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Editorial

Geopolitical Realignment in South Asia

An extraordinary geopolitical swing is taking place in South Asia as time honoured patterns of friends and adversaries is breaking down. Since the independence of India and Pakistan in 1947 the two neighbours have been in opposite camps. While Pakistan was closely allied with the United States, India was incontrovertibly all-time strategic partner of the Soviet Union /Russia. Pakistan and China have had an all-weather friendship since early 50s but its impact was not really felt till recently when the two nations agreed to a multibillion dollar project the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

India has been a devoted, committed and steadfast client of the Soviet Union but when the USSR was disintegrated, India jumped the US-Israeli bandwagon and it took to it as fish takes to water. The most striking commonality is their perception of Islam and China as their ultimate common enemy. Indian military occupation of Kashmir and Israeli military occupation of Palestine and Arab territories makes them natural partners. With this wither India's pro Palestine policy, its secular outlook, its non aligned status and now all this is replaced by religious intolerance, Hindutva, apartheid (against Dalits and other scheduled castes and tribes) , Islamophobia and national arrogance.

India and Israel, with the tacit support of the US, continue to violate the internationally recognized inalienable right of self-determination of the Kashmiri and Palestinian people. Instead they are now trying to change the demographics of Kashmir and Palestine through migrations and settlements and expanding the borders of their lands of occupation.

The new emerging geopolitical alignment of China, Pakistan and Russia has taken the world by surprise. In pursuit of its multipolar strategy particularly in South Asia, Moscow now finds Pakistan a ready partner. India is piqued by Russian new strategic priorities but fails to make out that it is itself responsible for this shift. India under Prime Minister Narendra Modi appears to have totally allied with the USA and both countries have signed military logistics pact (a modern day terminology of providing military bases). Modi's shift towards the anti-China camp is the result of American corporate sector investment. *India seems to have given up the non-alignment principle of its foreign policy as it has given up secularism in favour of religious fundamentalism (Hindutva).* Under Modi's regime, the anti-Russian lobby funded by the US corporate defence sector came in power within the Indian establishment. The huge Indian defence deals with the USA, Israel and its western allies bear testimony to the

view that the pro west lobby has worked overtime to manifest that Russian defence technology as faulty and lacking sophistication.

Despite several diplomatic protestation Russia seems to have rejected all Indian concerns regarding Moscow's up-and-coming partnership with Pakistan. It has turned down Indian plea about providing of Russian defence technology to Pakistan but it slowly but surely is building defence ties with Pakistan, as both armies have started bilateral military training from last year onward to an annual basis. Furthermore, Russia has also spurned Indian efforts to isolate Pakistan regionally and globally.

Russia has shown keen interest in the China Pakistan Energy Corridor (CPEC) as it appreciates its potential to build the Eurasian energy grid in Pakistan so that Caspian Sea energy would be exported by utilizing its potential for a two-way export for East, West, South and North. Indo-US non acceptance of CPEC is confrontational in nature. A realistic appraisal by India would reveal that this programme is unstoppable and has great potential for 'peace and cooperation' with Pakistan since this energy corridor would turn Pakistan into India's irreplaceable energy partner, as the Caspian Sea's proposed inter-continental gas pipelines would pass through Pakistan to the rest of South Asia via India.

As and when this programme links up with Iran and Turkey and later beyond to Europe, India would be isolated geo-economically. India has no option but to join One Belt One Road (OBOR) in the long run but should it continue with Modi's short sighted policy of aligning with US to contain China, India is bound to suffer enormously and perhaps irretrievably.

Ruling Elite and Corruption in Pakistan

While extraordinary geopolitical shifts are underway in South Asian region, Pakistan is witnessing unprecedented proceedings. For the first time in the history of Pakistan the highest judicial body the Supreme Court of Pakistan has removed a sitting prime minister on a string of corruption charges and ordered further investigation and trial by accountability courts. Mr Nawaz was removed from the office of Prime Minister in a unanimous verdict by a panel of five-judges of the Supreme Court of Pakistan.

Judge Ejaz ul Haq of the court declared, "Having furnished a false declaration under solvent information, Mian Nawaz Sharif is not honest", "He is no more eligible to be an honest member of the parliament and he ceases to be holding the office of prime minister."

As a sequel of the judgement on 28 July 2017, corruption references were filed in the National Accountability Bureau for investigation and trial of Mr Nawaz and his family including his daughter Maryam Safdar, sons Hassan Nawaz and Hussain Nawaz. They have now been indicted in a trial court on a string of charges that include, living beyond their means, hiding their assets, perjury and presenting forged documents in the highest court of the country.

Despite the tightening legal noose on the former prime minister, he appears adamant and defiant and this could trigger further political upheaval and uncertainty. Sharifs are now whipping up conspiracy narratives in a bid to garner sympathy. In the line of fire they have picked the Supreme Court and the military establishment. This is worrying as some analyst have expressed apprehensions that in his bid to become a political martyr he is deliberately creating an environment where military may well be forced to take direct action. Luckily the military has become much more prudent and pragmatic; it would not venture any action that may derail the democratic process.

This trial of ruling elite augurs well for Pakistan whose rulers hiding behind the façade of democracy have been mercilessly looting and plundering this poor nation. Corruption had become endemic and deep rooted under the two ruling families of Bhuttos/Zardaris and Sharifs. Yes political instability and resultant economic downturn could be expected outcomes when a ruling corrupt mafia is busted but over the long haul it shall reinforce democracy and good governance. All those who support democracy and justice have valid expectation that after Sharifs, Zardaris shall also be hauled in a stringent accountability probe. If the top leadership of mainstream political parties is honest only then spectre of corruption can be contained.

London Institute of South Asia has always considered corruption a human rights issue. We shall entreat and exhort all governments and international bodies to support anti corruption measures anywhere particularly in south Asia where corruption is rampant and endemic.

Genocide of Rohingyas in Myanmar has ‘Hindutva Imprints’

Currently, one of the worst post-World War II genocides is underway in India’s neighbourhood. In Rakhine Province of Myanmar (Burma) cleansing of people belonging to the Rohingya Tribe (mostly Muslims and few Hindus and Buddhists), has been going on for last two decades. But this cleansing project of Rohingyas is in full steam now by the Myanmar army and foot-soldiers of the Fascist Buddhist organizations with coming to power of Aung San Suu Kyi, a Nobel Prize recipient for fighting against military rulers of the country.

Ironically, this Nobel laureate now allegedly supervises/supports genocide of Rohingyas in collaboration with the country's army and fascist Buddhist cadres.

The rampaging killer/raping/maiming/burning gangs sponsored by the Burmese State, Army and Fascist Buddhist organizations have evoked worldwide condemnation including severe repudiation from world forums including UN. However, Indian PM Modi who visited Myanmar recently instead of expressing concern on the cleansing of Rohingyas expressed solidarity with the Killer State. He and Myanmar's State Counsellor and de facto leader Aung San Suu Kyi in a joint statement said, "*It is important to maintain security and stability along the long land and maritime borders of India and Myanmar...India stands with Myanmar over the issue of violence in the Rakhine state which has led to loss of innocent lives.*" This statement remained silent on the mass cleansing of the Rohingyas but expressed grave concern on the 'terrorist' activities of a section of Rohingyas in self-defence. In a more shocking development the RSS/BJP Indian Government has issued instructions to deport nearly 40,000 Rohingyas who escaped to India while under attack for being security threat. Shamsul Islam has written that Genocide of Rohingyas in Myanmar has distinct 'Hindutva Imprints'. In his article he states: "The inimical attitude of the Indian rulers towards Rohingyas is neither accidental nor sudden. It does not seem to be the fall-out of some grave security threat which might have cropped up in the recent past. We need to urgently investigate whether this cleansing got impetus with the political ascendancy of fascist Buddhist organizations in Myanmar and Hindutva fascist organizations in India.

The world obsessed with Islamist terrorism has not bothered to take any notice of a new terrorism network developing fast in India and its neighbourhood between Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and two ultra nationalist Buddhist groups of Myanmar and Sri Lanka against minorities in the area. In a startling and focussed disclosure *The International New York Times* (in an editorial titled 'Deadly Alliances Against Muslims') disclosed how fascist Buddhist groups in the region; Sri Lankan Buddhist group Bodu Bala Sena, Myanmar's Wirathu Group 969' [run by Ashin Wirathu a so-called monk from Myanmar who has preaching hatred toward Muslims and is the spiritual leader of a movement to boycott Muslim businesses] were in contact "at a high level" with the right-wing Indian Hindu group Rashtriya Swayam Sevak (RSS) to form what he called a "Hindu-Buddhist peace zone" in South Asia which meant a Muslim-Christian free zone in the area. The editorial was concluded with the following alarming words:

"It is folly for the governments of Sri Lanka, former President Thein Sein of Myanmar and Prime Minister Narendra Modi in India, or their political allies, to give even the appearance of tolerating these Islamophobic groups in a region

that has too often been convulsed by religious sectarian violence. They should condemn this mad alliance before it can spread further.” The world obsessed with Islamist terrorism has not bothered to take any notice of a new terrorism network developing fast in India and its neighbourhood between Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and two ultra nationalist Buddhist groups of Myanmar.”

What does the Crystal Ball tell us about India's future?

Alan Hart

On Modi visit to Israel in 2017, The Independent a British daily wrote, 'this is more than a historic visit. Prime ministers from India always took a balanced and sensitive approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the past. Not Modi. He won't even bother meeting with Palestinians during his visit. What we are watching, in slow motion, is the biggest realignment of the global order since the Second World War'. As one Indian writer put it, Indian nationalists "not only envisage India following Israel's apartheid model to deal with the minorities at home, but also always dream of turning India into an aggressive state like Israel".

Together Israel and India could be the biggest danger to the world peace. (Editor)

What will happen on India's journey into the future must, of course, be a matter for Crystal Ball gazing (speculation) but we can now be certain of one thing. One of India's most valued companions for its journey will be the Zionist (not Jewish) state of Israel. When Prime Minister Modi became the first Indian head of state to visit Israel last July, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu said to him, "*I have a feeling that India and Israel are changing our world.*"

In some respects India and Israel are natural travelling partners. Both, for example, give life to oppression – India with its de-humanizing caste system and Israel with its treatment of the Palestinians. (Question for Netanyahu: Is that what you mean by changing our world – more oppression?)

Fundamentally the growing relationship between India and Israel is about selling and buying weapons. India's military is the world's number one importer of arms and currently the leading purchaser of Israeli arms. About 41 percent of Israel's arms exports go to India.

In 2014, Indian government ear-marked \$250 Billion USD, for spending on modernizing its military over the next decade.

Given that India faces so many internal challenges, poverty in many forms being the biggest, why is it spending so much money on arms?

No doubt corruption in the military and political leaderships is a part of the answer. The rest of it, the answer, is defence. But is there ever likely to be to be a serious military threat to India?

I don't think so.

No Pakistani leadership, civilian or military, will ever think about initiating war with India. Why not? Massively outnumbered and out-gunned Pakistan would have to go nuclear in three or four days (and perhaps less) or capitulate and surrender. So war with India is not an option for Pakistan.

China?

A survey conducted by the Pew Research Center in 2014 showed that 72 percent of Indians were concerned that territorial disputes between China and neighbouring countries could lead to a major military conflict.

In a September 2017 article for *The Diplomat* on China and India, Professor Mohan Malik wrote that “small skirmishes ending in a major military conflict due to miscalculation or hubris cannot be ruled out.”

That makes sense to me but still I have to ask if the possible military consequences of miscalculation or hubris are sufficient to justify India's vast expenditure on arms when the biggest challenge it faces is internal – the poverty in many forms of the majority of its people.

About one-third of the poorest people in the world live in India.

Let's now look briefly at some of the key indicators of poverty in India.

* About 70 percent of India's population of 1.3 billion are poor. In numbers that's approaching 900,000,000. (As more and more Indians move from the countryside to the towns and cities, more and more slums are being created with totally inadequate life support systems (water, healthcare etcetera).

* In excess of 800 million Indians survive on half a U.S. dollar a day. (According to the Forbes 2017 list, *India is home to the fourth highest number of billionaires in the world*).

* Only 21 percent of the poor majority have access to latrines.

* Only six percent have access to tap water.

* Hunger remains the No.1 cause of death in the world. According to the UN there are 820 million malnourished and chronically hungry people in the world

and one-third of them are in India. Every day 3,000 Indians (1,095,000 a year) die from hunger and related and easily preventable diseases.

* An estimated 38.4 percent of India's children are stunted in growth, and some are mentally damaged, by the embryonic malnutrition they suffered in the wombs of their mothers.

* There are estimated to be 100 million "street children" in the world with 20 million of them in India's cities.

* Quantifying India's unemployment and employment rates with certainty is close to a mission impossible. The official figures tell us there is a labour force of 424 million and that unemployment is at 17.7 percent, which according to my calculations means that 8,000,400 are unemployed. But that's far from being the whole story. You are classified as employed in India if you work only 30 days a year. Of those who are employed 46.6 percent are self-employed and 32 percent are casual labourers. And many of those of who are reported as employed get work for only a small amount of time they are available. It's also the case that Prime Minister Modi's drive for greater use of technology and labour reform is making it easier for industries to sack workers. All that said there is one statistic that says more than all the others put together. *Three out of four Indian families have no regular wage earner.*

* The despair induced by poverty and unemployment is a prime factor in India's high rate of suicides. There are about 800,000 suicides worldwide every year and 135,000 (17 percent) of them are in India. In May of this year a report in the *Hindustan Times* included the following.

Sikkim, the state with India's highest suicide rate, offers future warning for India.

Sikkim was annexed by India [like many other states like, Junagarh and Manavadar 1947, Jammu and Kashmir 1948, Assam 1950, Goa 1961, Nagaland 1963, Manipur and Meghalaya 1972, Mizoram 1987] in 1975 and become the 22nd state of India on May 15 1975. It is India's third-richest state (after Delhi and Chandigarh), by per capita income, and its literacy rate is seventh highest. But it also records the second-highest unemployment rate. About 27% of the state's suicides were related to unemployment and found to be most common among those between 21 and 30 years of age.

* India has the largest number of illiterate adults in the world – 287 million, 37 percent of the global total. In January 2016 an editorial in *The Times of India* put it is way.

Data from various sources clearly shows that India is among the least literate countries in the world, and this reflects on the fact that successive Indian governments have failed to provide basic education for all. India is one of the 135 countries in the world to have made education a fundamental right, when the 'Right to Education Act' came into force in 2010, but much of that act has remained on paper and controversies have dogged its implementation. That the literacy rate has been rising steadily since independence is something to cheer about but not when viewed in conjunction with the exponential growth in population. It's imperative that the government puts more muscle into implementing programmes for compulsory, free education and ensures equal access to all.

* One of the consequences of poverty and fear of the future it brings is that many parents in India (and elsewhere) don't want baby girls. They only want sons in the belief that they will be better able to provide for them in old age than daughters. The British Medical Journal has estimated that 12 million Indian girls (babies in the womb) have been aborted in the last three decades. (No wonder that according to the UN India has the worst record in gender equality in the world).

Given all of the above what can the future of India be if the wealth it generates is not directed to fighting and winning the war that matters most – the war against poverty in all of its manifestations?

One of my best friends in India was Zafar Saifullah, the only Muslim to be appointed Cabinet Secretary to the government. On one of my visits to India he arranged a lunch for me at his home with 20 former Permanent Secretaries who had served in various government ministries. Zafar asked me to give them my views on poverty in India and its possible implications for the future. (Zafar was aware that way back in the 1970's I devoted two years of my life to researching and producing *Five Minutes To Midnight*, a two-hour documentary on the everyday reality of global poverty and its implications for all of us).

My starting point was that times and changed. What I meant and said was that once upon a time the poor of the world did not know they were poor. But today they know they are poor not only in relation to the peoples of what was called in development jargon the "Rich North" but, more to the point, in relation to their own mostly corrupt elites and the other affluent minority.

I then said that if government in India did not summon up the political will and devote the necessary resources to fighting and wining the internal war against poverty in all of its manifestations, I could see a day coming, perhaps decades

into the future, when the country would be torn apart by violence, an explosion of anger and despair on an unthinkable scale.

I was expecting these former Permanent Secretaries to respond rather like Sir Humphrey of *Yes Minister* and say to me something like: “No, no, no, my dear chap. That will never happen.”

Much to my astonishment they all said, “Alan, we agree with you.”

Another reason to imagine that much violence lies ahead for India is that revived Hindu nationalism endorsed and promoted (Trump-like) by Prime Minister Modi is spreading the fire of Islamophobia. India’s Muslims, currently 172 million but with that number growing, are very likely to become the targets of escalating Hindu hate crimes.

How will they respond? They might fight back on their own terms or they, some of them, might just acquiesce and submit under duress for their survival as they have no one to turn to. The main thing that Hindu nationalism and Zionism have in common is appalling self-righteousness.

In his book *Israel’s Fateful Hour* (first published in 1988), Yehoshafat Harkabi, Israel’s longest serving Director of Military Intelligence, wrote that his country’s biggest enemy was its own (Zionism’s) self-righteousness. Today I think it can be said that Hindu self-righteousness is India’s biggest enemy.

If that mindset with its de-humanizing caste system cannot be changed I think India is on course for a very violent future.

Alan Hart is a former ITN and BBC Panorama foreign correspondent who has covered wars and conflicts wherever they were taking place in the world and specialized in the Middle East. His Latest book Zionism: The Real Enemy of the Jews, Vol. 1: The False Messiah is a three-volume epic in its American edition. He blogs on AlanHart.com.

Bangladesh, Myanmar, and the Rohingyas

Jalal Uddin Khan

Is Hasina deserted by her immediate neighbours?

Currently, one of the worst post-World War II genocides is underway in India's neighbourhood. In Rakhine Province of Myanmar (Burma) cleansing of people belonging to the Rohingya Tribe (mostly Muslims and few Hindus and Buddhists), has been going on for last two decades. But this cleansing project of Rohingyas is in full steam now by the Myanmar army and foot-soldiers of the Fascist Buddhist organizations with coming to power of Aung San Suu Kyi, a Nobel Prize recipient for fighting against military rulers of the country. Ironically, this Nobel laureate now supervises genocide of Rohingyas in collaboration with the country's army and fascist Buddhist cadres.

Total subservience of Bangladesh to India, and its unconditional surrender to Myanmar, which has forced about a million Rohingyas as refugees into Bangladesh since 2012, reflects isolation and inept foreign policy. In dealing with Myanmar Bangladesh is almost totally friendless. Most of its trading partners, China, Japan, Russia, and even India have been siding with Myanmar.

