly obeyed the diktats of the high command; and turned a blind eye to what his Ministers were doing, he could avoid the confrontation he found so abhorrent. He also mastered the technique of countering uncomfortable questions with an enigmatic smile, or appearing in the public eye as seldom as possible. He was aware of the public perception that Sonia Gandhi was the power behind the throne; and that suited him just fine. As long as he was perceived to be not directly responsible for acts of commission and omission of his government, he could not be blamed either. His method of dealing with troublesome coalition ministers who did their own thing - notably, lining their pockets - and openly disdained his leadership was simple. He did not confront them or try to control them: he simply ignored them. He was a statesman after all. He could leave the dirty business of politics to those that revelled in it.

My take is that Manmohan Singh regarded his Prime Ministership as a post-retirement sinecure. He made up his mind at the outset to enjoy the pomp and pageantry the job provided, particularly the State visits where he could expound his world vision and be treated like an elder statesman. Even though he sincerely believed in parliamentary democracy, he considered himself above the maelstrom of Indian politics; and criticism just washed over him like water off a duck's back. Even allowing for his limitations, one expected him to at least take charge of the economy, his forte; and this was the one failure the people could not forgive him for. To be fair to Singh however, he was never allowed a free hand. Sonia Gandhi and her profligate National Advisory Council (NAC) called the shots. The NAC, explicitly supported by the Empress, was big on idealism but severely lacking in practicality.

They simply proposed and left the finance part to others. Incidentally, I believe Sonia Gandhi's heart genuinely bleeds for India's poor, but she is too financially unsophisticated to be aware of the consequences of her largesse. Inevitably, Manmohan Singh was left holding the bag. One can almost feel sorry for him; though not quite.

And so, as Manmohan Singh rides off into the sunset, we wish him a not so fond farewell. Our next Prime Minister is going to be diametrically opposite; decisive, authoritarian and determined to ram through his agenda. It sounds ideal, but it may well turn out to be too much of a good thing. Remember Indira Gandhi. Time will tell.

President Modi

The strategy of projecting Modi as a decisive strongman is actually quite astute from a political standpoint. After all, the country is fed up and disheartened with the current PM, who comes across as timid, vacillating and indifferent – in short, the antithesis of what a leader should be.

Let's face it. The impending general election will not be a contest between the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Congress; or between the BJP and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP); or even between the BJP and a putative Third front. The contest is between Narendra Modi and everyone else – including some leaders of his own party.

When the BJP took the unconventional step of announcing their Prime Ministerial candidate months before the scheduled elections, their aim was to rattle the Congress – and they succeeded brilliantly. The Congress fear of Modi is bordering on paranoia. Their mantra seems to be that anything – giving up seats, compromising with former enemies, even sacrificing some of their own stalwarts – is preferable to allowing Modi full dictatorial powers. Their fear is not entirely unjustified. Up to now, change of regimes have been relatively painless, if somewhat acrimonious. The outgoing dispensation was reasonably confident that their dirty secrets— notably those related to corruption – would not be punished, since the new rulers were equally guilty of having their hands in the till. Narendra Modi, however, is a different kettle of fish. His own image is relatively free of scandal; and if the venom he spews forth is to be believed, he despises the Congress with a vengeance. The perception is that he has nothing to lose by doing the unthinkable: removing the immunity from prosecution that political satraps have enjoyed since Independence.

If the Congress is terrified, some members of Modi's party are not too sanguine either. Already, some senior stalwarts have been sidelined; and the rest are painfully aware that Modi pays only lip service to parliamentary democracy; and when he ascends the throne, he will function more like a President than a Prime Minister. He has already demonstrated this in Gujarat, where he is the undisputed Commander-in-Chief and brooks no opposition from any quarter. Look at the full page ads recently appearing in national newspapers. The ads are ostensibly

about the BJP's achievements and promises, but look closely. The subject of one such ad is "India First", but that is just the fine print. The page is dominated by a life size portrait of Modi, looking Presidential. No other BJP leaders are visible, not even as addendums. The message is clear. Modi is the BJP and the BJP is Modi. Anyone else is irrelevant.

The strategy of projecting Modi as a decisive strongman is actually quite astute from a political standpoint. After all, the country is fed up and disheartened with the current PM, who comes across as timid, vacillating and indifferent – in short, the antithesis of what a leader should be. Modi presents a refreshing change. Moreover, in making the election a contest between national leaders instead of between party ideologies, Modi is playing up his strengths. No one can match Modi in oratorical flourishes, or his reputation as someone untainted by corruption. Even the relatively clean Rahul Gandhi has no effective counter to Modi's snide barbs against the Family, which have proved to be immense crowd pleasers. When the shezada is goaded to retort, he comes across as churlish and becomes the butt of ridicule.

Now that Modi seems pre-ordained to ascend to the top job, what will the country be like under his rule – and trust me, it will be an iron rule, quite unlike the fractured polity we have become used to. Those who have been bemoaning the indecisiveness and procrastination of the present government will be elated; although it is more likely to be governance by diktat rather than consensus. Ironically, the very raucous tactics employed by the BJP to continually disrupt Parliament will probably be put down with an iron fist in Modi's domain. My take is that Opposition parties and even recalcitrant allies will be dealt with firmly, maybe even with a touch of ruthlessness. The BJP often complains that the Congress is interfering with India's federal structure, but the Centre may exercise even greater control over the states under Modi's rule. Yes, Modi

will stress on development, but it will be on his terms and according to his rules.

And what of the BJP itself? The party may have discovered a supremely effective secret weapon in Modi, but I suspect some party leaders are beginning to realize they may have created a Frankenstein's monster that they now find difficult to control. Like all other political parties, the BJP has a hierarchy and a system. There is a nominal supreme leader, but the senior leaders retain their influence and followers and enjoy a fair degree of autonomy. There is a tacit understanding that the satraps will make the right

noises, but will internally accommodate each other and will not interfere in the primary occupation of feathering their own nests. Now Modi threatens to turn this cosy arrangement on its head. Congress and the regional parties are understandably nervous of this strange entity they have rarely encountered before - and so is the BJP. It is hard to predict if a Modi government will be a success or a failure. One thing is sure however. The people of India are about to have a government experience last seen during the heyday of Indira Gandhi. They have been clamouring for change - and they may get more of it than they had bargained for. Watch this space.

My Totally Unscientific Poll Predictions

I've always felt that Modi peaked a bit too early. He has been giving essentially the same stump speech for months now; and it is getting a bit stale.

Since everyone and his grandmother have taken to predicting the results of the forthcoming general election, I thought I would get into the act too. The difference is, my guesstimates are totally unscientific. They are not based on surveys or scholarly research, but purely on my gut feeling. If even half of them turn out to be accurate, no one will be more surprised than me. Anyway, here goes.

Let us start with the BJP. According to the pundits, Narendra Modi's ascension to the throne is inevitable and pre-ordained. This is probably true. The dichotomy is that the challenge, if any, to Modi will come not from the Congress or the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), or the regional parties, but from within the BJP itself. Here's one indicator. Modi has announced his intention to contest a second seat, besides in Gujarat, from Varanasi or Lucknow. Why an irresistible force like Modi feels the need to hedge his bets is for him to say. Anyway, neither of the incumbents, Murli Manohar Joshi or Rajnath Singh respectively, seems to be eager to take a bullet for the King-Emperor. Modi may eventually get his way, but it will be messy. Also word is that the other two aspirants to the BJP throne, Arun Jaitley and Sushma Swaraj - as well as veteran L. K. Advani - would not be averse to the Great Leader taken down a peg or two.

The Congress is universally regarded as the underdog, which has its advantages. Since expectations are so low, no political outfit is expending much energy in taking the Grand Old Party down. Moreover, I've always felt that Modi peaked a bit too early. He has been giving essentially the same stump speech for months now; and it is getting a bit stale. Even the digs at the Dynasty are becoming monotonous. Rahul Gandhi, on the other hand, is just hitting his stride. He has wisely decided not to

compete with Modi in terms of massive rallies and rhetorical speeches. He is instead talking to disparate small constituencies which unexpectedly could coalesce into a significant vote bank. The BJP is giving him free rein because they have already written off the Congress as irrelevant and no longer a threat. This indifference is beneficial to the Congress, as it leaves them at liberty to spring a few surprises.

The new kid on the block, the AAP is very adroitly playing the spoiler. Their grandstanding and sensational "disclosures" are alternatively evoking feelings of outrage, dismay and admiration. It is to Arvind Kejriwal's credit that of all the political leaders, he alone has been able to rattle the omnipotent Narendra Modi.

To conclude then, the BJP will be the single largest single party, but will have to scramble to cobble together enough allies to get a majority. The perception of the Congress being reduced to double digits may be premature and they may yet give a respectable account of themselves. The regional satraps will reserve judgement about alliances until they observe which way the political wind is blowing after the election results are announced. So will the joker in the pack, the AAP. If it gets 40-plus seats - which is not as farfetched as it seems - they may shed their broadcast neutrality and align with the Congress. They will justify it as a necessary compromise to fulfil their duty to keep out the "communal" BJP. That is my throw of the dice anyway. Place your bets.

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Point Counter Point

Ashok Karnik

Every issue has at least two sides. A wise person examines all sides before coming to a conclusion. This is an attempt to present various sides of an issue so that a considered opinion can be formed.

