



In governance mode

The government in Karnataka should focus on development despite political uncertainty

The BJP government in Karnataka won a trust vote in the Assembly on Monday, but that does not end the political instability. B.S. Yediyurappa, who has become Chief Minister for the fourth time at the age of 76, can breathe easy for six months now. The irony of his trust vote victory is that his government does not have an absolute majority of the total strength of the House. The exact numbers in favour of the government were not clear as there was no division of votes on Monday, but it is apparent that the BJP is short of the halfway mark of the Assembly's full strength, which is 225, including one nominated Anglo-Indian representative. Winning 105 seats, it had fallen short in the 2018 Assembly election but Mr. Yediyurappa had never conceded defeat. Supreme Court intervention ended his third tenure as CM in just three days then, but he is back in the saddle 14 months on, riding a rebellion in the ranks of the Congress and the Janata Dal (Secular) which had formed a post-poll coalition and government in 2018. While the coalition had inherent contradictions that weakened it from the very start, it was the BJP's relentless and amoral pursuit of power that led to its collapse. The BJP is evidently elated, and Mr. Yediyurappa said he believed in the principle of "forget and forgive".

Many other characters in the months-long political drama in Karnataka may not be able to "forget and forgive" the machinations that preceded the vote. K.R. Ramesh Kumar, who resigned as Speaker on Monday, disqualified 17 rebels from the Congress and the JD(S) under the anti-defection law. By disqualifying them for the Assembly's remaining tenure, he sought to preempt their inclusion in the new government, but the issue is headed for the courts. It might be a while before by-polls are held, and those could alter the Assembly's composition. The bitterness among political parties will linger, and the government will have uncertainty hanging over it. The State houses some of the best companies and has built for itself a reputation as a destination for investors and job-seekers. A dishonourable political culture that involves rent-seeking, high-handedness and rapacity by leaders has dented that reputation in recent years. Karnataka continuing its success as an economic powerhouse is in the interest of the country. While these are medium-term concerns, the State has some immediate challenges to tackle, particularly water scarcity and urban management. With such tasks ahead, the Chief Minister will need all the time and focus he can possibly garner for governance. Now that Mr. Yediyurappa has realised his dream and taken command, he should ensure that his rivals would end with bloody noses in this battle are drafted for better governance and the progress of Karnataka.

Talks and terror

Afghans suffer from the effects of war even in the middle of peace talks

The attack on Afghan vice presidential candidate Amrullah Saleh's office in Kabul on Sunday that killed at least 20 people and injured 50, including Mr. Saleh, is a grave reminder of the crisis the war-torn country is going through even amid attempts to find peace. Mr. Saleh, a former intelligence chief and a strong critic of the Taliban and Pakistan, is President Ashraf Ghani's running-mate for the September 28 election. And the irony is that the assault occurred a few hours after President Ghani officially launched his campaign in which he promised that "peace is coming". The message the insurgents are trying to send is that even the most fortified political offices in the country or its top politicians are not safe. The insurgents have made it clear they will carry out their offensive irrespective of the peace process, especially when Afghanistan gets down to a full-fledged election campaign. In recent months, even when the U.S. and Taliban representatives have held multiple rounds of talks in Doha, Qatar, insurgents have kept up attacks, both on military and civilian locations. The Taliban appears to be trying to leverage these assaults to boost its bargaining position in talks with the U.S. And the Kabul government's inability to prevent them and the U.S.'s apparent decision to delink the negotiations from the daily violence are giving the insurgents a free run in many Afghan cities.

Afghanistan's crises are many. Half of the country is either directly controlled or dominated by the Taliban. In the eastern parts, the Islamic State has established a presence and the group targets the country's religious minorities. The government in Kabul is weak and notorious for chronic corruption. Its failure to ensure the basic safety and security of civilians is in turn eroding the public's confidence in the system. At present, the government appears beleaguered. Its security agencies are strained by the prolonged war. It is true that Afghanistan needs a political settlement. The war has been in a stalemate for long. The government, even with U.S. support, is not in a position to turn the war around. The Taliban, on the other side, has expanded its reach to the hinterland, but not the urban centres. While a peace process is the best way ahead in such a scenario, the question is whether the U.S. is giving too much leeway to the Taliban in its quest to get out of its longest war. The decision to keep the Afghan government out of the peace process was a big compromise. The absence of a ceasefire even when talks were under way was another. The result is that Afghans continue to suffer even when the Americans and the Taliban talk. This has to change. There has to be more pressure, both political and military, on the Taliban to cease the violence. And the U.S. should back the Afghan government and the coming elections resolutely, while Kabul has to get its act together.

A straightforward lesson on resolution

By not sorting out conflicts between themselves, India and Pakistan are effectively outsourcing the role to third parties



HAPPYMON JACOB

U.S. President Donald Trump's claim last Monday that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had asked him at the G-20 summit in June in Japan to mediate between India and Pakistan on the Kashmir question may, for the moment, have been deftly handled by the two foreign policy establishments, but this is not a question that is likely to go away all too easily. Given that Mr. Trump made this rather out-of-the-blue statement during Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan's visit to the United States, it has fuelled further speculation about what it implies.

