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Battle over quit India

Modi boisterously appropriates what Congress believes to be its family heirloom

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been thinking on his feet, as it were, on the issue of hitching his party to the bandwagon of freedom struggle. He is celebrating, with all the fervour that he can muster, the 75th anniversary of the Quit India Movement of 1942, the 70th anniversary of India's independence, and he is planning grand celebrations for the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi in 2019 and the 75th anniversary of India's independence in 2022. It has become clear by now that Modi believes hugely in atmospherics. The main opposition party, Congress, feels left out and more than a little peeved by the PM's boisterous appropriation of the freedom struggle, which the grand old party of India believes to be its family heirloom. Congress leaders have always been contemptuous of the Hindu right-wing and they have forever taunted their ideological adversaries for having never taken part in the freedom struggle. Of course, the charge is unfair in historical terms. There were many who did not believe in the politics of agitation popularised by Mahatma Gandhi from 1920 onwards which placed the Congress party in the lead position, but who had been looking at other ways of gaining independence from British suzerainty.

The Muslim League was never part of the agitational approach of Gandhi's Congress, and neither were many other sections like the Zamindars, the Unionist Party in Punjab, the Justice Party in the Madras presidency and the Krishak Samaj Party in Bengal. One of the prominent leaders who did not accept Gandhi's extra-constitutional approach was BR Ambedkar.

So, if the case is to be argued as to whether people who did not court prison and raise anti-British slogans did not fight for freedom from the British, then it would be an argument that would be difficult to sustain. There were different political groups and each dealt with the British keeping in mind what they believed to be their own interests. There is little doubt that Congress had a broader viewpoint than all the others put together. It claimed to speak for the whole country, for all the groups and all the regions. The others contested the Congress claim to be representing all. This was specially so in the case of Muslim League. The Hindu right-wingers were indeed in a quandary because they could not say that Congress did not represent the Hindu majority. As a matter of fact, the League dubbed the Congress as the party of the Hindus. There was no room in the arena for other Hindu sectional interests. Hindu Mahasabha leaders like MR Jayakar and Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya continued to exert influence in Congress. In a way, communal Hindu elements found a voice within Congress. Nehru and others were aware of this and greatly resented their presence. Modi has turned the argument over whether one participated in the freedom struggle on its head by asserting that present day India ruled by BJP derives inspiration from the 1942 Quit India Movement to transform India. In contrast, all that Congress president Sonia Gandhi could bring herself to say was that it was Jawaharlal Nehru who had moved the Quit India resolution on August 9, 1942. Sonia was clutching a twig of history, while Modi took upon himself the burden of carrying the spirit of Quit India Movement, at least by way of rhetoric, to transform India of today.

Congress has now been reduced to a party which clings to memories of the past, invoking its heroism of long ago to seek solace in its bleak present and infuriated by the Modi strategy of appropriating the heritage of the freedom movement for BJP with much panache. It can be said that Modi's words and gestures sound hollow because he does not really believe in the Gandhian morality of loving the adversary. And most importantly, he is not able to come to terms with Gandhi's proclaimed political heir, Nehru. Atal Bihari Vajpayee had no hesitation in looking up to the Nehruvian legacy because Vajpayee had greater self-confidence than Modi does. The prime minister's belligerence in what he says and what he does not say betrays a brittle sense of his own self. But he is moving in the right direction by acknowledging loudly and clearly events like the Quit India Movement which was essentially a Congress ploy. It can be seen in retrospect that the Quit India Movement was a historical blunder because the Muslim League and others became stronger between 1942 and 1945. Many Congress leaders, including Nehru, were not comfortable with Gandhi's decision. Though it was a tactical blunder, Gandhi was right in going ahead with it because all the Congress leaders were imprisoned, and when they came out of prison at the end of the war, they were burnished heroes who had paid the price for refusing to go with the British war effort. But no Congress leader of the day ever showed any resentment towards the bureaucracy, towards the Indian armed forces who participated in World War II, nor with the industrialists and many others from different walks of life who were not in the Quit India Movement. Congress in 1945 carried everyone else with it. Modi seems to be trying to appropriate the legacy of the freedom struggle with barely a nod towards Congress. Congress's anger is palpable.

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Terror calls for coordinated combat

ET Editorials



The terror attack in Barcelona and the resort town of Cambrils in Spain killing 13 and injuring dozens more comes after the fall of Raqqa and Mosul. The message is clear, the Islamic State (IS) might have lost its territory but remains potent as an ideology that can recruit killers around the world. There is a need to acknowledge that terrorism is a global challenge. That IS links up with terror groups and modules across the world, creating franchises. It has links with Boko Haram, Al-Shabaab, Al-Qaeda, Hizbul Mujahideen and others. It uses cyberspace, has access to a pool of disgruntled, dissatisfied and sometimes dispossessed people. It is able to continually reach out to

new audiences. One idea unites all these terror outfits: anyone who holds values different from theirs is an enemy deserving death.