Majority of Bangladeshis including its military establishment consider India a bully and a hegemon. However, sections of Bangladeshis, who don't believe in independent Bangladesh and want its merger with India, consider India as the Bandhu Rashtro (The Friendly Country). The rationale for their unconditional support for India is possibly also because of the latter's support for the Liberation War of Bangladesh in 1971. Nevertheless, the Indian support was never unconditional or altruistic, as it also benefitted from the disintegration of Pakistan.

Muslim Rohingyas of Myanmar, the most suffering and yet most neglected human community of the world, about 850, 000 of whom have recently fled into refuge in Bangladesh from the inhuman torture by the terrorist Buddhist military-ruled Myanmar. If the Rohingyas were not Muslims, they would not have faced what they have been facing for years—getting uprooted, exiled, expelled, burnt, beaten up, destroyed, devastated, raped, ruined, enslaved, shot to death, and starved to skeletal and spectral existence. Buddhist Myanmar's military and militant monks are brutally Balkanizing (like what happened in the Balkans—Bosnia and Herzegovina—in 1990s) their historically Muslim Arakan/Rakhaine province. Fiercely involved in barbaric crimes against

humanity, they have been committing gruesome genocide and ethnic cleansing of the Muslim minority in masses triggering an unprecedented humanitarian crisis.

On this uprooting of the Arakanese/Rakhaine Rohingyas by the Buddhist Myanmar and pushing them homeless into Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina finds herself almost isolated internationally. No important player in the region is on her side. She has been cheated into cuckoldry by her ostensibly friendly (if not actually deceiving) India, China, Russia, Japan, and even America, who are all solely driven by their narrow, mechanical, and mercantile concerns that are totally bereft and devoid of moral and humanitarian content. Their commercially motivated desertion of Bangladesh in favour of Myanmar is a point stressed by many analysts, academics, columnists, and journalists on the local as well as international media.

Despite their offers and promises of trust and friendship through all these years—offers and promises that turned out to be not so solid and substantial (if not “fake,” “phony,” and “ruse,” to use Donald Trump’s words for those he does not like)—most of the international players have actually been waiting for the right rendezvous to demonstrate their warm and true love for Myanmar over Hasina’s shoulder. What a shocking betrayal from all those posing as friends for so long! It is a betrayal that the intelligence community and the foreign policy of Bangladesh utterly failed to have an inkling into as they also completely failed to detect the Myanmar policy of rape, murder, and expulsion of its Muslim minority Rohingyas living there for hundreds of years in their native homeland Arakan/Rakhaine province.

Those who are sending in relief aid (Saudi Arabia, Morocco, USA, and EU, for example) end up doing only so without committing themselves to politically and diplomatically cornering and creating pressure on Myanmar (with the exception of Turkey, Malaysia, Canada, and the UK). As many politicians pointed out, Saudi alone, as the indirect leader of the Muslim world, was enough to play a crucial and decisive role in pressuring Myanmar into stopping the bloody violence and taking the exiled Rohingya refugees back in peace and safety with dignity. Furthermore, what would happen to the plenty of aid in cash and kind for the Rohingyas in Bangladesh, a country widely known for corruption? Would the sick and starving Rohingyas continue to receive the international aid in a steady flow of abundance or as needed or only in trifles and trickles?

Sheikh Hasina alone cannot do much against the powerful Myanmar, made more powerful by firmly and forcefully having China, India, Russia, and Japan on its side, over the issue of the suffering Rohingyas, who are being savagely

persecuted into leaving their homes in their own country across the Naf river at Bangladesh's southernmost tip in the east. Hasina also can do nothing against her "friendly" India for killing her own people at the border. She has done hardly enough to help the flood victims, her own people, in the north and east of her country.

However, Sheikh Hasina, like the stereotype figure in popular folk culture who comes home to thrash his wife, can severely beat up her political opponents at home. She does it well with the help of her police/RAB known for their nonstop hostilities against the popular BNP and the much vilified and maligned others. She has the hands and feet of her political opponents tied and tethered in an authoritarian way—the way the Myanmar military has those of Aung San Suu Kyi tied and tethered. If Suu Kyi is free to say and do anything what she likes as a Nobel laureate and still does not say and do to relieve the sufferings of the poor Rohingyas, she is then a part of the persecuting Buddhist Myanmar military junta and their religious militant monks. In that sense, both Sheikh Hasina and Suu Kyi are the same, on the same page, oppressing and suppressing their own people at home.

Also, Sheikh Hasina's neighbours know that she is politically woefully weak at home primarily because of the fact that she has a deeply and dictatorially divided country behind her, heading a highly controversially and questionably elected, thereby, "illegitimate" government. No doubt, as unity is strength, "United, we stand; divided, we fall." No doubt, a friend in need is a friend indeed.

Sheikh Hasina has been hopelessly abandoned by at least those on the regional scene, as she is pitifully deserted when she gives her annual speech at the UN with the whole general assembly hall turned almost empty, except only a few, the other seats, personified, hardly any human sitters in, starkly staring at the female speaker from the Indian subcontinent, a fact frustratingly seen by all TV watchers at home and abroad for years and correctly noted by many columnists and commentators, lending support to how internationally isolated she is on the matter of the poor and helpless Rohingyas, their inhuman sufferings, and their criminal expulsion from their native soil by the Buddhist Burma/Myanmar whose barbaric brutalities on them at home know no limit.

Just as the West helped and stood by the Christian East Timor to secede from the Muslim majority Indonesia and the Christian South Sudan to separate from the Muslim majority Sudan, Bangladesh should help the Muslim Arakan/Rakhaine State to break away from the militantly Buddhist and terrorist Myanmar. Had the Rohingyas been Christians or Hindus, neither the extremist Buddhist Burmese junta would have dared to kill and uproot them from their

native soil nor the West would have played the role of the passive onlooker and indifferent passers-by. It is unfortunate that the Hasina government initially refused to open the border (although the Rohingya issue is a pretty old one) and shelter the suffering Muslim Rohingyas who were then indiscriminately vilified by her men, in a blanket accusation, as terrorists and drug dealers, just as Donald Trump vilified the Mexican immigrants as rapists, criminals, and drug dealers. Sheikh Hasina had to yield to the pressure exerted by the popular political opposition in her country and the International Human Rights Organizations around the world. At first (from August 25 to September 10, 2017), she had her armed police/BGB inhumanly shoot, threaten, scare, intimidate, and turn back hundreds, even thousands of Rohingyas, until she had to finally give in. At the beginning her government even wanted to join Myanmar to stop the flow of the Rohingyas caught in the middle of the Myanmar and Bangladeshi fire and water at the border or in the no man's land.

What is even more shameful is that when Myanmar is engaged in unspeakably inhuman hostilities with its own people and its bordering Bangladesh, Hasina's Bangladesh became engaged in awarding lucrative business to Myanmar by buying tons of rice from the Buddhist military junta. In times of unprecedented humanitarian and political crisis, Bangladesh has become an illogical Good Samaritan who, despite getting slapped on one cheek, strangely offers the other cheek to get slapped even more.

As if the shame of Bangladesh has no limit, its garrulous food minister went there to Myanmar to purchase rice along with his good and innocent wife. It was, as it were, a bizarre and surreal fun and pleasure trip for the food minister during what may be called a Dickensian "worst of times" (*A Tale of Two Cities*, referring to London and Paris) between Dhaka and Yangon. It is an allegation made against the food minister Kamrul Islam (whose ill-conceived policies are responsible for the current price hike of the foodstuff causing suffering to the low-income group and were also responsible for the import of rotten wheat some time back) not only by many opposition political leaders but also well-known researchers and media personalities, who even publicly demanded Islam's resignation for his utter mismanagement concerning the recent rice price hike problem facing Bangladesh.

What's the point of feeding, raising, and strengthening a military when it cannot stop or is afraid to stop the Burmese incursion into Bangladesh? This is a point raised by many watchers and observers, who speak about the need for raising the spectre/prospect of a military threat against Myanmar.

All other sovereign and independent countries would have shot down any alien/foreign helicopters violating their territory. By contrast, Bangladesh feels

there is no choice but to helplessly “watch” and “enjoy” being violated by the Burmese “UFOs” crossing into its space. As the word goes, when the rape becomes inevitable, the victim has either to relax and enjoy or fight back, the latter being entirely beyond the means of Bangladesh left miserably alone by all she has mistakenly trusted, one-sidedly though, without being reciprocated.

Myanmar, being a pariah, militaristic, communal, and sectarian Buddhist state with the powerful neighbours—some of them veto-wielding—on its side, will never care for the internationally weak and domestically fascistic Hasina’s diplomatic overtures. Secondly, having persecuted them for ages and having expelled and uprooted them brutally and bloodily, the barbaric Buddhist Myanmar, its marauding Buddhist military, and its militant monks would never accept to take back the linguistically and ethnically and religiously different poor Rohingyas, although they have been living there as Myanmar (Burmese) Arakanese Rohingyas for hundreds of years, like the other ethnic groups in Myanmar and all other countries in the world. In all likelihood, they seem to have been able to make their risky and hazardous way into refuge in Bangladesh to stay there forever. Bangladesh has only two choices. Either it keeps the linguistically and ethnically and religiously similar Rohingyas, makes them its own and accommodates and integrates them with its mainstream local and native population, or:—,

Bangladesh should march its military into Myanmar and occupy the historically Muslim Arakan/Rakhaine to save and free the Muslim Rohingyas from the cruel claws and clutches of the militant Burmese Buddhist monks and their terrorist military cohorts and other accomplices. Actions speak louder than words and the language of force matters and means business when that of soft diplomacy fails. Prevention is better than cure. Justice delayed is justice denied. In the present circumstances, Bangladesh, having miserably failed politically, diplomatically, and intelligence-wise, should assert its authority militarily, which would internationalize the affair in no time and force a realignment of the international players (India, China, Russia, Japan, America, EU, Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia), to the great credit and benefit, not to the detriment of Bangladesh!

Finally, if there is anyone who deserves and can claim a Nobel for Peace for making it possible for the Rohingyas, whose plight and predicament beggar description, to find a little rest under the open sky, it should be the selected local (Bangladesh) media, local journalists, foreign media (BBC, Aljazeera), foreign governments (Turkish, British, and Canadian), and the international human rights organizations and the UN organizations (such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, UNHCR, UNFP, Care International, Save the Children, and Oxfam), but not any dictatorial, divisive, autocratic, and

authoritarian politician or prime minister, who fails to take care of her own flood victims, millions of them, in her own country. While she is the belated and Machiavellian mother of humanity to the Rohingyas, eyeing the apple of discord—the Nobel—she is also the frightening and terrorizing mother of inhumanity—Mother Goose of the folk nursery rhymes—to her political opponents at home.

At the same time, the noble Swedish Nobel Committee is being urged to revoke and rescind the peace laurel it mistakenly awarded, in 1991, to the clearly and convincingly communal, sectarian, violence-loving and genocide-committing Buddhist Aung San Suu Kyi supported by her militant Buddhist monks and her terrorist Buddhist military. It is the same ignoble Suu Kyi who, both vicariously and sadistically, said, in the context of her government's ongoing genocide that she was not afraid of and intimidated by the international threat and criticism of her government and that the Rohingya girls were not good-looking to attract the Buddhist soldiers to rape and have sex with. What a mean, lowly, sexist, gender-biased, and discriminatory characterization of her own "fair sex" that made her far uglier, far less attractive—as unattractive as a dull, dry, and diminutive plastic toy, a total turn-off—compared with the pure and innocent Rakhaine girls!

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Pakistan's Existential Vindication over India

Andrew Korybko

Even after 70 years of independence many voices in India continue to insist that their neighbour Pakistan is allegedly an artificial state which has no right to even exist.

There may be some international conditions for the India-Pakistan partition, but essentially domestic problems between Hindus and Muslims during the late colonial period actually made the division inevitable.

Russian historian Nikolai Starikov has a point when he says that Pakistan's independence immediately made it an "anti-Indian" state which was exploited by the West in order to give it a platform for strategic influence in the region and enable it to more easily manage the divided subcontinent, indeed these undoubtedly were the geopolitical motivations, this in no way should be taken to imply that Pakistan is an illegitimate, artificial, or non-sovereign state.

Even though British neo-colonial strategists may have thought at the time that Pakistan would indefinitely provide them a perch from which to indefinitely maintain the West's hegemonic influence in the South Eurasian Rimland, the eventual results of their planning couldn't have been more wrong. *It's true that Pakistan geostrategically functioned in accordance to the aforementioned model for decades, but nowadays a profound paradigm shift has taken place* whereby Pakistan is the all-weather ally of China, one of the two chief architects of the Multipolar World Order alongside Russia, while formerly "non-aligned" India is racing to set up an undeclared global military-strategic alliance with the US, the violent defender of the New (unipolar) World Order.

To be fair, India enjoys unprecedentedly close relations with Russia too, which allows Moscow the opportunity to manage the American-provoked Chinese-Indian Cold War and resultant rising tensions in full coordination with Beijing through the framework of the Russian-Chinese Strategic Partnership, though it would be much stable and in the greater good of the entire Multipolar Community if New Delhi hadn't fallen for Washington's temptations and instead remained the reliable BRICS partner that it was under the premiership of Manmohan Singh and the Indian National Congress.

On the one hand, it's commendable that India is working together with Russia and Iran to streamline the North-South Transport Corridor to Europe, but on the other, the project would be logistically and economically optimized if India cooperated with Pakistan through the SAARC regional integration structure to directly establish a much more efficient unimodal transport system instead. This would allow Pakistan to fully embrace its geopolitical destiny as the zipper of pan-Eurasian integration by linking together the Eurasian Union, China, SAARC, and the greater Mideast marketplace in Iran and beyond, but India's unconstructive obsession with maximalist demands towards Kashmir and the refusal to recognize Pakistani sovereignty over the province of Gilgit-Baltistan are major interlinked impediments to this multipolar vision.

The fact that Pakistan was intentionally left out of India's gargantuan long-term investments in the port of Chabahar and the North-South Transport Corridor in general prove that *New Delhi is not seriously committed to reaching a lasting and sustainable peace with Pakistan* anytime soon, as does its uncompromising stance on claiming all of Kashmir. This attitude can be explained by the fact that India wants to control this crucial chokepoint on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor so as to either prevent the project's completion or exert dominance over the only dependable non-Malacca trade route that China would have with the Indian Ocean.

Either way, India's intentions are obviously obstructive and present a serious threat to China's grand strategy of securing its international trade routes, and by related extent, viably constructing the foundational infrastructure critical for the success of the emerging Multipolar World Order. This state of affairs has made it so that the existence of Pakistan serves as a safeguard for the survival of multipolarity in South Asia and has consequently given Islamabad the heavy responsibility of guarding this globally vital corridor from American-encouraged Indian aggression.

In a poetic twist of irony, whereas in the past it could have been argued that Pakistan was "getting in the way" of the "good guys" and carrying out the US' dirty work, nowadays it's India that's fulfilling that role and functioning as the ultimate divide-and-rule instrument of unipolarity, though this time not just over the subcontinent, but over the entirety of Eurasia.

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Kashmir: Exposing the Myth behind the Narrative

Abdul Majid Zargar

The great enemy of the truth is very often not the lie, deliberate, contrived and dishonest, but the myth, persistent, persuasive and unrealistic (John Kennedy). A myth is a story that survives till it is debunked & during the period of its currency it is more portent & powerful than history. Myth is what we call other people's religion and like a war, very easy to start but difficult to bring to an end. It is this difficult job which author Khalid Bashir has accomplished through his book 'Kashmir-Exposing the myths behind the narratives'.

When a myth busting book hits stands, questions & doubts are often raised about the intentions, tools & methodology used by the author to contest well established myths in the form of stories & legends as both the manufactures & consumers of such myths are not ready to accept the new but factual positions. In such circumstances, the author is put to extra challenges of acceptability & criticism (often by those who haven't even read the book) especially at initial stages. Khalid Bashir has been no exception to this initial tirade. The last time a worthwhile myth busting book was published was 2015 when Catherine A. Epstein's book 'Nazi Germany: Confronting the Myths' was published. It faced the same response but ultimately held the ground and today, after a span of less than three years is regarded as a master piece on the subject.

In the Indian subcontinent, Brahman Hindu Historians have unfortunately entwined religion & history, producing what one may call a mytho-history based on Sanskrit textual sources. Over a period of time, it has been corrupted and falsified to such an extent, particularly after partition that one particular narrative has gained pre-eminence -that Hindus had once a glorious past which was destroyed by Muslim conquerors-. For such historians having their way, Taj Mahal, the masterpiece of Muslim architecture, built by Mughal emperor Shahjahan in memory of his beloved wife Mumtaz Mahal is actually "Tejo Mahalay, a temple dedicated to Hindu deity Lord Shiva.(Hindu Historian P.N.Oak in his book Taj Mahal: The True Story). Similarly these historians would like us to believe that world's largest minaret in Delhi, Qutab Minar was not built by Qutab din Aibek but rather, it was a Hindu structure known as Dhawaja Sthambha or Vishnu Sthambha. As famous British historian William Dalrymple notes, Hindu supremacists "have found it hard to believe that such a masterpiece was built by the same Muslims they despised".

Khalid Bashir's Kashmir: Exposing the Myth behind the Narrative is an excellent book which puts various issues pertaining to Kashmir's history in proper perspective. It exposes a particular interest or class of interests behind various such issues. It is a common knowledge that post 1990; many new narratives have been created with a particular interest behind these. Since myths have necessarily to be created to give a currency to such narratives, the author exposes such myths with meticulous research, references & cross references. Be it the movement of Kashmiris to obtain their political and economic rights during Dogra rule or the migration of Pandits in 1990, the author lays bare the facts to challenge the myths woven around these events to bring the truth & reality to surface.

Khalid's book is divided in nine chapters. Each chapter is seductive & keeps the reader engrossed with the author's systematic demolition of the myths & falsehoods created & promoted by biased writers & historians. One of the chapters of Khalid's book 'Malice' revolves around myths of persecution by Muslim rulers woven by Kashmiri pundits since the time of advent of Islam. An instance is that of Sultan Sikander who has been branded as an intolerant tyrant king and an idol breaker (But shikan) by Pandit historians. The fact is that Sultan Sikandar was a benevolent & secular ruler who donated state land as endowment to many temples and installed idols in several of them. One of the instances is recorded in history, when he installed a Shiva lingam in Gnash temple, popularly known as Ganpatyar Mandir, only half a kilometre away from the famous Lal Chowk. In 1990, Jagmohan the then Governor got the said *murti* shifted from the Ganpatyar Mandir to Zeshta Devi Mandir in the vicinity of Raj Bhawan after defacement of the important inscription in Pali language which had been documented by none else than famous researcher and former head of the Department of Central Asian Studies, University of Kashmir, GN Bhan, himself a Kashmiri Hindu. (Ajaz Mir-Poioneer). Incidentally it may be mentioned that it was Suh Bhat, a Kashmiri Pandit and Prime Minister during Sultan Sikander's rule, who embraced Islam and did damage some temples to quell anger & rebellion within his own community.