Elections–2014

1. For the first time in decades, voters have a chance to make a difference. The normally immovable ruling party has realized that its vote banks no longer guarantee success and it has to reach out to the much ignored middle class to secure its support. The thinking voters have sensed that their opinions and choices would make a difference for the first time since 1977. Then there was a choice between what was perceived as evil and what was presented as good. Similar choices have opened up again although there is nothing black and white as it appeared in 1977. This time it is more subtle as choices are multiple: a choice to end an opaque and non-responsive administration and to end (?) corruption as well as squash Government's notion that a party with majority has no need to answer any questions; obfuscation and legal hair-splitting are enough. There are alternative formulations that offer a lot but also leave a lot of questions unanswered. Voters are bemused with the choices available. The good thing is that there are choices. There is hope accompanied by apprehension that all may not end up in another non-functional Government.

1. This is a season of promises when nothing is impossible to get. Free water and electricity, cheap houses, slum rehabilitation, subsidized food, toll-free roads, free TVs or laptops, corruption-free administration are there for grabs. Who pays for it and for how long? Perhaps all this would ruin us financially for the next decade but who cares when political power is at stake? Can anybody be asked to explain the economics or is such debate only for the cynics? In any case, once it is claimed that it is the people's right to get everything free, there is nothing left to argue. In the rush to get votes, everything is promised but there is certainty that nothing would be delivered. What does a voter look for? Since 'The End of History', ideology is nearly dead and the only thing voters can look for is programmes and performance. Who are capable of delivering the programmes they announce? The choice is between old, dysfunctional but familiar street vendor (Congress), decisive but possibly abrasive action (Modi), regional icons incapable of joining hands (Third Front), promise of an elixir that may lead to chaotic changes (AAP). Exciting times ahead!

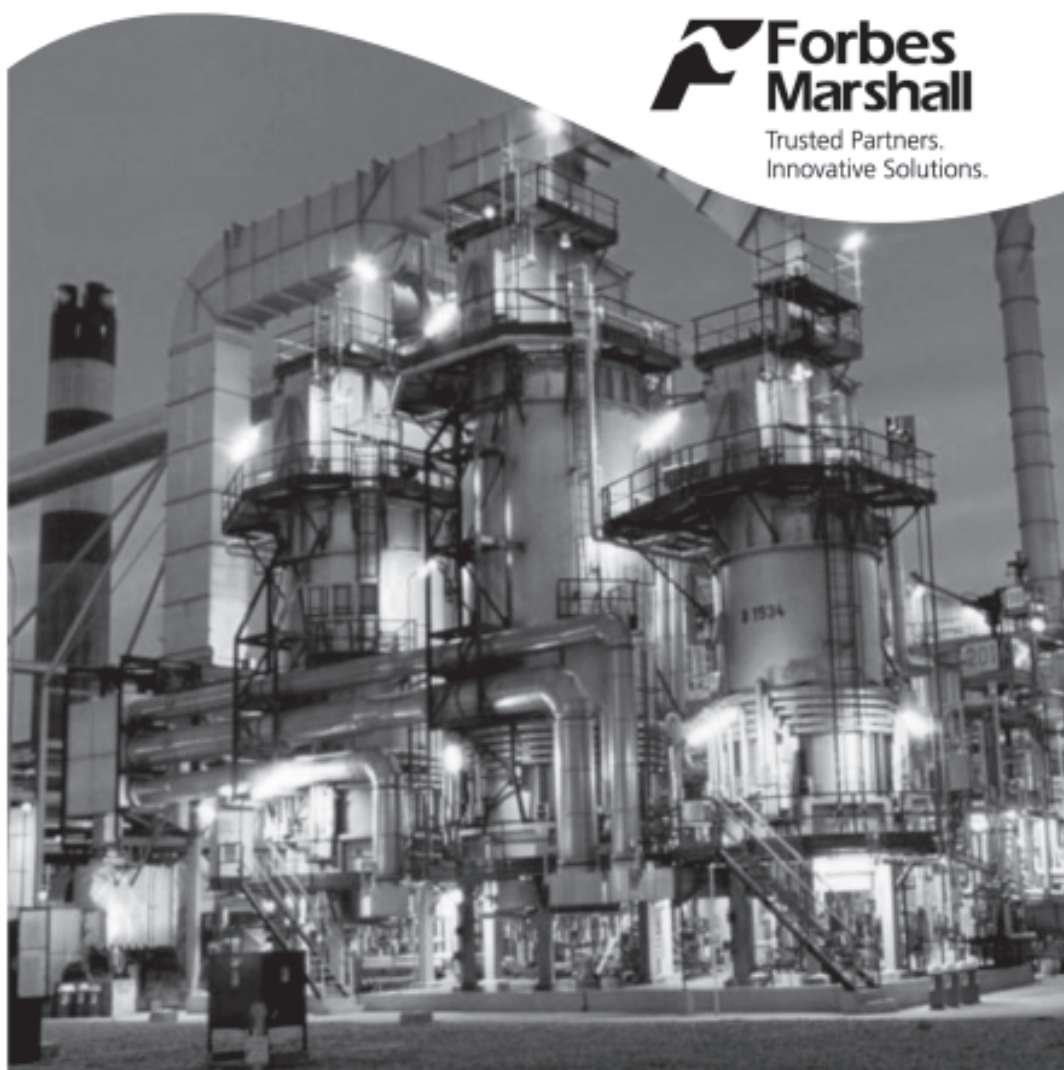
Freeing Rajiv's Killers

2. The Supreme Court remitted the death sentence passed on three of Rajiv Gandhi's assassins on the grounds that there was inordinate delay in deciding their mercy petition. As soon as this happened, the convicts were supposed to revert to their jail term which could have been life term till death. However, politics stepped in and the Tamilnadu Government which is sympathetic to the Tamil cause immediately granted them remission from the jail sentence. This raised a storm as the rest of the country – even those opposed to capital punishment – could not digest that ruthless assassins of our ex-Prime Minister could now roam free. The state government took advantage of Section 432 of CrPC which allows the 'Appropriate Government' to grant remission of jail terms. There is quibbling over interpretation of the Section; the Supreme Court would deliver its learned view on the matter. For the moment, it has stayed the remission but we need to guard against legal hair-splitting.

2. The Central Government argued that the accused were convicted under Central laws and therefore the Centre was the 'Appropriate Government' to consider the remission issue. The course to be followed by the 'Appropriate Government' is not clear and we may be faced with a situation where Khalistani terrorists would be released by Punjab, Kashmiri terrorists by J&K, Assamese separatists by Assam and so on. It is not a matter of legal interpretation but of national will to stop terrorism of all kinds. A terrorist convicted of killing an important leader or innocent citizens cannot be allowed to walk free because of change in political alignments. National security should not be trifled with just because a state government wants to placate a local group. Hope the Supreme Court goes beyond legalese and gives directives based on the spirit of law. If necessary, Parliament should amend the law to remove ambiguities and ensure that justice does not become a plaything of parochial forces.



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Tainted Leaders

3. As elections near, the claims of political parties about fighting corruption get exposed. They start finding excuses to give tickets to their tainted leaders who they believe have winnable qualities and cannot be ignored. The quest for maximum seats dilutes their will to fight corruption. Excuses are then trotted out that the tainted men are only under legal scrutiny but not convicted; if convicted, the argument is that their appeals are pending in higher courts. Indian jurisprudence is quoted to point out the lofty principle that no man is guilty till proven so. Everybody knows that under our legal system, appeals up to Supreme Court would take about 15-20 years to settle if the accused has enough money to spend on lawyers. Every political leader could thus escape the finality of conviction till his political life is over. It is a paradox that a country which is proud of its moral heritage has no system in place to bar corrupt politicians. The Supreme Court has shown a ray of hope by ordering that a convicted legislator would automatically get disqualified – appeals notwithstanding; and further by prescribing that criminal cases against MPs and MLAs should be decided within one year so that the convicts' legislative position could be terminated quickly. The efficacy of this decision needs to be tested.

3. Prior to the Supreme Court directive (March 10), the allegation - charge-sheet - conviction - appeal - syndrome obstructed action against any corrupt leader. For example, cases of Suresh Kalmadi of the Commonwealth Games ignominy and Ashok Chavan of the Adarsh scam were advocated by no less a person than Narayansami, Minister in the PMO, who claimed that neither had been convicted yet. It is obvious that the Minister was not bothered about moral considerations. It is said that Caesar's wife should be above suspicion but in India politicians can be tarred and can still be projected as pristine pure. This effrontery is amazing when Rahul Gandhi has been shouting from rooftops what all his party had done to fight corruption! Paradoxically and fortunately, Manish Tewari, another Minister, took a moral position that tainted leaders, whether charge-sheeted or not, should not be selected as candidates. BJP has already made an exception in the case of Yeddyurappa who faces charges but is not convicted yet. The Congress has found a way of winking at corruption by having an alliance with Lalu Prasad Yadav who was disqualified after conviction. Another way of ignoring corruption is to give tickets not to tainted leaders but to their relatives in a desperate bid not to lose the pockets of support the tainted leaders supposedly have.