As long as the ideology survives, terror groups will morph, merge and even improve on terror delivery systems. This not new — the US-led coalition vanquished Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, driving its leader Osama bin Laden into hiding in Pakistan. The vacuum was filled by a more virulent rendition, called IS. To successfully vanquish terror groups, governments across the world need to defeat the ideology.

For that, the major powers must stop differentiating terror strikes in Europe and US from those in Africa and Asia. The US must use its considerable clout with Saudi Arabia to impress upon Riyadh the need to stop the export of Wahhabi Islam and aid to terror outfits that attack Shias. The events in Barcelona and Cambrils should spur governments to finalise and adopt the UN Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism. India has consistently argued that defeating terrorism requires concerted global effort; it is time to heed its words.



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स्वास्थ्य ढांचे की बीमारी का इलाज

राजीव चंद्रशेखर



गोरखपुर मेडिकल कालेज में बच्चों की मौत पर लोगों का गुस्सा फूटना पूरी तरह जायज है। इन मौतों के लिए अस्पताल प्रशासन, अस्पतालों की निगरानी के लिए बैठे सरकारी अमले और राज्य में इन्सेफेलाइटिस यानी मस्तिष्क ज्वर की देखभाल का जिम्मा संभाल रहे लोगों की आपराधिक लापरवाही का मामला बनता है। उनकी यह लापरवाही उन बच्चों की जिंदगी पर भारी पड़ गई जो बेहतर बचपन और जिंदगी के हकदार थे। गोरखपुर की घटना के पहले केरल में डेंगू महामारी की तरह फैला था। इसके चलते करीब 400 बच्चों की मौत हुई। इसके बाद राजनीतिक आरोप-प्रत्यारोप और एक दूसरे पर निशाना साधने का दौर शुरू हो गया। यह इन दिनों बेहद आम हो गया है। केरल से लेकर गोरखपुर की घटनाएं यही बताती हैं कि राज्यों में

सार्वजनिक स्वास्थ्य सेवाओं की हालत कितनी दयनीय है। यह महत्वपूर्ण है कि इन मौतों पर उपजा गुस्सा समय के साथ खुद ब खुद शांत न हो जाए। हमें इन मौतों को भूलना नहीं होगा। मौजूदा हालात को एक नजीर मानकर गौर करना होगा, क्योंकि पिछले कुछ वर्षों में देश के तमाम हिस्सों में बच्चे असमय काल-कवलित हुए हैं। इस पर होने वाले विमर्श के बिंदु पूरी तरह वास्तविक मुद्दों पर केंद्रित होने चाहिए। इसलिए और भी, क्योंकि हमारे अधिकांश राज्यों के स्वास्थ्य ढांचे में बेलगाम भ्रष्टाचार, लापरवाही और सरकारों की अनदेखी सेहत के इस तंत्र को बीमार बना रही है। हमारा संविधान अनुच्छेद 21 के तहत प्रत्येक नागरिक को जीवन और स्वतंत्रता का अधिकार प्रदान करता है। इसके साथ ही वह राज्य यानी सरकार को नागरिकों के लिए स्वास्थ्य सेवाएं सुनिश्चित करने का दायित्व भी बाध्यकारी बनाता है। उच्चतम न्यायालय ने भी तमाम फैसलों में अनुच्छेद 21 की व्यापक विवेचना की है और उनमें स्वास्थ्य के अधिकार को भी अनुच्छेद 21 का ही भाग माना है। पिछले एक दशक से भी ज्यादा समय से एक सांसद के तौर पर मैंने देखा है कि स्वास्थ्य ढांचे पर संसद में अव्वल तो कोई सार्थक बहस नहीं हुई और अगर हुई भी तो महज खानापूति के तौर पर रस्म अदायगी की ही तरह। मुझे संदेह है कि विधानसभाओं में भी इसे लेकर कमोबेश यही स्थिति होगी। अब समय आ गया है कि सभी नेता इस लापरवाही भरे रवैये का परित्याग करते हुए इस बेहद महत्वपूर्ण मसले पर चर्चा और निगरानी को अहमियत दें।

बीमारी किसी व्यक्ति की जाति या धर्म को देखकर नहीं घेरती। इससे महिला, पुरुष और बच्चे सभी प्रभावित होते हैं। राज्य सरकारों की जवाबदेही तय करने पर जोर दिया जाना चाहिए कि वे नागरिकों के लिए जीवन के अधिकार की बाध्यकारी शर्त को पूरा करने के लिए अपनी कमर कसें। इसका अर्थ यही होगा कि सार्वजनिक स्वास्थ्य प्रशासन और वितरण तंत्र की सड़ांध को साफ करते हुए उसे भ्रष्टाचार मुक्त बनाया जाए। यह इसलिए भी महत्वपूर्ण है, क्योंकि अधिकांश भारतीय इलाज के लिए सरकारी अस्पताल और प्राथमिक स्वास्थ्य केंद्रों पर ही निर्भर हैं। विश्व स्वास्थ्य संगठन के मई, 2017 में जारी किए गए आंकड़ों के अनुसार डायरिया भारत में पांच साल से कम उम्र के बच्चों की मौत का दूसरा सबसे बड़ा कारण बना हुआ है जिसने 2015 में रोजाना 132 बच्चों की जान ली। बच्चों के विकास से जुड़ी 132 देशों की सूची में भारत 114वें स्थान पर था। यह उम्र से कहीं कम लंबाई और कुपोषण के स्तर को दर्शाता है।

