



## Foggy in Wayanad

Rahul Gandhi's decision to contest from Kerala opens up fault-lines in the anti-BJP front

Rahul Gandhi's decision to choose Wayanad in Kerala, in addition to Amethi in Uttar Pradesh, to contest, could well be a defining moment in this election. Though Wayanad was under consideration for at least two weeks, the decision was nonetheless surprising as his principal opponent would be, not his national-level ideological rival the BJP, but a party of the Left, which is in the forefront of the fight for a secular alternative to the ruling formation. This paradox could turn out to be a central challenge in the emergence of a national coalition against the BJP because many parties that are opposed to the BJP are also opposed to one another. Mr. Gandhi's gambit amplifies that contradiction and marks a rupture between the Congress and the Left Front – fierce opponents in Kerala, but natural partners at the Centre. The national leadership of the Congress had kept an arm's length from the highly competitive politics in Kerala, where its State unit and the Left are face to face. The exigencies of national politics shape their cooperation elsewhere. Only recently, on Mr. Gandhi's watch, the Congress was in seat-sharing talks with the Left in West Bengal. Though the Congress has said Mr. Gandhi's candidature is not against the Left, the latter has been brutal in its reaction. The Congress claimed the foray signalled Mr. Gandhi's commitment to all regions. But the choice of Kerala, rather than Karnataka, where the Congress is locked in a direct battle with the BJP, is difficult to explain. If the Left frontally attacked the Congress, the BJP was disparaging. Amit Shah remarked Mr. Gandhi feared he would be held accountable by Amethi's voters; and Narendra Modi, in a statement with communal overtones, said Mr. Gandhi chose the seat because Hindus were in a minority there.

By fielding Mr. Gandhi from Wayanad, the Congress has taken a view that considerations of alliances are now secondary to its push to maximise its individual tally. The Congress has strong alliances in Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Bihar but a shaky one in Karnataka. Its U.P. ambitions were rejected by the SP-BSP axis; and differences persist within the party on aligning with the AAP in Delhi. After the 2004 elections, the Congress became the fulcrum of a national coalition, which was bound by a broad commitment to a pluralist India, as opposed to Hindutva's exclusivist and majoritarian politics. The Left had a significant role in its formation but ended the experiment in 2008 over differences with the Congress on the nuclear deal. State-level compulsions have led regional parties to cross from the BJP to the Congress and vice versa, but the primary fault-line is political mobilisation along religious lines. Without clarity of concept on addressing this fault-line, there can be no effective cooperation among non-BJP parties. Though it is unfair to put the entire onus of aggregating non-BJP politics on Mr. Gandhi, his candidacy in Wayanad can do nothing for the larger secular cause.

## Space for campaign

EC went by rule book on ASAT issue, but PM should have upheld the spirit of Model Code

In ruling that Prime Minister Narendra Modi did not violate the Model Code of Conduct by announcing through a nationally televised address the demonstration of India's capability to bring down an operational satellite, the Election Commission has taken a possibly correct view of the Code's provisions. However, it remains a narrow technical view as it is a thin line that divides the idea of making a high-level declaration of a defence capability from using it for electoral advantage. Opposition parties had accused the Prime Minister of violating the Model Code by touting the demonstration of the anti-satellite (ASAT) missile test as a significant achievement of the ruling BJP. CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury had formally complained to the EC. There were questions about the timing of the test as well as the manner of announcement as the country is in election mode. A five-member committee formed by the EC concluded that the relevant provision was not attracted in this case. Part VII of the Code covering the "party in power" says that "...the misuse of official mass media during the election period for partisan coverage of political news and publicity regarding achievements with a view to furthering the prospects of the party in power shall be scrupulously avoided." The committee's finding that there was no "misuse of official mass media" as Doordarshan and AIR took the feed from a news agency, and more than 60 channels did the same, is rooted in the letter of the code, not its spirit.

It is possible to come to an equally valid conclusion that Mr. Modi's action in making the announcement himself, rather than letting the DRDO, the agency involved, do so violates the bar on "furthering the prospects" of the ruling party by the nature of the publicity given to the achievement. The practice of using a private agency to record the announcement and asking it to share the feed, obliquely serves the purpose of generating publicity through the official media. As the legal maxim goes, what cannot be done directly cannot be done indirectly either. Given that Mr. Modi gave advance publicity to the announcement, there is really no virtue in claiming that DD and AIR were not used for the purpose. As a landmark achievement in defence research, it deserved a public pronouncement at a high level. Even then, letting the DRDO explain the achievement first would have served the purpose. That the motive was to proclaim the ASAT demonstration as an achievement of the regime in the field of national security became obvious when it was propagated by the ruling party that its predecessor did not have the political will to approve such a test. The BJP must demonstrate it will not use such achievements for partisan advantage.