Indian Mujahideen (IM)

4. NIA's charge sheet against IM co-founder Yasin Bhatkal is revealing in the sense that IM's linkages with the ISI / Al Qaeda are once again exposed. Politicians who wondered whether the IM really existed should wake up at least now to the clear and present danger to our security. The NIA charge sheet reveals that the IM leadership in Pakistan is helped by the ISI and is trying to develop links with the Al Qaeda. It has opened an arms factory in Delhi and has established units in Rajasthan. It has been given the task of avenging the atrocities on Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar. ISI paid Rs.25 crore to the IM and was trying to control its activities which the IM resisted. The IM was entertaining ideas of getting a nuclear device from Pakistan to explode it in Surat and seek assistance from Al Qaeda in order to work independently of the ISI. They also claimed that some IM cadres were fighting on the Af-Pak border. All this may be difficult to corroborate.

4 All this is based on confessions of IM members and interception of electronic chats between those in India and their leaders in Pakistan. Such confessions should not be taken at face value as there is a lot of boasting and bravado in talks between criminals. For example, the Bhatkal brothers claim that they were trying to get a nuclear device for exploding it in Surat; it is implausible because even if such a device becomes available, the Al Qaeda would not give it to the IM as it has more vital targets to attack. The talk of training its cadres with Al Qaeda is also to be taken with a pinch of salt. Such talks hint at attempts to display self-importance. Ideas of global expansion may be just hot air. Nevertheless the danger must be taken note of by Indian security agencies as it points to potential source of terrorism from young men fired by hatred, passion and bravado. Yasin Bhatkal has declared that if he is freed he would plant bombs again. It shows the mind-set even if it is merely a boast.

Readers are invited to email their points of view on serious issues of the day to ashokkarnik2001@yahoo.co.in.

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Exercise or Military Coup?

Suresh C. Sharma

In 1966, the Defence Minister, Y. B. Chavan, asked the COAS, General J. N. Chaudhuri, about the possibility of a military coup in India and the Army Chief had replied that such a possibility did not exist.

The movement of one military unit each from Agra and Hissar to Delhi on the intervening night of 15 and 16 January 2012 coincided with the filing of the appeal by the Army Chief, General V. K. Singh in the Supreme Court regarding his date of birth. The Ministry of Defence was alerted by the Intelligence Agency about a military coup. This allegation of a coup was prominently reported in *The Indian Express*. The Army HQ clarified it as a routine exercise for movement drills. The Defence Minister confirmed this viewpoint and the Prime Minister called the allegation an affront to the dignity of the Armed Forces. In due course of time, the din about the incident cooled off.

A shocking revelation has recently been made by Lt.Gen. A. K. Choudhary, the then Director General Military Operations [DGMO], that the Defence Secretary had called him late at night on that day and asked him to ensure that the units be immediately sent back to their respective stations. The Intelligence Agency was directed to check the return of the troops from a helicopter. No one reasoned whether there was adequate number of troops in Delhi for a coup. The Defence Minister has reiterated his views of the unlikelihood of a military coup. It is not clear why General Choudhary decided to open the case now when the dust had settled. Is it to allege that the Defence Minister and the Army Chief had concealed the facts of the alert? It is of interest that the Defence Secretary contacted the DGMO and not the Army Chief. It certainly displays a lack of trust between the civil and military leaders.

Legacy of Mistrust

Apprehension of a military coup and lack of trust of the defence services by the Congress governments is a legacy inherited from Nehru. Immediately after taking over as Prime Minister, Nehru told the C-in-C that India did not face any threats and there was no need for an army. While being conducted on a tour of the North Block, he saw a few military officers in a room and walked out. He was told by the accompanying civil servant that they were members of the Military Wing of the Cabinet Secretariat. Nehru ordered that they should not come in

uniform but come to the office in civil dress. The defence services personnel take pride in their uniform.

The day General Thimayya, DSO, took over as Chief of Army Staff [COAS], Nehru walked into his office to congratulate him. The COAS was so taken aback that he remained transfixed. Nehru took the visitor's chair and talked about Thimayya's sister whose husband had recently died in an accident. Pointing to a steel chest next to the table, Nehru asked whether it was a treasure chest. Thimayya replied that the top drawer contained operational plans for the defence of Western and Northern borders while the second one had dossiers of senior officers which the Prime Minister would need for carrying out promotions. "And the third one?" asked Nehru. With a mischievous smile, Thimayya replied that "it contained the only copy of a plan for a military coup and I keep it under my personal care." This perhaps nursed the seed of suspicion which was already there.

In 1966, the Defence Minister, Y. B. Chavan, asked the COAS, General J. N. Chaudhuri, about the possibility of a military coup in India and the Army Chief had replied that such a possibility did not exist. Firstly, there was respect for a constitutional government amongst all sections of the society. Secondly, the country had a vast size and the government machinery was decentralized. A coup at the Centre without similar action in the states would fail. It was possible that a situation may arise when the Central Government may order the Army to take over a particular state or region. But that may take some time as redeployment of the army may be necessary. The Government can easily meet such a situation by declaring martial law. The Defence Minister could not have raised this subject on his own but must have been directed by Indira Gandhi to discuss it.

The President's Powers

A situation may arise when the President could order the COAS to take over. The Constitution is clear on this issue. The President can only act on the advice

(Continued on page 7)

‘Dragon’ (Bull) in the China Shop:

A Complex Challenge Confronting the US and the World

B. Ramesh Babu

The ASEAN nations went through a period of anxiety over possible “dual hegemony” of the US and China together. President Obama toyed with the idea and sounded Beijing about it during his State visit to the country. For reasons best known to her, China did not fall for it.

Of late China has been flexing its muscles and all her neighbours in Asia-Pacific are a worried lot. Long dormant territorial and jurisdictional disputes between China on the one side and Japan, Vietnam, Philippines, Malaysia, South Korea and Indonesia on the other are erupting into the open. Beijing’s assertion of protecting her maritime rights is a euphemism for coerced seizure of coastal rights of China’s neighbours. China’s strategy is to deal with each targeted country one by one separately through coercive diplomacy and not let all of them gang up against her. China’s aggressive ambitions are revealed by its conveniently vague and expanding “nine-dash line” maritime claims stretching all the way to the coasts of Vietnam, Malaysia and Philippines. This line has no legal basis and the Chinese choose not to define what it represents. The Philippines has filed an international arbitration claim challenging the “nine-dash line”. The outcome belongs to the future. In any case, China is unlikely to heed to the “legal limits” laid down by any international authority or institution.

At their 2011 meeting, the ASEAN (with China’s acquiescence) adopted a “code of conduct” for dealing with the growing number of territorial and maritime jurisdictional disputes in the vast region. China chose to defy the resolution even before the ink was dry. The ASEAN nations were worried on two counts: (a) their economic and commercial over-dependence on China; and (b) the continuing legacy of their dependence for security on the US. In fact they went through a period of anxiety over possible “dual hegemony” of the US and China together. Fortunately, for them and the rest of the world, such a prospect did not materialize, though early in his first term President Obama toyed with the idea and sounded Beijing about it during his State visit to the country. For reasons best known to her, China did not fall for it. They saw it as a trap to co-opt the country into the extant global hegemony of the US as a junior partner. On his part, Obama quickly retreated from the ill advised step because of the hostile response it evoked all over the region (including from India). Wiser counsels quickly reasserted themselves in Washington.

China Activates Dispute with Japan

The long dormant dispute over the islands called the Senkaku by Japan and the Diaoyu by China has been heating up recently. A few years ago the Ambassadors of the two countries exchanged verbal blows at the UN. The Chinese Ambassador accused Japan of “stealing” China’s islands. The US efforts to cool them down did not make much headway. Since then the situation has become tense because the Chinese coast guard vessels and planes shadow the islands on a daily basis. In fact this harassment has become the only predictable event in the gathering conflict between the two countries! It must be added that the Chinese have been training their forces for what they expect to be a “short, sharp war” in case of a military conflict with Japan over the islands.

The latest (February 2014) meeting of the Stockholm China Forum held in the context of the changing political-military map in Asia gives us a peep into what is cooking in the volatile region. At this annual event co-sponsored by the Shanghai Institute of International Studies and the German Marshall Fund of the United States, a Chinese military expert waxed eloquent on “the benign inevitability of Beijing’s rising power in the Pacific.” He went on to reassure the international assemblage by remarking: “You should trust China. In ten years we will be much stronger, and you will feel safer”. Most of the several dozen European and American experts (among others) gathered were hardly reassured. Instead, there was a consensus, even among most of the Chinese participants, that China’s growing military power did not make her neighbours feel safe at all. On the contrary, this has led to friction over the disputed islands and maritime rights.

China Aims to be a Global Super Power

As China continues to grow as an economic super power, her ambition to grow into a military power in the region and beyond is gaining ground among the top leaders and also at the popular level. A sense of destiny and patriotism bordering on chauvinism are on the rise. China has never hidden her intention to be a global superpower

and its passionate opposition to America's global hegemony. So far China has been prudent to avoid direct collision against the US. China is fully aware of the preponderant superiority of her mighty adversary. It is biding its time. In the meanwhile, China has been steadily arming herself extensively and in an orchestrated manner. Early in March 2014, the National People's Congress (China's Parliament) proposed a 12.2 per cent increase in the defence spending in view of the "high risk security environment" in the region marked by rising territorial tensions with many neighbours. At 130 billion dollars the country's annual defence budget is second only to that of the US (which stands at \$600 billion). This is the third successive year for China's defence budget to be hiked over ten per cent annually.