आजादी के 70 साल बाद भी यह बेहद शर्मनाक है कि देश में बुखार, डेंगू, मलेरिया, हेपेटाइटिस ए और बी, डायरिया और एच1एन1 जैसी बीमारियों से लोग मर रहे हैं। यह स्थिति देश भर में अभिभावकों और बच्चों की मौजूदा मुश्किलों को और ज्यादा बढ़ा रही है। उत्तर प्रदेश में जिस इन्सेफेलाइटिस बीमारी की वजह से बच्चों की मौत हुई है वह उस क्षेत्र में बेहद आम हो गई है और यह लगभग हर साल की बात है, लेकिन यह देखने को नहीं मिला कि अतीत में भी किसी सरकार या राजनीतिक नेतृत्व ने उसका उचित रूप से अनुमान लगाकर बचाव की पुख्ता तैयारी करने पर कोई बात की हो। यह एक राजनीतिक जिम्मेदारी भी है कि हालात खराब होने पर आपात स्थिति में स्वास्थ्य सेवाएं मुहैया कराई जाएं। दुर्भाग्य की बात है कि संविधान की भावना और सहस्राब्दि विकास लक्ष्यों के अनुरूप काम करने में वर्षों से लगातार लापरवाही भरा रवैया ही दिखा है। ऐसे में बच्चों की मौत पर हुए संताप से उपजा आक्रोश पूरी तरह जायज लगता है। वर्ष 2005 में गोरखपुर के इसी बीआरडी मेडिकल कॉलेज में इन्सेफेलाइटिस की वजह से 1,500 से भी ज्यादा मौतें हुई थीं जिनमें से 90 फीसद बच्चे थे। इस बीमारी से ग्रस्त 2,500 से 3,000 मरीज हर साल बीआरडी अस्पताल में भर्ती होते हैं। इस पर जरूर प्रश्न होना चाहिए कि इतने लंबे समय से ऐसे हालात क्यों बने हुए हैं? जवाबदेही की कमी, भ्रष्टाचार, दायम दर्जे का इलाज, ठप स्वास्थ्य उपकरण और स्वास्थ्य के मामले में लापरवाही इस समय तमाम राज्यों के लचर सरकारी स्वास्थ्य ढांचे की खास पहचान बन गए हैं। यह तस्वीर इसलिए दिल दुखाने वाली है, क्योंकि हमारे सबसे बेहतरीन डॉक्टर, सर्जन और नर्स सरकारी स्वास्थ्य तंत्र में ही कार्यरत हैं। इससे पता चलता है कि इस मामले में समस्या नौकरशाही और राजनीतिक स्वरूप वाले ढांचे से ही जुड़ी है। देश के समक्ष चुनौती इस बात की है कि सभी नागरिकों के लिए आसान पहुंच वाली, किफायती और एकसमान स्वास्थ्य सेवाओं की परिकल्पना को साकार किया जाए। उत्तर प्रदेश और केरल में हुई हालिया मौतों पर उपजा गुस्सा महज कुछ दिनों में शांत नहीं होना चाहिए। देश भर में सार्वजनिक स्वास्थ्य सेवाओं में सुधार और उनके कार्यालय के लिए सतत बहस आज की दरकार है। समय आ गया है कि 70 साल के भ्रष्टाचार और लापरवाही को विदाई देकर उसकी जगह नए-नवेले, विश्वसनीय, मरीज हितैषी सरकारी स्वास्थ्य तंत्र स्थापित किया जाए। इसमें नए किस्म के राजनीतिक नेतृत्व की भी जरूरत होगी जिसकी प्राथमिकता में सभी भारतीयों का स्वास्थ्य और बेहतरी शामिल हो। इस राजनीतिक नेतृत्व को कई भूमिकाओं को अंजाम देना होगा। इसमें एक तो यही है कि सभी सरकारी और निजी स्वास्थ्य सेवा प्रतिष्ठानों की तिमाही आधार पर समीक्षा कर उनकी रिपोर्ट तैयार की जाए। इसके उपरान्त राजनीतिक सांठगांठ, भ्रष्ट और बाबूशाही के चंगुल में फंसे स्वास्थ्य तंत्र को उसके शिकंजे से छुड़ाकर उसके लिए पर्याप्त वित्तीय संसाधन आवंटित कर उसकी कमान जवाबदेह हाथों में सौंपी जाए। यह ठीक नहीं कि आजादी के 70 साल बीत जाने पर भी हम अपने बच्चों की जिंदगी महफूज नहीं कर पा रहे हैं।



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Prisoner of the binary

By calling cultural nationalism illiberal, Hamid Ansari panders to western notion of nationhood.