A mixed bag

To be fair to the Indian establishment's traditional logic, third party mediation in Jammu and Kashmir might not be a useful idea simply because third parties typically come with their own agenda. Second, it might do more harm than good in an age of hypernationalism and frenzied media attention on anything to do with Kashmir. In a milieu where bilateral diplomacy on Jammu and Kashmir itself comes under intense scrutiny from domestic political forces, third party mediation is almost impossible to even consider. More so, past instances of third party mediation have had mixed results.

And yet, Kashmir is likely to be on the great power radar and will continue to attract international attention for a variety of reasons, not least because New Delhi refuses

to invest in bilateral diplomatic measures to resolve Jammu and Kashmir.

Simla and after

Historically, New Delhi has had a love-hate relationship with third party mediation in Jammu and Kashmir in 1948. However, much of this overt third party intervention in Kashmir ended with the Simla agreement of 1972 which stated, at New Delhi's insistence, that Kashmir will be a bilateral issue thereby ending the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan's (UNMOGIP's) peacekeeping work in Kashmir, de facto, if not de jure. The current UNMOGIP involvement in Kashmir is neither encouraged nor recognised by India, something Pakistan continues to do. New Delhi believes that its UN experience *vis-à-vis* Kashmir has been an unsavoury one which partly explains the current distaste in India for any third party mediation. Then there is India's status-linked indifference to external opinion that comes with being a major economy and military power whose deep pockets and growing markets are of significance to those potentially desirous of talking about Kashmir. So theoretically, New Delhi has consistently, and successfully, blocked all third party mediation in Kashmir, except when it wants to let others play a role. And if anyone indeed makes a reference to Kashmir which New Delhi disagrees with, it either ignores it or strongly disapproves of it.

That is, in practice, there has historically been a great deal of third party attention on the larger Kashmir question some of which has been encouraged by India.

In order to understand this argument better, let us make a con-



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ceptual distinction between conflict resolution and crisis management. While both involve some amount of mediation, the former is focussed on a specific issue – Kashmir in this case – and seeks to address and resolve the root causes of the conflict. The latter involves mediation during an ongoing crisis with a potential for escalation. Crisis mediation unlike conflict resolution does not seek to resolve the political or root causes of a conflict.

Management and resolution

New Delhi has traditionally been averse to mediation in the form of conflict resolution while accepting more than once third party mediation during crisis events. Kargil is an example when India accepted third party mediation by the Clinton Administration in the U.S. This was also evident during the post-Pulwama military stand-off in February this year. While both Kargil and the February stand-off were directly linked to Kashmir, mediation by the third party did not seek to address anything beyond the immediate diffusion of tensions. Then there are other instances where third party crisis mediation took place even though they had no direct links to Kashmir such as the post-26/11 terror attacks.

For sure, crisis management is

different from conflict resolution. And yet even when the focus is on crisis management, the larger conflict, which has given rise to the crisis comes into focus and become part of the conversations between the mediator and the conflicting parties. This is precisely what seems to underlie the current American interest *vis-à-vis* Kashmir. So even though New Delhi accepts crisis management, and not conflict resolution in the context of Kashmir, it is not easy to separate the two either during a crisis or when the conflict is crisis prone.

Put differently, given that crisis, at least in this context, is the function of a pre-existing conflict, crisis management by third parties and the attendant focus on the broader conflict is not easy to avoid.

More so, while New Delhi is loathe to having third party discussions on Kashmir, especially on the human rights situation, it actively seeks third party attention on terror emanating from Pakistan as well as the latter's sponsorship of violence in the Valley. While this might be a desirable distinction to New Delhi's mind, it is not easy to get a third party to focus on one part of the problem and ignore the other. In other words, New Delhi's efforts at getting other countries to condemn Pakistan's sponsorship of terrorism in Kashmir while at the same time disparaging the reports of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) on the human rights situation in Kashmir is a difficult balance to maintain.

Impact of regional geopolitics

The unfolding developments in regional geopolitics could also have implications for third party interest in Kashmir. The U.S.'s desire for

a deal with the Taliban in Afghanistan, in which Pakistan is key, is already beginning to have an impact on the frosty relationship between Washington and Islamabad. Besides Washington, Beijing, and Moscow, the European capitals will also eventually start courting Pakistan. This will invariably increase, albeit marginally, the global focus on Kashmir either at Pakistan's insistence or because third parties might see a link between Kashmir and regional instability. As a matter of fact, several people have in the past made a direct link between instability in Afghanistan and the Kashmir conflict. Such voices could potentially become sharper now. More so, if the rising concerns about the Islamic State's influence in Kashmir turn about to be not-so-misplaced, the heat on Kashmir is only going to increase.