As per her doctrine of "strategic asymmetry," China has been selectively reinforcing her "defence and offence" capabilities on a significant scale. By destroying its own satellite in outer space a few years ago, China demonstrated that it could defend itself against incoming ICBMs and satellite launched rockets. The US mainland is now within the range of China's ICBMs. While rocket for rocket or weapon for weapon the country cannot match the US, Chinese security experts are convinced that their strategy of "enough is enough" works. They believe that they are fully capable of deterring any adversary (including the US) from opting for the proverbial 'first strike.' Latest reports reveal that China has developed a novel system of land-based ballistic missiles to deter America's nuclear powered aircraft carriers from coming near her coast. It must be added that this capability is aimed at acquiring a credible deterrence against possible US intervention in China's maritime disputes in the Asia-Pacific region. It is obvious that China is waiting for the opportune time to implement her expansionist designs. It is necessary to add in this context that China is also involved in serious and active territorial disputes across her land borders with nearly twenty countries around the world.

What Should the US Do?

It is quite clear that the days of China restraining itself in deference to the American primacy in Asia-Pacific are drawing to an end. Peaceful compromise and mutual accommodation with respect to the territorial and maritime jurisdictional disputes seem unlikely in view of the aggressive expansionism of China. The US is treaty-bound to defend Japan in case of war or military conflict over the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands. The US doesn't want to get dragged into such a conflict. Hence, the US is urging caution to Japan. But, that does not amount to a policy response. Buying time could prove to be unviable even in the short run.

It should also be noted that political and military

tensions in Asia-Pacific are heating up at a time when the US is cutting down on defence outlays, retreating from Afghanistan, and is generally reluctant to get entangled in foreign interventions. Ashley Tellis, a distinguished expert on American foreign policy, has recently published a detailed study on how his country should deal with the aggressive expansionism of China at the present and in the near future.* He recommends a four-fold policy response: 1) Bolster the regional actors, whether they fully agree with the US or not. 2) Selectively deepen globalisation so that China gets more and more integrated into the extant global system. 3) Bolster America's own military capabilities – reversing the current trend. 4) Reinventoriate the US economy.

Conclusion

Entry of new players on the world arena inevitably leads to a tortuous, painful, and often bloody re-structuring of the existing global power structure, history tells us. Since the end of the First World War, multi-polarity, bipolarity, uni-polarity, and a return to multi-polarity characterized world politics and the global security scenario. With the aggressive rise of China, resurgent Russia, and enhanced role of Japan, India, Canada, Brazil, and South Africa etc. in the context of a relative economic and political decline of the US, the world is transiting into a new political / economic / security equation. This is the right time to tame the dragon through a combination of countervailing power and due accommodation of her legitimate ambition to be a bigger player on the world arena. At the same time, it is absolutely necessary to ensure that China is constrained to conform to global norms of "right and wrong" in her dealings with other countries. In such an enterprise, all the major stake holders have to play their part.

According to me the US, Japan, and India should take the lead in building such a countervailing coalition of nations to restrain the dragon from going on a rampage! Russia may not be unwilling to chip in because it has its territorial disputes with China. Moreover, Russia is deeply worried about China's demographic designs over her sparsely populated vast province of Siberia. Australia will be positively inclined to join hands. The focus in the second part of this article to be published next month will be the urgent need for a US, Japan, and India trilateral leadership to rein in the new rogue bull in the China shop.

*Ashley Tellis, *Balancing without Containment: An American Strategy for Managing China*, Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2014, 105 pages.

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Ukraine's Unending Crisis – Losing Crimea Forever?

R. G. Gidadhubli

Crimea joining Russia seems to be a fait accompli.

Ukraine sandwiched between Russia in the East and Poland in the West, which has been in the news, has landed itself from the frying pan in to the fire. What was a domestic conflict for two decades of 'cold war' has become a global issue in the past 3 or 4 months involving major players. The speculation whether Ukraine might split has virtually become a hard reality. The USA and Western leaders have been very critical of Russia for intervening in Crimea, which belongs to Ukraine, by using its military force and marking its presence in that region thus violating Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. While the Western leaders question the legality of the new government of Crimea, the Russian leaders question the legality of the present government of Ukraine under Arseniy Yatsenyuk as the new Prime Minister. This legal battle might go on. US President Barak Obama has warned that Russia will have to pay a heavy price for its action insisting that there is no 'zero-sum game'. In response, Russia strongly disagrees with the contentions of the West resulting in allegations and counter allegations. In the process there is no sign of the crisis ending in Ukraine.

The History

Looking back into history, both Russia and Ukraine being Slavic States (along with Belarus), have centuries old political, cultural and economic ties. In fact Russian history started about four centuries back with what is known as Kievan-Rus. While the eastern and southern regions of Ukraine have significant Russian ethnic population, the Western region is predominantly Ukrainian. During the Soviet era, Russia and Ukraine were the most economically developed republics having strong and close trade and economic ties that has continued even after the breakup. Ukraine being energy deficient depends upon Russia for oil and natural gas and in turn pipelines pass through Ukraine for Russia's oil exports to European countries even as there were occasional problems between the two States. Hence Putin was counting on close ties with Ukraine in his vision of making the Eurasian Economic Union to compete with European Union by 2015. But with the crisis in Ukraine, Putin's ambition will remain a dream.

At the end of February 2014, the situation dramatically changed from bad to worse. There are several

factors for the crisis getting aggravated – simmering differences between ethnic Ukrainians and ethnic Russians; discontent among Ukrainians against the former pro-Russian president Viktor Yanukovich; differences among political parties for the failed 2004 'Rose Revolution' which favored Western type of freedom and democracy in Ukraine; three months of sustained peaceful protest since November 2013 against Yanukovich for not signing EU agreement much against the claimed consensus on this issue by the protestors; violence against peaceful protestors resulting in 70-80 deaths at the end of February; imprisonment of former Ukrainian Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko by the Yanukovich government seen as political vendetta. Subsequent to the death of protestors which resulted in violent protests in the country, new leaders of the protest movement took charge of the government in Ukraine forcing Yanukovich to flee the country.

The crisis shifted in the first week of March 2014 from the Ukrainian capital Kiev to Crimea, which is an autonomous region on the Black Sea with reports of Russian troops entering that region. The Crimean government declared its independence from Ukraine deciding to join Russia after securing approval through a Referendum to be held on 16th March 2014 to which the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) observers are invited. With 58 per cent predominantly ethnic Russian population in this region, a positive outcome of the referendum is a formality.*

However, Refat Chubarov, leader of the Crimean Tartars, has stated that his community constituting about 10-12 percent of the population of Crimea might not participate in the referendum and may not accept its results. This might create some hiccups for the new government. Thus two issues deserve attention namely the legal status of Crimea and the consequences of its 'independence' including the impact of sanctions that the Western countries are contemplating against Russia.

At the outset it may be stated that the Russian President Vladimir Putin has rewritten the history of Crimea which will be an integral part of the Russian Federation in 2014 which was handed over to Ukraine on a platter by the former Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev in 1954.

This will be officially declared after receiving the proposal and consent of the Crimean Government which will be put up for approval to the Russian Parliament on 21st March. Thus Crimea joining Russia seems to be a fait accompli.

This raises several questions and criticism. Analysts and Western leaders, including the German President Angela Merkel, question whether referendum is a violation of international law. Secondly, the Ukrainian government and its Western supporters not only consider the referendum as illegal but there are also allegations that Russian military forces have been used in Crimea which is part of Ukrainian territory. There were reports by several international news agencies that Russian troops entered Crimea when the crisis in Kiev was at its peak. Russia contended that this was at the request of the Crimean Government and that of Yanukovich who has taken shelter in Russia. It was no doubt a smart and swift move by Putin, which was confirmed by the Russian ambassador in the UN Security Council, to prevent any action to be taken by the new leaders of the Ukrainian government. According to Russian analysts and reports, Russia has not been involved nor intends to escalate its actions in Ukraine beyond the Crimean region.

But Russia's action in Crimea has created a strong reaction in the West and consequently of possible serious sanctions against Russia. Possibly to show that he is in favor of de-escalating the situation, Putin has made a smart U-turn stating that the Russian military had no role in Crimea and it was a creation of the Crimean military forces only. But there are not many takers for Putin's contention much less the Western powers and analysts. As a counter move, the USA deployed defense forces in the Black Sea which is only symbolic.

The question does arise about the legality of the Crimean referendum and the region joining Russia, which under the worst case scenario might take decades. The contending parties might even take the matter to International Organizations such as the UNO and the International Court for Justice. While the USA, the EU and the Ukrainian Government do not intend to use military force as a reaction to Russia's action, there are other measures being considered including isolation, economic sanctions, asset freezes, travel bans and visa restrictions against Russia. For instance, there are already reports that Russia will not be involved in the forthcoming G-8 summit. The issue of sanctions has also become complex since there is no unanimity among the major powers. Germany and France do not fully support Obama's intention to initiate strong policy measures.

To counter the moves the West, the Russian

Foreign Ministry said on 7th March that "Russia will not accept the language of sanctions and threats" and that if they are implemented, "they will not be left without a response." This assumes significance considering the fact that the proposal of economic sanctions is complex, more so since there is an element of trade dependency between some European countries and Russia. For instance, Germany, France and Ukraine itself are heavily dependent upon Russian oil and natural gas and pipelines pass through Ukraine.