One finds a stark similarity in this maligning game of Muslim rulers by Brahmin historians in India. Take for instance Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb. Of all the Muslim rulers who ruled vast territories of India from 712 to 1857 CE, probably no one has received as much condemnation from Brahmin writers as Aurangzeb who was, otherwise one of the pious, scholarly, liberal, tolerant & competent rulers of India. Fortunately, of late few Hindu writers have come out in the open to dispute these falsehoods & rectify the historical wrongs. But a major section of Indian Hindu society has become so intolerant that it didn't spare even historically acknowledged the most secular Mogul emperor, 'Akbar the Great' whose name has been erased from the streets of Delhi recently by

rightwing Hindu Govt. Similarly the name of Mughalsarai Railway station in UP has been changed to ‘Deen Dyal Upadhy station’

In the chapter ‘Migration’, the author has established beyond doubt the forces behind migration of Pandits in 1990. It should serve as an eye-opener for our Indian friends who are continuously fighting the truth to malign & demonize Kashmiri Muslims.

In the chapter ‘Titled Media’, the author establishes how Indian media in Kashmir in past, mostly manned by Kashmiri Pandits, has been partial & biased towards Kashmir in tune with the Indian interests. It has been in service of lies & half truths 24X7. With the passage of time, Kashmiri pundits have been replaced by jingoistic & ultra-patriotic journalists employed by Indian corporate, who in the name of covering the news from Kashmir, cover up everything but the reality.

Not that the book is free from errors. For instance- Number of persons martyred on July 13, 1931 incident has been stated to be 22 instead of well documented 23(Kashmir ki Tehreeki Azadi-Peer Muhammad Afzal Makhdoomi-page 74). Similarly the personal assistant of Nehru has been named as Dwaraka Nath Dhar instead of Kachru. But such errors hardly affect the utility of the book.

This book is well researched with lot of hard work having gone into it. It has a ring of truth & its contents deserve to be well known. It is a valuable addition to Kashmir literature alongside Mirdul Rai’s ‘Hindu rulers-Muslim subjects’ & Chiterlekha Zutshi’s ‘Language of belonging & Kashmir’s contested past’. Undoubtedly this book will go a long way in correcting the one sided & mostly false narratives on Kashmir built over years. The book needed to be written & now needs to be read

Tail Piece: In history making it is said that until the lions have their own historians, tales of the hunt shall always glorify the hunters.

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Upper Caste Privilege: From Catharsis to Change

Prashant Nema

One seldom hears any of the persons saying, "Let us do something to change the Touchable Hindu."- Dr. B. R Ambedkar.

People have of course heard of the "Caste System"- a complex system of hereditary and occupation-based segregation that has been an organizing principle of much of Indian society for Millennia. While most people know of it, few understand both its persistence and its cruelty for the hundreds of millions of people it designates as undesirable. To understand this is to enter the Heart of Darkness.

"Frankly Prashant, if I weren't an exceptional student, I would have committed suicide long ago."

His statement chilled my bones; having been known him for years, I knew he was not given to exaggeration or needless drama. He was serious. As I shivered, I realized two things- that I myself was unexceptional and that even in that state, I played a role in his immiseration. I had to know more.

Tanmay and I had been chatting over lunch and the words were flowing. I had asked him to tell me about his background; he obliged me with elegance and passion. No books, lectures, or documentaries could have prepared me to understand Tanmay and what he represented. For others, we were just two Indian immigrants chatting over lunch but our chat was a statistical and moral improbability- the differences in our background were deep, wide, and invidious. After all I am an upper caste Hindu and Tanmay is a Dalit. How we got to this point of convergence- as "successful" employees of Microsoft- is a tale of deep deprivation and extraordinary strength on Tanmay's side and privilege and mediocrity on mine, an object lesson in the inequality of endowments and circumstances wrought by the Caste System.

How I got to be interested in Tanmay's story is a lesson in itself. The recent discourse in my adopted home about Race had me thinking of an analogy to my own upbringing in India. As I came to understand White Privilege, it become increasingly difficult to comment or act on issues of racial justice without first confessing my own version of privilege.

The privilege I was born into and facilitated who I am today came from the same system that hampered Tanmay at every stage from becoming who he is today. People have of course heard of the “Caste System”- a complex system of hereditary and occupation-based segregation that has been an organizing principle of much of Indian society for Millennia. While most people know of it, few understand both its persistence and its cruelty for the hundreds of millions of people it designates as undesirable. To understand this is to enter the Heart of Darkness.

A Personal Journey

I was lucky enough to be born into a family in which almost all members graduated University. Though still beset with traditional gender-roles, our family had done well- the adult males found stable jobs that afforded us middle-class luxuries. In a country recovering from colonial destitution and characterized by great inequality, this achievement was rare and important. Though my ancestors were largely small businessmen and traders, both of my grandfathers found their path in education and assumed professional roles in the growing and newly independent country. By the time my generation came, the basic existential needs of life were taken care of; in that sense my childhood and adolescence were easy and filled with the joys of privilege.

Tanmay was not so fortunate. Caught in the punishing cycle of Caste, his birthright was not education and privilege but difficulty. While the working adults in my family were professionals, in his they were involved in the skinning of dead animals. For literally thousands of years, generations of his family were locked into this thankless, dangerous and “God-ordained” profession. Those who attempted to break out of this vicious cycle were dealt with harshly. By the time of Independence- 1947- both his grandfathers were skinning these animals in largely rural India; they were part of a large group – numbering **200 million** today- called Dalits (or “*Untouchables*” in the common English translation.)

This extreme lack of occupational diversity and related deprivation in his community was not simply a matter of happenstance- it was the determined product of a carefully planned and enforced system of slavery. Not only was this a synthetic or man-made system but it was “sold” to the Indian population as part and parcel of their religion.

I recall hearing first about Caste when i was eight. My mother told me in passing that our last name meant we were “Baniyas,” or members of a particular caste. Though I understood very little, I later learnt from Indian mythology that Baniyas were a sub-caste of “Vaishyas” which implied that we

were tradesman by profession. I learned about the other “upper” castes at that time too- Brahmins and Kshatriyas. Taken as a group, these members of upper castes are called “Savarnas.”

For most of my childhood, I didn’t think much of Caste; in some sense I was lucky- I grew up in a cosmopolitan neighbourhood defined by diversity and what we thought at that time to be a “modern” outlook. As I grew up, I remember specifically thinking that we had transcended “isms” and had achieved a universal outlook. As I reflect now, I realize how wrong I was- I cannot recall a single Dalit friend or family associate from my childhood. While we felt that we had achieved universality, we lived in the heart of segregation. But at that time, I revelled in our “modernity.”

With my idealistic naiveté, I thought that despite its power in history, the caste system had lost its strength. Sure, people married within their caste and faced social opprobrium if they sought a partner from outside, but for the most part, as I thought, the more damning parts of the caste system had dissipated. I thought of my own family in which my own father was no longer a petty trader but was, instead, a scientist working on innovative and new things. India was a modernizing country with a progressive constitution and a well-developed idea of citizenship, so even if there were remnants of the caste system, they were benign. Sure, there was the notion of “untouchability,” but that was an excrescence, not a persistent feature of society. Interestingly, many learned people shared this position. The past was the past; the present and the future were bright.

Tanmay’s childhood perception was the polar opposite of mine; his own caste position – as a Dalit and not a Savarna- gave him a rude shock from the beginning. First, it was evident to him that everyone around him was engaged in professions that viscerally repulsed him. Second, he was victim to scores of incidents in which he was singled out due to his caste, including by a teacher who, when Tanmay was only 8 years old, declared to the class that the child was “not even touchable not to mention teachable.”

A system I thought had largely disappeared was simultaneously destroying Tanmay’s aspirations. For me, it was a theoretical construct, part of our past; for him, it was real, present, and inescapable. As I learned later on– after decades of life- 75% of Dalit students drop out before completing high school, unable to manage either economically or survive the harassment levelled by teachers, students, and public figures alike. This childhood was very different than mine, which was filled with clear encouragement from my teachers, peers and others in my social graph

For Tanmay, the deprivations and insults continued. Not only his direct relations but also all the people who lived in his vicinity shared the fate of having filthy, menial jobs, scraping the very bottom of the economic barrel, and being treated by others as untouchable. Amongst them were manual scavengers, janitors, animal rearers, and corpse handlers. The perception of these jobs is best described by the fact that the titles of these occupations are actually slur words in the common lexicon. Not only did Tanmay have to bear such insults, he was not only bereft of any amenities but also was intimidated by the powerful castes around him. He grew up feeling dejected, helpless and looked down upon.

Book Knowledge versus Reality

It's not that notions of untouchability were unknown to me growing up, just that they seemed to be things of the past. We knew that for thousands of years, Tanmay's ancestors were not even allowed in public spaces, in some places they were not only "untouchable" but also "unseeables." If they tried to educate themselves even by listening, religious texts called for molten lead to be poured into their eyes. In every corner of the country, Dalits were assaulted and subjugated. With unrelenting harshness and unrelenting predictability, these life-killing practices became part of culture and tradition, accepted by the Savarnas.

Though there were countless uprisings through history, when colonial India entered the 20th century, untouchability was alive and well. With the ferment of the Independence struggle and the leadership of Dr. BR Ambedkar–Tanmay's hero and prime architect of Free India's constitution, Dalits did gain Civil Rights including the benefits of the world's largest affirmative action program- called Reservations. *But as with so many such situations, these rights were de jure and less commonly de facto.*

For a Savarna like me, busy with my own studies and obligations, I had little idea of the difference between my idealistic picture and Tanmay's lived reality. For me, Dalits were abstractions, metaphors for India's progress.

To illustrate how "legitimate" reasons are propounded in order to justify the divisions of society into "touchables" and "untouchables." Take for instance the fact that the professions often occupied by Dalits are considered "unclean" (like those who deal with human excrement, corpses, slaughtered animals, etc.) People in my echelon of society were told not to play with their kids for reasons of hygiene. The label of "impurity" given by religious sanction was converted into a "modern" and "scientific" epithet having to do with hygiene.

Forget of course, the provision of proper sanitary services— rich society had other priorities.

My bookish and idealistic view of Caste belied the painful reality on the ground. This “blindness” stems from privilege, just as theoretical notions of Race and Racism in the US belie the lived reality of the minorities who suffer.

There is of course more to the system than “personal contempt,” which of course exists. Sure, Dalits are questioned all the time- for their intelligence, integrity, and even humanity. But there are also the structural impediments- having to do with economics and social currency— that hobble their lives at every turn.

I had the privilege of not knowing; Tanmay had the opposite- the burden of being oppressed at worst and condescended to at best. That he fought his way through is a testament to his strength of personality.

University

The particular situation with regard to higher studies further divides Savarnas and Dalits. I myself succumbed to the mainstream propaganda, but not for reasons of contempt or religious fundamentalism. No, the highly competitive nature of Indian University admissions- coupled with the unremitting narrative of the powerful classes and castes- create a propagandistic environment in which the systems of Affirmative Action create even more hatred and divisiveness. While this is true in the US University and even in the workplace (via Affirmative Action and Diversity programs), the scale in India dwarfs what is seen in the US.

Admissions, especially to the few prestigious institutions in India, are highly competitive. With the system of Reservations, the “scores” required for Dalit students to get in are less than for Savarnas. This is exactly how Affirmative Action should work- it factors in the variety of obstacles that Dalits and others face along the way and attempts to counter this with slightly loosened standards for admission. Even with these programs, the Dalit representation in these institutions is tiny; after all with economic deprivation, unrelenting humiliation, and other societal obstacles, very few Dalits make it this far in the first place.

But for a hard-working young person like me, with only a bookish understanding of Caste, the idea of reservations seemed to be a blow against equality. If we want equality, shouldn't all standards be equal? This narrative of conservatism afflicted me- it seemed fair and logical. It's an indication of

great privilege to invoke equality only when it serves oneself and to be blind to struggles for fairness and justice- equality itself- and to maintain silence when it serves others.

With these perceptions of unfairness and with the social baggage we grew up with, University life was characterized by a clear boundary between Savarnas and Dalits. I remember with great regret referring to Dalit students with derogatory terms because of the perceived injustice that my own friends were unable to get into the university while less qualified Dalits were given “an easy route in.” “No doubt there were Dalits from well-to-do families who were able to avail of the Reservation system to get in, but what large social system doesn’t have such cases? The rich and privileged use “the system” to their advantage every day but when someone else uses the very system in the very same way, we blanch and invoke morality! In a curious inversion, we declared ourselves victims!

The bias and animus against Dalits was not limited to fellow students but also characterized those with power- the faculty and administration. When these people spread ideas of Dalits being like Reagan’s “Welfare Queen,” they unleashed a terrible reality on Dalits- segregation, unfair insults, unfair grading, harassment, and a variety of other tortures.

Dalit students, who have fought tooth and nail, to get a glimpse of the decent life via education, often are broken; *many commit suicide*. The media often relate these suicides to the lack of ability to cope with the academic pressure, but all data suggests that the vast majority of these suicides are connected to mistreatment and harassment. In fact, this is a known phenomenon called “Death of Merit”. The more talented ones, the ones who dreamt of being able to breakthrough, cannot bear with the harassments and constant pressure and turn to suicide.

Tanmay

After understanding this, Tanmay’s invocation of suicide made sense to me; that he marched through all the difficulties and is now a celebrated Engineer in Seattle is amazing and rare. He credits his mother a great deal. She was adamant about educating herself and her children. He found his courage through her and through the fact that he was an exceptional student. The system of Reservation gave him the confidence that if he excelled, he’s be able to get into a good institution.

Despite his success, his struggle did not end there. Even in studies beyond his Bachelor’s Degree, he faced enormous discrimination. Via the serendipity of a

benefactor, he was able to afford a Master's Degree and to find the inner strength to endure the continued humiliations.

He finally made it to the US and to a fantastic job at a dynamic company. He points out that for many, these great jobs are a ticket to riches but to him they were a path out of a shackled life.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that I too worked hard and faced some challenges to get where I got but for the most part, my life has been one of privilege. Talking to Tanmay made me understand just how true this is and much other suffer to enjoy even basic privileges. There are of course many Savarnas who have to overcome obstacles to succeed but for Dalits, the effects of multiple oppressions are that much harder to overcome.

The analogy in my adopted home is clear, especially in an era of open Racism. The Caste division in India is like the Race division in the US, even without adding in the effects of misogyny, bias against people's sexual choices, and other prejudices. In fact, I was able to learn about myself- and Savarna privilege- by understanding White Privilege.

In the end, the difficulty of life as a Dalit is palpable and real. Humiliations are common. Lives are destroyed. And most of us are either ignorant or callous. Even a cursory search for information yields a vast reservoir of knowledge and documentation indicating just how bad it is for Dalits; ignorance is therefore a privilege.

Tanmay taught me about myself and about the society I thought I understood. He and I are now connected; I wish I had recognized a Tanmay in my life when i was younger. I hope this story helps more Prashants and more Tanmay's to find each other and through empathy, listening, and action reduce Caste oppression to a thing of the Past. It is my hope that listening will turn to acknowledgment, which then will turn into partnership and eventually a solution!

Tanmay and Prashant are software engineers based in Seattle. Romi Mahajan and Lornet Turnbull also contributed to the writing of this article.

China wears the mediator's gown in the Af-Pak

Salman Rafi

Despite a high-level meeting between Pakistan's COAS General Bajwa, and Afghanistan's president Ashraf Ghani, relations between the two countries remain largely troubled and uneasy. Nothing else can testify this tension better than the fact it is China once again that intervened to ease down tension and engage both countries in both bi-lateral and tri-lateral platforms of both dialogue and economic connectivity.

Will the current phase of dialogue leave any durable impact on the regional situation is hard to guess, for the root of the problem between Pakistan and Afghanistan go a lot deeper than mere bi-lateral tie.

On the one hand, the US is in the middle of applying its new strategy to Afghanistan, and on the other, Afghanistan is welcoming India's role in the war-torn country's economic reconstruction. While the two factors contribute to Pakistan's reasons for engaging with the Afghan government, Afghanistan's fast changing geo-political dynamics also mean that Pakistan is highly unlikely to play the lone-game. Therefore, an important reason why we are seeing China's increasing involvement in Afghanistan is that Pakistan wants to counter-balance Indian and US influence in Afghanistan by facilitating China, as also Russia to some extent, in Afghanistan by opening them up to the Taliban and removing their doubts about the Taliban's plans to export their ideology to China or Central Asia.

Notwithstanding Pakistan's position in the region, it cannot still be said that China doesn't have its own reasons to increase its involvement. For one thing, peace in the Af-Pak region is crucial for the success of CPEC and the New Silk Roads project. For another, the Islamic State's increasing presence in Afghanistan is a big threat to Chinese interests as it fears extremist infiltration from Afghanistan into China.

Therefore, if ISIS is to be stopped, China's security establishment seems to believe, it must be contained away from its borders. Hence, the forward deployment of the Chinese military in Afghanistan, where China confirmed in late February that it was participating in "joint counterterrorism operations" although at the same time a spokesman announced there were no "military operations" inside the country.

It was again in February that the chief of the Chinese army, Fang Fenghui, announced roughly \$70 million of military aid to support the Afghan government's anti-terrorism efforts. Chinese president Xi Jinping reiterated China's commitment during the visit of Abdullah in May. At the beginning of July, the Afghan forces received the first batch of Chinese military equipment as well.

Notwithstanding military co-operation, Chinese involvement is unlikely to transform into direct military deployment. Therefore, the emphasis it has been putting is on bi-lateral and tri-lateral dialogue between Pakistan and Afghanistan in order to pave the way for peace through joint Pak-Afghan action against groups like Daesh, and engage in negotiations with the Taliban on the same basis.

In this regard, the above mention meeting between Pakistani and Afghan high officials is just another example of how China is intervening time and again diplomatically in the region. There are other examples as well.

For instance, prior to the said meeting in Kabul, officials from Pakistan, Afghanistan and China met in Kabul and held talks under a trilateral framework to bring peace and development in the war-torn country. The second meeting of the China-Afghanistan-Pakistan (CAP) Practical Cooperation Dialogue was held in Kabul from September 26 to 27.