What further ensures third party involvement in Kashmir is the lack of a conflict resolution process between India and Pakistan. The less the two sides talk on Kashmir, the more there is are likely to be crisis situations between them which would invariably lead to more third party involvement in the whole Kashmir quagmire. In other words, by not resolving conflicts between themselves, India and Pakistan are effectively outsourcing crisis management, and thereby conflict resolution, albeit in a limited manner, to third parties. The lesson then is a straightforward one: if you do not engage in a dialogue with Pakistan to resolve the Kashmir issue, third parties will continue to meddle.

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In Assam, basic dignity at stake

There are concerns over how the State government plans to solve the issue of stateless citizens after the NRC exercise



SANJOY HAZARIKA

The Supreme Court has extended the day of reckoning for the controversial exercise known as the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam from July 31 to August 31, giving a month's relief or another opportunity to those who are off the list to scramble and get into it. Thus, it has provided an equal time frame for those who say that many on the list shouldn't be there because they are not actually 'foreigners'.

With this extension, the Court rejected demands by both the Central and State governments which, concerned about the nationwide controversy about the drive, had said they wanted to re-verify 10% to 20% of those on the list. In making such a request, the governments were expressing a degree of anxiety about the data quality of a process for which they themselves have pressed strongly since 2014.

The Court's decision was based on a declaration by the State Coordinator of the NRC, the officer whom it has mandated to run the NRC, that such a review was not

necessary: his team had already re-verified 27% of the list. This again has roiled the waters – the local unit of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) says the officer, Prateek Hajela, had no business to do so. The State unity's president asserted that the party stood by its demand for a 20% re-verification: "Even if some more time is taken, we want a correct NRC."

The concern here is that many Hindu Bengalis will be left out of the NRC and hence also get disenfranchised in the process. This has happened numerous times in the ongoing exercise as also with members of traditional tribal groups in the State.

Identifying Indians

The goal of the gargantuan effort of the NRC appears simple: identify Indians living in Assam and by exclusion pick out the 'foreigners' or Bangladeshis. In this case, some 40 lakh people were left out of the NRC when the draft list was published last July. This led to an outcry by civil society groups, and media accounts showed how citizens had been left out, reportedly on religious and ethnic grounds, and due to bad data collection. In the past months, not less than 36 lakh or 3.6 million counter claims seeking inclusion were filed.

That is nearly 90% of those who were left out. In the last storm of data-driven efforts, the country's



REUTERS

highest court allowed not less than two lakh complaints against people alleged to be "foreigners" by others whose identity was kept secret. Unknown entities tossed vague charges against people who had lived in India for generations.

The overall effort is to untangle what appears to be nothing short of a Gordian knot – to resolve the issue of illegal immigration from neighbouring Bangladesh into the region over decades. But each stage and layer appear to underline how challenging the problems remain, with issues of legal redress being acute.

The plight of the stateless

Concerns in Assam have been high over the purported influx post-1971 after the creation of Bangladesh. The effort is to calm local anxieties and also cater to a political agenda. Yet the question that is often asked but rarely answered is what happens to those individuals (and their dependents) who are

deemed stateless after they find themselves off the list.

I have two questions: What becomes of them while applying to tribunals and courts for relief – all the way to the Supreme Court, a detailed, drawn-out process? How will the government deal with those who are declared non-citizens and if Bangladesh refuses to take them, saying they are not its nationals, as it has consistently held for decades?

In this context, the recent remarks of a senior BJP leader from Assam on the issue are important. For they outline a process which the government believes can help resolve the situation. In a recent television panel discussion, the BJP leader underlined his non-acceptance of the Assam Accord, which has been the *madhyam* (medium) for the issue of alleged migrants, and which enabled the conferring of citizenship on a distinct group of people after a cooling off period of 10 years.

About 75,000 persons who benefited from this process had migrated from then East Pakistan between 1966 and 1971; most of them were Hindus. The BJP leader said that such a cooling off period was unacceptable, that "there should be" push back" but "push back with dignity".

But it is significant, however, that what appears to be emerging is that until such expulsion, al-

leged foreigners must have access to rights that will ensure their survival. These would include the right to education and health. But it would exclude the right to vote or to acquire property so that they did not have a role in political processes.

Is this an indication of how the governments, in Assam and the Centre, are thinking of resolving the issue? Could the "suspected" perhaps not be displaced from their locations but deprived of the right to vote and acquisition of property? As has been mentioned earlier, what also needs to be clarified is the status of lands on which they are living or have acquired. Will they be deprived of those? Would this amount to creating an enduring phenomena since Bangladesh refuses to take alleged illegals back?

Many of those who are off the list are poor, cannot afford lawyers and may not even know of their right to legal aid. At stake is the basic dignity of the weak, voiceless and vulnerable. The next few months will see how many of them will receive succour and how many will need to carry their bundles of documents from court to court in an unending and perhaps desperate search for hope.