At the same time Russia will also suffer since its economy depends much upon the inflow of petrodollars from its export of hydrocarbons to West Europe. The European Union is a major trading partner of Russia accounting for about 49 per cent of its total trade turnover. Hence Russia will suffer if economic sanctions are imposed by the USA and West European countries. Considering this possibility, Putin has shown his readiness to diffuse the crisis and even for talks and negotiations. Equally important is the fact that Russia is getting strong support from China which has urged the Western leaders that Russia be associated and not be isolated in finding a solution to the issue. The Western leaders are aware of the close political and economic ties between Russia and China which can frustrate any strong sanctions against Russia. Moreover, as a counter move Russia, which has close ties with the Middle East countries and Iran, might count on them and put hurdles for any policy initiatives by the West against Russia.

Under these circumstances, uncertainties will prevail in the region and the new Crimean Government will face challenges in its governance including likely conflicts with pro-Ukrainian and Tartar Muslim minorities in the region. Lack of geographical contiguity with Russia will be an additional disadvantage. At the same time even as the crisis has not ended, there is positive development of consensus among the major powers both the East and West for de-escalation of conflict in the region and seeking a solution through bilateral and multilateral talks.

DR. R. G. GIDADHUBLI, Professor and former director Center for Central Eurasian Studies, University of Mumbai, Mumbai.

** At the time of going to press, the referendum, which was postponed thrice and the terms of reference also changed thrice, was held on 16th March. 97.6% voted in favour of being part of Russia. - Ed.*

Right To Reject and Right To Recall

– Workable Electoral Options Or Democratic Fantasies?

Aditya N. Raut

The right in the nature of a ‘right to recall’ an elected representative needs to be examined, possibly not as an addition but as an alternative to the NOTA option.

On 27 September, 2013 the Supreme Court of India passed a ‘landmark’ judgement permitting the voter to reject all the contesting candidates in their constituency. The Supreme Court held that citizens have a ‘right to reject’ all candidates seeking votes and directed the Election Commission to provide for a ‘None of the Above’ option in the electronic voting machines and ballot papers. With this, voters dissatisfied with all the candidates in a constituency can cast negative votes to register their disapproval of the choices on offer. The Supreme Court further said that if a person is not allowed to cast negative votes, it would “defeat” the rights of the citizens as ensured by Article 21 of the Constitution of India.

Whilst most of the mainstream, and even some marginal, political parties responded to the judgement with abundant caution, most of the civil rights activists, NGOs and certain self-proclaimed arm-chair commentators and activists hailed it as being the next big thing in terms of electoral reforms and the democratisation of a disenfranchised and virtually paralyzed polity. Subsequent to the aforesaid Supreme Court judgement, there were many clarion calls for arming the citizenry with another electoral weapon in the form of a ‘right to recall’ elected candidates on grounds of non-performance. The aim of this article is to explore the contours and the workability of these options against the backdrop of a largely chaotic, but functioning, democracy littered with instances of corruption and political malpractices.

A definition on the web of The Right to Recall is as follows:

“Right To Recall” is a proposed law in India that would allow citizens to replace public servants holding key posts in the government...”

However prior to delving into the intricacies of the ‘right to recall’, let’s for a moment briefly weigh the pros and cons of the ‘right to reject’ which has been permitted by the Supreme Court. Whilst one must commend the Supreme Court for taking this bold step in empowering democracy with this useful tool, it is pertinent to note that

the Supreme Court in its own wisdom refused to go into the details of what would happen if the ‘rejected’ votes overtake the highest votes polled by any candidate. This one aspect is what essentially forms the genesis of why the ‘right to reject’ is more like a half-baked option and could lead to anomalies in a political system like ours. This right would also be highly susceptible to misuse by certain cynical elements in the society who would now encourage negative polling thus incentivising the exploitation of cynicism that exists (whether rightly or wrongly) against the political class as a whole, instead of curbing it. The ‘right to reject’, as it stands, will suffer from the consequences of not being able to harmonize itself with the realities of politics and elections in India. Some of the disadvantages of the ‘right to reject’, as currently propounded by the Supreme Court, are as follows:

- Implications of a majority exercising the ‘none of the above’ (NOTA)

The Supreme Court has steered clear of expressing their view in a scenario where the majority of voters in a constituency exercise the NOTA option. In such a scenario some options have been put forth by some commentators. One suggestion has been that elections should be held again and the people who stood in the first round should not be eligible to contest in the next round. This, they say, will force political parties to ensure that good candidates are put up. In my view there is no guarantee that in the second round of elections (or third round, if so needed) political parties would put up clean and good candidates. In fact in a polity with such deeply entrenched vested interests, the chances of proxy candidates like the kith and kin of the erstwhile rejected candidate being put up is extremely high. Voters too would not want to burden the already burdened exchequer with the additional expenses of multiple elections and therefore are unlikely to exercise the NOTA option until a ‘credible candidate’ is put up, which in itself is a subjective matter.

- In the event of the NOTA option being exercised by a majority of the polity:

Some commentators have suggested that the

candidate who gets the next highest votes should be declared the winner. This possibly, to my mind, is a solution which is worse than the problem. The idea behind the 'right to reject' was to empower the citizens with a powerful weapon to voice their dissent against bad candidates. Allowing this option would defeat that very purpose as a candidate with a 10% or 20% vote of the total votes polled could be declared a winner which would be against all the basic norms of representative democracy. This will encourage parties with a not so good presence in a particular constituency to encourage voters to exercise the NOTA option and ensure the defeat of the main candidate thereby ensuring that a candidate with marginal support, by virtue of being second, gets elected. This kind of a negative alliance between political parties i.e. the coming together of a group of political parties with the sole intention of defeating the main candidate can never be good for a representative form of democracy.

• *Unwittingly propagate and encourage voter cynicism:*

The 'right to reject' in its current form is most likely to be used by a political party with no presence in a particular constituency to exploit sentiments against the incumbent candidate and encourage voters to select the NOTA option. For the sustenance of a vibrant democracy, voters have to be able to make a choice and select one out of the buffet spread, so to speak. Ensuring clean candidates and clean politics is a part of reforms that will be ensured by the June 2013 Supreme Court decision of barring tarnished candidates from continuing in office as also by bringing political parties within the purview of the RTI. Such negative options of encouraging and exploiting voter cynicism will have the effect of discouraging people from joining politics worsening the already plummeting faith of people in our democracy.

The danger of the 'right to reject' in its present form, far from empowering democracy and the citizens, could germinate and precipitate more problems as enunciated above. It is precisely in these circumstances that a right in the nature of a 'right to recall' an elected representative needs to be examined and possibly not as an addition but as an alternative to the NOTA option.

Now a Right to Recall by definition, as stated above, would mean the right to be able to recall an elected representative by the voters who are not happy with his/her performance. The questions that therefore arise for consideration are:

- How do you measure the unhappiness amongst the voters and by logical extension in the constituency as a whole?
- What is the barometer for evaluating the public discontent with the elected representative?
- What is the trigger point for exercise of this option by the voters and how will it be carried out?
- Considering most of the main elected representatives are elected for a term of five years, how many times in such a five-year period should such a right be allowed to be exercised? Surely it is nobody's case that an elected representative should be busy warding and fighting off numerous recall applications all throughout his tenure such that he/she has no time to devote to concentrate on the development of his/her constituency.
- What are the safeguards that we need to have in place to ward off misuse of such a powerful weapon, if it were to be introduced in India?

The answers to the above questions are not easy nor do I wish to spend time evaluating or attempting to analyse the 'right to recall' as it exists in other countries or even in India. The objective of this article is to devise a 'right to recall' to suit the Indian conditions and advance it as possibly an alternative to the 'right to reject' and NOTA option.

In a democracy as chaotic as ours, such rights would be susceptible to misuse and therefore there have to be more than sufficient safeguards in place to ensure the smooth flow of the election process as also against the unwarranted harassment of a duly elected representative.

Therefore the option that is sought to be advanced is as follows:

- 'Right to recall' should be exercisable by only those candidates who stood for elections against the winning candidate (and not any lay person from the polity). This will ensure a safeguard against proxies being put forward to exercise such a right. Also there will be a need to limit, rather identify the people who would be entitled to exercise such a right. It would be chaotic to allow a system whereby the citizens in a particular manner get together to exercise such a right, especially in the absence of a suitable penalty being imposed on those who engineer the attempt, whether in genuine belief or otherwise.
- 'Right to recall' to be exercisable only twice in one five-year term of an elected representative. Therefore only the two people who stand 2nd and 3rd in terms

of votes polled in the same election would be allowed to exercise the 'right to recall' since the right can be exercised only twice in a given five-year period. In case other candidates who stood 4th, 5th, etc. wish to exercise the right, they would have to get a no-objection from the people above them in the pecking order (so to speak) and submit the same to the Election Commission prior to being eligible to exercise the 'right to recall'.