Written by Dr Rakesh Sinha, The writer is associate professor, Delhi University and honorary director, India Policy Foundation

The last Vice President of India Hamid Ansari's observation just before he demitted office that "more recently, an alternative view point of purifying exclusivism has tended to intrude into and take over the political and cultural landscape" is an unconcealed attack on the ideological moorings of the RSS and the Narendra Modigovernment. However, it is nothing more than another unreasonably polemical expression of anti-RSSism as it remains unsubstantiated by evidence of discriminatory practices. The RSS is not a new entity whose ideological tenets are unknown nor has the BJP assumed power in the country for the first time in 2014. Its predecessor, the Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS), was instrumental in the formation of non -Congress governments in half a dozen provinces along with Ram Manohar Lohia's socialists and also the Communist Party of India (CPI) in 1967. The the CPI justified camaraderie with the

BJS “not as a sop” but based on “concrete programmes”. Since then, the political trajectory of the party includes coalition experiences with parties which have been ideologically opposed to it. From 2014 onwards, there has been a marked consolidation of saffron politics as India’s political executive is completely Congress-mukt — the offices of president, vice president and prime minister are held by RSS men.

The RSS is an ideologically driven movement which is more subaltern than any other group or idea. It believes that the masses, not disconnected elites, can change the destiny of a people. More than 1,60,000 social projects to empower the poor and marginalised are being run by RSS workers, including in Naxal and insurgency affected areas, without soliciting the support of big business or government. India’s biggest chain of schools run by Vidya Bharati belongs to the RSS. This is a small part of the social concern embedded in the ideological indoctrination of cultural nationalism which, according to Ansari, is an “illiberal form of nationalism” which promotes “intolerance and an arrogant patriotism”. This is a reactionary attack on the idea which has been the basis of India’s unity and the continuity of its civilisation. Ansari’s idea unveils his own perspective of the nation and nationalism, nurtured by Western narratives. Sukumar Dutt understood the crisis of Indian intellectuals as early as 1926 when he aptly argued in Problem of Indian Nationality that “a mind free from (the) Western concept of nationality is absolutely necessary to comprehend the problems of Indian nationality.” The Western mind, averse to conflicts and with binaries of religion, language and cultures, defines nationalism as political and considers constitutionalism the guarantee for its perpetuation.

However this is not the case in India. The concept of nationalism can be traced from the prithvi sukt of the Atharva Veda which proclaims “the earth is our mother and we are her sons (mata bhoomi putroham prithivyah).” That is the reason humanitarian concern is embedded in India’s cultural nationalism and “otherness” is largely missing from its narratives. That is the reason cultural nationalism becomes a cradle for extremes and is classically accommodative. Ansari misses the spirit and message of the constituent assembly debate on secularism which is no different than the RSS’s perspective on secularism and nationalism. It is worth recalling the words of two members of the Constituent Assembly, Tajamul Hussain of Bihar, and H.C. Mukherjee, vice chairman of the assembly and a practising Christian. Hussain said the concept of minority was incompatible in the Indian case as India’s history showed there had never been a tyranny of the majority. Mukherjee, on the other hand, warned the nation that acknowledging any community as a minority on the basis of religion would be detrimental to the objective of One People One Nation.

But post-Independence, India’s politics undermined the noble doctrine of One People One Nation and increasingly relied on Western definitions and experiences. Secularism and nationalism cannot be safeguarded only by enjoying privileges in the name of pluralism but not contributing to strengthening the idea of modernity and multiculturalism. It was intolerance toward Hindus when they faced demographic aggression by Semitic religions as part of the latter’s expansionism. Cultural nationalism is based on spiritual democracy which promotes pluralism, not obstructs it. Cultural nationalism as an ideology had votaries even before the formation of the RSS — Aurobindo Ghose, B.C. Pal, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Lajpat Rai and many others. It reconnects modern India with its progressive ancient past and cultural and intellectual legacies. This idea was raised by Jawaharlal Nehru at the convocation at Aligarh Muslim University on January 24, 1948: “I have said that I am proud of our inheritance and our ancestors who gave an intellectual and cultural pre-eminence to India. How do you feel about this past? Do you feel that you are also sharers in it and inheritors of it and, therefore, proud of something that belongs to you as much as to me? Or do you feel alien to it and pass it by without understanding it or feeling that strange thrill which comes from the realisation that we are the trustees and inheritors of this vast treasure?”

But post-Independence India's Muslim intellectuals escape this question and consider the role of people like Tajamul Hussain in the Assembly "as subversive to minority's rights". Hamid Ansari is a prisoner of the binary of majority and minority, which he assumes is essential to secularism and the RSS considers the binary an insult to the historical tradition of the nation. To quote Carlton Hayes "a nationality receives its impress, its character, its individuality from cultural and historical forces." Ansari, by calling cultural nationalism illiberal, devalued the personality of the nation acquired over thousands of years.