According to the official statement issued, "the three sides agreed that the aim of the trilateral practical cooperation is to support the peaceful reconstruction and economic development of Afghanistan."

This emphasis on reconstruction and development partly owes its justification to America's emphasis on finding a military solution by defeating the Taliban as well as the Islamic State in Afghanistan. China, of course, sees things differently, and broadly disagrees with the US policy of keeping Afghanistan militarized for an indefinite period of time.

Another important reason for why China is steadily upping its role in Afghanistan is the country's view that the US doesn't have any strategy to establish peace, nor can it reconcile Pakistan and Afghanistan — something without which no dialogue can take place or peace ultimately established.

However, notwithstanding the crucial significance of China's mediatory role, the Af-Pak problem is going to turn out to be a tough riddle for China to resolve, for the crucial issue between Pakistan and Afghanistan remains cross-

border militancy, and the fact that Afghanistan wants Pakistan to change its erstwhile relations with the Taliban.

That Afghanistan wants to use the opportunity offered by the Chinese to force a change in Pakistan's Taliban policy is evident from the way Afghanistan's incumbent president had travelled to Beijing right after his election in 2014 and impressed upon the Chinese authorities to ask Pakistan to bring the Afghan Taliban to the negotiation table.

While this effort was followed by the establishment of now dysfunctional Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG), the issue remains very much alive and its resolution is still the only key to peace in the region.

What adds more to the problems China might have to face is the fact that the Afghan territory close to Chinese border is under the domination of Afghanistan's non-Taliban and non-Pashtun militant groups and warlords. While China cannot afford to let this region slip out of its hands, China still has to deal with the fact that some of these non-Pashtun groups are coalition partners in the Afghan government and that most of them are deeply sceptical, if not completely opposed, to dialogue and reconciliation with Pakistan, including its ultimate outcome, which might mean the Taliban's entry into the mainstream political system.

At the same time, China cannot abandon Afghanistan, for the stakes are too high, ranging from direct security threats to materialization of Silk Road projects. It is, therefore, China rather than the US that appears more determined to break the logjam between Afghanistan and Pakistan on the one hand, and between the Taliban and the Kabul regime on the other.

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“The Ministry of Utmost Happiness” by Arundhati Roy

Book Review: Dr Gideon Polya

After Arundhati Roy’s Booker Prize-winning novel “The God of Small Things” the world had been waiting for 20 years for her second novel. Arundhati Roy’s “The Ministry of Utmost Happiness” has been well worth the wait – it is a marvellous feast of poetry, prose, characters, causes, good, evil, the expected and the unexpected by a master story-teller and truth-teller that does justice to Humanity and specifically the poor and marginalized of India. At its heart is a deep well of empathy.

Arundhati Roy’s “The Ministry of Utmost Happiness” is set largely in New Delhi and Kashmir with small excursions to Gujarat, Kerala and America, and has a much bigger locational and political advocacy stage than her first novel “The God of Small Things” (1997) that is set in a village in Kerala. “The God of Small Things” is a deep and complex novel about a riven and esoteric multicultural family that shocks with the deadly consequences of familial and societal nastiness, in particular relating to caste. The realities of mass poverty, political activism and police repression are unavoidable elements of an intense family story set in a hot and lush village in Kerala. The novel explores family, racism, caste, discrimination, hatred, power, violence, love, kindness, forbidden love and betrayal. Controversially, the twins Rahel and Estha have sex in consummating their intimacy and guilt over the violent death in their childhood at the hands of police of their older and good friend Velutha, the kind, Communist, untouchable carpenter and lover of their mother, Ammu. How times have changed – by way of comparison, D.H. Lawrence’s “Lady Chatterley’s Lover” (published privately in 1928), was banned for 32 years in the UK because of its subject of inter-class adultery and use of a then-unprintable word.

A brief sketch of Arundhati Roy’s “The Ministry of Utmost Happiness” can be given as a tale of two heroines but without revealing too much of the story. The first heroine to be presented is Anjum, born into a New Delhi Muslim family, named Antab at birth, and a hermaphrodite. As a teenager Anjum eventually leaves her family and goes to live with other hijras (variously male to female transgender people) in the Khwabgah (“House of Dreams”, noting that in Hindi “Kharaab Gahr” means “Bad House”). Anjum eventually has surgery that removes her penis and unsatisfactorily enhances her vagina. Anjum becomes a celebrity, a “sought-after lover” and also a mother after finding and adopting a

lost baby Zainab. Anjum travels to Gujarat with her elderly friend Zakir Mian but are caught up in the 2002 massacre of Muslims in Gujarat under Chief Minister Narendra Modi (in the novel India's present Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) PM Narendra Modi is "Gujarat ka Lalla" (Gujarat's Beloved); Atul Behari Vajpayee, India's BJP PM from 1999-2004, is "the Poet Prime Minister"; and Manmohan Singh, the Indian economist and politician who served as the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) PM of India from 2004-2014, is "the Trapped Rabbit"). Anjum's friend is killed by the mob but Anjum is spared because she is a hijra and the killers are superstitious about killing hijras. In Anjum's absence, Zainab started sleeping with Saeeda and calling her "Mummy" too. Eventually Zainab goes over to Saeeda completely as Anjum becomes increasingly upset. Anjum, now 46, then leaves the Khwabgah and makes her home in a graveyard. This home is visited by others (including Saeeda and Zainab) and becomes a home (the Jannat, or Paradise, Guest House and Funeral Services) for hijras and other marginal people, notably one Saddam Hussein who is involved in the transition of the story to the second heroine.

Saddam Hussain is a low-caste Hindu called Dayachand from a family of skimmers. His father and his companions routinely pick up a dead cow but the police reject their bribe as insufficient, they are imprisoned and then beaten to death as "cow killers". by a Hindu mob Saddam Hussein adopts his Muslim name and identity to get a job as a mortuary worker, and thence reverts to Dayachand for a security guard job ("because every idiot knew that in the prevailing climate a security guard with a Muslim name would have been considered a contradiction in terms" ([1], page 75). Anjum, Saddam Hussain and others attend a gathering of variously impoverished, discontented and political activist people next to the Jantar Mantar (the famous observatory in Delhi that consists of 13 architectural astronomy instruments). A notable figure at the Jantar Mantar gathering is a vocal activist, Dr Azad Bhartiya, who publishes a progressive "News and Views" news sheet and represents all those indignant Truth-Tellers for Humanity, including Arundhati Roy herself and those publishing indignant articles in progressive Alternative Media such Countercurrents. Dr Azad Bhartiya is the last person to see the removal of an abandoned baby by our second heroine, "S. Tilottama, publisher of Dr Azad Bhartiya's News & Views", but does not deliver her up despite a beating from the casually violent police ([1], page 133). Saddam Hussain and another Jannat resident, Ishrat-the-Beautiful, track Tilo and baby by horse-drawn cart to her apartment, they and the baby-carrying Tilo wave to each other (she from the window of her second floor apartment), and the Jannat duo depart after leaving their "Jannat Guest House and Funeral Services" card.

The second heroine Tilo and her 3 male admirers are central to most of the remainder of the novel. Tilo is the out-of-wedlock child of a remarkable Keralan woman who is an innovative educator. Tilo is an architecture student at Delhi University together with Kashmiri student Musa Yeswi, and in 1984 (30 years before the baby acquisition in 2014) joins the cast of an English play “Norman, is that you?” that includes history masters students Nagaraj Hariharan (Naga) who plays “Norman” and Biplab Dasgupta who plays the character “Garson Hobart”. Tilo always refers to these 3 men who love her as Musa, Naga and Garson Hobart, respectively, this latter affectation being crucial when Dasgupta wants to anonymously contact Tilo when she and the baby finally end up with Anjum in the Jannat Guest House ([1], page 207) and, earlier, when Tilo, detained by the Indian military in Kashmir, is released by violent Indian Army torturer Major Amrik Singh after Tilo writes the message “Please call Mr Biplab Dasgupta, Deputy Station Head India Bravo Give him this message: G-A-R-S-O-N H-O-B-A-R-T” ([1], page 380). Tilo becomes a graphic designer, Musa Yeswi becomes a leading Kashmiri insurgent, Naga becomes an ostensibly progressive journalist who profits from secret and mutually beneficial Indian Intelligence connections, and Biplab Dasgupta becomes a senior figure in Indian Intelligence. Enough said, read the novel for this absorbing tale by a master story teller.

In between her two novels Arundhati Roy has become a leading activist for important humanitarian causes within and outside India, of which a list of 12 is presented below (with some amplifying, quantifying and documenting comments in brackets):

(1) supporting the impoverished and marginalised people of India (the annual per capita GDP in India is a mere \$1,709 as compared to \$56,064 for the US; 4.5 million Indians die avoidably from deprivation each year as compared to essentially zero in North America, Western Europe, China, Japan, Taiwan and South Korea; and India ranks 97th out of 118 countries in the Global Hunger Index with 15% of the population malnourished and 39% of under-5 year old children stunted).

(2) opposing the Narmada Dam project, the huge Sardar Sarovar Project for power and irrigation in Gujarat (this and other like major projects have created 50 million “internal refugees” in India since Independence, noting that poverty kills, with 350 million Indians dying avoidably from deprivation in the period 1950-2005)

(3) opposing US imperialism, notably the war criminal and indeed genocidal US Alliance invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, with Arundhati Roy being a notable participant in the seminal World Tribunal on Iraq (deaths from

violence plus avoidable deaths from war-imposed deprivation in brackets: post-1950 US Asian wars (40 million, 1950-present), the Palestinian Genocide (2 million, 1920 – present), the Korean Genocide (5.2 million, 1950-1953), Laotian Genocide (1.2 million, 1955-1975), the Vietnamese Genocide (15.3 million, 1955-1975), the Cambodian Genocide (6 million, 1965-1975), the Congolese Genocide (30 million, 1960 – present), the Guatemalan Genocide (2 million, 1960-1966), the Afghan Genocide (9 million, 1978 – present; 6.0 million, 2001- present), Iraqi Genocide (9 million, 1914 – present; 4.6 million, 1990 – present; 2.7 million, 2003 – present), the Somalian Genocide (2.3 million, 1992 – present), the Libyan Genocide (0.2 million, 2011 – present), Syrian Genocide (1.0 million, 2012 – present), the post-9-11 US War on Muslims, Muslim Holocaust and Muslim Genocide (32 million Muslim deaths from violence, 5 million, or deprivation, 27 million, in 20 countries invaded by the US Alliance since the US Government’s 9-11 false flag atrocity), and the deprivation-driven Global Avoidable Mortality Holocaust (1,500 million avoidable deaths from deprivation, 1950 – present; 17 million such deaths annually) [9, 16-24].

(4) supporting human rights and the will of the people in Kashmir, this leading to a charge of sedition against her (according to Arundhati Roy’s novel, in Kashmir there are “DEAD = 68,000 DISAPPEARED = 10,000”, page 115) – the key issue should not be borders, sovereignty etc but human rights);

(5) accusing Apartheid Israel of state terror e.g. over its devastation of Lebanon in 2006 (the substantially UK- and US-backed Palestinian Genocide has involved 2 million Palestinian deaths from violence, 0.1 million, or imposed deprivation, 1.9 million, since WWI, versus 4,000 Zionists deaths at the hands of Palestinians since 1920; there are 8 million Palestinian refugees and all of the 14 million Palestinians are excluded from all or part of Palestine; of about 14 million Palestinians (half of them children), 7 million are forbidden to even step foot in their own country, 5 million are held hostage with zero human rights under Apartheid Israeli guns in the Gaza Concentration Camp (2.0 million) or in ever-dwindling West Bank Bantustan ghettos (3.0 million), and 1.8 million live as Third Class citizens as Israeli Palestinians under Nazi-style Apartheid Israeli race laws; 90% of Palestine has been ethnically cleansed of Indigenous Palestinian inhabitants; of nuclear terrorist Apartheid Israel’s now 50% Indigenous Palestinian subjects, 74% are excluded from voting for the government ruling them; 24 million people have died avoidably from deprivation since 1950 in 5 impoverished countries variously occupied by Apartheid Israel since the inception of this genocidally racist rogue state).

(6) *damning the UK-, US- and Apartheid Israel-backed Tamil Genocide in Sri Lanka (horrendous human rights abuses, 100,000 Tamils killed, 800,000 displaced, circa 100,000 avoidable deaths from war-imposed deprivation);*

(7) *supporting Adivasi (Aboriginal) land rights (the 100 million Adivasis represent about 9% of the Indian population);*

(8) *criticizing state terrorism and human rights abuses in the Indian government's armed actions against the Naxalite-Maoist insurgency, calling it "war on the poorest people in the country" (violence and terrorism must be deplored but high technology state terrorism vastly exceeds non-state terrorism in violence and deadliness – indeed the greatest crime of non-state terrorism in general is that of wittingly or unwittingly providing "excuses" for disproportionately deadly state terrorism, as exemplified by genocidally deadly US state terrorism and Apartheid Israeli state terrorism);*

(9) *supporting minorities, notably Dalits, Adivasis, Muslims and Christians, against dangerously fanatical Hindutva sectarian intolerance and hostility (since Partition that involved 1 million killed and 20 million refugees in an orgy of sectarian violence, communal violence has killed several hundred people each year in India in addition to the huge numbers killed or expelled in the 2002 Gujarat anti-Muslim pogrom (800 Muslims killed, thousands displaced), the 1984 anti-Sikh riots (up to 17,000 killed, 50,000 displaced) and the ethnic cleansing of Kashmiri Hindu Pandits (300 killed, up to 500,000 expelled).*

(10) *opposing nuclear weapons and Indian acquisition of nuclear weapons (nuclear terrorism), a stance that has massive global support with nearly all non-European countries (but not nearly all European countries) overwhelmingly supporting a Nuclear Weapons Ban, and the International Campaign Against Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2017 (a nuclear exchange would wipe out most of Humanity (current population about 7.5 billion), successively through the initial instantaneous destruction of cities, subsequent deaths from burns and radiation sickness from radioactive fallout, and finally through a "Nuclear Winter" decimating agriculture through stopping photosynthesis and photosynthate-based life in general; the upper estimates of stored nuclear weapons are as follows: US (7,315), Russia (8,000), Apartheid Israel (400), France (300), UK (250), China (250), Pakistan (120), India (100), and North Korea (10). India, Pakistan, Apartheid Israel and North Korea have not ratified the nuclear non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT));*

(11) *supporting sustainable living (it is now too late to avoid a catastrophic plus 2 degrees Centigrade temperature rise but we are all obliged to do*

everything we can to make the future “less bad” for our children and grandchildren; there is a steadily worsening Climate Genocide and it is estimated that only 0.5 billion people will survive (i.e. about 10 billion people will perish) this century in the absence of requisite action to curb and reverse man-made global warming from greenhouse gas (GHG) pollution); and

(12) giving support by courageous example for free speech for truth and on behalf of the disempowered. In accepting the 2004 Sydney Peace Prize, Arundhati Roy stated, “There’s really no such thing as the ‘voiceless’. There are only the deliberately silenced or the preferably unheard”. There is massive Mainstream media lying by omission and lying by commission about the crimes of the rich and the suffering of the poor. Lies of omission are far, far worse than repugnant lies of commission because at least the latter admit the possibilities of refutation and public debate. Arundhati Roy on simultaneous First World crimes and First World denial (2004): “The ultimate privilege of the élite is not just their deluxe lifestyles, but deluxe lifestyles with a clear conscience”.

Indeed Arundhati Roy’s causes include those enunciated by the unfailingly earnest and morally committed Dr Azad Bhartiya in “The Ministry of Utmost Happiness”: “I am fasting against the following issues: I am against the Capitalist Empire, plus against US Capitalism, **Indian and American State Terrorism/ All Kinds of Nuclear Weapons and Crime, plus against the Bad Education System/ Corruption/ Violence/ Environmental Degradation and All Other Evils. Also I am against Unemployment. I am also fasting for the complete obliteration of the entire Bourgeois class Each day I remember the poor of the world, Workers/ Peasants/ Tribals/ Dalits/Abandoned Ladies and Gents/ including Children and Handicapped People**” (, page 126).

Arundhati Roy dedicates “The Ministry of Utmost Happiness” “To, The Unconsoled” and the characters of the novel reflect her activism and empathy for the variously threatened, non-empowered and unconsoled in India, the poor, the transgender Hijras, low caste Hindus (Dalits), Muslims, Kashmiris, Communist activists, and Adivasis. The abuses suffered by her characters range from sidelining, rejection, and intimidation to occupation, dispossession, trauma, violence, imprisonment, torture and death. The novel is wonderfully polemical and at its core is deep empathy for the richness of Humanity and the Biosphere that is being destroyed in the name of neoliberal-driven progress, whether the inhabitants, society and environment of the drowning Narmada River valley or the Adivasis in their jungle retreats being supplanted by mining and industry.

Arundhati Roy’s deep empathy for the “unconsoled” is expressed in a poem by Tilo towards the end of the book: “How to tell a shattered story? By slowly

becoming everybody. No, by slowly becoming everything”, page 436). One is reminded of the deeply moving and empathic movies of Bengali film-maker Satyajit Ray, and a profound statement by brilliant Bengali scholar and writer Rabindranath Tagore: “We have come into this world to accept it, not merely to know it. We may become powerful through knowledge, but we attain fullness through sympathy”.

It is possibly unfair to contrast Jane Austen and Arundhati Roy but the exercise is useful. The brilliant English novelist Jane Austen (1775-1817) wrote beautifully crafted novels about truth, boy-meets-girl and romantic love set in her environment of the English upper classes whose wealth heavily derived from the remorseless and deadly exploitation of Indians. *The real world of starving Indians (e.g. 10 million Indians starved to death under the rapacious British in the 1769-1770 Great Bengal Famine)*, slavery and wretched conditions for the English working class (1 in 6 women in London were prostitutes) scarcely intruded into the calm and wealthy world of Jane Austen’s novels in which the key moral issue was “truth” in oh-so-polite interpersonal relations. However every artist has a right to choose the subject and scope of the canvas and Jane Austen’s brilliant novels carry the profoundly important message that we are all empowered by the rational and articulate use of language.