## Ensuring access to justice

The Supreme Court must set up more Benches, and disciplinary jurisdiction over lawyers must go back to the judiciary



RUMA PAL

The justice system in any democracy is set up, under the Constitution to serve the public without "fear or favour, affection or ill-will" as far as judges are concerned. Yet the protagonists, as far as India is concerned, in operating the system have stopped that very access – judges through lack of presence, and many lawyers through their dishonesty in many forms.

### Revisiting judges' advice

At an informal meeting, all of the then sitting judges of the Supreme Court (including myself) advised the then Chief Justice of India to decide against the request of the then Central government to sit in other places in the country under Article 130 of the Constitution. The reason we (judges) decided against it was because we felt that the authority of the Supreme Court would get diluted. The reasoning, in retrospect, was fallacious. Many High Courts in this country have different Benches for meeting out justice without 'justice' being 'diluted'. For example, the Bombay High Court has four Benches – in Mumbai, Aurangabad, Nagpur and Panaji (Goa) – and the quality of its decisions or status have certainly not been diluted thereby.

The number of Benches depends on the size of the State, the idea being to facilitate easier access to justice. The direct consequence of the wrong decision has been three-fold. First, the Su-

preme Court sitting only in Delhi has resulted in excellent lawyers from other High Courts not appearing before the Supreme Court, possibly because it casts too large a monetary burden on their clients, many of whom are impoverished. Second, all lawyers, whatever their calibre or competence, who happen to be in Delhi now appear in the Supreme Court. Some of the good lawyers who were able to leave lucrative practices in the High Courts have settled down in Delhi, but they have established a monopoly, and, as a result, charge unconscionable fees even from charitable concerns – sometimes even when they do not appear at the hearing. This is also true of litigating lawyers at all levels of the judicial system. The third fallout of the failure to act under Article 130 is that the Supreme Court in Delhi has been flooded with work and been reduced to a District Court instead of a Court of Final Appeal and Constitutional Court as envisaged under the Constitution.

### Unethical lawyers

But the fault in actually denying access to justice to citizens is the fault of unethical lawyers alone. That lawyers are generally dishonest is a well-known fact. Lawyers are (frequently) humorously called liars, and because they are the middle-men between judges and the litigating public, they act like dishonest brokers. That is why William Shakespeare said, "The first thing we do, let's kill all the lawyers" (Henry VI). This is a somewhat unfair condemnation of those lawyers who are persons of high principles.

Some of the lawyers specialising in victim compensation cases do not charge any fees for their ser-



vices and render services free of cost. They generally obtain a blank cheque from the victim which is filled in after credit of the compensation to the bank account of the victim. Victims who open bank accounts for the purpose of victim compensation are being duped by some of the lawyers who link their or their assistant's mobile number to the account so that they can have access to all the information of the transactions in the bank account. Some of the lawyers specialising in victim compensation cases thus take huge money as a percentage of compensation amount awarded towards victim compensation. Such a practice is frustrating the whole purpose of victim compensation. The procedure is similar to that adopted by some advocates dealing with Motor Accident Claim Cases under Section 166 (application for compensation) of the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988. They agree to conduct the cases without a fee, but in the event of compensation being granted by the court, the advocates get a certain percentage. This is illegal, being a champertous agreement.

In some cases, as soon as an award of victim compensation is

made by any Legal Services Authority (LSA), a statutory body to render free legal services to the impoverished all over India, the lawyer gets in touch with the victim and somehow convinces him/her to file a writ petition before the High Court to show that without such writ petition the compensation will not be disbursed by the State LSA (SLSA). Ultimately when the amount of compensation is finally disbursed by the SLSA, the lawyer takes credit and shows that it was because of his noble initiative that the victim got the relief, and in exchange claims a hefty share in the compensation. Such lawyers effectively create a perception of rendering a benevolent service by not charging any fees so the victim could never suspect him/her of any malpractice. Incidentally, according to a study carried out by a research organisation, Vidhi, in the Delhi High Court, more than 70% of the delays in the disposal of cases are attributable to lawyers, a major reason being sometimes unjust pleas for adjournments.