Date: 18-08-17

Two plus two

A new format for India-US dialogue is welcome. But it won't add up without clarity of vision, determined leadership

Editorial

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Donald Trump have moved to insulate the India-US strategic relationship from feuds over trade by instituting a new level of interaction between the principal actors, the foreign and defence ministers of the two countries. In both countries, diplomats hope the mechanism will place the strategic and security relationship between the two countries on centrestage, allowing common challenges — like the crisis spawned by China's aggression on its peripheries, or challenges to energy security from instability in West Asia — to be addressed irrespective of differences on trade issues. The mechanism — called a 2+2 format — was discussed and agreed upon by External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj and her counterpart, Rex Tillerson, on Tuesday.

The 2+2 format draws on a framework Japan used for its strategic interactions with the US, France, Russia and Australia. From 2010, India and Japan began direct interactions between their foreign and defence secretaries; this was raised to the level of the respective ministers in 2014. National Security Advisor Ajit Doval is believed to have begun discussing the idea with his counterpart, General H.R. McMaster, soon after President Trump took office, in an effort to give depth to India-US strategic ties. There is little doubt that 2+2 will provide a powerful new vehicle to discuss issues. But bureaucracies in both countries need to resist being seduced by the idea that process alone can resolve the issues in the relationship. There are now over 60 India-US bilateral institutions — but there is also mounting ire in Washington DC over what it sees as New Delhi's chronic failure to use them to their potential. The causes are manifold: Bureaucratic inertia, legal issues, suspicions of US motives, lack of clarity on what India seeks from the strategic relationship. Perhaps more importantly, the existence of a dialogue mechanism will not itself insulate the strategic relationship from the fallout of simmering rows over intellectual property rights and trade — issues President Trump is likely to pursue — unless political leaders are clear on the ends they seek. Prime Minister Modi has gone some distance in meeting President Trump's concerns, moving forward rapidly on importing shale oil from the US in an effort to narrow the trade deficit. However, there is a deeper problem: The White House's lack of a clear vision for Asia, and of the US role in it, will dog the India-US relationship, just as it has the superpower's ties to its other allies in Asia. This problem is one only determined political leadership can resolve, not yet another mechanism.

Date: 18-08-17

Going off track

PPP model has not succeeded in metro rail projects. New policy overlooks lessons from past ventures

Editorial

The government's new metro rail policy marks a significant shift in its approach to urban mass transit projects. The PPP model, which was tried out without much success in Delhi Metro's airport line — and is faltering in the Mumbai and Hyderabad metro rail projects — is back in the Centre's scheme of things. The new policy, approved on Wednesday, makes private sector participation in metro rail projects an essential requirement for the Centre's assistance to such ventures.

India has, by and large, steered clear of PPP in its metro rail projects. The capital-intensive nature of such projects does not allow private players to get a return on their investments unless they hike their fares steeply — a problematic prospect for more than one reason. The metro has several externalities that make it imperative for the government to subsidise it. From enhanced mobility to its relatively low carbon footprint, metro usage has benefits that cannot be measured through the purely commercial yardstick of profit and loss. In pressing for the PPP model, the government is ignoring an important lesson from the success of the Delhi Metro: The Centre and state government have footed much of the bills of the Delhi Metro Railway Corporation. The project, in fact, experienced one of its rare failures when the airport line, then run by Reliance Infrastructure, shut down for six months in 2012 — Reliance ultimately pulled out of the venture in early 2013. Private enterprise has also proved unreliable in Mumbai, with Reliance taking almost seven years to complete 11 km of the city's metro project. The company now claims that it is losing Rs 50 lakh every day. The construction major L&T was scheduled to have completed work on the first phase of the Hyderabad metro by July; the deadline has now been extended to November 2018.

The fraught association between the private sector and the metro has been underscored by a number of studies, and most importantly by E. Sreedharan — whose stewardship of the Delhi Metro project earned him the sobriquet of India's Metro Man. In an interview to this newspaper, Sreedharan has pointed out that nowhere in the world has the "construct and maintain model of PPP in metro rail completely succeeded". Private players look for a return of around 12-15 per cent, while no metro project has yielded an investment return of more than 3 per cent. As Indian cities expand, the metro will be an important constituent of the transport mix. The government will do well to learn from past successes — and failures — in planning for this mode of transport. It will profit from paying heed to the counsel of India's Metro Man.

Redrawing the arc of influence

M.K. Narayanan is a former National Security Adviser and a former Governor of West Bengal

Indian diplomacy needs to display higher levels of sophistication for New Delhi to play a global role

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's schedule of foreign visits has been extremely impressive, and he has managed to inject a degree of dynamism into a system accustomed to a more leisurely pace. Estimating outcomes from these visits is, however, more difficult.