In sharp contrast to Jane Austen’s measured and genteel articulation, the powerful poetry and soaring prose of Arundhati Roy’s complex novels deal with the horrendous truths of the Indian social realities of mass poverty, disempowerment, discrimination and deadly violence. One notes, however, that in “Sense and Sensibility”, the most “Indian” of Jane Austen’s novels, Jane Austen the truth-teller presents a very detailed but very cleverly disguised version of the well-hidden story of her Bengal-born cousin and sister-in-law Elizabeth de Feuillade (the model for Jane Austen’s more advanced female characters) who was the product of the adulterous relationship in India between Jane Austen’s paternal aunt Philadelphia Hancock and Warren Hastings (the first de facto Governor-General of India from 1772 to 1785). *However just as horrendous Indian famine events from the 1769-1770 Great Bengal Famine (10 million victims) to the WW2 Bengali Holocaust (6-7 million Indians starved to death by the British with Australian complicity) have been largely white-washed out of the monolith of British historiography, so too has the Jane Austen-revealed family story about Warren Hastings’ adulterously fathering of Jane Austen’s Bengal-born cousin has been overwhelmingly deleted from the huge mountain of academic and non-academic literature about Jane Austen and her novels.* Jane Austen, like Arundhati Roy, was committed to truth but this extraordinary lying by Western Mainstream editor, writer, journalist,

politician and academic presstitutes continues today with massive and pervasive Mainstream media fake news through lying by omission.

The complexity, poetry and polemical sweep of Arundhati Roy's "The Ministry of Utmost Happiness" is more than justified by the compelling need to present the wrongs in a people-moving way that only a great artist can, in a fashion that rises above the horrendous statistical realities of Arundhati Roy's humanitarian causes as quantitatively outlined above. Of great pertinence to brilliant and passionate activist writer Arundhati Roy versus the actively and passively homicidal, neoliberal State, French writer Albert Camus stated (1946): "Over the expanse of five continents throughout the coming years an endless struggle is going to be pursued between violence and friendly persuasion, a struggle in which, granted, the former has a thousand times the chances of success than that of the latter. But I have always held that, if he who bases his hopes on human nature is a fool, he who gives up in the face of circumstances is a coward. And henceforth, the only honourable course will be to stake everything on a formidable gamble: that words are more powerful than munitions".

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The U.S.-Pakistan Relationship Is on Life Support

Michael Kugelman

There is genuine anger and apprehension in Pakistan

In the days since President Trump came down hard on Pakistan in his speech outlining America's new Afghanistan strategy, the reaction in Islamabad—and elsewhere across the country—has been predictably angry and defiant.

Pakistan's National Security Committee, a group of top government and military officials, rejected Trump's allegations—ones also made by many American leaders before him—that Pakistan provides sanctuaries to terrorists that destabilize Afghanistan and attack American troops. *"To scapegoat Pakistan will not help in stabilizing Afghanistan,"* the committee declared in a sharply worded statement. In a fiery interview with CNN, political opposition leader Imran Khan excoriated Trump for blaming Pakistan for U.S. struggles in Afghanistan and proclaimed that Trump's criticism was "hurtful" and "humiliating" to all Pakistanis. Most recently, on August 30, *Pakistan's National Assembly passed a resolution lambasting Trump's accusations as "hostile" and "threatening."*

Pakistan's anger is now affecting high-level diplomacy. Islamabad asked Alice Wells, a top South Asia official at the State Department, to indefinitely postpone a planned visit to Pakistan. Pakistan's foreign minister, who had been scheduled to visit Washington, will now be going to China, Russia and Turkey instead—three countries with close or newly growing ties with Pakistan. Speaking to Parliament on August 30, Pakistani foreign minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif called on the government to suspend all high-level bilateral visits with Washington.

Meanwhile, anti-American protests, all peaceful, have broken out across the country. From demonstrations in the remote tribal areas to a sit-in outside the U.S. consulate in the city of Lahore, people are expressing their anger toward Trump's criticism and America's policies more broadly.

On one level, Pakistan's apoplectic reaction to Trump's speech isn't anything new. The U.S.-Pakistan relationship is fraught with mistrust and ill will. Most recently, in 2011 and 2012, the relationship was plunged into deep crisis thanks

to a rapid-fire succession of events—including a CIA operative killing two Pakistani men on a busy city street in Lahore, U.S. Special Forces entering Pakistan to take out Osama bin Laden, and NATO aircraft accidentally killing two dozen Pakistani border troops. Back then, the rhetoric in both capitals was much angrier than it is now.

Additionally, in a nation as anti-American as Pakistan (in the pre-Trump era, as many as 92 percent of Pakistanis disapproved of U.S. leadership), top leaders are obliged to issue strong, public rebukes to sharp rhetoric like Trump's. If you simply laugh or shrug off tough talk from the U.S. president, you risk becoming a political liability. So there's a playing-to-the-gallery dimension inherent in the Pakistani response.

All this said, by no means is the Pakistani political class displaying manufactured sentiment. Far from it. There is genuine anger and apprehension, and for three major reasons that go beyond the simple fact that a U.S. president has put their country down in a big and threatening way—cause for anyone on the receiving end of such rhetoric, in any context, to be incensed.

First, Pakistani officialdom is well aware of Trump's uncompromising, black-and-white position on terrorism: In effect, any terror group anywhere must be destroyed at all costs. Trump, more than his predecessors, is likely to order new and draconian measures meant to compel Pakistan to sever its ties to groups like the Afghan Taliban and Haqqani Network, which help Pakistan in a big way by keeping India—Pakistan's bitter foe—at bay in Afghanistan. These possible measures could include expanding drone strikes into areas of the country, like Baluchistan and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Provinces, where militant leaders are harboured but have rarely been hit by drones; placing sanctions and travel bans on Pakistani officials with known ties to terror; launching broader air strikes on terrorist facilities; and even designating Pakistan as a state sponsor of terror if it fails to undertake a series of counterterrorism measures within a certain space of time. Trump administration officials have specifically singled out the first two measures as real possibilities.

Second, Pakistani leaders understand the increasingly anti-Pakistan mood in Washington. Such sentiment is apparent in the White House, at the Pentagon, on Capitol Hill and even within the community of think-tank analysts. The mood toward Pakistan may be friendlier at the State Department and USAID, but the influence of these agencies in shaping foreign policy, not to mention Pakistan policy, has taken a major hit. For all the unpopularity of Trump's policies in Washington, the White House's tougher line on Pakistan is likely to garner glowing bipartisan approval.

The third reason for Pakistan's unhappiness boils down to the India factor. Trump generated banner headlines for putting Pakistan on notice, but his comments about India are more consequential—and problematic—for U.S.-Pakistan relations. Trump called on India to step up its game in Afghanistan—a country where New Delhi already plays a major role. India and Afghanistan signed a strategic partnership agreement in 2011, and this accord has translated to generous levels of Indian development assistance to Afghanistan—including funds allocated to dam construction and to Afghanistan's new Parliament building.

But other than training that India offers to Afghan troops, the provision of military transport vehicles and other nonlethal hardware, and a one-time transfer of several Russia-made fighter helicopters to Afghanistan, New Delhi's military aid to Afghanistan is modest—reflecting a high level of discretion on the part of India to avoid antagonizing Pakistan. When it comes to New Delhi's warm relationship with Kabul, it's the spectre of deeper security relations that really spooks Pakistan.

Significantly, Trump did not ask India to scale up its military assistance to Afghanistan. Instead, his speech explicitly called on India to intensify its development and economic support there.

And yet, the simple fact that Trump asked India to do more in Afghanistan likely sent shock waves coursing through Islamabad and especially through Rawalpindi, home to the Pakistani military leadership. Pakistan often alleges that India uses Afghanistan as a base from which to orchestrate acts of meddling and sabotage in Pakistan—from supporting separatist rebels in Baluchistan to providing aid to terrorists like the Pakistani Taliban. *For an American president, for the first time, to formally call on India to deepen its footprint on territory that Pakistan claims New Delhi already uses for anti-Pakistan activities—this is nothing short of a nightmare scenario for Pakistan.*

From Pakistan's perspective, now may seem to be an opportune time to lower the curtains on its relationship with America. Pakistan is stuck with an American president dead set on threatening, with likely support from key players in Washington, some of Pakistan's most important national interests. Trump is poised to apply draconian new tactics to drive Pakistan away from no state assets that make Pakistan's Indian enemy vulnerable, and he has already encouraged India to deepen its presence on Pakistan's western flank. *If Pakistan were to walk away from its partnership with the United States, it wouldn't be wandering into the wilderness; it would be marching into the wide-open embrace of Beijing, which is cementing its already-deep partnership with Pakistan as it builds out the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.*

One might also conclude that America is prepared to walk away. The tough-on-terror Trump can't be expected to have any patience for a country that takes billions of dollars from Washington while sheltering terrorists that kill Americans. The White House, by telegraphing its willingness to take escalatory policy steps that could ratchet up U.S.-Pakistan tensions to unprecedented levels, appears ready to risk the possibility of a rupture in relations in order to pursue its new Afghanistan strategy.

In truth, however, while both sides will be keen to take several big steps back, neither will want to walk away entirely. In fact, Trump, in his speech, extended an olive branch: "Pakistan has much to gain from partnering with our effort in Afghanistan."

Both countries derive benefits from partnership, and the loss of these benefits could damage their interests. Now that Trump has formally endorsed an open-ended military commitment in Afghanistan, the strategic significance of NATO supply routes that snake through Pakistan has never been stronger. Islamabad would close these down in a heartbeat, as it did for a seven-month period in 2011 and 2012, if relations further deteriorate. Meanwhile, Pakistan, despite all it gets from Beijing, continues to value American military assistance and the prestige value of a relationship with the world's sole superpower. Additionally, the supportive treatment that Pakistan receives from the International Monetary Fund—an institution where Washington holds great sway, and which has often helped Pakistan ease its economic woes—could be jeopardized in the event of a collapse in bilateral ties.

Ultimately, the trajectory of the U.S.-Pakistan relationship will depend on the types of pressure tactics implemented by the White House, and on the nature of Pakistan's responses and retaliations. Another determinant of the relationship's future is how much risk Washington and Islamabad will be willing to take on. The harsher the measures adapted by the United States, the greater chance that Pakistan could retaliate in dangerous ways. Additionally, the more that Pakistan resists changing its policies, the harsher the American tactics are likely to be.

Even at such an uncertain moment for U.S.-Pakistan relations, this much is true: The relationship may not shrivel up and die, but it's dangerously low on oxygen. Dark days lie ahead.

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Problems in Northeast India: A case study of Nagaland

Sidra Tariq

After the Indian independence in 1947, its North East has seen sustained unceasing separatist insurgencies. Indian heavy handed state response has resulted in unending bloodletting. In the perception of North Eastern seven states, they have nothing in common with India. It is a landlocked region that is connected with Indian mainland by 22 kilometre wide Siliguri corridor (also called chicken neck) in northern Bengal, bordering Bhutan, Bangladesh, China, Myanmar and Nepal is also close by India has face large scale insurgencies against it security forces. Like Kashmir the Indian government has deployed large formations of regular army and para military forces for counter-insurgency. Heavy militarisation and covert operations have created a horrendous human rights situation. Ethnic cleansing, massacres and extra judicial killings have become routine.

China's rise over the past two decades has altered the balance of power in the region and with the rapidly changing geopolitical dynamics and the recent India- China standoff at Doklam (very close to Siliguri Corridor) rang alarm bells in Delhi as they fear that the ongoing insurgencies in the North East may get a quantum boost.

The Northeastern region of India has forever been a mosaic of the most conflicting images with the involvement of no less than 100 armed rebel groups of varying intensity. The contiguous "seven sisters" namely the states of Assam, Nagaland, Mizoram, Manipur, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Arunachal Pradesh(1) have a significant tribal population and very low infrastructure with a hilly and difficult terrain. Each state has a unique and diverse ethnic, cultural, linguistic, economic and political heritage of its own. Even the topography of each is different from the other.

In the last two decades, violence and bloodshed have been perpetrated in the Northeast region because of the in-fighting between the states over the issues of ethnicity, inadequate resources and inaccessibility. *The Indian Government's ad hoc policies and its failure to provide necessities of life and liberty to the Northeastern people resulted in public dissatisfaction and alienation of this region.* A growing sense of exploitation and lack of alternative means of empowerment led to the growth of militancy. Therefore, demands of these insurgent groups vary from secession to autonomy to the right to self-determination, and a myriad of ethnic groupings bawl for special rights and the

protection of their unique identity. In short, irredentism is the *raison d'être* of all the nationalist, sub-nationalist or autonomy movements in India.

The problems of insurgency and political violence have adversely affected the nation-building process of Indian federation. This study essentially aims to explore the Naga insurgency in the greater regional perspective, its contemporary status in detail together with future trends and options. The Naga insurgency, over half a century old, is the first and the longest of the secessionist-turned-insurgency movements in South Asia. It is meant to achieve a sovereign Nagaland. At the heart of the Naga movement lies the question of its “unique” identity — Nagas as a separate nation. When their demand for the right to self-determination was not granted by the Indian state, they opted for the politics of secessionism to attain the objective of Naga nation-state.

India, among others, is a state facing a number of insurgencies especially in its Northeastern region.

According to Walter C. Ladwig:

An insurgency can be said to have both root causes and proximate causes. Root causes are the elements that make a population susceptible or amenable to the idea of taking up arms to wage a political struggle, while the proximate cause provides the avenue for the actual emergence of armed violence. Potential root causes can vary widely from underdevelopment to political ideology, to greed, to ethnic grievance. However, a growing body of academic literature identifies a lack of local governance and administrative authority as the key proximate cause of the emergence of insurgent violence. This is particularly troublesome in rural areas or rough terrain such as mountains, swamps and jungles where poor communication or transportation infrastructure may limit the government's reach.

The case of Nagaland fits in as a perfect case of a nation beset with insurgency — a rough and hilly terrain, a largely marginalized and deprived Christian population who view themselves as ethnically and linguistically separate from those around them.

Northeast India stands out as one of the most volatile regions of the world. Archana Upadhyay, in her latest work, *India's Fragile Borderlands* has outlined several features specific to Northeastern conflicts:

First, barring a few exceptions, most of the states of the region have experienced long drawn violent uprisings, seeking either secession from the Indian Union or greater autonomy within the Union. Second, conflict in some manifestation or the other is visible in each state of the region. Besides discord between the states and the central government,

disputes of varying intensity and nature are known to exist among constituent states of the region, between one tribe and another, between tribal groups and between indigenous groups, and 'outsiders', who have moved in from other parts of India and from neighbouring countries such as Bangladesh and Nepal. And lastly, the influence of the student organizations in almost every state is paramount.

Insurgency in Nagaland: A brief background

The Northeastern region is linked to the Indian mainland by a 21-kilometre long land corridor passing through Siliguri in the eastern state of West Bengal, called the 'chicken's neck.' Nearly "the entire boundary of the region is an international border: China to the north, Bangladesh to the southwest, Bhutan to the Northeast, and Myanmar to the east." The factors behind the ethnic conflicts and insurgencies in the Northeast can be traced back to the history of the exploitative and discriminatory administrative policies of the British. Colonial powers world over left their colonies a legacy of unending confusion and chaos, in the shape of arbitrary demarcation of boundaries in view of their administrative and military advantage, regardless of the history, wishes and sentiments of the local populace. Similar was the case with post-independence India where people in different states were irate with sourness and wild hopes. The successive Indian government being preoccupied with the problem of preventing further balkanization and the task for assimilating 562 princely states, failed to realize the consequences of the new political stirring in tribal society. In the years after independence, hasty makeshifts followed from time to time with the parliament carving out new states under political pressure or out of political convenience.

The British entered the Naga region with an expeditionary might in the early 1830s. In 1866, the Naga Hills were raised to the status of a separate district but the British took almost five decades to consolidate their control over the Nagas. By the beginning of the 20th century the Naga Hills had formed an integral part of British India.

After the annexation of Naga territories, all the competing sub-tribes of Naga group came under a united administrative control of the British power. Insurgency in Nagaland is the one which is ethnically organised. The first problem of insurgency surfaced in Nagaland (which remained divided between Assam and the Northeast Frontier Agency NEFA) in the early fifties, albeit the aspiration of Nagas not to join India after the partition had been expressed earlier in 1926 to the British administration. In 1929, the Naga Club, an organization of 20 Naga tribes, presented a memorandum to the Simon Commission. The memorandum clearly articulated sovereign status for Nagaland containing both sides of the hilly border region between India and

Burma – “i.e. the Northeast Indian states of Nagaland, Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh and Burma’s Sagaing Division and Kachin state.”

Conscious of the inter-clan enmity of the Nagas, the colonial rulers did not respond favourably to their demand. This claim for a sovereign Nagaland is staunchly being held by the Nagas till today. The British rulers who were fully cognizant of the Naga pride and independent nature had kept the Naga Hills away from the mainland and administered it as an “Excluded Area with an Inner Line Regulation.”

According to this system, no ‘outsider’ could enter these areas without a valid permit from the district authorities. The British policy of segregating the Northeast tribes and their tribal lands from the rest of India created a ‘frontier within a frontier’, which increased the economic, social and cultural differences between the hill tribes and people of the plains in Northeast India. The hill tribes continued with their traditional way of life. This sense of autonomy even during the British rule stirred the desire for independence among various tribes of the Northeast.

A study into the history shows the Nagas as proud, fiercely independent and daring people with prolonged signs of wars with Naga and non-Naga neighbours. Despite the fact that the notion of ‘Naga identity’ has gained greater impetus over the decades, love for tribe and village still comprise the central position in the life of Naga people.

Before the British advent in this region, there was no problem of indigenous versus outsiders. The problem of this migration further escalated after the partition in 1947 that disrupted, and continues to perturb the present demographic equations. It was soon followed by the Chinese takeover of Tibet and the coagulation of the previously ‘soft borders’ with Burma choking the region in the Easterly direction as well. The pursuit for greater political space between the dominant ethnic groups is an outstanding characteristic of the conflict dynamics in the Northeast. The struggle has created further ethnic rivalries between the dominant and minority classes living within the same society. In reaction to the hegemony of the dominant groups over the smaller ones, umpteen smaller conflicts have emerged.

In June 1947, the NNC signed a “Nine-Point Agreement” with the Indian government represented by Assam’s governor Sir Akbar Hydari. The agreement, also known as Hydari Agreement, provided for a review of the political status of the Naga Hills after every ten years — which the Nagas interpreted as one that gave them “the right to be independent after the expiry of the Agreement.” Nonetheless, when the Naga leaders realized that the Indian Constituent Assembly intended to change the provisions of the agreement, they

took up the case to Mahatma Gandhi who is said to have promised the Nagas that “they would not be included in India against their wishes.”

However, Jawaharlal Nehru had a different approach in this regard. In 1946, as Congress president, he wrote to T. Sakhrie, a leading member of the NNC: Naga territory in eastern Assam is much too small to stand by itself, politically or economically. It lies between two huge countries, India and China, and part of it consists of rather backward people who require considerable help... Therefore, this Naga territory must form part of India and of Assam with which it has developed such close association.