The litigating public and lawyers (including women and students) – either because they do not trust the judicial system or they distrust lawyers in particular, or for whatever reason – write hundreds of letters to the Chief Justice of India and the Chief Justices and Justices of each High Court for relief. Some issues raised in these letters are administrative or statutory in nature. Apart from these letters, hundreds of letters are written to Chief Justices for relief on the judicial side. Given the huge workload before all judges, it is not possible to deal with all letter-appeals simultaneously on the statutory, administrative or judicial side, unless they are drawn

specifically to the Justices' attention. Unfortunately the disciplinary powers available to Bar Councils both in Delhi and in States are more often than not ineffective. Some are politically motivated and some States do not have disciplinary committees at all. The disciplinary jurisdiction over lawyers was originally with the courts. As far as the older High Courts are concerned, this is clear from the respective Letters Patents under which the courts were set up. This continued till the power was taken away by the Advocates Act, 1961. Significantly, the Law Minister at that time was Ashoke Sen, a well-known lawyer. The solution to the present situation is to give the disciplinary jurisdiction back to the courts and to repeal the Advocates Act, 1961.

### The way forward

Therefore, to hound out the corrupt lawyers from the system at all levels so that justice may be truly rendered to the public, I have a few suggestions. First, the Supreme Court should reconsider setting up Benches in different States in keeping with the recommendations of the Law Commissions (125th Report and 229th Report). Second, the Bar Council of India should exercise its powers under the Advocates Act, 1961 more effectively. If not, the disciplinary jurisdiction must be returned to the judiciary as was the position prior to the Advocates Act, 1961 by repealing the 1961 Act. Third, lawyers should be made irrelevant by referring more cases to trained mediators, as the Supreme Court has done in the Ayodhya dispute.

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## Deepening insecurity

The buzz around 'Mission Shakti' should be an opportunity to review India's defence strategy



RAJNI BAKSHI

After 'Mission Shakti' – India's anti-satellite test – there is a feeling that India needs this form of deterrence for its security. To be visibly strong in order to deter any enemy from attacking is a concern that goes back to pre-historic times. But when this ancient urge is exerted by nations with nuclear weapons, it must be an occasion to revisit the arms race, the Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) doctrine and their long-term implications.

The doctrine emerged during the Cold War in the mid-20th century when the U.S. and the erstwhile U.S.S.R. had stockpiled so many nuclear weapons that if launched, the weapons could destroy both nations many times over.

Since there was eventually a 'détente', or a relaxation of hostilities between the two, it is tempting to think that MAD is a valid doctrine that should continue to be applied by all countries with nuclear weapons capability. What

is the basis of this belief? And does it actually work?

For more than 100 years now, scientists and writers of science fiction alike have fostered the illusion that some day humankind will have a weapon so terrible that the fear of its impact will end war for all times.

### Deterrence and violence

Having invented dynamite and unleashed it upon the world in 1867, Alfred Nobel believed that "the day when two army corps can annihilate each other in one second, all civilized nations, it is to be hoped, will recoil from war and discharge their troops".

Since then incalculably more destructive weapons, including nuclear bombs and chemical weapons, have been deployed but this has not ended war. On the contrary, the invention of increasingly deadly weapons has fuelled a global arms race.

Globally, the annual spend on armaments is now estimated to stand at about \$1.7 trillion. Estimates of the total number of nuclear weapons in the world range from 15,000 to 20,000, with each one of these weapons being far more powerful than the bombs dropped by the U.S. on Japan in 1945. The U.S. and Russia still



maintain about 1,800 nuclear weapons in a state of high alert, ready for launch within minutes.

According to the Global Peace Index, in 2017, the economic impact of violence globally was estimated at about \$14.76 trillion, which was 12.4% of global GDP. Since 2012, there has been a 16% increase in the economic impact of violence largely due to the conflicts in Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq.

It is vital to note that having competing weapons, in terms of quality and quantity, has not acted as a deterrent either in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict or in the Syrian war or the prolonged conflict in Colombia. What did finally end the conflict in Colombia, after almost 50 years, was a protracted process of negotiation between all parties of the conflict.

The Global Peace Index also shows that over the last 70 years the per capita GDP growth has

been three times higher in more peaceful countries. This is partly why, compared to 10 years ago, 102 nations are spending less on military as a percentage of their GDP.

But that is a thin silver lining to a grim reality. Ban Ki-moon, while he was UN Secretary General, said, in 2009, "The world is overarmed and peace is under-funded ... The end of the Cold War has led the world to expect a massive peace dividend. Yet, there are over 20,000 nuclear weapons around the world. Many of them are still on hair-trigger alert, threatening our own survival."

According to the website of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), the failure of the nuclear powers to disarm has heightened the risk that other countries will acquire nuclear weapons. In 2017, the ICAN was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

### Double-edged sword

Theoretically, MAD is supposed to eliminate the incentive for starting a conflict but it also makes disarming almost impossible. This is partly why, long after the Cold War ended, the U.S. is poised to spend enormous amounts of money over the next 10 years in updating and

modernising its nuclear arsenal.