- Since the 'right to recall' can be exercised only by people who would have contested against the winning candidate in that particular election, a failure by any such candidate exercising the 'right to recall' should debar him/her from contesting the next elections. This will ensure two things, one, that the candidate choosing to exercise this 'right' will him/herself conduct a comprehensive survey in the constituency to confirm that there indeed exists some disgruntlement amongst the electorate in that constituency leading to a situation whereby the people want to recall the elected candidate. This will ensure that the right is not misused and the elected candidate is not subjected to unnecessary harassment.
- In the event of a 'right to recall' being successful, the sitting candidate should be immediately stripped of his seat and entitlements and the person exercising the 'right' should be instituted as the MP/ MLA representing the constituency till the next elections. The recalled candidate should, however, not be debarred from contesting the next elections whenever they are held.
- The candidate who would have won pursuant to exercising the 'right to recall' should be elected till the date of the next elections and not for a five-year term. This would obviate the possibility of the other eligible candidates from being left outside the political spectrum and being prevented from contesting the elections when they are due.

Needless to say the 'right to recall' would have to be exercised by a referendum. The candidate wishing to exercise this right would approach the Election Commission with a request to do so and the Election Commission, after checking the basic parameters of eligibility, would call for a referendum in that constituency. The advantages (in addition to the ones stated above) of the said mechanism propounded, are as follows:

- Such a 'right to recall', apart from being a genuine electoral reform, would make India a "dynamic democracy" in the truest sense of the term.
- The electorate would no longer need to tolerate a corrupt or a non-performing MP/MLA for the full term

of five years. They can air their grievances to the other 'eligible candidates' and persuade them to set the 'right to recall' mechanism in motion.

- 'Eligible candidates' would think twice (or maybe more) prior to exercising this 'right to recall' for the fear of being debarred from contesting in the following elections in the event of a failed attempt at recalling the elected candidate thus obviating the fear of its misuse to a very large extent.
- The elected candidate would be under reasonable pressure to perform and work his way at ensuring a good report card in respect of his constituency.
- This mechanism circumvents the need for the Election Commission from mandatorily requiring a petition by 'x%' of the people of that constituency prior to calling for the referendum. The barometer for measuring the disgruntlement amongst the voters in the constituency would not be required in the light of the safeguard disabling the candidate wishing to exercise this 'right'.

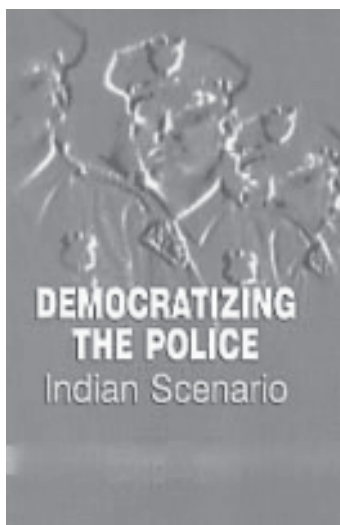
This 'right to recall' if implemented properly, in my view, would indeed be a powerful and robust mechanism to keep our elected representatives under constant check with the Damocles sword of performance hanging over their heads. The safeguards against a misfired attempt would ensure that any party could conduct a thorough survey in the constituency prior to exercising this 'right'. However, one would have to admit that the 'right to recall' in the form as enunciated above can be made applicable only to elected representatives and by its inherent nature not be applicable to the bureaucracy or babus.

In conclusion, I would only state that it would indeed be a fine day in the history of our democracy if we as a citizenry were to be armed with this formidable weapon of a 'right to recall' (whether in this form or otherwise), and even better if we as citizens come together to encourage our elected representatives and Election Commission in arming us with this 'right'.

As Henry Ford said, "coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success". An empowered, enlightened and active electorate is the first step towards maintaining a vibrant democracy and the same can achieve wonders of a kind possibly unimaginable by the current lot of politicians.

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BOOK REVIEW



DEMOCRATIZING THE POLICE INDIAN SCENARIO by Dr. G. R. S. Rao • Published by Shipra Publications, Delhi • 2013 • Pages 210+xii • Rs.650

Reviewed by Ashok Karnik, Deputy Director, Intelligence Bureau (IB), Government of India. Post-retirement, he has been a commentator on issue involving national security. Writes a column in *Freedom First* "Point Counter Point".

The author has very thoroughly studied the working of the police, their problems and, more importantly, the role they should play in the changing socio-political system. His understanding of the issues involved is praiseworthy. What is

committees would bring the people closer to the police. Democratization of the police means their humanization. The police must become people friendly. He expects the police to establish alliances with institutions of civil society and reverse the trend of hostility between the police and the public and help shape public policy. He wants the police to become an instrument of social transformation.

There is no doubt that the police should become people friendly and give up their image of a 'lathi force'. The police need to stress more and more on police reforms which have been suggested by the Supreme Court, expedite police modernization and be more responsive to the changing social structure. However, it needs to retain its essential character of being an instrument of state power. An army may pursue its "Operation Sadbhavana" to build bridges with the local populace but it will always remain an instrument of defence/attack against the enemy. It can be argued that the same is the case with the police: they can be friends with the people to make their own task easier but cannot give up their essential role of being an enforcer of the law. Other instruments of the State, including the political masters, revenue, health and education departments have to do the job of creating social harmony. The police are not able to fulfil their essential task of providing security to the society. To add the task of social transformation to the already weary police force is utopian, very attractive on paper but not within the present capabilities of the police. This may sound retrograde, but scholars like G.R.S.Rao could help determine if the police can indeed be stretched to take up the task of social transformation or trained to do their present job more efficiently.

disconcerting is the repetition of the diagnosis of what ails the police. It appears that the book is a product of several workshops on police matters and therefore repeats the views expressed time and again. The diagnosis is valid but the treatment of the disease is uncertain.

What the foreword mentions as a starting point is of essence. It states, "There is deep-rooted and widely held suspicion bordering on hostility with regard to the intentions and operational methods of the police force." The author holds that the political process in the country has become malignant; which in turn has led to abnormal growth of the Gross Social Conflict (GSC). Police organizations are caught in the middle of political conflicts. While the police have failed to attune themselves to their changed role in new India, the people have become more demanding. Besides the usual street crime, the country is faced with new challenges constantly like jihadi terrorism, insurgency, communal conflicts, rise of Naxalism, civil rights agitations and separatist demands but the police have not risen to the additional tasks that are heaped on them. He observes that India represents a sick body, infested with multiple diseases and fractures; it has become a soft state. In this bleak scenario, the police which should have been an instrument of promoting harmony as a peace force have remained a 'lathi force'.

The author's remedy for the police malady is unexceptional but incomplete. He argues that the police should be a part of the 'panchayati raj' innovations. The system of police patils/munsifs/patwaris needs to be expanded to make the police a part of the rural life. Mohalla

Relation between per capita income and highest denomination notes

Country	Per capita income	Highest denomination
USA	US\$ 40,000	US\$ 100
UK	UKL 20,000	UKL 50
INDIA	INR 59,000	INR 1000

Brig. Suresh Chandra Sharma (retd)

Educating Adults

The Right to Education Act (22)

This is the twenty second and concluding instalment in the series, examining the various aspects of the Right to Education Act (RTE).

Conclusion

Suresh C. Sharma

Education is a tool for empowerment and the RTE Act with all its shortcomings is a good attempt. The task is difficult and the scheme will get modified in the light of practical experience. All the stakeholders should act positively and try to implement it. Universal education will take its own time and the initial attempt should be to give good education to all those who want it. Even if the learning results are below the desired level, children putting on a clean uniform and attending school has its merits. This will teach them a sense of good behaviour instead of running around in the street or traveling up and down in trains without tickets.

Compulsory admission of Economically Weaker Section (EWS) children requires careful handling by the school staff. School education cannot be separated from its social context; those who teach and learn carry with them attitudes, beliefs, habits, customs and orientations which differ from class to class and caste to caste. The elite schools have their own culture and their teaching-learning environment which suits children of the upper class but which children from the weaker section may find alien. Most of the teachers in schools belong to the middle

class which gives an edge to middle class children in learning. Children of upper classes are able to comprehend the contents of the syllabus better than their counterparts belonging to marginalized sections of society.

The present experience of India with mixed or diversified classrooms is not encouraging. The children from marginalized sections of society are discriminated in the classroom on the bases of gender, caste, and ethnicity despite the fact that the Indian Constitution strictly prohibits discrimination on the bases of caste and other social background and is a punishable act. Teachers must exercise due caution to ensure that they are not discriminated against and their lack of knowledge not ridiculed.

The Act should not be frozen and changes must be made as and when necessary based on experience.

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I, J. R. Patel, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

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J. R. Patel
Publisher.

*The Muzaffarnagar Riots***Bitter Sugar Belt: Muzaffarnagar Riot Victims as Refugees**

Alka Panda

Leaders from both the communities, the Jats and the Muslims, admit off the record, that even after five months, there is anger and sense of injustice among both the communities.

Muzaffarnagar is in the news for all the wrong reasons since August 27, 2013. In the heart of UP's sugar economy, life has been disrupted by the unfortunate Jat-Muslim conflict over issues still not clear to anyone. The Muslim workers are reluctant to return to the cane fields; the safety for their lives being their major concern. Displaced from their villages since the start of the riots in August 2013, they have been living in camps at Jogyakhera, Joula, Loi, Malakpur and five madarsa camps in Suneti, Barnavi, Dabherikhurd, Khurgan and Bipur in Shamli district for the last five months. These riots have been the deadliest in the decade leaving 59 dead and 50,000 people homeless from 24 villages in Muzaffarnagar and Shamli districts. The camps are ill-equipped and the surroundings unhealthy and unhygienic. Children are unable to go to school, people are idle with no livelihood and several infants and children are dying of cold, temperatures having plunged to 1.5 degree Celsius.