With the independence of India on 15 August 1947, the Nagas, in accordance with the Hydari Agreement, became part of the Indian Union. The events that followed the partition of the subcontinent aggravated tensions between the government and the Naga leaders. *Nagas continued to hold that Clause 9 of the agreement granted them the right of freedom.*

A dichotomy of interests was thus the outcome. The Naga insurgency we see today is rooted in the Naga Movement engineered by NNC leader; Angami Zapu Phizo went to New Delhi and requested Prime Minister, Nehru to meet their demand for a sovereign Nagaland. The request obviously was rejected. A dejected Phizo on his return started mobilizing the different rival sub-tribes of Nagas with the slogan of “*Naga nationalism.*” He marshalled his people as freedom fighters for emancipation of their territories from Indian occupation and boycotted the first general election in Naga Hills. Phizo created a secretive government known as Naga Federal Government (NFG) in 1954 coupled with a Naga federal army of around 15,000 armed guerrillas. Following the deployment of the Indian army in Nagaland, Phizo flew to former East Pakistan and later to London with the help of a Baptist Christian missionary, Rev. Michael Scott, in June 1960. In the face of the spurt in violence, the Indian government set up a single Naga administrative unit under Indian rule in the year 1957. *Nevertheless, Nagas responded strongly to the centre’s initiative and resorted to a disruption campaign. Reacting, the Indian government made Nagaland an autonomous state within India* under the external affairs ministry in 1960, with its formal inauguration as the 16th state of the Indian Union on 1 December 1963. However, the Naga separatists persisted with their demand for having an independent and single administrative unit consisting of all the Naga-inhabited areas extended to several Northeastern states like Assam and Manipur.

External factors

a) India's Northeast is surrounded by China, Bangladesh and Burma (Myanmar). Since its inception, in 1947 India has been having hostile relations

with all its neighbours. The impact of these troubled relations has had tremendous repercussions for India's Northeast, which has become a competing ground for multiple ethno-territorial identities. India has for long been extremely critical of the involvement of the foreign elements in its Northeast, for actively aiding smuggling of arms and drugs and providing operational assistance to various insurgent groups in the Northeast. a) The 1962 Indo-China war altered the course of Sino-Indian relations and led to increased Chinese involvement in the region. According to the Indian news sources, insurgent groups in Assam and Nagaland have received huge arms consignments from China.

Furthermore, Naga insurgents have strengthened this link by establishing liaison offices in the Yunan province of China and in Lhasa (Tibet). Naga insurgents are also believed to have established contacts with Yunanese military intelligence.

b) Pakistan The former East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) was seen as one of the major supporters of the Naga movement. India claims that "Pakistan was the first nation to offer moral and material assistance" to new ethno-nationalist movements like Naga Nationalist Council. Pakistan has been alleged to support "under a joint command" various separatist outfits in Northeast India. India believes that Pakistan's intelligence agency, the ISI, has been quite instrumental in backing the Northeast rebels particularly in Nagaland and Assam and assisting jihadist outfits in the region. India also claims that Pakistan has been providing logistical support like fake visas and documents, delivery of weapons and financial backing to the existing and emerging insurgency groups in the Northeast.(

c) Bangladesh

Indians believe Bangladesh is also actively involved in aiding the insurgency. India has accused that the border areas of Bangladesh have provided the Northeast insurgent groups with safe havens. These rebel groups are engaged in arms shipment in transit to India through these safe havens. India's Border Security Force (BSF) has charged that Naga insurgents have created helter points at Salopi, an area adjacent to Mizoram-Bangladesh-Myanmar border area and also in the Bandarban area of the Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh. India alleges that Bangladesh's security establishment, the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI), works hand in hand with the Pakistani ISI to prop up miscreants in the Northeast in the form of "financial assistance" and "ideological indoctrination."

d) Burma (Myanmar)

Nagaland shares a 258-kilometre-long international border with Myanmar. There have been historical-cultural linkages between different groups in Burma and Northeast India. Rebel groups, particularly in Nagaland, have long been backed up and schooled by the “Kachins of North Burma”. This assistance has provided the Northeast insurgents a gateway to the arms market in Cambodia and to Burma’s “Golden Triangle”, known as one of the largest opium producing regions of the world. The Sagaing region of Myanmar is known to be one of the main Naga-inhabited areas, where Eastern Naga Regional Council (ENRC), also one of the proponents of “Greater Nagaland” besides NNC, is quite active. The ENRC helped NNC establish its contact with one of the Burmese rebel group KIA and also in reaching China to expand its network. (46)

In the Northeast region, Nagas have been the most active in establishing links with the neighbouring countries and gaining their support to run their insurgent activities. Therefore, both factions of NSCN are the most heavily armed groups in the region.

India, since the beginning of these insurgencies, has feared the trans-border linkages that these groups have. In addition, the element of strategic alliance among them has fostered criminality and insurgency politics making the conflict dynamics all the more complex. The most significant feature of this strategic alliance is the birth of a ‘terrorist economic network’ backed by an intricate nexus between armed rebel outfits and organized criminal groups, whose activities sabotage and destroy the legitimate economy of the entire region.

A complex present situation

Nagaland is one of the most important Northeastern states; however, it is important to look at the ongoing insurgency in a larger regional perspective. The ever increasing violence, the geographical proximity of the region with the neighbouring countries and its porous borders has long remained issues of great concern for the Indian government. Therefore, it has placed a heavy military set-up in the region while adopting different counter-insurgency measures during varying situations. Measures such as the “Armed Force Special Act (1958), the National Security Act (1980), The Disturbed Areas Act (1976), and the Terrorism and Disruptive Activities Prevention Act (TADA, 1985), have been part of the counter-insurgency operations in the region.”

Nonetheless, Indian government’s counter-insurgency strategy so far has largely lacked vision and a well thought-out plan for the region under study.

The fear of the “domino effect” restrains the state government from extending greater concessions to the insurgents. On the contrary, extensive use of force leading to massive violence is the major source of survival and communication for the insurgents. Peace talks between the Indian government and The National Socialist Council of Nagaland NSCN (IM) are underway since 1997. The cease-fire agreement between the government and the NSCN (K) in 2001 was another major step towards peace.

Myanmar. However, today Nagaland stands at a crossroads with a political environment that is changing but is extremely vulnerable to the decisions and actions of the key players involved. Even if the NSCN (IM) settles down for the option of greater autonomy within the Indian Federation, its determined stance on Greater Nagalim could easily overturn the whole peace process. Crucial in this regard is the fact that despite the changing situation in Nagaland, the positions taken by the leading rebel groups clearly resonate among major segments of the populace they claim to represent. The current political environment is so laden with suspicion and distrust that resolving differences between the competing insurgent outfits is the biggest challenge.

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The Russia Pakistan Equation

Sabina Siddiqi

Today, Pakistan-Russia relations are not dependent on the Russia-India factor anymore, a reliable and independent partnership governed by mutual interests has materialized, security and business interests are intermerged and the future is promising.

A remarkable geopolitical shift has taken place in this part of the world as the traditional pattern of friends and adversaries is broken. India and Pakistan have been in opposite camps since the partition of the subcontinent in 1947. India and Russia have been all-time strategic partners while Pakistan was more mindful of American interests and was a Cold War ally of the United States. China and Pakistan had an all-weather friendship since 1950 but it is only recently that this partnership made major ripples such as the China Pakistan Economic Corridor project.

The current emerging bloc of China, Pakistan and Russia has taken the world by surprise; some recent developments in 2016 caused this realignment.

The first factor has been a huge improvement in U.S-India relations, a bilateral deal on military logistics exchange was formalized this year, and this Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement allowed both countries to access each other's land, air and naval bases. The United States designated India as its Major Defence Partner; Washington has virtually legitimized it as the world's sixth nuclear weapon state.

The second factor was India's single-minded animosity towards Pakistan and its intention to prevent the CPEC project at any cost, this project is China's largest investment in any foreign country, and ultimately any attack on CPEC will be taken as an act of war on China as well as Pakistan. The U.S. quietly supports India in this venture, it would love to contain China's rise so that it does not challenge its 'superpower' status, CPEC and the Chinese 'One Belt One Road' plan are a threat for America and its allies. Russia and China are more and more economically interdependent of late so it is inevitable that it would help protect Chinese interests.

The third major factor is the mess in Afghanistan, the U.S left a weak government in place which cannot assert its writ on most of the country, and the country is at war with itself with the Taliban emerging as the undisputed power. The withdrawal of the U.S. forces helped mercenaries fill the vacuum and ISIS has become a real, growing threat since about a year, Russia, China, Pakistan

and Iran feel ISIS is the real problem in Afghanistan but India wants to help the Ashraf Ghani government crush the Taliban instead. This issue is fast developing as a major divergence of interests as India treats it as inconsequential while the other countries want to nip ISIS in the bud before it spreads in their direction.

Consequently, it is not just economic interests that would bring China, Russia and Pakistan together, even their security concerns are similar. During 2016, Russia has been re-considering its priorities as India put one foot in the West, the logistics deal with the United States clinched matters. One of the first indications of Russia's change of heart was its participation in the first ever joint military exercises with Pakistan. The timing was particularly poignant as these exercises happened to coincide with the Uri terror attack and India was looking to wreak revenge on Pakistan for its supposed involvement. It had taken Russia's support for granted in raising the matter on international podiums and declaring Pakistan a pariah state. The BRICS summit in October brought another surprise, the Indians were astounded by the revelation that both Russia and China shielded Pakistan and blocked any unfavourable mention regarding Pakistan in the Goa declaration.

Today, Pakistan-Russia relations are not dependent on the Russia-India factor anymore, a reliable and independent partnership governed by mutual interests has materialized, security and business interests are intermerged and the future is promising.

One more common factor for China, Russia and Pakistan is their current state of ties with the United States. After incurring heavy human losses in the endless War on Terror as a front-line state for US interests and still being asked to 'do more', Pakistan felt compelled to think of its national interests. India's current major defence partner status and its nuclear deal with the U.S. are not palatable for Pakistan. Russia is a traditional adversary of the U.S. while China has its own problems with the U.S. and its allies in the South China Sea.

Shortly after this train of events, rumours circulated that the Russian Federal Security Services chief Alexander Bogdanov visited Gwadar port, it was reported by Pakistani media that Russia had joined CPEC and Russian ships would be allowed to use Gwadar port. Apparently, Russia is not willing to play second fiddle to the United States as far as India was concerned, notwithstanding all the Indo-Russian military deals in place. In December 2016, Russian envoy Alexey Y Dedov announced that his country would join the China Pakistan Economic Corridor and in future link its own **Eurasian Economic Union** project with CPEC. Pakistan and Russia also held their first ever foreign office consultations on regional issues in Islamabad. A baffled India is trying to pretend nothing has happened even though the realities are changing fast. . The CPEC is the initial factor which started this strategic shift,

it promises to expand the political and economic influence of all the countries that become part of it.

The situation was best described by Russian presidential envoy to Pakistan Zamir Kabulov when he said “Moscow didn’t complain about India’s close cooperation with the US and so India also shouldn’t complain about “much low level” of cooperation between Russia and Pakistan.” There are reports in the Pakistani media that President Putin is likely to visit Pakistan in May 2017 to inaugurate an LNG pipeline project, such a visit is most welcome and would further increase the bonhomie and goodwill between both nations and enhance clarity in bilateral relations.

On 27th December, a trilateral meeting was held between Russia, China and Pakistan in Moscow to discuss a solution for Afghanistan, the Indian backed Afghan government was not invited to its dismay. Maria Zakharova, the foreign ministry spokesperson said, “[The three countries] expressed particular concern about the rising activity in the country of extremist groups including the Afghan branch of IS.” She said the three countries agreed on a “flexible approach to remove certain figures from sanctions lists, as part of efforts to foster a peaceful dialogue between Kabul and the Taliban movement.”

The looming ISIS threat has potential to bring the three nations even closer and joint military action could be possible in the future, the U.S. is gradually ceasing to be relevant in this regional scenario. China, Russia and Pakistan would ultimately want the U.S. to leave maintenance of security in Afghanistan to them; this would be a major setback to Indian ambitions in the region unless it falls in line with these imminent strategies. Iran also wants to counter the ISIS threat, so India would be virtually left to its own devices. The entire region would become consolidated with the exception of India in the long run.

These new geopolitical realities hit India in Afghanistan and affect its intentions regarding the CPEC as well, any future Indo-Pak war is impossible as any attack on CPEC would be seen as an attack on these regional powers.

This new alliance is focused on changing the ground realities of Afghanistan, the countries involved have common focus, common targets and this is beginning to look like a long-term arrangement, and there is nothing transitory about their future vision.

The new power troika of China, Russia and Pakistan carries great potential to herald in an era of peace in this region; it even diminishes the nuclear threat hanging like a Damocles’ sword on citizens of the subcontinent.

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India: Why are we silent on the grave threat to Prof Kancha Illaiah?

Vidya Bhushan Rawat

While it is nobody's suggestion that India was a tolerant land some three years back and suddenly has developed the intolerance but none can deny the fact that the goons threatening intellectuals and activists have certainly become more arrogant and encouraged by the absolute 'disinterest' shown by those in power. In the past few years we have lost number of persons for the cause of human rights and secularism and probe have reached nowhere even though links with organisations associated with Hindutva groups have been reported in the media. Activists are being threatened; intimidated and street goons have taken it upon themselves to provide the justice. Where the person is a bit powerful, cases are filed against him in the court while goons are let loose to physically intimidate him.

Kancha Illaiah is a well-known Bahujan philosopher who has been actively critiquing the Brahmanical social order and its injustices meted out to the Dalits-OBCs and Adivasis. Should he not be allowed to do this under the garb that it 'hurt' the community sentiments. It is not the question of any outsider writing a critique but a person from the community historically denied right. The only difference this time was that his new book that has come out is about the Vaishya community which is basically a trading community. Normally the Brahmins are the target but this time the Vaishyas (Banias) have taken it to themselves and have been protesting against Illaiah for his writing against them. The main contention of the community is that they have been called 'social smugglers' by Kancha Illaiah in his book. One of the Member of Parliament from Telugu Desam Party T G Venkatesh has reportedly threatened to kill him and asked for his hanging. Yesterday, his vehicle was attacked and a prompt action by his driver could save his life. So shocked was Prof Kancha Illaiah that he felt deeply isolated and decided to confine to his home for the next one week. It is sad that an intellectual at this stage is facing so much of threat of physical violence and no assurances from the authorities for his safety. Now the issue is being deliberately being politicized to create Hindutva frenzy in the state so that corrupt politicians can reap the benefit of the emotional blackmailing of people. This is the new India where the Brahmanical Hinduism will come through violent means. No criticism would be allowed or countered through a fair critique. It is not that Kancha Illaiah wrote it for the first time. His thought provoking books are there in open and should be welcomed. One can disagree with him and for that we have enormous avenues to not merely

protest peacefully but also wrote counter argument to denounce but that is not happening.

With so much of media and publishing world in hand these power elite are still fearful of a few who critique them. We are informed that Gandhi was a Bania. None deny that. We are not here asking anyone to be unhappy where they are born. None come here with a fixed birth record except in the Brahmanical system where your caste and occupation are fixed with your birth. That is what we call caste based varnashram dharma and it must be rejected. We cannot hide the fact that caste system and caste discrimination are the biggest obstacle in the development of this country. In fact the caste system remains our biggest hurdle in national unity and integration. The caste system creates prejudices in the minds of people and limits your mobility beyond your own castes. Once you confine yourself within your castes, everything outside it looks as suspect and dangerous. Can we have a united India with so many thousands of caste and each considering it superior to other? Critiquing India's notorious caste system is nothing wrong but will ultimately help India get stronger and united. Even then if he has said anything academically or factually wrong then there are options before the people to go the court or even write rejoinder through engaging in a democratic debate. Huge number of upper caste dominate our media, academia, intelligentsia and they can write a counter critique of Kancha Illaiah but the abdominal street protests that we are witnessing in Andhra and Telangana are merely for the political purpose and need to be unconditionally condemned.

The videos of protest using innocent children to urinate in public on the photograph of Kancha Illaiah is nothing except the sick mindset of the people who are using children to reap the rich harvest of hatred during the election. It is deeply despicable and condemnable. Why children should be used in a debate which is academic debate. And even if they are used, is the best way to use their 'creativity'. Is this not an imposition of male supremacy as we find no girls or women in the protest? Kancha Illaiah has not killed anyone, nor is he spreading hatred against particular communities or people, he has not threatened anyone but used the only way, to speak up through his writings against what he and many like him consider historic wrong. Isn't it his right to question and speak up against the social injustice that prevailed for centuries in our society?

Isn't it for Indians to ponder as why one community is in business or knowledge while other is purely for cleaning human excreta? Is this not a reservation which has existed in this filthy society where a few protested but those enjoyed kept quiet? When this hegemony is challenged then the question of merit is raised as if all those in the Dalal Street in Mumbai are the most meritorious people? Caste system is nothing but hidden apartheid and you

cannot hide from the fact that it need to go and should be demolished as Dr Baba Saheb Ambedkar as well as many others like him, had wanted.

What is more disturbing is that the failure of the two state governments of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana to provide him protection and action against those threatening him. The way political protests have been launched against him is clear indication of the local politicians who are being encouraged by their respective parties to intimidate a scholar through street goondaism. The two chief ministers of Andhra Pradesh and Telanagana are the same who refused to speak up against institutional murder of Rohith Vemula. Even when the entire country stood up for Rohith's cause, the two upper caste governments actually were determined to treat him as a 'non Dalit', a deliberate ploy to divide people on caste lines and deviate from the real issue of the prevailing caste prejudices in their system. The Member of Parliament of Telugu Desham party has openly threatened to kill him but there is no action from the chief minister Chandra Babu Naidu. The goons are openly attacking him and monitoring his physical movement but the two chief ministers remain shamelessly silent on the issue.

Another appalling thing is the conspicuous silence of intellectuals and political parties as Kancha has himself said. This is a very disturbing fact. We know he has been a critique of Brahmanical system in our political parties and intelligentsia including the left and this is not for the first time any intellectual spoke about the left and other political organisations. It was a critique of Dr Ambedkar, Phule, Periyar and many others who follow their path yet over the years. There are people who acknowledge their faults and happily engage in a fruitful discussion on the issue which is a welcome sign.