The tragic irony of this trend is that nuclear defence, particularly with warheads riding on rockets of supersonic speed, actually deepens insecurity in both countries by causing millions of lives to be perpetually at the risk of instantaneous annihilation.

All through the Cold War and even now, the MAD doctrine has been opposed on both moral and practical grounds by a variety of disarmament and peace groups. The most prominent of these, War Resisters' International (WRI), which will turn 100 in 2021, has 90 affiliated groups in 40 countries. Such groups ceaselessly serve as a counter to all those who glorify or justify war or an arms race. Above all, they constantly draw attention to the fact that the only true security lies in dissolving enmity by going to the roots of any conflict.

Once the joy about India's technological achievements, in the realm of missiles, has settled down, perhaps attention can shift to the much bigger challenge of seeking answers to a key question: what really makes us, the world a whole, more secure?

Rajni Bakshi is the author of 'Bapu Kut: Journeys in Rediscovery of Gandhi'

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

### Rahul from Wayanad

That the complexity of political alliances varies from State to State has always been an acceptable norm but the candidature of Congress president Rahul Gandhi for the Wayanad constituency in Kerala has kicked up a controversy and given the ammunition-starved BJP something to deride the Opposition about. While the barbed criticism of the Left is justifiable, the Congress should not allow things to go out of control as the BJP is always on the lookout for a fallout amongst the Opposition parties (Page 1, "Left unhappy as Congress says Rahul will contest Wayanad too", April 1). It is imperative that the Congress and the Left sort out their differences and concentrate on the task at hand – to stop the BJP's from getting another term.

G.B. SIVANANDAM,  
Coimbatore

■ Opportunism and politics go hand in hand and it is no

surprise that Mr. Gandhi is looking at another seat. However, one is surprised by the indignation being expressed by rival politicians. When the Prime Minister chose to contest from Vadodara and Varanasi in 2014, it was hailed as a masterstroke. But when Mr. Gandhi does it now, it is called desperation. Finally, the Election Commission must explore the possibility of recovering the cost of the second election in either one of the constituencies in the event of the candidate winning in both. It does impose a wasteful expenditure of public funds.

ANAND ARAVAMUDHAN,  
Chennai

■ The move is a blunder as it sends the message that the Congress is not secular. The point is that in north India, the Congress follows the same Hindutva agenda that the BJP does. The way the Congress is campaigning in Uttar Pradesh is an indication of this. Contesting from Wayanad will result in a contest with the LDF, which

is a supporter of a secular dispensation at the Centre. The Kerala PCC's enthusiasm after the announcement is to hide or end the groupism with the State Congress unit.

B. PRABHA,  
Varkala, Kerala

■ The decision is a clear indication of the fear of defeat in the Congress party. There can be no comparison with the Prime Minister Narendra Modi's move to contest from two seats in 2014. He was a first-timer with no traditional Lok Sabha seat. Only time will tell whether the Left in Kerala will play a friendly match. The move does also raise interest about the electoral fortunes of the dynasty.

D.-JAI PRAKASH GUPTA,  
Ambala Cantt., Haryana

■ The Congress party, which failed in its attempt to form a Mahagathbandhan before the elections, has made sure that political disunity and acrimony will continue even after the elections. The party should have shown some political expediency by

keeping out of Kerala and exhibiting the same grace and maturity shown by the Bahujan Samaj Party and the Samajwadi Party (by not fielding candidates in Rae Bareilly and Amethi in U.P.). Perhaps the Congress might have anticipated a similar gesture from the Left in Kerala. The electorate will wonder whether it is worth exercising their franchise in favour of a hotchpotch of parties that do not want to see eye to eye with each other. Despite being perceived to be on a sticky wicket due to its mediocre performance, the NDA suddenly finds itself at an advantage due to egoistic and unrelenting Opposition leaders.

V. SUBRAMANIAN,  
Chennai

■ The stringent opposition, especially from the Left, primarily stems from that desperate realisation of the rich electoral dividends that the Congress would stand to reap/gain, which could have far-reaching ramifications in all constituencies of the

State. There are examples from the past of political leaders who have contested from two parliamentary seats and emerging victorious in both. Elections are to be fought on bread and butter issues instead of personality politics and sectarian issues.

B. SURESH KUMAR,  
Coimbatore

### Water distress

As water sources in south India begin to show signs of severe distress and exploitation, the focus should move to environmentalists who have been struggling to point out that dwindling green cover and shrinking water bodies are issues within our control. Rampant real estate development and concretisation are also why

### CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:

The headline of a story (April 1, 2019, some editions) regarding the PSLV mission read: "PSLV to launch military's eye in the sky." It should have said *military's monitor*.