Sanjoy Hazarika is International Director, Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative. The views expressed are personal

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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A betrayal of trust

What has happened in Karnataka over the last few months is no drama – it comes as a very real insult to the mandate of those in the State. While B.S. Yediyurappa has won the trust vote, the people have lost the trust they had imposed in their MLAs.

Monday's development may have given temporary closure to the political turmoil that kept governance in the State in a prolonged coma. But this doesn't rule out the fact that the disqualified MLAs may get another chance to enter the Assembly. Some of them may even contest from the very parties they deserted if denied tickets by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), giving this sordid saga another twist. To sum up, the crisis demonstrates that a mature democracy must allow people the right to recall their representatives

if they fail to live up to their expectations (South page, "BJP expected to have a smooth sailing in Karnataka trust vote," July 29).

J. AKSHAY,
Bengaluru

■ Former Karnataka Speaker K.R. Ramesh Kumar acted in haste in disqualifying all the 17 lawmakers who had resigned and proved that he is more loyal to his party than to the Constitution ("Karnataka Speaker disqualifies 14 more MLAs before trust vote," July 29). This came nearly a month after the resignation letters submitted by the dissidents were put in cold storage by the Speaker, who later also told the Supreme Court that he cannot take hasty action. He was probably hoping that the MLAs will withdraw their resignations and save the government. However, after the fall of the government, he perhaps realised that a no-confidence motion would

be moved against him. Therefore he hurriedly disqualified the MLAs. In doing so, he inadvertently did a favour to the BJP, which sailed through the no-confidence vote. However, the Speaker's move could act as a deterrent for future dissidents wanting to destabilise a government.

K.V. SEETHARAMAIAH,
Hassan, Karnataka

Insulting tweet

U.S. President Donald Trump's malicious tweet aimed at distinguished African-American lawmaker Elijah Cummings comes close on the heels of his attack on four Democratic Congresswomen, who he asked to return to "their countries". Mr. Trump ignores the fact that prior to the "discovery" of America in the 15th century, only Native Americans and aborigines lived there. Immigrants and their descendants constitute the vast majority of the

present U.S. population. Will the President choose to 'return' the U.S. to its original inhabitants? (World page, "Trump defends attack on black lawmaker as criticisms mount," July 29)

C.G. KURIAKOSE,
Kothamangalam, Kerala

A political titan

In the death of S. Jaipal Reddy, the country has lost one of its most-gifted sons (Front page, "Jaipal Reddy passes away," July 29). Ever since his student days in the Osmania University in the 1960s, Reddy had been a great debater, and a promising leader. Despite not having had his schooling in English medium, he acquired a matchless command over the language through grit and interest. His knowledgeable and thought-provoking write-ups and speeches won him many admirers and followers. Reddy was one of the few leaders who was never after

post, position or purse and despite being in the Congress, was a great critic of dynasty rule. He also had a penchant for taking on biggies such as Reliance without being afraid of the repercussions. He belonged to a rare tribe of politicians who were 'in' politics but not 'for' politics.

M. SOMASEKHAR PRASAD,
Hyderabad

■ Jaipal Reddy was a thinking man's politician. Knowledge,

coupled with sense of humour, made him a natural choice to be the spokesperson of the party or the government he represented. The Janata Dal, when it was facing a leadership crisis due to factional feuds, could count on his felicity with words. His death is a great loss to the country.

GUNDU K. MANIAM,
Bhandup, Maharashtra

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CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:

It is a 16-member panel: a front-page (July 29, 2019) report headlined "Govt. must convince industry of RCEP's benefits: Australia" erroneously referred to a 15-member Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership.

In the report titled "Army's first Integrated Battle Groups to be structured by end of next month" (July 29, 2019), a sentence read: "Typically each Corps has about three brigades." Typically, there are three Divisions under a Corps and each Division has three Brigades. Therefore, there are nine Brigades under a Corps.

"Archer - the new weapon in England's armoury" (Sport, July 28, 2019) erroneously said that England had not lost a Test series at home since 2001. England has not lost to Australia at home since 2001, but lost to India in 2007, to South Africa in 2008 and 2012 and to Sri Lanka in 2014, at home.

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Trump and Johnson: two peas in a pod

How the two men assumed power through different alchemies of chance, pusillanimity and mendacity



RUCHIR JOSHI

When Boris Johnson finally achieved his life-long ambition of becoming the U.K. Prime Minister, U.S. President Donald Trump described him as “a good man” who will achieve “tremendous things”. Mr. Trump also pointed out that many people call Mr. Johnson “Britain Trump, which they say is a good thing”. I suppose one should feel glad that Mr. Trump explained that because, left unexplained, that comparison could be seen as an insulting epithet. But let’s leave aside the jokes and examine the very different routes by which each man has managed to capture the top political post of his country.