This is the period of a great crisis among us. Those who are targeting Mr Kancha Illaiah know it well that there are wide differences among the non Hindutva groups of people. This is not merely the problems of the left forces but also of the Ambedkarites and Bahujan forces. It is not the time to get into digging history and then taking a stand. In my opinion every Ambedkarites or a true intellectual of any variety left or socialist or freethinker will always defend an individual's right to freedom of expression and engage in democratic debates. Moreover, it is not a street brawl that he has engaged in but a purely academic work which can and should only be countered through academic exercise or democratic protests. The pain is that we have not heard intellectuals, academic taking any stand on it particularly outside Andhra and Telangana except for some individual responses on social media. It is good that the Congress Party has issued a very strong statement in the media as their spokesperson Randeep Singh Surejewallah demanded action the threatening

Member of Parliament and protection to Mr Kancha Illaiah. This is certainly a positive sign and we appreciate it.

India is fast becoming a mob republic where power elite has developed various ways to not only intimidate you but put you in deep distress to the strength of physical hurt or elimination. The mobs are being encouraged to take law in their hands and they have the fullest backing through the PR agents who can easily convert a wrong into right and the vice versa but then these should be the finest hours for all of us who are fighting against the subjugation and discrimination as it is the right time to see the truth, our stand and our attitude. We need to develop the culture of debate and discussion as that is the only way to save us as a society and as a nation. Once people start taking law in their hand and deciding to judge everyone in the street we will have none to blame but on to us. It is better to learn from the experiences of others. People in Sudan, Yemen, Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan and elsewhere know well the importance of democracy where in the name of identities and national interests people have killed each other. India survived as a democracy and fared well because despite all our weaknesses, we promoted ideas through constructive debates. We agreed to disagree. If you don't like Mr Kancha Illaiah or any one like him, don't read him, switch off your TV or if you are reasonable enough then counter him ideologically and argumentatively through various mediums. Each one of have various options including social media and it should be used to strengthen the debates but don't fall prey to the political goons who are only using sentiments to spread hatred and promote their political interest. Prof Kancha Illaiah must be provided all the security that he needs as well as those threatening to kill him must be prosecuted.

P.S.

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Afghanistan: A war tailor made for Donald Trump and Steve Bannon

Adam Garrie

Steve Bannon has said that ‘screwing up’ China’s One Belt–One Road should be a priority for the US. In this sense Bannon is as mainstream and as neo-con as they come

In many ways the moral, logistical and ethical simplicity of the Syrian conflict, meant that it was always destined to be the conflict that would wake up at least some in the west, to the nature of how the US and its allies often foment wars by aligning with the most immoral forces on the planet in order to attempt to achieve a geo-strategic goal.

When ordinary Americans and Europeans saw a secular Ba’athist government in Damascus which protected the rights of ethnic and religious minorities as well as one which gives full rights to women, such people could hardly internalise the idea that head-chopping, bomb planting, woman enslaving, minority murdering Wahhabi Sunni supremacists were a more ethical or moral option than the secular Ba’athist government—no matter how many times Obama called them ‘moderate rebels’.

Donald Trump as a candidate and Steve Bannon as a campaign partner and before that a media ally, realised this and pushed an anti-war message in Syria. The message was one which played on the natural tendencies of most Americans to favour a secular/pro-Christian government over an opposition that includes al-Qaeda and ISIS.

Where Bannon carefully swayed secular/pro-Christian US opinion against Obama’s war in Syria, in respect of Afghanistan, the Bannon/Trump message was far more duplicitous, even before the troop surge.

Long before the 2016 US election, Donald Trump and Steve Bannon expressed anti-war sentiments in respect of Afghanistan. The message boiled down to the line from the Vietnam War era Country Joe McDonald song “What are we fighting for, don’t ask me I don’t give a damn, the next stop is ~~Vietnam~~ Afghanistan”.

But while delivering an anti-war message which even in his ‘troop surge’ announcement Donald Trump admitted was his “instinct”, both men were and remain totally in favour of the primary goal of the Afghan conflict: Disrupting China’s One Belt–One Road and specifically the important roles that Pakistan is playing as an important stop long the Belt and Road.

Bannon and Trump are known to hold anti-Chinese views. In a recent interview, one of his first since leaving the White House, Bannon said that one of the primary US policy goals should be to “screw up One Belt–One Road”.

With Trump’s troop surge in Afghanistan and specifically his threats against Pakistan which includes the stated desire to drag India into the conflict, Bannon just got what he wished for.

The India scenario vis-a-vis Pakistan and China is as follows:

Today, Pakistan is increasingly supportive of proposals by China and Russia which involve a negotiated settlement to the conflict which involves both the current fractious government as well as the increasingly powerful, influential and in many regions popular Taliban factions. Such proposals fit in with Pakistan’s long term strategy in Afghanistan and suit Islamabad’s contemporary regional desire for stability.

While in the 1980s and 1990s India tended to side with Russia, it is looking increasingly likely that India under Prime Minister Narendra Modi is going to take a more American approach to the conflict.

However, it remains far from certain whether India will commit troops to the recently announced ‘Trump surge’ or whether India can offer anything at a peace keeping table beyond joining with the United States to further alienate Pakistan, causing Islamabad to grow even closer to Beijing than it already is. In this context, growing closer to Beijing also means implicitly growing closer to Moscow as China and Russia have offered similar solutions to the conflict, both of which involve fostering dialogue between the government in Kabul and the Taliban.

China is all too aware that The United States is isolated in the region in respect of a peace process. Iran is increasingly seeing things along the same lines as Russia and China and in any case, the chances of Donald Trump working with Iran anywhere are nil. The lone exception to this pattern of isolation is India. Under Modi, New Delhi may use Trump’s offer to try and upset the status quo of the region in which all of the key powers are increasingly cooperating with China’s One Belt–One Road project, India being the lone country which under Modi is increasingly hell-bent on antagonising China at every opportunity.

With this in mind, China has issued the following statement:

“Donald Trump talked about close US-Indian relations; we are glad to see the development of normal and friendly relations between these countries if these relations do not harm other countries’ interests and create positive conditions for regional development”.

China's position is clear, India is welcome in Afghanistan as such a thing is not up to China in any case and Beijing is comfortable with this reality of international law. What China is not comfortable with is India's presence in Afghanistan acting as a force which could impede the progress of important projects with Pakistan, namely the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. The statement above makes this known implicitly.

In a worst case scenario, India could disrupt a peace process involving dialogue with the Taliban that could distract Pakistan from its long term goals in China. However, Pakistan under its current leadership would appear to be steadfast in its commitments to China. Distractions won't work as well as they would have done even 10 years ago.

Both the governing PML-N and the surging opposition party PTI, led by the charismatic Imran Khan have expressed full support of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. Khan in particular seems to be pivoting his traditional views which are deeply sceptical of US power in the region towards one which seeks to equally assure China.

In many ways, the Trump plan could backfire. Pakistan will only grow closer to China and further from the US and likewise, India might feel about the US what many of America's long-time European allies have felt under Donald Trump. Trump has recently asked the NATO states of Europe to do more for the alliance in terms of both financial contributions as well as ramping up military strength in order for the US to bear less of the costly burden.

Trump has already alluded to the fact that he wants India to 'do more' in Afghanistan. Suddenly India's privilege as a peacemaker (largely unwelcome by Pakistan and China) has turned into a responsibility that realistically New Delhi is not in a position to carry out

Modi may be a man driven by ego more than a pragmatic understanding of economics, but at the end of the day, all men have a price. If Donald Trump asks too much from India, the chips in Afghanistan will fall where they would have fallen in spite of the US and India. The only real result will be India learning that when it comes to geo-politics, America has deputies and servants but never partners or equals.

The stated goal in Afghanistan is to fight both the Taliban and its opponent ISIS simultaneously while propping up an Afghan government which is increasingly unfit for purpose is a goal which the US has set up as a straw-man. Both Trump and Tillerson have stated that they will be willing to negotiate with the Taliban just as soon as they're done bombing them.

The obvious response from the rest of the world has been, "avoid the bombing and negotiate with moderate rebels within the Taliban now".

This of course will not be done because it would cease to accomplish the real US goal of prolonging the war in Afghanistan for as long as possible in order to accomplish the following in order from most to least important:

1. Disrupt Pakistan's progress as a partner of China in One Belt–One Road with a specific emphasis on sowing a lack of confidence over the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.
2. Disrupt China's ability to peacefully link Pakistan with Iran as part of One Belt–One Road.
3. Surround Pakistan with Indian troops on all sides with a proposed Indian presence in Pashtunistan (Afghan side of the border).
4. Cause instability in Pakistan with increased drone strikes on Pakistani territory.
5. Make sure that China is out of reach of Afghanistan's rich resources such as lithium and valuable minerals. While the US may have to fight blood-for-blood in order to get these resources, in many ways it is more important for the US to prevent China from obtaining them than it is for the US to have easy access to them, a task which is increasingly Quixotic for the US.
6. Keep the CIA's game of *cat, mouse and merchant* with Afghan drug lords flourishing for as long as possible.

As geo-political expert Andrew Korbko writes,

“Trump's new Afghan strategy is less about changing any of the battlefield dynamics there per se, though it does aim to extract some of Afghanistan's estimated \$1 trillion of minerals, and more about formalizing the US' pivot from Pakistan to India, the latter of which became an unprecedented military-strategic partner of the US through year's LEMOA deal and its official attendant designation as the Pentagon's “Major Defence Partner”.

What Trump really wants to do is put multi pronged pressure on Pakistan as part of the Hybrid War on CPEC [China Pakistan-Economic Corridor] through the American-backed strategic interlinking of its Afghan and Indian neighbours, with the goal being to influence, disrupt, and then ultimately control China's game-changing corridor to the Indian Ocean through state and non-state proxy warfare”.

Thus it becomes clear that Bannon has clearly positioned himself to have it both ways in Afghanistan. He'll claim that he is opposed to war in the Middle East and Asia, which in part may be a sincere and in that case positive statement, but his penultimate goal of trying to “screw up One Belt–One Road” is very much the master plan in Afghanistan. Whether it succeeds is another matter.

In this sense Bannon got what he wished for in the short term, but he ought to be careful what he wishes for in the longer term. China is not going to roll over in South Asia, just as Russia did not roll over in respect of Russia's Syrian ally.

For Bannon and Trump, the 'worst' may be yet to come.

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The Rise of Hindu Fascism

Saikat Bhattacharyya

Rise of Hindu fascism is not all of sudden in India, its gradual embedded deep inside construction of Indian nationalism.

Rise of Modi to the helm of power in democratic India is not much different from the rise of Hitler to the power in Germany which also took place under democratic electoral system. But rise of Hindu Fascism is not all of sudden in India. It is a gradual process and from the very beginning Hindu fascism is embedded deep inside construction of Indian nationalism. Only a few pockets of resistances against Hindu fascism remain in Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Odisha and West Bengal.

Rise of Indian Nationalism

As the Hindu ultra nationalism is spreading across length and breadth of India. We will also discuss here how this fascist politics can be dealt with. The term “Hindu” was used to designate anyone from east of river Indus by West Asians and Central Asians since Persians came to India as early as 400 BC. But the name became popular among South Asians only after Turks overran large parts of South Asia by late 12th century AD. Turk rulers called natives of new conquered South Asia as Hindus. Three centuries later the term Hindu began to be used widely to identify people who follow idol worshipping and all other types of native religions.

Hence by 15th century AD, Hindu became a separate religious identity which is different from Islam which came to India from West Asia and Central Asia. Hindu identity became more popular among native non Muslim traders and landlords when rise of British started to destroy the political domination of Muslim rulers across South Asia. In fact, the native class which collaborated with the British justified their collaboration by claiming to fight Muslim domination over “Bharat Varsha” (present South Asia). By 1850s, Muslim domination was gone and different Hindu compradors (i.e. native collaborators of British rule) gradually got united under the banner of Indian nationalism.

Indian National Congress was first step in which Indian nationalism got a distinct objective and motivation. But Hindu compradors had a lot of inter fight as well. Since middle of 18th century Bengali Hindus were most important collaborators with the British. Bengal’s huge agricultural revenue, Bengali Hindus’ rent collecting skills and Calcutta port’s importance made them most

important allies of British. Since 1870s, importance of Calcutta declined and Bombay became commercial capital of British India. As British started setting up industries across India, agriculture's importance relatively declined. Hence, West Indian Hindu businessmen (from Gujarat-Rajasthan-Haryana) replaced Bengali Hindus as the most important collaborators since 1880s. Muslim traders and landlords who already lost their political domination began to collaborate with the British.

From India to Hindustan

By 1920s, Bengali Hindus were weakened considerably and contradiction between West Indian Hindus and Muslims became primary issue. Congress Party under Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi successfully managed to convince the people of Gangetic plain (modern UP-Bihar-Jharkhand-MP provinces of India) to join West Indian Hindu business compradors. This successful alliance between capitalistic West Indian businessmen with feudal Gangetic plain is done with the help of Hindi language and Hindu religion. Despite many differences both people (except Gujarat) accept Hindi as their writing language and Devanagari as their writing script.

So Hindi language was used to make this alliance happening. Similarly, as contradiction between West Indian Business and Muslims grew sharper, anti Muslim sentiment and Hindu identity was propagated to make this formidable alliance. Thus the vast stretch of land from Haryana in the west to Bihar in the east and from Himachal Pradesh in the north to Central province in the south became united under Hindi language-Hindu religion and this region is often called Hindustan. In this way, within Indian nationalism Hindustani (Hindi-Hindu) identity became prominent. As Hindustan politics gained momentum Muslim politics for the creation of Pakistan got advantage under Mohammad Ali Jinnah.

Rise of Hindu Fascism

Gradually more ultra Hindu nationalists emerge under the banner of Hindu Mahasabha who criticized Gandhi's Congress as weak counterpart of Jinnah's Muslim League. The failure of Congress to keep Hindu dominated undivided India created permanent mass appeal for Hindu fascism. In the initial years after independence, modernisation of India, socialist philosophies, anti-Western mind set were much more prominent in India. But after fall of USSR in later 1980s and early 1990s socialist dreams were diluted. It is then that Hindu fascist ideology started to resurface. Demolition of Babri Mosque gave Hindu fascism great leap forward. From just two members in Parliament, BJP (electoral political wing of Hindu Mahasabha) reached one hundred and two

after the incident. Since then Hindu Fascism was making steady advance. They came in power in 1999-2004. But they reached their point of glory when Modi was elected Prime Minister after having huge mandate. And now BJP is ruling in entire Hindustan and 17 out of 31 states in India. Hindu fascism now is more powerful than ever.

Pockets of Resistance against Hinduism

Hindu fascism has its base in Hindi language-Hindu religion-undivided India. So it is mainly concentrated in Hindi-speaking heartland. As the result all pockets of resistance that still remains is non Hindi area like West Bengal, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Punjab. In other non Hindi area like Maharastra, Seemandhra and Telengana, BJP is in power with the help of regional parties who mainly held regional and often linguistic ideology. Only Gujarat state despite non-Hindi speaking has deep rooted Hindu fascist ideology. North-Eastern seven sisters usually go along with the ruling parties of the centre. So they are now BJP ruled as well. Hence, we can say that if any resistance is expected against rise of Hindu fascism it is from non-Hindi speaking region.

Hindu Fascist Politics

As an important point for discussion is that Hindi region is more populous compared to non-Hindi region? Since, Indian constitution is very much unitary and there is little room for Federalism, more populous Hindi heartland sends more law makers to both houses of legislature i.e. Loksabha (equivalent to British House of Commons) and Rajyasabha (equivalent to British House of Lords). Moreover, non-Hindi speaking southern peninsula, Deccan plateau, Odisha and Bengal are coastal region and more industrialised compared to Hindi-heartland which has no sea connection.

Since these non-Hindi area are relatively developed in industries and commerce, their fertility rate is considerably low compared to Hindi heartland. In fact, most of them have below replacement rate fertility rate (1.7 on average), while Hindi-heartland has above 3 fertility rate on average. Hence, demographically Hindi heartland is not only stronger but their strength is rising compared to others. Thus the cities of non-Hindi speaking area are watching rising migration of Hindi speakers. This can be concluded that rise of Hindu fascism is the result of demographic domination of Hindi speakers. Hindu politics is commanding not only votes of Hindi area but also influence in cities of non Hindi region.

How to counter Hindu Politics

One way to counter Hindu politics is by upholding linguistic identity in non-Hindi speaking region. At the same time, all non-fascist political parties of Hindi-heartland must be united as well. Then alliance between these two forces is needed on the basis of anti fascist ideology. Hindu fascism breeds on the concept of Undivided India and United South Asia (Baharat Varsha) threatening sovereignty of different neighbouring nations. At the same time, it thrives on domination of Hindi heartland over the rest of India threatening all languages and culture other than Hindi. So accepting fully federal constitution must be common minimum program when linguists of non-Hindi region and anti-fascists of Hindi region are uniting to uproot Hindu fascism. Only by federalizing India, the demon of fascism can be defeated.

Conclusion

Hindu identity started as an ideological tool to ally with the British against the then Muslim rule. Then Hindu identity used to project Indian nationalism. Finally due to inter contradictions among Hindu compradors and contradiction between Hindus and Muslims, Hindi-Hindu Fascism came out of Indian nationalism. Now Hindu fascism is stronger than ever. Its expansionist dream of undivided India not only denies the sovereignty of neighbouring countries but also cultural-linguistic heritage of different community within India. The only way to fight fascism is unite all non-fascist elements in India, uphold linguistic identity over religious identity and finally unite both under the concept of future fully federalized India.

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Now India Is At War With Itself

Nayantara Sahgal

Today we are in a state of civil war. The most unwinnable wars in history have been the combination of civil and religious war and this is the twin ammunition in use in India today. The futility, absurdity and inanity of religious war should by now be a long-established fact since God is one whom we worship in different ways, and in no time past, present or future will the human race give up the sacred right to worship in its chosen way. Whether men have been broken on the wheel or on the rack, or burnt alive at the stake, no form of torture has succeeded in making them deny the god they worship or the way they worship. In India this belief in the sanctity of one's own religion is integral to the fact of being Indian, in a land whose Constitution has given us the right to live, love, eat and worship as we choose. The unholy war being waged on our multi-religious civilization needs to come to terms with this basic truth. But we have seen that it is not coming to terms with it because it is in the mood for religious war. Has no political leader ever tried to reverse the inevitability of war, asks eminent historians.

Men have gone to war since time began, for conquest, for plunder, for glory, for keeping muscles trim and adrenalin flowing. In the Hindu caste system which divided people and conferred status according to their occupations, the warrior ranked second highest in the hierarchy of caste. War is central to our epics. "Go to war" is the message. From bows and arrows to swords and shields, from hand- to-hand combat to war on horseback, the strategy of war has graduated to tanks and bombs. And, finally, the power to wipe out cities and human beings by the million with a single bomb that did not only banish life from the face of the earth, but ensured that those left alive would die of disease or be killed by radiation. After this memorable step forward in the art of annihilation, a privileged club of nuclear membership reigned supreme. But the split atom was not the ultimate achievement of modern warfare.