In "Dramatic win for Hamilton" (Sport, April 1, 2019), the reference to Sergio Perez of *Racing Line* should be corrected to read as Sergio Perez of *Racing Point*.

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# The politics of enmity

We must reject the idea that membership in a group comes with an enemy to be fought



RAJEEV BHARGAVA

Indian elections have become less violent over the last three decades. The credit for this must go not only to institutions such as the Election Commission but also to the political class. Yet there is another disturbing tendency, potentially replete with violence, that has been growing during the same period: to view political opponents as enemies to be annihilated. One gets a flavour of this in slogans such as 'Congress-mukt Bharat', but more than in statements, it is present in the tone of some speakers, in their body language and in the ferocity in their eyes.

## Friends and enemies

The pro-Nazi, but important legal and political theorist, Carl Schmitt, made the friend-enemy distinction as constitutive of politics itself. To be political was necessarily to work with a distinction between an extreme version of us and them, friends and enemies. Not only was this distinction the decisive criterion of the political but even within this relationship, enmity had priority over friendship: Those not on our side, or disloyal to us, are automatically, irredeemably, enemies. In doing so, Schmitt reduced all politics to war. At least war is an ever-present possibility in politics, he claimed, and therefore a political person must conduct himself as if surrounded by enemies. Schmitt was exploiting a distinction perfected by some strands within Abrahamic religions that invented the idea of an 'extra-systemic other', a radical other with whom no conversation is possible, one who is outside one's semantic universe. Those who do not adhere to the doctrine defining the system are enemies to be fought. Internal dissent too is anathema, akin to betrayal, of joining the camp of the enemy, signifying treachery. Felt as existential threats, both outsiders and deviant insiders must be 'converted', brought in line or altogether expunged.

This horrendous resource within these traditions, when deployed under certain conditions, has played havoc in large parts of Europe lead-



"The strain of exclusionary nationalism has permeated South Asian cultures, an example being the expulsion of the Rohingya from Myanmar." A Rohingya refugee camp in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. •GETTY IMAGES

ing to crusades, the inquisition, the expulsions of Jews, and to the final solution of the concentration camps; and outside Europe, in the liquidation, for example, of native Americans. Some detect the same ideological underpinning even in the neoconservative war on Iraq. Perhaps, its most recent expression is in the violence exhibited by Islamist organisations such as the Islamic State. However, this mindset is no longer confined to strands of Abrahamic theology; it has crept into other religions and even been secularised. It is found in the 20th century in both fascism and Stalinism and more pervasively in a host of ultra-nationalisms that have led to ethnic cleansing and genocide in several parts of the world, including Indonesia, Cambodia and Rwanda. This strain of exclusionary nationalism has permeated China where undercurrents of Han nationalism have virtually turned Tibetan Buddhists and Uighur Muslims into extra-systemic others or enemies. It has infected South Asian cultures too, causing the partition of the 'subcontinent', ethnic cleaning of Tamils in Sri Lanka and the expulsion of the Rohingya from Myanmar. In India, the frequent use of the term 'anti-national' for those critical of the current dispensation smells of the same fatal disease. How to deal ideologically with this seems to be one of the great challenges of our times.

## Enemies and adversaries

Obviously, a mentality inebriated

with the friend-enemy syndrome is fundamentally undemocratic. Knowing the difference between an enemy and an adversary is absolutely critical in a functioning democracy. An adversary is someone one wishes to defeat in a temporary contest such as a legal combat or a game of cricket. To wish to trounce an opponent in an election is entirely legitimate. On the other hand, an enemy is someone to be destroyed permanently. Adversaries can be won over, turned into allies, but enemies cannot. A compromise with an adversary is acceptable, even praiseworthy. On the other hand, with an enemy, a compromise spells defeat, an unacceptable concession, a betrayal. The world of adversaries in a democracy does not involve a zero-sum game; no one loses everything or forever. There are no permanent losers or victors; each competitor wins some and loses some in a fair contest. But all rules of fairness can be abandoned in a fight with an enemy. In this hostile scenario, all politics is nothing but war.