Journey to the top

Donald Trump could never have occupied the top post leading a European style political party in government. That would have involved some kind of a career, politicking and manoeuvring within a party. It would have involved giving at least lip service to the idea of working in a team of equals, one or the other of whom at some point could be appointed leader of the team. It would probably have meant letting someone else have a go at the top job and waiting for him or her to fail before vying for the captaincy. All this would have been impossible for Mr. Trump. The only route he had to the presidency was from almost outside the Republican Party, by convincing a confused conservative conglomeration that it was a good idea for him to jump the queue. The only way he could do it was through a mixture of repeated monumental lies, luck, bluster, and the disgust that he had built up towards Hillary Clinton which allowed him to win despite getting three million fewer votes.

Boris Johnson could never have won a ‘presidential’ style election in the U.K. Even the Tory Party that has now inserted him into 10 Downing Street would never have had the temerity to present a man like Mr. Johnson to the larger voting public as their presidential candidate. Had



“The U.S. and the U.K. have never been morally irreproachable.” An artwork titled ‘Doris Borump’ depicting both U.S. President Donald Trump and British Prime Minister Boris Johnson on a wall in east London. ■ REUTERS

they been foolhardy enough, Mr. Johnson’s gloriously sorry record would have been torn apart by his opponents, not least his disastrous tenure as Mayor of London. The only way Mr. Johnson could move his way into the Prime Minister’s post was by hunting down and killing every scruple and principle he could find, by taking shameless U-turns on positions, by back-stabbing almost every politician he allied with, and, like Mr. Trump, through luck, a matching lack of principle and moral courage on the part of his party leadership, and by constantly deploying a series of whopping lies.

Through quite different alchemies of chance, pusillanimity and mendacity, two wealthy white men, both fanatically devoted only to furthering their own ambitions, both with serious track records of espousing deeply racist, colonialist and misogynist views, both unbelievably blind and uncaring to the real problems facing their own people and the world, are now in charge of two of the most powerful countries on the planet. There are other men controlling other large nations who can run them very close – Vladimir Putin is certainly the current, long-standing champion – but there can be no two world leaders *more* dishonest, more anti-democratic and more contemptuous of human rights than Mr. Trump and Mr. Johnson.

Mr. Trump and Mr. Johnson are getting to paw the steering levers of nations that are not only rich and po-

werful, but that also claim leadership on democracy, human rights and social justice. So, do we now write off the U.S. and the U.K. in these terms? I think not. In fact, with Mr. Johnson’s entry into Downing Street, things get really interesting. We must remember that the U.S. and the U.K. have never been morally irreproachable. The point about the two countries was never about who’s in power but the checks and balances these flawed democracies managed to impose on their demi-despotic, skullduggerous leaders and power systems, about how the people managed to effect the ouster of various Presidents and Prime Ministers.

The obstacle course

Even as Mr. Johnson puts his Cabinet in place, former Special Counsel Robert Mueller underwent a grilling by the U.S. Congress. Though Republicans are trying to put a fantastical spin on his testimony, what has been made clear by the dignified and clearly spoken Mr. Mueller is that Mr. Trump has neither been cleared of collusion with agents of the Russian state or, equally damningly, of obstructing Mr. Mueller’s investigation. Both are impeachable offences and Mr. Trump might yet be the first U.S. President after Richard Nixon to be forced to leave office for serious breaches of the law.

Mr. Johnson was greeted by a terse message from the president of the European Union who he will be dealing with over Brexit: “Dear Mr. John-

son, On behalf of the European Council I would like to congratulate you on your appointment as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. I look forward to meeting you to discuss – in detail – our co-operation. Yours Sincerely, Donald Tusk.” Even before Mr. Johnson took over, members of the Cabinet resigned, stating publicly that they will not serve under this man, something unprecedented in British politics. Among those Cabinet ministers resigning are many who have made it clear they will work from the backbenches to fight a reckless Brexit.

Autumn elections in the U.K. look highly likely. Mr. Johnson has done nearly a clean sweep of previous ministers and appointed what one commentator has called “a hammerhead shark of a Cabinet”. We in the sub-continent should not be too enthused when we see names like Priti Patel and Sajid Javid in the Cabinet; this is a hard right-wing, pro-rich, racism-prone bunch of unelected reactionaries who have taken over from a barely elected and now self-ejected Theresa May. Mr. Johnson’s booster rockets may be multi-coloured but they will combust in the same direction, propelling him to what he hopes will be an election victory in a presidential style contest against Jeremy Corbyn.

Across the Atlantic, Mr. Trump has already launched his own re-election campaign and he too will be hoping to overcome the obstacles he currently faces. We’ll have to wait and see how American and British democracies react to these two men so nakedly bent upon dismantling the ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity, but there is one lasting image from the last few days: As Mr. Johnson drove to Buckingham Palace to be appointed Prime Minister, volunteers from Greenpeace including some children fanned out across the road, blocking his Jaguar and the police motorcycle outriders. The convoy stopped. The outriders came up to the activists and spoke to them. Other police appeared and pushed them aside. A few of the children came back, however, and the cars had to swerve to avoid them as they went past.