Taking the two most recent visits, for example, one can easily see the contrast in outcomes. The U.S. visit was a carefully calibrated one producing few surprises, despite the U.S. President having a reputation of being highly unpredictable. For his part, the Prime Minister charted a time-tested course, concentrating mainly on counter-terrorism and the defence security partnership, avoiding contentious trade-related issues. The naming of the Hizbul Mujahadeen chief as a "specially designated global terrorist" and a "new consultation mechanism on domestic and international terrorist designations listing proposals" were the high points of the counter-terrorism agenda. Reiteration of India's position as a major defence partner and confirmation of the sale of the Guardian Unmanned Aerial System to India, reflected the deepening security and defence cooperation. In concrete terms, not much else took place during the visit, despite an oblique reference in the joint statement to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and reiteration of support for "freedom of navigation" in the Indo-Pacific. What was most obvious was the U.S. tilt towards transactional rather than strategic aspects.

A clear de-hyphenation

In the case of Israel, this being the first ever visit by an Indian Prime Minister to that country, the euphoria of the standalone visit, de-hyphenating Israel from Palestine, was understandable. It also produced better dividends, including elevation of the India-Israel relationship to the level of a 'strategic partnership'. Israel achieved a major propaganda scoop by getting the Indian Prime Minister to visit the memorial of Theodor Herzl, founding father of the Zionist movement.

The main focus of the visit was on defence cooperation, joint development of defence products and transfer of technology. Most of the agreements signed related to transfer of technology and innovative technology-related items and India expects to benefit substantially, considering that Israeli export rules are far more flexible than those of the U.S. Both countries also expressed a strong commitment to combat terror. The reality, however, is that when the two countries speak of terrorism, they speak of very different things. Iran and Hezbollah are the main targets for Israel, which has little interest in the Afghan Taliban or Pakistan's Lashkar-e-Taiba. For India, it is the latter that matters.

The euphoria of the visit cannot, however, conceal China's importance for Israel. China is a far bigger investor and trading partner of Israel than India. On this occasion, India and Israel decided to set up a \$40 million Innovation Fund to allow Indian and Israeli enterprises to develop innovative technologies and products for commercial applications, but it is clearly dwarfed by the Israel-China comprehensive innovation partnership which has an outlay of \$300 million. India and Israel also have differences over China's BRI: Israel is eager to participate in it, unlike India, and possibly views this as an opportunity to develop a project parallel to the Suez Canal.

It's the neighbours

Two countries where India's diplomacy, despite the impetus given to it, is currently facing heavy odds are China and Pakistan. China in Asia is already exercising some of the political and economic leverages that the U.S. previously possessed. China has a significant presence in East and Southeast Asia, is steadily enlarging its presence in South Asia, and is also beginning to expand into West Asia. For instance, China's influence in Iran today appears to be at an all-time high, whereas India's influence seems to be diminishing.

India has, however, refused to be inveigled by China's blandishments, including the BRI. Nor has it flinched from standing up to Chinese 'bullying', as in the recent instance of the Doklam plateau in Bhutan. Few other countries in Asia are, however, willing or in a position to tangle with China. A divided ASEAN again has provided China with an opportunity to demonstrate its economic and military muscle. Most countries in the region also demonstrate a desire to join China-based initiatives. Even in South Asia, despite India's commanding presence, China has been successful in winning quite a few friends among India's neighbours such as Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka and the Maldives. In the case of Pakistan, the implosion of the state arising from its internal stresses and problems, together with the virtual standoff between India and Pakistan (involving a total cessation of talks or any kind of worthwhile contacts), has enabled the Pakistani Deep State to further entrench itself. India has been left with few options and this is leading to a diplomatic gridlock which does not augur well for India. As Pakistan becomes still more deeply mired in problems, its dependence on China is growing. This is contributing to a strategic imbalance in the South Asian region. It is a moot point whether India and Indian diplomacy can do something to rectify matters in this context, but for the present it confronts Indian diplomacy with one more serious dilemma.

Notwithstanding India's efforts, the diplomatic scene vis-à-vis Russia also could be better. Russia is undergoing a strategic resurgence of sorts, sustained in good measure by the close relations recently established with China. Buoyed by developments in the Ukraine and Crimea, and the uncertainties surrounding U.S. commitment to NATO, the new Russia-China 'strategic congruence' is certain to impact Asia. The problem for India and Indian diplomacy is that at this time India-Russia relations appear less robust than at any time in the past half century. India's 'Act East and Look West' policies have given a new dimension to Indian diplomacy in both East and West Asia. In both regions, however, but especially in West Asia, Indian diplomacy still lacks the nimbleness required to deal with fast-changing situations. In West Asia, despite its long time presence in the region, a 9-million strong diaspora, and the region being its principal source of oil, India is not a major player today. Both Russia and China have overtaken India in the affairs of the region. This is particularly true of Iran where the Russia-China-Iran relationship has greatly blossomed, almost marginalising India's influence.