It is often heard that in politics there are no permanent friends or enemies. This may well appear to be opportunistic in some contexts but it is the very stuff of democratic politics where everyone hopes that today's losers can be tomorrow's victors and vice versa. Everyone, not only active political agents but also ordinary citizens, is assured that no matter which party wins, the fundamental interests and liberties of all, the majority as well as the minority, are secure,

and despite deep differences on many matters, everyone also shares something in common. This 'common' can be our humanity, national ethos, Constitution, or shared civilisational values, nurtured through history. For example, in India, the value of pluralism, acceptance and accommodation, of refusing to view the world in terms of simple binaries has faced challenges from time to time by narrow-minded, rigid, hierarchy-ridden, upper caste practices (often termed Brahminism because it was legitimated by scholarly Brahmins), by close-minded religious orders which accompanied Afghan and Turk invaders and marauders, and by ruthlessly exploitative colonialists. More recently, heartless multinational corporations have also damaged this ethos by mindlessly turning everything into a commodity to be bought and sold in the capitalist market. But exclusionary ultra-nationalists (as distinct from inclusive, moderate nationalists) must not be left out of this nefarious list. They too are hell bent on throttling our civilisational values and democratic ethos.

## Protecting our civilisation

As groups grow in size, they invent rules to regulate behaviour, formulate authoritative norms, install a structure of authority and, above all, evolve some criteria of who is in and who is out, of insiders and outsiders. Let us even agree that there is no 'self' without an 'other'. But rules can be rigid or flexible, a challenge to norms can be tolerated or punished severely, and the 'other' can be viewed as a temporary adversary in a healthy contest, someone with whom one can also have a fruitful dialogue, or one with whom conversation is impossible, a permanent enemy. This idea that membership in a group comes with an enemy to be fought was a powerful resource in the doctrines of some religions has slowly taken root in Asian religions, including modern Hinduism. It has now entered our democratic politics. If it stays there, it will utterly destroy the *atman* of our civilisation and the *astiva* of democracy. Everyone across religious differences must strive to fight it. All democrats, if they wish to save their cherished system, must defang it before it is too late.

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# Chowkidars are those who protect the rich

Why the BJP campaign is on the mark



KANCHA ILAIAH SHEPHERD

Prime Minister Narendra Modi calls himself a chowkidar. What he has done is tell the nation and the world the truth. Chowkidars exist mostly in Asian countries where poor men work as protectors of the rich. In India, only about 0.5% of the population have watchmen, who are called chowkidars. Only poor, lower caste people – Dalits, Other Backward Classes and Adivasis – take up this

job, and that too when no other work for survival is available. That the job is tied to caste was evident in Rajya Sabha MP Subramanian Swamy's statement. Mr. Swamy recently said that he cannot join the BJP's 'Main Bhi Chowkidar (I am also a watchman)' campaign as he is a Brahmin. Being a chowkidar is a low-paying job with little job satisfaction – after all, a chowkidar has to stand at the gate of a rich man or woman's house all day and protect it. No chowkidar serves the poor. The poor do not have anything that needs protection.

## Protecting the rich

When I say Mr. Modi is speaking the truth, I refer to the people he has been protecting as Prime Minister – the rich, the top industrialists. Those who are trying to establish a Hindutva state and economy are doing so for the rich. The BJP/RSS Ministers and cadres have no hesitation in joining the 'Main Bhi Chowkidar' campaign. The BJP and the RSS have never believed in socio-economic equality. While it is true that BJP-RSS activists have always worked to help people during natural calamities, they have never worked for the upliftment of the poor. They have never organised the agrarian poor or the urban poor in order to increase their daily wages. Whenever there have been strikes by workers, they have sided with the management, never with the workers. Their student wing, the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad, has never organised seminars or conferences on how to improve the living conditions of the marginalised. Nor has it organised meetings for social and economic justice. It has, in fact, opposed progressive meets on campuses.

When the Indian economy was feudal, these activists mobilised support for the feudal lords. After it became mainly capitalist following the globalisation and liberalisation phase, they stood by the growing crony capitalists. Their only concern was that these crony capitalists should back the Hindutva ideology.

This is not to say that the Congress has not supported monopoly capital. But during the freedom struggle and till the 1970s, the Congress had some serious ideological relationship with the socialist welfare agenda. It wanted to build state capital. From Nehruvian democratic socialism to Indira Gandhi's abolition of Privy Purses and bank nationalisation, the Congress engaged with the idea of some sort of social and economic equality.

However, after Emergency, its credibility began to erode. When Rajiv Gandhi became Prime Minister, a slow pace of privatisation started. Once the P.V. Narasimha Rao government was ushered in, the privatisation process picked up, without giving up the idea of a mixed economy.

Through all these phases, the RSS and Jan Sangh opposed state capital; they opposed a mixed economy. It was only after Indira Gandhi imposed Emergency that they gained some credibility among the poor, and this was because they joined hands with the socialist leader Jayaprakash Narayan. Otherwise they never moved away from the rich. They never moved away from serving capitalist and feudal interests.