Ruchir Joshi is a writer, filmmaker and columnist

Not a ‘Right’ agenda

The BJP heavily leans Right on cultural matters, but still leans towards the Left on economic issues



PRABHASH RANJAN

The supremacy of the right wing in Indian polity was reaffirmed when the Narendra Modi government romped back to power with a colossal majority. But what is the real nature of the Indian Right? The Left often argues that the Right represents religious majoritarianism, combined with a neoliberal economic agenda. But is this true?

India has definitely witnessed a surge in majoritarianism in the last five years. Religious polarisation has increased; instances of lynching and violence in the name of religion have been on the rise; and brazen display of religious nationalism has become the new normal. However, the economic agenda has been anything but neoliberal.

Typically, a right-wing government is one that supports free-market capitalism – it has a doctrinal belief in a small government, privatisation, and low tax regime; looks at private (not public) investment and exports as key engines of economic growth; makes availability of land and labour easier and cheaper; and relies less on welfare doles and more on economic growth to help the poor.

Not quite market friendly

The first Narendra Modi government was not quite market friendly if one evaluates its performance based on the above mentioned factors. Many examples prove this. The only engine of economic growth that was fired from 2014 to 2019 was public or government investment. Domestic consumption, private investment and exports remained sluggish. Despite the government enjoying massive political capital, land and labour laws were not reformed; neither were public sector undertakings privatised – only profitable PSUs were forced to buy shares of loss-making PSUs to make the fiscal math look good.

A hugely compromised GST with multiple tax slabs was adopted. Economic populism through measures like building toilets and providing gas cylinders, reminiscent of a patriarchal state, became the mainstay of governance. All this was a far cry from the promise of generating productive jobs in the private sector. Demonetisation was the biggest surgical strike on markets, on private property and on the integrity of money – all key tenets of free-market capitalism.

Even in the second term – if the recently presented general Budget is anything to go

by – the trajectory of the economic approach has not changed. To appear ‘pro-poor’, the government has hiked income tax rates on the ‘super rich’; import tariffs have gone up that makes ‘Make in India’ look like the dreaded import-substitution industrialisation of the bygone socialist era; a ‘super-rich tax’ on foreign portfolio investors has spooked the markets; nothing has been said on amending the Land Acquisition Act; and welfare populism has got more entrenched with PM-Kisan. All this would have made a statist government proud!

Looking at the BJP’s roots

This cleavage, between pursuing a social and cultural rightist agenda on the one hand and not pursuing an economic right-wing agenda on the other, can be understood by looking at the ideological roots of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The BJP, formed in 1980 as a successor to the Bharatiya Jan Sangh, is the political arm of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). The RSS’s mission, best captured in the words of its founder K.B. Hedgewar, is “to organise the entire Hindu society from Kanyakumari to the Himalayas”. He had said that to protect Hindustan, Hindu culture has to be nourished. Thus, the agenda was always cultural and never economic.

This variety of Indian right-wing was very different from the right-wing politics that the Swatantra Party represented. Founded by C. Rajagopalachari and Minoo Masani, two secular icons, it was premised on a plea for a “market economy for India” because policies “based on the socialistic pattern of society would lead the country to bankruptcy”, wrote Masani. Cultural and religious goals were never part of their agenda. They too critiqued Jawaharlal Nehru, but for his economic socialism and not for his cultural syncretism or liberal, secular outlook.

The RSS considers both free-market capitalism and socialism as alien to Indian culture. Its focus has been on the *swadeshi* or the indigenous, with strong cultural overtones. While the BJP, being a political party, is compelled to have a more nuanced approach, it cannot cut itself away completely from its roots. This explains why, for the Indian Right, economics is an “incidental extra”, as MP Swapan Dasgupta writes in his book. Thus, though the government heavily leans Right on cultural matters, when it comes to economics, it still leans towards the Left. It may, for political expediency, adopt policies that suit select business houses. However, this cronyism should not be construed as ‘right-wing’ economic agenda.

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No detente on the horizon

Just like in 2016, tensions with Iran will provide vital source material to Trump’s campaign team

EJAZ AHMED

Recently, U.S. President Donald Trump announced that his country’s warship had destroyed an Iranian drone in the Strait of Hormuz. The *USS Boxer*, an amphibious assault ship, brought down the drone reportedly after the latter came within its proximity despite multiple warnings.

The U.S. has since called for other countries to condemn this as an act of gross escalation in the region, an act that Washington sees as Tehran’s way of disrupting oil trading routes.

Earlier, in June, Iran had shot down a U.S. drone that allegedly entered its airspace, an exchange that led to a major escalation between the two adversaries, so much so that the American security establishment was on the verge of taking retaliatory military action against three Iranian targets. The crisis appeared ready to explode until Mr. Trump stepped in to call off the attack.