The communal violence has rendered a severe blow to the traditional Jat-Muslim alliance. It was unfortunate that the Samajwadi Party and the government of Akhilesh Yadav failed to resolve the riots which could have started on political grounds but soon acquired a communal colour. It has demonstrated two things very clearly: firstly the backlash of the Hindu Jats and secondly the spread of riots to the rural areas. Thus, 24 villages have witnessed displacement of the Muslim population. One wonders, how long this displacement will last.

The politics behind the displacement is the government's inability to resolve sugar cane related matters. Before the riots had started there had been hartals and lockouts in the sugar mills in the sugar belt. A senior minister, Azam Khan, in charge of the Muzaffarnagar district, had begun to interfere in the administration's efforts to resolve the deadlock. The government failed to see that beyond a certain point they would be unable to take for granted the Jat-Muslim affinity. Thus, the Jats reacted violently and the conflict started in the Muslim dominant area. The government underestimated the reactions from

the Jats who dominated the villages and the Muslims who dominated the towns. They were confident that the sugar belt's problem would not get mixed up with the Jat-Muslim conflict. However, they were proved wrong and the conflict acquired a communal colour.

Leaders from both the communities, the Jats and the Muslims, admit off the record that even after five months, there is anger and sense of injustice among both the communities. The desire for revenge is strong which results in killings of Jats and Muslims on and off. Thus rape, murder, arson and looting continue in the district. There is a silent war continuing with communal anger.

The riots have now led to a communal polarization which will last till the parliamentary elections of 2014. The Jats have shifted their affinity to the BJP. The Samajwadi party thought that it would benefit from this communal divide but the grievances of the common man living in the refugee camps will go against the Yadav government, the ruling Samajwadi party.

Heightened insensitivity and apathy has been visible in the junket and jamboree extravaganza of the ruling party in UP. While the people in tents shivered and children died of cold with temperatures falling to 1.5 degree celsius, 22 ministers and MLA's went on a 20 day junket to Turkey, Greece, The Netherlands, U.K and UAE apparently under the guise of a 'study tour'. To add insult to injury, Narad Rai, Uttar Pradesh's sports minister, is reported to have said, "Deaths of children, adults and elderly are inevitable. It isn't necessary that only those living in camps are dying. People die in palaces too. It isn't that children in our homes don't die. Deaths occur everywhere," Commenting on relief camp deaths, the UP Principal Secretary for Home Anil Gupta said, "Children have died of pneumonia, not of cold. Nobody can die of cold. If people died of cold, nobody would have been alive in Siberia."

For the jamboree at Saifai in Etawah district of UP, the hometown of the CM, a two-week extravaganza was

organised. 10 planes were chartered to ferry Bollywood stars and VIP's from Mumbai and Delhi in the backdrop of the misery of the riot-affected victims. They danced and celebrated for what? May I say for the misery and misfortune of thousands in the state?

Such a serious incident began by the narration of a Bollywood-like story – a girl from the Hindu Jat community was harassed by a youth when she went to a village called Kawal. The boy was identified as Shahnawaz Qureshi who was then killed by the girl's cousins Sachin Singh and Gaurav Singh. The police arrested 11 members of the girl's family for killing the boy. However, the two brothers were killed by the Muslims. The police did not take any action against the killers. Thus, the riots started

over an incident which apparently seems to have been fabricated because the girl declared that she does not know anybody named Shahnawaz and that she never went to Kawal. Another version is narrated in which a minor traffic accident took place which involved some youths and from there the conflicts took a religious colour.

However, the Jat-Muslim riots in Muzaffarnagar still continue to be a cause of concern for if it spreads to the rest of the country it would be far more dangerous.

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Riots Demonstrate a Dangerous Trend

Dr. Rita P. Bhambi

The riots bared a dangerous trend where crimes against women were distorted and used as a trigger for communal conflagration and polarization for votes. It is most dangerous as incidents of eve-teasing and sexual assaults were twisted and used as a means to communalize and polarize ahead of the 2014 elections.

Recent riots in Muzaffarnagar raise serious questions not only about social stability in the country but also about the civil administration's ability to move swiftly to quell disorder and the willingness of political parties to enact tougher laws against communal and targeted violence. There are many different narratives about what happened there, including a dispute about what started it all. The story of a Hindu girl from the Jat community having been harassed by a Muslim youth, who was then killed by the young woman's brothers, is itself being contested. Truth is a major casualty under such circumstances.

The situation in Muzaffarnagar started deteriorating since 27 August, when two youths of the Jat community were beaten to death in Kawal village, under Jaansath tehsil of Muzaffarnagar. One youth from the minority community was also killed in the clash. The clash occurred over the alleged incident of eve teasing. The Jat community, to protest against the incident, organized a 'panchayat' at Jaansath town on 31 August. The panchayat demanded action against the culprits responsible for the murder of the two Jat youths. They also demanded the removal of the Superintendent of Police of Shamli district for his allegedly partisan conduct. The Khap panchayat then

announced the organization of a 'mahapanchayat' on 7 September at Nagla Mandaur if their demands were not met. On 5 September, the BJP had also given a call for Muzaffarnagar bandh.

To prevent the 'mahapanchyat', the Muzaffarnagar district administration imposed prohibitory orders under Section 144, in the entire district. Armed forces, the Rapid Action Force, PAC and the RAF were deployed and the city remained tense but peaceful till Saturday. On Saturday, as soon as the participants of panchayat were attacked in the Basee village, the police and the para-military forces were rushed to Nagal Mandaur, the venue of the Mahapanchyat. The rioters in city of Muzaffarnagar had a field day for several hours.

In the last two decades, this is the first incident of communal riots in Uttar Pradesh, when the civil administration has had to bring in the armed force to take control of the law and order situation. The last time such an incident took place when the army had to be called, was in December 1992, where communal riots erupted after the demolition of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya.

The riots bared a dangerous trend where crimes against women were distorted and used as a trigger for

communal conflagration and polarization for votes. It is most dangerous as incidents of eve-teasing and sexual assaults were twisted and used as a means to communalize and polarize ahead of 2014 elections.

Union steel minister Beni Prasad Verma described the riots as being bigger and far more tragic than the post-Godhra Gujarat riots of 2002. Terror still prevails in Muzaffarnagar. People don't want to return home. Instead of helping the riot victims, the Samajwadi Party government is merely playing politics.

There is a discrepancy in the very narratives of violence. MP Qadir Rana of BSP has not been seen since the violence broke out. Muslims in relief camps are highly critical of his absence. An FIR has been filed against him for the hate speech he delivered at a public meeting addressed by different political parties on August 30.

The BSP has asked for the dismissal of the Akhilesh Yadav government, and the imposition of President's Rule in Uttar Pradesh. But apart from this one demand and criticism of the state government's role, the BSP seems to be following a "hands off" policy with the Party remaining out of the current conflict. Although some Jats in one of the worst hit villages, Kutba said that the Dalits had attacked Muslim homes, there was no confirmation

of this from the affected Muslims who were categorical that they had been attacked by their Jat neighbours and not the Dalits.

The BSP stands to gain politically if the Muslim vote that seems to be shifting from Samajwadi Party at this point in time gravitates towards it, as it had done in the past. Muslims in relief camps recalled the peaceful days under the Mayawati government, and insisted individually that her administrative policies were inclusive and not divisive.

India feels it has reached a positive turn of history. The AAP is in power in Delhi and the Modi juggernaut is moving relentlessly to crush the Congress. Both events seem to signal a middle class, majoritarian victory. In the tumult of that moment, they might ask, so what if a few Muslims died. That is the sadness of history. It could also signal the final obituary of any democracy.

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The Aam Aadmi Party

Events Leading to Its Formation

Ajinkya Chogle

Anna Hazare had wanted to keep the movement politically neutral but Kejriwal considered that direct involvement in politics was necessary because attempts to obtain progress regarding the Jan Lokpal Bill through talks with existing political parties had, in his opinion, achieved nothing.

Anna Hazare had wanted to keep the movement politically neutral but Kejriwal considered that direct involvement in politics was necessary because attempts to obtain progress regarding the Jan Lokpal Bill through talks with existing political parties had, in his opinion, achieved nothing.

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has led several protests since its formation. Among these was a campaign against an alleged nexus between government and private corporations relating to price rises for electricity and water in Delhi. Another saw the party demanding justice for

victims of sexual harassment and rape, including the introduction of a stronger anti-rape law. The party's first electoral test was in the 2013 Delhi legislative assembly election from which it emerged as the second-largest party, winning 28 of the 70 seats. With no party obtaining an overall majority, the AAP formed a minority government with conditional support from the Indian National Congress. According to an opinion poll conducted by a global market research company Ipsos, 44% voters of those polled said they would vote for an AAP in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections. The said opinion poll was conducted in India's eight most populous cities Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata,

Chennai, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Pune and Ahmedabad.*

The origin of the AAP can be traced to a difference of opinion between Arvind Kejriwal and Anna Hazare, both social activists who had been involved in Team Anna, a strand of the anti-corruption movement for Jan Lokpal Bill that had gained momentum in India during 2011 and 2012. Anna Hazare had wanted to keep the movement politically neutral but Kejriwal considered that direct involvement in politics was necessary because attempts to obtain progress regarding the Jan Lokpal Bill through talks with existing political parties had, in his opinion, achieved nothing. A survey conducted by the India Against Corruption organization using social networking services had indicated that there was wide support for politicization. Hazare and Kejriwal agreed on 19 September 2012 that their differences regarding a role in politics were irreconcilable. Kejriwal had obtained support from some activists, such as Prashant Bhushan and Shanti Bhushan who were involved in the movement, but was opposed by others such as Kiran Bedi and Santosh Hegde. On 2 October,

Kejriwal announced that he was forming a political party and that he intended the formal launch to be 26 November, coinciding with the anniversary of India's adoption of its Constitution in 1949.