## Disintegration of feudalism

Luckily for them, by the 2014 Lok Sabha election, feudalism got disintegrated. The crony capitalists were impatient with the Congress culture of slow privatisation. They found in the BJP those who could protect them.

Of course, some pro-poor policies are taken by the government too – for poor farmers and labourers. This is only because if this is not done, a revolution could break out. And if a revolution does occur, leave alone the chowkidars, even the police cannot protect their economy.

The 2019 elections will decide what the masters do. If the chowkidars come to power with their full backing, more decisions will be taken to increase the gap between the masses and the rich.

Kancha Ilaiah Shepherd is a political theorist, social activist and author

## SINGLE FILE

# Taking a cue from Japan

How India can bridge the Belt and Road divide with China

ATUL ANEJA



As the countdown begins for the second edition of the Belt and Road Forum (BRF) later this month, Beijing is jubilant. Last month, China demonstrated that President Xi Jinping's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) had steamed into the heart of Europe. Late last month, during President Xi's Europe visit, Italy became the first G7 country to formally subscribe to the China-led BRI. The Chinese have interpreted Rome's decision as a historic event that revives ties between the European and Chinese civilisations. During his visit, President Xi also spoke about joint venture prospects in other countries, including in Africa. That apparently tickled a nostalgic nerve in European capitals, where it has been difficult to separate the guilt of colonisation from a whiff of romance. The geopolitical subtext of the visit is also fairly obvious. With its ties with the U.S. souring, China is making a bold move to chip away at the real or contrived fault-lines of the Trans-Atlantic Alliance. As in 2017, when there were plenty of red faces in China when India did not grace the BRF, there is once again a fear in Beijing that New Delhi may repeat the embarrassment. India had stayed out because of sovereignty concerns as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, the flagship of the BRI, passes through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. The question then arises whether there is third way out of the problem that would allow India to hold on to its position against official participation, but yet convey to the Chinese that New Delhi has no ingrained ill-will towards the BRI.

Perhaps, New Delhi can pull a leaf out of Japan's play book. In 2017, after Tokyo had decided that it needed to rebuild bridges that had collapsed following a maritime dispute over a few East China Sea islands, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe decided to send his trusted party ally, Toshihiro Nikai, to China. Mr. Nikai, the secretary general of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, though an established heavyweight, was technically not a part of government. His presence signalled that Tokyo continued to have reservations about the BRI, but was nevertheless open to an engagement with the enterprise, provided a course correction was carried out in the future. Significantly, Mr. Nikai's delegation included the head of Keidanren, Japan's Business Federation lobby – a pointer that its current misgivings apart, Japan could be open to business within the ambit of the BRI.

Taking the cue from Japan, Prime Minister Narendra Modi can also tap an influential party heavyweight to lead an Indian non-official delegation to the BRF, along with business leaders and reputed scholars. A mature and pragmatic Indian response, which keeps the door open for a future partnership with the BRI, may help keep afloat the reset achieved last year following the informal summit between Mr. Modi and Mr. Xi in Wuhan.

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## DATA POINT

### The winning habit

The late CPI leader Indrajit Gupta had the distinction of being a member of 11 Lok Sabhas, beginning in 1957. The CPI(M) has the highest proportion of MPs who have been part of five or more Lok Sabhas. Among States, Meghalaya has the highest proportion. By Vignesh Radhakrishnan

### Veteran line-up

The graph shows MPs who were part of 9 Lok Sabhas or more. Labels show the MP's name, the latest party he was affiliated to and the number of Lok Sabhas he was part of

|                                    |                                   |                                 |                                 |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Indrajit Gupta<br>CPI<br>11        | Basudeb Acharia<br>CPI(M)<br>9    | Kamal Nath<br>INC<br>9          | Purno Agitok-Sangma<br>NPP<br>9 |
| Somnath Chatterjee<br>CPI(M)<br>10 | George Fernandes<br>JD(U)<br>9    | Ram Vilas Paswan<br>LJP<br>9    | Madhavrao Scindia<br>INC<br>9   |
| P.M. Sayeed<br>INC<br>10           | Giridhar Gamang<br>INC<br>9       | Khagapathi Pradhani<br>INC<br>9 |                                 |
| Ata Bihari Vajpayee<br>BJP<br>10   | Manikrao Hodyla Gavit<br>INC<br>9 |                                 |                                 |

### Experience counts

The CPI(M) has the highest proportion of veterans among parties which have sent at least 50 MPs and that are no longer defunct.

Table 1 shows the % of one-time MPs (1), % of two to four-time MPs (2 to 4) and % of MPs who completed five or more terms (>5) among various parties.

Table 2 shows the same State-wise.