Iran has been Mr. Trump’s pet peeve for some time now. His remarks, ever since the campaign days, have regularly featured Iran and its alleged insidious tactics across the West Asian region. This pre-occupation with Iran has been a constant feature throughout his presidency and resulted in a U.S. pullout from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in 2018, despite certifications from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) that Tehran was complying with the deal.



A non-interventionist leader

However, it must be noted here that Mr. Trump is as much a non-interventionist as his predecessor Barack Obama – and this despite the massive difference in their respective rhetorical positions. Mr. Trump has pulled out a substantial number of American troops from Afghanistan and has shied away from direct military intervention in Syria.

Ironically, this approach of ‘no new interventions’ has been possible despite the presence of policy hawks such as John Bolton and Mike Pompeo in the administration. Perhaps

what the global security architecture is struggling to comprehend is that ‘Trumpian politics’ has a distinct style when it comes to foreign policy: escalate and then de-escalate with the aim of securing a deal, an approach consistent with Mr. Trump’s projected image of being the “ultimate dealmaker.”

Projection of strongman image

However, with the 2020 U.S. elections around the corner, Mr. Trump is unlikely to let go of the Iranian issue because it is – as it was in 2016 – a source of much election campaign material. Back then, it was the JCPOA; this time, it will be Tehran’s alleged belligerence and sabotage on the high seas. Invariably, Mr. Trump’s election campaign team will be hoping to portray that it is only Mr. Trump, with his strongman image, who can effectively bring Iran to heel

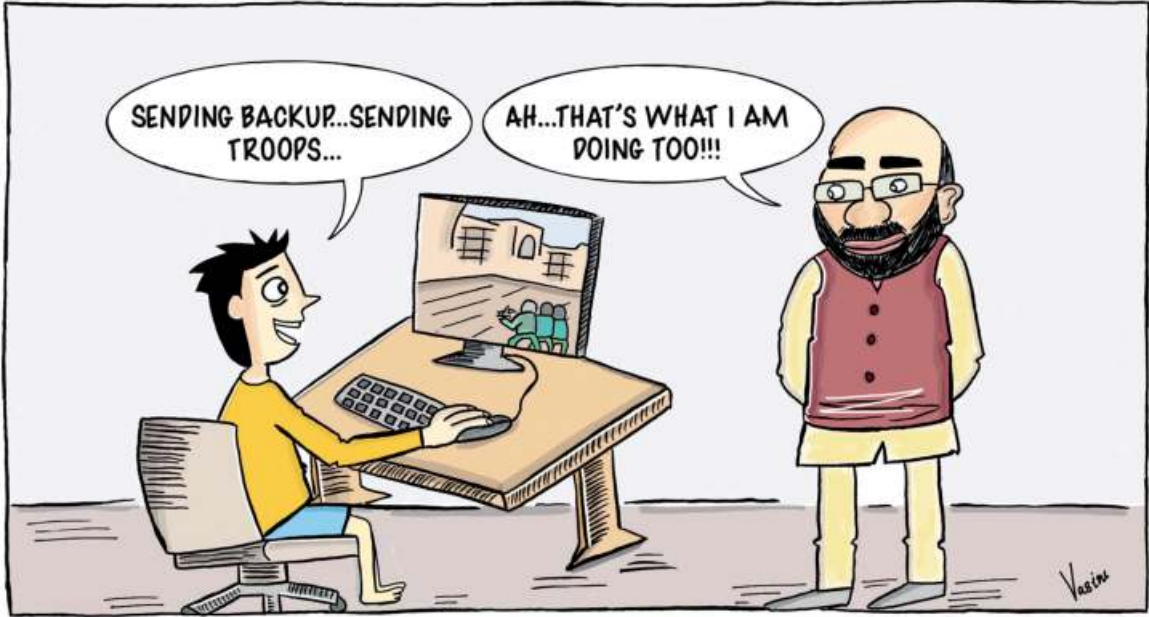
and thus secure the U.S.’s vital security concerns in the region.

On its part, the Iranian government appears to be waiting out the tensions, hoping that it can mend ways with the next administration. But has it reckoned with the fact that Mr. Trump’s approval ratings have been somewhat on the ascendant?

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, in his interaction with the press at the UN, hinted at engaging diplomatically with the U.S. to defuse tensions. He even went on to offer an additional protocol agreement, which would grant the IAEA further inspection rights that would not only be comprehensive but also even more intrusive than before.

Perhaps Tehran has come to grips with the reality that ‘waiting out’ and ‘strategic sabotage’ on the high seas alone will not work in the long term. However, its offer to defuse tensions has been met with scepticism in Washington, and this portends a continuation of hostilities as the search for a common ground goes on.