Fadeout in West Asia

India's absence from, and its inability to play a role in, West Asia, even as the region confronts a split down the line between the Arab and the non-Arab world is unfortunate. More so, there is the possibility of a series of confrontations between an increasingly powerful Shiite Iran and a weakening Saudi Arabia. The most recent challenge is the one posed by Qatar to the existing order in the West Asian region. The fallout of all this will impact India adversely and Indian diplomacy's inability to make its presence felt will matter. An additional concern for India would be that growing uncertainties in the region could further fuel radical Islamist terror in the region.

The 'Act East' policy has produced better results. Closer relations with countries in East and South East Asia, especially Japan and Vietnam, are a positive development. However, in the Asia-Pacific, India has to contend with an increasingly assertive China. There is little evidence to show that India's diplomatic manoeuvres individually, or with allies like Japan, have succeeded in keeping the Chinese juggernaut at bay — or for that matter provide an alternative to China in the Asia-Pacific.

India's diplomatic establishment is all too aware of the political history and economics of the Asian region. Under Prime Minister Modi, diplomatic styles have changed but it would seem that the substance has altered little. His recent visit to Israel was, no doubt, a resounding success, but Israel was already one of the very few countries which had shown a complete understanding of India's defence and security needs, even ignoring the sanctions imposed on India by some countries. Israel's supply of critical defence items during the Kargil conflict (of 1999) is an excellent example. What Indian diplomacy currently needs to do is to find a way to steer amid an assertive China, a hostile Pakistan, an uncertain South Asian and West Asian neighbourhood, and an unstable world. The strategic and security implications of these, individually and severally, need to be carefully validated and pursued. Indian diplomacy may possibly need to display still higher levels of sophistication to overcome the odds.



Date: 18-08-17

चीन की महत्वाकांक्षा से विचलित न हों

शशांक, पूर्व विदेश सचिव

चीन और भारत का तनाव इन दिनों सुर्खियों में है। कभी सीमाओं पर अतिक्रमण करके, तो कभी धौंस दिखाकर, तो कभी भूटान, नेपाल जैसे हमारे पड़ोसी देशों में अतिक्रमण करके चीन अपनी विस्तारवादी नीति को गति देने में जुटा है। ऐसा लगता है कि उसने छोटे राष्ट्रों पर यह दबाव बना लिया है कि अगर उन्हें 'बेल्ट ऐंड रोड इनिशिएटिव' जैसी योजनाओं का लाभ लेना है या उप-महाद्वीप में शांतिपूर्वक रहना है, तो भारत से दूर रहना होगा। हालांकि मौजूदा घटनाक्रम इस बात की भी गवाही दे रहे हैं कि भारत इस बार जवाब देने के मूड में आ गया है। नई दिल्ली को लग रहा होगा कि उसने अमेरिका से नजदीकियां बढ़ा ली हैं। लॉजिस्टिक्स एक्सचेंज मेमोरेण्डम ऑफ एग्रीमेंट (एलईएमओ) यानी 'लेमोआ' जैसे समझौते कर लिए हैं। हथियार-मिसाइलें वगैरह जमा कर ली हैं, तो उसे अब चीन की हरकतों को बर्दाश्त नहीं करना चाहिए। यानी मोदी सरकार के शुरुआती दिनों में द्विपक्षीय संबंधों में जो मधुरता की बात थी, मौजूदा समय में हम उससे काफी ऊपर उठ गए लगते हैं।

इस बदलते घटनाक्रम की वजहें भी हैं। चीन अब विश्व में अपनी बड़ी भूमिका देख रहा है। अमेरिका में ट्रंप सरकार के आने बाद वहां जिस तरह से परिस्थितियां बदली हैं और उसने अपनी नीतियों में बदलाव किया है, उसमें चीन अपने लिए काफी सारी संभावनाएं देख रहा है। चीनी इतिहास में स्टेट्समैन के रूप में दर्ज डेंग शियाओपिंग का कहना था कि अपनी ताकत छिपाकर रखो, सबसे दोस्ती व आर्थिक सहयोग की बात करो। मगर अब यह लग रहा है कि चीन के मौजूदा नीति-नियंता विस्तारवादी नीति और मुल्क को शीर्ष पर पहुंचाने के लिए हर तरह के हथकंडे अपनाने को तैयार हैं। वास्तव में, अमेरिका में जारी उथल-पुथल ने चीन की महत्वाकांक्षा बढ़ा दी है। वाशिंगटन इन दिनों कई घरेलू मसलों में उलझा हुआ है। यूरोपीय देशों से उसका साथ छूटता जा रहा है। जर्मनी, फ्रांस जैसे कई देशों का उससे विश्वास डिग-सा गया है और वे नए सहयोगी ढूंढने की बात कह रहे हैं। ब्रेजिट की वजह से यूरोप भी नई राह पर बढ़ने को आमादा है। कई प्रतिबंध आयद कर दिए जाने से रूस चीन की तरफ बढ़ता जा रहा है। और तो और, खुद राष्ट्रपति ट्रंप अपनी कोरिया नीति चीन के भरोसे छोड़ चुके हैं। साफ है कि राष्ट्रपति चुनाव के समय ट्रंप जो आरोप चीन पर मढ़ रहे थे कि वह अपने हित में मुद्रा-व्यवस्था से छेड़छाड़ कर रहा है, अपने उत्पाद अमेरिका में खपाने में जुटा है और अमेरिकी नौकरियां खत्म कर रहा है, वे सब के सब आरोप अब अपना अस्तित्व खोते जा रहे हैं।