It went further, from the atom bomb to the hydrogen bomb. At the same time, chemical weapons of mass destruction — napalm and other scientifically tested improvements — made sure of the certainty of killing or maiming those on whom these were lavished. And the last century has consecrated what is known as the arms race. It has given its blessing to the ongoing manufacture of arsenals yet undreamed of. All nations are in the race. This then is war. A young woman of wisdom beyond her 20 years has spoken out against war and

been reviled, abused and threatened with rape and worse. These assaults on Gurmehar Kaur have shown us the continuing popularity of war among those who have targeted her, and the mentality that has floated up like scum to the surface in the warlike activities that are reported daily in the newspapers.

Here are some that we read about: One, in a village in Bareilly, a Hindu group has ordered the Muslim villagers to get out. If they have not left the village by the year's end they will face consequences.

Two, cow rakshaks laid siege to a hotel in Jaipur that was falsely rumoured to be serving beef. The manager was beaten and man-handled while the police watched. The FIR filed by the police said unknown persons had trespassed. The sadhvi who led the violence was not mentioned. It may be recalled that a blacksmith called Mohammed Akola was lynched in Dadri on a similar manufactured rumour. His family is now being declared guilty and his murderers have been cleared as victims of the crime.

Three, meats shops and slaughterhouses across Uttar Pradesh have been sealed for many and various reasons, none of them clear. Three of these have been ransacked and burnt.

Four, the attack on Sanjay Leela Bhansali's film, Padmavati, the vandalizing of film sets and the order to cut out scenes from it, has been very thoroughly carried out twice over at different locations.

Five, the continuing onslaught against the freedom to speak, think, and function as an academic institution should, is an on-going tragedy as the ABVP and other vigilante enthusiasts batter their way into university premises to prevent scheduled events from taking place.

Six, vicious and violent attacks on writers continue. When a nation turns upon itself, when it persecutes and kills its own citizens with abandon, when it declares that its own people are foreigners or enemies of the state, this is a situation known as civil war. We now see Indians turning upon Indians in methodically targeted ways, in some cases with guns or whatever crude weapons they can lay hands on, in some cases with black paint, in some cases with the simple device of numbers known as a mob.

Today we are in a state of civil war. The most unwinnable wars in history have been the combination of civil and religious war and this is the twin ammunition in use in India today. The futility, absurdity and inanity of religious war should by now be a long-established fact since God is one whom we worship in

different ways, and in no time past, present or future will the human race give up the sacred right to worship in its chosen way. Whether men have been broken on the wheel or on the rack, or burnt alive at the stake, no form of torture has succeeded in making them deny the god they worship or the way they worship. In India this belief in the sanctity of one's own religion is integral to the fact of being Indian, in a land whose Constitution has given us the right to live, love, eat and worship as we choose. The unholy war being waged on our multi-religious civilization needs to come to terms with this basic truth. But we have seen that it is not coming to terms with it because it is in the mood for religious war. Has no political leader ever tried to reverse the inevitability of war?

One did, an Englishman called Tony Benn (born Anthony Wedgwood Benn) of Britain's Labour Party, who proposed unilateral disarmament decades ago. It was a prospect unheard of and unacceptable to his contemporaries. Instead Labour went on to choose a trigger-happy leader, Tony Blair, who along with his partner George Bush illegally invaded Iraq and laid waste a prosperous sovereign nation because its dictator was about to change the terms on which he traded oil. The legacy of the Bush-Blair criminality is chaos in West Asia. And Bush and Blair have yet to be tried as war criminals. True religion has given birth to great song, great poetry, and the great ideal of the brotherhood of man. There is no one today to proclaim this ideal, no Gandhi who went unarmed to the killing field of Noakhali and brought peace by his mere presence, no Nehru's voice for peace in a savagely armed post-war world.

It is for citizens to defend the heritage of equal citizenship bequeathed to us by our founding fathers and to ensure that religion remains a private affair if incidents like those cited above are not to become daily unchecked outrages. As a practitioner of yoga for many years, I have been taught that a cardinal principle on the spiritual path is non-violence. No one who advocates violence is a yogi so permit me to refer to the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh as Shri Adityanath. What is happening in Uttar Pradesh is taking place under his watch, a sign that Hindutva is on the warpath. Why else would the Muslims in a Bareilly village be ordered on pain of death to leave? Is it possible that the Hindu neighbours they have lived with all their lives have delivered this barbaric ultimatum? Or, as is more likely, is this another case of roving vigilante enthusiasm that consigns these defenceless Indian citizens and their families to a wilderness of fear and desperation? Shall we stay silent and watch?

Nayantara Sahgal is an eminent historian and author. This first appeared in The Tribune, Chandigarh

The Assassination of Dissent, at Point-Blank Range

Priti Gulati Cox

If I were to describe Islam in three words, there is nothing there besides sex, crime and murder. So the question for you is not whether Rohingya will stay here or the Muslim will leave here.... Now, what's the question is that everyone is being brought here (The banner in the back reads: Drive Out Rohingya Save India Protest.... Thank Modi for saving Gujarat in 2002; otherwise we would have been surrounded from all sides. So, the question is only this, that you will have to repeat Gujarat 2002, there is only one solution; there is no other solution.... Are you ready for that thing? Look, our ancestors fought for us.... to keep us Hindu.... Can we say the same about us? That we can do the same for the coming generation, or not?

Some people in India are paying a heavy price for exercising their democratic right to freedom of expression. Others, like the scoundrel quoted above, are getting away with inciting violence against Muslims in public spaces. The day after the bigot's tirade, the Indian government, exploiting the Rohingyas' high profile in the global news, sent out a notice to all state governments asking them to block any undocumented immigrants from entering and to deport those already in the country. That included ethnic Rohingya refugees, of whom there are around 40,000 now in India.

“Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness; it invents nations where they do not exist.” *Ernest Gellner, Thought and Change, 1964.*

The link that connects seven of India's bravest dissenters — Ram Chander Chhatrapati, Narendra Dabholkar, Govind Pansare, M. M. Kalburgi, Gauri Lankesh, Shantanu Bhowmick and Kanha Ilaiah, is the coward state, with its strong arms hanging limp at its sides, watching the country's extremists play out their dream (nightmare for Dalits, Adivasis, along with countless women, Muslims, other religious minorities, journalists, rationalists, and others) of mutating India into a Hindu nation-state by hook or by crook.

Emboldened by the Indian state's passivity, other peripheral fanatic factions—including godmen, warring political parties, and privileged upper-caste communities—are cranking out bling, multiplying the numbers of their blind followers, and killing innocents with impunity.

The first five of the heroic dissenters named above were assassinated at point-blank range by motorcycle-borne stooges of the country's political elite; the sixth, journalist Shantanu Bhowmick, was beaten and stabbed to death. There are new developments ensuing daily with regard to writer Kancha Ilaiah's predicament; you will read about them in the course of this article.

Killed on November 21, 2002

Ram Chander Chhatrapati

Sach aur jhooth ke beech koi teesri cheez nahi hoti (There is only truth and lies, there's nothing in between.)

— Ram Chander Chhatrapati, editor of Sach (The Complete Truth), Sirsa, Haryana.

On August 25, 2017, the self-proclaimed “Guru of Bling,” Dera Sacha Sauda chief “Maharaj” Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh was sentenced, 15 years after the fact, to 20 years imprisonment on charges of raping two of his sadhvis (female disciples). We all heard about that. But something else also happened fifteen years ago that involved the “Guru” and his sect, and most of us know bling little about it.

At the end of May, 2002, only about three months after the founding of Chhatrapati's evening daily *Poora Sach*, the publication revealed details of an anonymous letter from a sadhvi alleging that she, along with others, was being sexually harassed and raped by Ram Rahim. The rest is history — some known, some not so known. Along with Chhatrapati, the Dera manager Ranjit Singh was also murdered in 2002. Ram Rahim is accused of both murders, “as these were carried out allegedly at his behest.”

Killed on August 20, 2013

Narendra Dabholkar

In Maharashtra, each year around one Crore [10 million] families bring the idol of Ganesha at home to celebrate Ganesha Chaturthi. Each idol weighs around two kilograms. Most of these idols are made up of plaster of Paris and painted with chemical colours. This means each year around two Crore kilograms of these harmful chemicals are released into water bodies, causing blockage and poisoning. To prevent this dire environmental situation, we launched a movement and appealed to the people to donate their idols to the committee,

instead of immersing them in the river. The movement received a tremendous response. We collect thirty to forty thousand Ganesha idols from different parts of Maharashtra. But since the last two years the Hindu Janjagaran Samiti has begun to oppose this movement vehemently. Their position is, let there be water pollution, but the idols must be immersed into the flowing river as sanctioned by the scriptures.

— Narendra Dabholkar rationalist and author, Satara, Maharashtra.

Narendra Dabholkar was one of India's eminent rationalists. Described by some Hindu fanatics as a dharma drohi (an enemy of religion), Dabholkar committed his life to the eradication of vishvaas (blind faith) and the uprooting of exploitative superstition. In 1989 he founded the Maharashtra Andhashraddha Nirmoolan Samiti (Committee for the Eradication of Blind Faith in Maharashtra [MANS]) and authored twelve books aimed at fostering scientific thinking among the Indian people, including one titled *Vivekachi Pataka Gheu Khandyavari* (Let Us Shoulder the Flag of Rationalism.) He was a victim of threats and assaults by Hindu extremists throughout those years.

Killed on February 20, 2015

Govind Pansare

Dabholkar's assassination is an indicator that there're fundamentalists and fascists among us who want to quell all rational voices with violence.... It is the Sangh [Rashtrīya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), a cultural guild] that decides who should speak, what and when. The Sangh is the boss, the rest, subsidiaries. The Sangh determines the policy, others merely implement it, and so goes its style of functioning.... There is a reason why the caste of Mahatma Gandhi's murderers should be made public. Of course, they were all Brahmins.... [Gandhi] was against inequality.... He was murdered for it.

— Govind Pansare, lawyer, trade unionist, author of *Shivaji Kaun Hota (Who Was Shivaji)*, and member of the Communist Party of India, Bombay.

Pansare was front and centre in hammering away on the role played by Hindutva ideologues in the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi. On the evening of August 20, 2013, as Narendra Dabholkar's body lay at rest in his home in Satara, Govind Pansare was there. Standing beside his comrade's body, he said many things, including the first part of the statement above. A year and a half later, Pansare's words of reason were silenced by the same forces of unreason.

Killed on August 30, 2015

M. M. Kalburgi

Of late artificial changes are being introduced instead of genuine ones in society thanks to religious and political leaders. The researcher needs to unravel actual history in order to stop the exploitation caused by such false history. Research is not a purely historical exploration but a struggle with those who invoke false history to profit from the present.

— M. M. Kalburgi, former vice-chancellor of Kannada University, Research Scholar of Old Kannada, Dharwad, Karnataka.

M. M. Kalburgi, was a prolific writer, and most importantly, he was a tireless truth seeker.

In the same year in which Dabholkar founded MANS, the politically and financially powerful Lingayat community of Karnataka cracked down hard on certain views expressed by Kalburgi. One of those views involved the arcane issue of the birth of the saint-poet Channabasavanna. Having hurt the Lingayat's fragile orthodox feelings, Kalburgi was forced to recant in April, 1989. Afterward, Kalburgi explained, "I did it to save the lives of my family. But I also committed intellectual suicide on that day."

Kalburgi went on to declare that Lingayatism was never part of Hinduism. Attacking Hinduism's caste system was a regular feature in his writings. India's current government in power, the Bharatiya Janata Party (the political wing of the RSS) was voted to power for the first time in Karnataka in the 2004 polls, with B.S. Yeddyurappa, a Lingayat, as the party's chief minister. Both Hindu extremists and the mainstream orthodox Lingayats hated Kalburgi's guts.

"I am Losing Faith," says Kancha Ilaiah. On September 25, 2017, two days after a mob attacked the car he was driving in, intending to harm him, he announced that he was going into self-imposed house arrest. He also said that "In my two petitions at Osmania [University] I requested for strong police protection at my house. That is also not provided."

Killed on September 5, 2017

Gauri Lankesh

Whether it is attacks on pubs.... in *the name of* culture and protection of women, or whether it's attacks on Dalits.... in the name of cow protection, or attacks on liberals and leftists in the name of Hindutva.... when Kalburgi was killed, one Bajrang Dal [youth wing of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), affiliated with the RSS] guy called Bhuvith Shetty, he sent a tweet saying that anyone who criticizes Hinduism will die a dog's death.... *Last week*, after the court convicted fraud guru Gurmeet Ram Rahim for rape, his photos with several BJP leaders went viral on social media. Photos and videos of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and several Haryana BJP ministers were circulating. It irked the BJP and the Sangh. To counter this, they circulated a photo of Kerala chief minister and CPM leader Pinarayi Vijayan sitting with Ram Rahim. It was a photo shopped image.... What is most shocking and sad is that people accepted it [fake news] as truth without thinking with their eyes and ears closed and brains shut off.

— Gauri Lankesh, journalist, Bangalore, Karnataka.

“Are Rohingya ‘terrorists’ killing Hindus and burning their homes & temples? Read verified, not fake news.”

That was the last tweet that Gauri Lankesh posted. Lankesh was the editor of the weekly Kannada tabloid Gauri Lankesh Patria, described by some as an “anti-establishment” publication. She took on everything and everyone that indulged in right-wing divisive politics: the BJP, Hindutva ideologues, dominant-caste Indians, mob violence, hate crimes, lynchings. And she stood for all of their victims: Dalits, Adivasis, Muslims, and other religious minorities.

The assassins of Dabholkar, Pansare, Kalburgi, and Lankesh are yet to be brought to book. The Bombay High Court said recently that “People with liberal values and principles are being targeted. It's like if there is any opposition to me, I shall have that eliminated. This is a dangerous trend which is giving a bad name to our country.”

A month later, emerging from his “house arrest” on October 5 (his birthday), Kancha Ilaiah stated that the central government should be held responsible if he is murdered.

Killed on September 20, 2017

Shantanu Bhowmick

Bhowmick was beaten and stabbed to death in Mandai, on the outskirts of Agartala, the state capital [of Tripura], where the local TV station Dinraat (“Day and Night”) had sent him to cover the clashes between police and members of the Indigenous People’s Front of Tripura (IPFT), a local tribal-based party that issued a call yesterday for acts of violence against a rival faction.... Bhowmick was the second journalist to be murdered in the past two weeks in India, following Gauri Lankesh, a well-known woman journalist gunned down in the southern city of Bangalore on 5 September.

— Reporters Without Borders.

Attacks on media freedom are becoming increasingly commonplace around the world “especially in democracies,” claims Reporters Without Borders (RSF). Out of 180 countries, India is ranked number 136 in RSF’s 2017 World Press Freedom Index.

Threat issued Against Kancha Ilaiah on September 18, 2017

Kancha Ilaiah & his controversial book *Samajika Smugglurlu Komatollu*

Indian exploitation has a massive component of the use of caste ‘social borders’ to control the accumulated wealth within that border of heavily exploited wealth. It was used by the traders for their good life and gave enough to the temples for better survival of priests. The remaining surplus was hidden underground, over ground and also in the temples. This process did not allow the cash economy to come back in the form of investment either for agrarian development or for promotion of mercantile capital. This whole process is nothing but social smuggling. The wealth did not go outside India but did get arrested and used only within the caste borders. This process is continuing even now in different modes. In all grain markets, the Shahukars [moneylenders] are the main buyers of the produce who get it for very low cost from the farmers and sell the same goods for huge prices.

—Kancha Ilaiah, Director, Centre for the Study of Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policy, of *Why I Am Not A Hindu*, Hyderabad.

History repeats itself constantly in upper caste-noxious India. Like Kalburgi, Kancha Ilaiah is today a victim of the pathetic boo-hooing of the privileged. His writings have been condemned on TV; death threats have been issued against him; someone threatened to cut off his tongue; his effigies have been burnt along with his booklet; on September 23 he and his travelling companions narrowly dodged a “murderous attack at Parakal, Bhupalpally district.... by the

Arya-Vysya forces at 4.45 pm,” and more recently, the Hyderabad police registered a case against him.

Kancha Ilaiah’s controversial book, *Samajika Smugglurlu Komatollu* (Vysyas Are Social Smugglers) has thoroughly upset the emotionally delicate Arya-Vysya (trader/bania) community of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, who find the title and contents of the book derogatory and demeaning. The Telugu Desam Party (TDP) MP T.G. Venkatesh even issued a Hindu version of a fatwa against him, calling for public. The MP later took it back, saying that “he did not mean ‘fatwa’ as he was carried away emotionally. However, he warned that things will go out of control if the book was not banned.”

Well, I have news for you, MP Venkatesh. Things are already “out of control” in *JatiIndia*. Every reasonable voice, scientific analysis, environmental action, historical research, or challenge to hard-wired upper-caste privilege is at risk of being silenced by a coward state that is okay with the torrent of violence and threats that is ripping the threads of justice apart, one dissenter at a time.

Today, October 14, there was a small victory for the Indian Democracy, and Kancha Ilaiah. *Samajika Smugglurlu Komatollu* will not be banned. The Supreme Court of India dismissed a “public interest” litigation filed before it by an Arya-Vysya advocate seeking to ban Ilaiah’s book. Said Ilaiah, “This has reaffirmed my faith in the Indian Judiciary, Constitution and Democracy. I thank all the social forces, political parties, organizations, media that stood by me and also for the right to freedom of expression.”

Now, Kancha Ilaiah’s predicament is back in the hands of Indian democracy, which needs to get him out of the gun sights of the Arya-Vysya troublemakers and punish severely anyone who threatens him.

Note: India’s dissenters featured here are #s 12 through 18 in my continuing series *JatiIndia* Flags of Atrocities Caste, Present and Future. The colour orange in the flag symbolizes long-existing castes, now made more open and feverish by resurgent Hindutva politics. Blue—a colour historically adopted by the Dalit movement—here honours all of India’s and occupied Kashmir’s oppressed people and those who fight and die for them. The bottom green bar embodies India’s ecological foundations, which are endangered by the ideology of neoliberalism and defended by our Adivasis and other oppressed people, including Kashmiris. The circular image in the centre signifies a target viewed through a weapon’s saffron (Hindu nationalist) crosshairs.

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