Note: In cases where an MP represented multiple parties, the last party that s/he was part of has been considered. An MP might have also contested from various States. In that case, the last State from where s/he contested has been considered

### Table 1

| Party  | 1  | 2 to 4 | >5 |
|--------|----|--------|----|
| CPI(M) | 41 | 50     | 9  |
| BJP    | 52 | 41     | 7  |
| SP     | 56 | 38     | 6  |
| INC    | 52 | 43     | 5  |
| AITC   | 61 | 35     | 4  |
| DMK    | 64 | 33     | 3  |
| Ind.   | 80 | 17     | 3  |
| TDP    | 74 | 25     | 1  |
| AIADMK | 84 | 15     | 1  |
| BSP    | 80 | 20     | 0  |

### Table 2

| State        | 1  | 2 to 4 | >5 |
|--------------|----|--------|----|
| Meghalaya    | 50 | 33     | 17 |
| Uttarakhand  | 35 | 53     | 12 |
| Jharkhand    | 57 | 32     | 11 |
| West Bengal  | 52 | 39     | 9  |
| M.P.         | 60 | 31     | 9  |
| Kerala       | 47 | 45     | 8  |
| Karnataka    | 52 | 40     | 8  |
| Goa          | 58 | 33     | 8  |
| Tripura      | 50 | 43     | 7  |
| Gujarat      | 51 | 42     | 7  |
| Himachal     | 52 | 42     | 6  |
| Maharashtra  | 55 | 39     | 6  |
| Assam        | 59 | 35     | 6  |
| Bihar        | 59 | 35     | 6  |
| Odisha       | 59 | 35     | 6  |
| A.P.         | 52 | 43     | 5  |
| Rajasthan    | 63 | 32     | 5  |
| Telangana    | 63 | 32     | 5  |
| Tamil Nadu   | 64 | 31     | 5  |
| Chhattisgarh | 52 | 45     | 3  |
| U.P.         | 60 | 37     | 3  |
| Haryana      | 50 | 49     | 1  |
| Punjab       | 60 | 39     | 1  |
| Mizoram      | 50 | 50     | 0  |
| Delhi        | 58 | 42     | 0  |
| J&K          | 59 | 41     | 0  |
| Arunachal    | 64 | 36     | 0  |
| Nagaland     | 64 | 36     | 0  |
| Manipur      | 67 | 33     | 0  |
| Sikkim       | 67 | 33     | 0  |

## FROM The Hindu ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO APRIL 2, 1969

### Wrong Air-India folder to be withdrawn

The Union Minister for Tourism and Civil Aviation, Dr. Karan Singh, expressed regret in the Lok Sabha today [April 1, New Delhi] that a folder produced by Air India in collaboration with the BOAC and Thomas Cooks to attract foreign tourists had indicated that India, Kashmir and Nepal were separate countries. The Minister was earlier taken by surprise when Mr. Indrajit Gupta flourished the pamphlet and asked whether there was any kind of check to stop this kind of giving wrong information that India, Kashmir and Nepal were three separate countries whereas Kashmir was an integral part of India. Mr. Gupta demanded to know who authorised this production, whether anybody in Government had seen the text and what action would Government take to see that such a piece was not put out. Dr. Karan Singh said that he was distressed to learn that Air India had produced such a pamphlet. It had not come to his notice so far.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO APRIL 2, 1919.

### A Farewell in Madras

Two gentlemen long connected with the Madras Christian College are leaving Madras for good in the persons of Mr. J.R. Henderson, C.I.E., and the Rev. the Hon'ble Mr. G. Pittendrigh. Whether as Professor in the Christian College for a quarter of a century, or as Superintendent of the Madras Government Museum, Mr. Henderson has done valuable and enduring work. An active member of the University Senate, as Hon'y. Secretary of the Victoria Technical Institute, both those institutions have profited by his zeal and experience... In Mr. Pittendrigh the student world loses a ripe and able educationalist. He is a warm friend of the Young Men's Christian Association. Mr. Pittendrigh was given a cordial send-off at a farewell meeting yesterday.

## POLL CALL

### Electronic voting machine (EVM)

EVMs replaced the paper ballot system in the Kerala State elections in 1982 and are now used during Lok Sabha and Assembly elections. EVMs are easy to operate, reliable, eliminate the possibility of invalid votes, make the process of counting faster, and are easier to transport compared to ballot boxes. Only two Indian public sector units manufacture EVMs: Bharat Electronic Limited and the Electronics Corporation of India Ltd. EVMs contain a control unit, which is with the polling officer, and a balloting unit, which the voter enters in order to cast her vote. Names and symbols of parties are shown on the machine and the voter presses the button next to the party of her choice.

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