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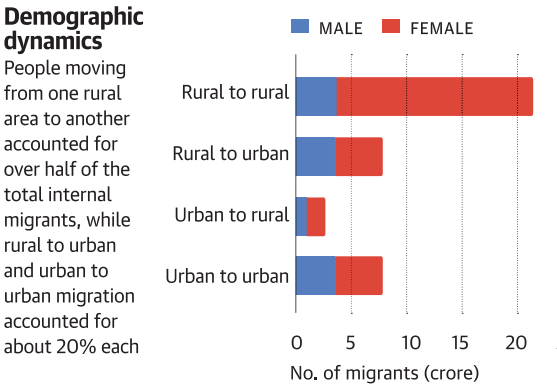
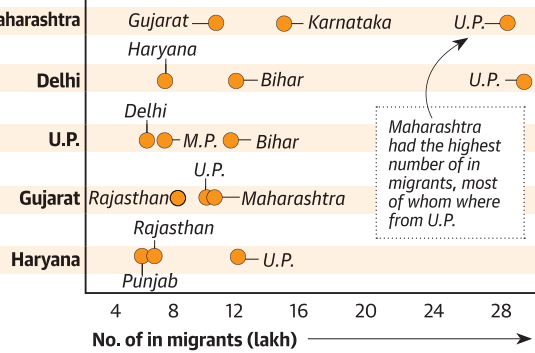
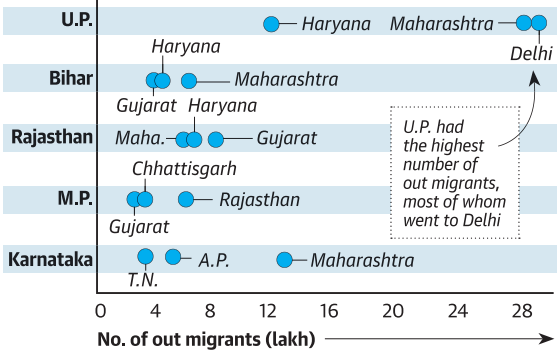


DATA POINT

India on the move

As of 2011, Maharashtra was home to the highest number of internal migrants, most of whom hailed from Uttar Pradesh, the State which recorded the highest outmigration. People mostly migrated from one rural area to another. Most international migrants were from Bangladesh. By Varun B. Krishnan and Sumant Sen

From where to where | Chart 1 shows the top five States which had the highest number of outmigrants and the States the migrants headed to. Chart 2 shows the top five States which had highest number of in migrants and the States of their previous residence



From a foreign land | Migrants from Bangladesh to West Bengal accounted for over 30% of the total international migrants, the highest by a large margin

Country	State	Migrants (lakh)	% of total
Bangladesh	West Bengal	18.97	34.55
Nepal	Bihar	2.60	4.74
Bangladesh	Tripura	2.15	3.92
Pakistan	Punjab	2.01	3.67
Sri Lanka	Tamil Nadu	1.40	2.56
Nepal	U.P.	1.25	2.28
Pakistan	Delhi	1.17	2.14
Pakistan	Haryana	1.08	1.97

Source: 2011 Census

The Hindu.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO JULY 30, 1969

No judicial probe into murder

The Union Home Minister, Mr. Y.B. Chavan, turned down in the Lok Sabha to-day [July 29, New Delhi] a demand for the appointment of a judicial commission to inquire into the murder of the Jan Sangh leader, Mr. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya. (The Special Sessions Judge has acquitted the accused of the charge of murder). The question of appointment of a judicial commission or committee would arise only after the U.P. Government decided whether to go in appeal against the Special Session Judge’s verdict or not, Mr. Chavan said while replying to a calling attention notice tabled by Mr. A.B. Vajpayee and four other members. The notice reminded the Home Minister of the demand made by more than 70 members of Parliament that a judicial commission vested with necessary and effective powers should be appointed to find out the facts regarding the murder. Mr. Chavan told Mr. Vajpayee that it would be an embarrassing situation if the U.P. Government were to go in appeal to a higher Court after the Centre decided to appoint a judicial commission. The Centre had examined the judgement of the Special Judge and forwarded its view to the U.P. Government.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JULY 30, 1919.

Paddy Prices Up.

Paddy is again selling fearfully dear [in Nellore]. What was 105 Rupees a putty three weeks ago has become 130 Rupees a putty; and enquiries appear to be brisk even at that rate. Second sort paddy has flown up from 64 Rs. to Rs. 100. To the public these frequent rises are very difficult to understand. Since their memorial to Government last March about the situation in food stocks and prices, the Government appear to have put restrictions upon exports of rice from this district by rail. What stock there then was, assuming that our local administrators had fully and vigilantly prevented smuggling out – one speculator alone is reported to have purchased 70,000 Rs. worth of paddy for export the other day – has been augmented by the second crop harvest in the delta taluks which has just come in. Further, during May, a few consignments of Rangoon rice had been allowed into the local market by the Director of Civil supplies. Under these circumstances, we had thought we had fairly enough to keep us going on for some more time easily and without any catastrophic fluctuations of price.