The party's name Aam Aadmi, reflects concern for "The Common Man", whose interests Kejriwal proposed to represent. A party constitution was adopted on 24 November 2012, when a National Council comprising 320 people and a National Executive of 23 were also formed. Both the Council and the Executive were expected to have more members in due course, with the intention being that all districts and all classes of people would have a voice. Various committees were to be formed to draft proposals for adoption by the party in a process that was expected to take several months. Although one aim was to limit nepotism, there were complaints at this initial meeting that the selection of people invited to attend was itself an example of such practices. The party was formally launched in Delhi on 26 November 2012 and registered as a political party by the Election Commission of India in March 2013.

Ipsos is a global market research company with worldwide headquarters in Paris, France.

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The Party's Objectives

Akshada Sawant

AAP refuses to be guided by ideologies and assert that they are entering politics to change the system: "we are aam aadmis. If we find our solutions in the left we are happy to borrow it from there, if we find it in the right, we are happy to borrow it from there".

The AAP has led several protests since its formation. Among them was a campaign against an alleged nexus between government and private companies relating to price rises for electricity and water in Delhi. Another saw the party demanding justice for victims of sexual harassment and rape, including the introduction of a stronger anti-rape law. The Party's first electoral test was in the 2013 Delhi legislative assembly election where it emerged as the second-largest Party, winning 28 of the 70 seats. With no party obtaining a majority, the AAP formed a minority government with conditional support from the Indian National Congress.

The AAP says that the promise of equality and justice that forms a part of the Constitution of India and its preamble has not been fulfilled and that the enslavement to an oppressive foreign power has been replaced by an political elite in independent India. The party claims that

the common people of India remain unheard and unseen except when it suits the politicians to think of them. It wants to reverse the way the accountability of government operates and has adopted an interpretation of the Gandhian concept of swaraj as a tenet. It believes that through swaraj, the government will be directly accountable to the people; the swaraj model lays stress on self-governance, community building and decentralization. Kejriwal says the AAP refuses to be guided by ideologies and asserts that they are entering politics to change the system: "we are aam aadmis. If we find our solutions in the left we are happy to borrow it from there, if we find it in the right, we are happy to borrow it from there".

On 26th November 2012, the formal launch day of the AAP, Shanti Bhushan, the former law minister in the Morarji Desai's government, donated Rs.1 crore. Prashant

Bhushan, his son, is member of the Party's National Executive Committee. On 18th May 2013, a group of Indian-Americans from 20 different cities in the USA held a convention in Chicago and extended support to AAP. The convention was attended by the two AAP leaders, Kumar Vishwas and Yogendra Yadav and Kejriwal addressed it via video conferencing. Aruna Roy and Medha Patkar, who had differences with Kejriwal on certain issues, supported him after his 15 days fast against inflated electricity bills.

On 23rd March 2013, Kejriwal began an indefinite fast in an attempt to mobilize people against inflated power and electricity bills at a house in Sundar Nagari, a low income group resettlement colony in North-East Delhi. During the protest, he urged Delhi citizens not to pay "inflated" water and electricity bills. The AAP also demanded an audit of power and electricity companies in Delhi by the comptroller and Auditor General of India which was supported by the civil society groups like National Alliance of People's Movement. The AAP claimed that the protest garnered support from 1,00,000 people in Delhi

on a single day and more than 3,00,000 people up to 28th March 2013. Anna Hazare urged Kejriwal to end the fast and he did so on 6th April.

On 10th June 2013, Kejriwal supported the agitation of Delhi auto rickshaw drivers, who were protesting the Delhi government's ban on advertisements on auto rickshaws. Kejriwal claimed that the reason for the ban was the support his Party had received from auto rickshaw drivers and they carried AAP'S advertisements on their auto rickshaws. He challenged that volunteers of AAP would put 10,000 advertisements on auto rickshaws as a protest.

On 28th December 2013, the AAP formed a minority government in the hung Assembly, with what Sheila Dikshit describes as "not unconditional" support from Indian National Congress. Arvind Kejriwal became the second-youngest Chief Minister of Delhi and the second one with a degree from IIT.

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Euphoric Outburst for Change

The dramatic and meteoric rise of Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) is nothing short of an uprising by the neglected and disillusioned electorate. The popular euphoric outburst for change is rightly being considered by political pundits as an expression of deep seated contempt of the politics of denial, deprivation and inequitable distribution of the fruits of economic progress.

Sixty five years of post-independence misrule has created widespread discontent and distrust for existing political parties and their leaders. People are fed up with the contemporary style of politicking, of dividing the electorate on religious and caste lines, community appeasement and introduction of impractical populous schemes. Successive governments of various political hues, both at the centre and the state, have miserably failed to bridge the ever yawning gap of socio- economic development between the haves and the have-nots. The inept and corrupt governance has rendered the various democratic institutions fragile and open to public ridicule.

Arvind Kejriwal, the leader of the AAP, and its prominent members were successful in creating the right connect with the masses by their simple mannerism, selfless

and sacrificing attitude, coupled with voicing the grievances of a politically important section of the aggrieved electorate – the common man.

The AAP successfully brought about a paradigm shift in the political discourse of the country. They promised honest, transparent and efficient governance sensitive to the common man's needs and aspirations, end of VIP culture, decriminalization of politics and cleansing the political system from the use of muscle and money power.

The birth of the AAP was at an opportune moment as citizens were disillusioned with the available political dispensation and longed for a change. Leadership of the AAP realized the need to catapult the common man to the centre stage of political change. Their outreach and innovative style of campaigning struck the right chord with the voters, who, cutting across religious and caste lines voted and gave AAP a start that every new political party could wish for.

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China and Tibet's Revolution in Exile

Thubten Samphel

Throughout China's long and turbulent history, no people along its imperial fringes have been such a nuisance to the Middle Kingdom as the Tibetans are today. However, unlike neighboring Xinjiang or Eastern Turkestan which is wracked by sporadic violence, Tibet poses no military threat to the People's Republic of China. Neither the Dalai Lama nor the Central Tibetan Administration question China's sovereignty over Tibet in any future settlement of the issue.

Regardless of this, Tibet is a challenge for China. The challenge comes from not what the Tibetans are doing to China but from what they are doing to themselves.

Witness the 127 young Tibetans from across Tibet who since 2009 set themselves on fire, calling for the return of the Dalai Lama to his homeland and freedom for Tibet. Regardless of the merits and de-merits of such acts, and there are plenty of arguments on both sides, these unnerve the Chinese authorities. Such acts recall China's own revolutionary past when Chinese individually and collectively sacrificed their all for the ideal of unified, just and egalitarian China. These acts also point in a fiery blaze of Tibetan determination to the fact that China physically controls Tibet but not Tibetan hearts and minds.

In any other society, such unprecedented protests would lead to anguished soul-searching and genuine attempts made to redress the stated grievances. In Tibet, the response is the thud of the iron-fist coming down on the fiery protestors, or what's left of them, their family members or their villages, imposition of tighter control of news flow and total lockdown.

The other Tibetan challenge constitutes a set of principles that the refugees have incorporated into their exile administration: non-violence, democracy, cultural renewal, and the growth of civil society. The challenge consists in the speed with which the Tibetan exiles have re-constituted their culture in exile and successfully re-interpreted the universalism of its values to the international community.

China has no earthly reason to fear this challenge. No matter how many Tibetans set themselves on fire or whatever uplifting principles the Tibetan refugees might have incorporated into the exile body politics, these pose no danger to China. In fact, Chinese leaders liken these efforts to "a fly flapping its wings against the king of mountains."

On this side of the Himalayas, the Tibetan exiles have been undergoing a quiet revolution of their own. It is nothing as dramatic as China's recent revolutionary past or its dazzling ongoing economic transformation. What the Tibetan exiles have managed to accomplish outside of their country, however, will have an impact deep into Tibet's and China's own future. The accomplishment is nothing less than the renewal and rejuvenation of Tibetan culture and its spread to the world. This renewal process has been strengthened by the re-establishment in exile of the key monastic institutions and the thick and growing network of cultural and spiritual resources that underpin the community and Tibetan Buddhism. The cultural renewal is accomplished within a democratic political environment that has triggered the talent and creativity of a new generation of Tibetan political leaders.

This has produced a vibrant, cohesive and productive community, constantly renewed and stimulated in the exhilarating freedom of India. In short, by his tireless efforts, the Dalai Lama has transformed one's people's political struggle into a whole civilization's right to exist and flourish. In the process, the Dalai Lama has created a strong, worldwide cultural and spiritual constituency for Tibet. By spurning the Dalai Lama, China is not just spurning the Tibetan people alone. China is spurning a composite, rejuvenated civilization and all the goodwill that goes with it.

Huffington Post

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