इससे चीन स्वाभाविक तौर पर बड़ी उम्मीदें संजो बैठा है। यह भारत के लिए किसी झटके से कम नहीं है। नई दिल्ली को भरोसा था कि ट्रंप हुकूमत भी पहले की डेमोक्रेट व रिपब्लिकन सरकारों की लीक पर ही काम करेगी, जिसमें भारत एक मजबूत कूटनीतिक साझेदार के रूप में उसके करीब जाएगा। मगर अब इसकी उम्मीद कम ही दिख रही है। लिहाजा भावुकता में आकर अभी चीन से उलझने की बजाय हमें अपनी कुछ व्यावहारिक कमजोरियों से पार पाना चाहिए। यह सही है कि हमने आर्थिक और सैन्य तकनीक में काफी तरक्की की है, लेकिन सैन्य उत्पादों व तकनीकी को लेकर हमारी निर्भरता अब भी दूसरे देशों पर काफी ज्यादा है। ऐसे में, हम अगर किसी जंग की तरफ बढ़ते हैं, तो देश में सैन्य उत्पाद, हार्डवेयर और सॉफ्टवेयर का अभाव हो सकता है। यहां तक कि ऐसी नौबत पाकिस्तान के साथ उलझने में भी आ सकती है, जिससे हम पर बेजा दबाव बढ़ेगा।

हमारी कोशिश यह होनी चाहिए, जिसकी तरफ प्रधानमंत्री मोदी ने शुरुआत में कदम बढ़ाए थे कि पड़ोसी देशों के साथ-साथ उन तमाम मुल्कों के साथ संबंधों को विस्तार दिया जाए, जहां प्रवासी भारतीयों ने ऊंचा मुकाम हासिल किया है। जरूरी नहीं कि उन देशों के तमाम रुख का हम समर्थन ही करें, मगर कोशिश द्विपक्षीय मतभेद दूर करने की होनी चाहिए। इसके साथ-साथ हमें अपने को आंतरिक तौर पर भी मजबूत बनाना होगा। कोशिश यह होनी चाहिए कि अगर एक-दो दशक में चीन आर्थिक व सैन्य ताकत में खुद को शीर्ष पर देख रहा है, तो हम भी तब तक एक बड़ी आर्थिक ताकत बन जाएं। अच्छी बात यह है कि युवा आबादी के मामले में हम चीन से बेहतर हैं। लिहाजा युवाओं को रोजगार देकर, निम्न व मध्यवर्ग के लिए बेहतर चिकित्सा-शिक्षा जैसी व्यवस्था करके हम खुद को मजबूत बना सकते हैं।

पर यह उपलब्धि जंग की बात कहकर हासिल नहीं की जा सकती। बेशक इसका एक पहलू आंतरिक आतंकवाद से जुड़ता है, मगर यही सब कुछ नहीं है। सेना प्रमुख कहते हैं कि हमारी फौज ढाई मोर्चों पर यानी चीन, पाकिस्तान और आंतरिक सुरक्षा से जुड़ी चुनौतियों से युद्ध के लिए तैयार है। मगर हकीकत में ऐसा नहीं होना चाहिए। कई ऐसे सामाजिक मसले हैं, जिनके खिलाफ हमें जंग लड़ने की जरूरत है, और यह लड़ाई हम जीत भी सकते हैं, क्योंकि हमारी विरासत काफी संपन्न है। हमें प्रयास करना होगा कि चीन हमें संघर्ष में उलझाकर अपना हित साधने में कामयाब न हो जाए। इसलिए बीच का रास्ता निकालना जरूरी है। अपने देश व समाज के लिए हमें जिस तरह आगे बढ़ना चाहिए, उस पथ से हम महज चीन की वजह से विचलित न हों। हम व्यावहारिक नजरिया अपनाएं और किसी अतिशयोक्ति से बचें। वक्त चीन से उलझने का नहीं, बल्कि अपनी चुनौतियों से लड़ने का है। हमें यह कतई नहीं सोचना चाहिए कि हमने कितनी ताकत इकट्ठा कर ली है, बल्कि कवायद आपसी विश्वास की पुरानी स्थिति में लौटने की होनी चाहिए। हमें यह नीति न सिर्फ चीन के लिए, बल्कि रूस व अपने तमाम पड़ोसी देशों के लिए भी बनानी चाहिए।