

LISA JOURNAL

Issue No: 29

Editor: Saeed Ismat

January-March 2014

CONTENTS

Editorial

Kashmir and Indo–Pak Relations: Politics of Reconciliation

Dr Happymon Jacob Columns - Mehmood ur Rashid 8

Planned Killing in Guise of Judicial Trial in Bangladesh

Firoz Mahboob Kamal 13

1971 Pakistan – India War: Unbiased views and facts

Sarmila Bose 20

India's next move in Afghanistan

M K Bhadrakumar 25

Muzaffarnagar Riots

Betwa Sharma 30

Is India's Potential Prime Minister driven by anti-Muslim Prejudice?

Sarmila Bose 34

Indian Ideology

Perry Anderson - Review by Pankaj Mishra 39

Getting real on Siachen

Asif Ezdi 46

The Crisis And Challenge Of Dalit-Bahujans

Braj Ranjan Mani 50

The Great Kashmir Wall

Abdul Majid Zargar 60

The robbing class of Pakistan

Asif Ezdi 62

Teelka's Fall: Will The Indian Media Hold The Mirror Up To Itself?

Satya Sagar 66

Taliban back in the saddle in Afghanistan by 2017 - leaked intel report

A report by RT 72

Political Deadlock: Will History Repeat Itself In Bangladesh?

M Mukhlesur Rahman Chowdhury 75

EDITORIAL

We the people –Victims of Psy warfare

Never in human history have we been as well-informed as today and yet the vast majority haven't got a clue of what's really going on in this world. That's because whilst the super high-tech Western global media supplies tons of data, but their theme and narratives remain most misleading. Their aim is not to enlighten public opinion but rather to dump data upon us all and then force it together as best suits the Global Power Masters.

The media are the instrument that scripts that data in very specific ways to generate a specific worldview that will support specific interpretations that then lead straight to specific conclusions that result in popular support (or compliance) towards their goals and objectives. In other words, the mainstream media are the vehicle for manufacturing consent.

With the impressive technological advances, the mainstream media has advanced into full-fledged Psychological Warfare – PsyWar – that does not distinguish between foreign and domestic “enemies”. From the Global Power Elites viewpoint, “*We the People*” everywhere are the enemy, especially independent-thinking people that increasingly challenge them.

PsyOp's ability to manufacture consent amongst “*democratic majorities*” has led to the worst crimes being perpetrated in broad daylight, whilst a compliant and complacent populace just looked on allowing it all to happen.

From the obscene destruction of Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and systematic destabilisation of Pakistan, to the genocide of Palestine and Kashmir, *they have successfully catapulted the perverted and corrupt politicians into the upper echelons of government in country after country after country*. It's pretty much the same everywhere and in every country because people watch the same TV channels and read the same newspapers... South Asia is no exception.

Another example of labelling of the Muslim Brotherhood as terrorist, the imprisoning of protest leaders, and the crackdown on dissent, has returned Egypt to a police state worse than under Mubarak, *consent is being*

manufactured by the western media to see the departure of a democratically elected Muslim brotherhood government as a positive and progressive necessity. We may well see a civil war in Egypt as we have seen in other Arab countries where the West intervened at its own or on behest of Israel.

Man of the Year

One of Britain's most influential newspapers has named Russian President Vladimir Putin 'Man of the Year.' The Times awarded the title because Putin "succeeded in one of his most enduring ambitions: to bring Moscow back to the international high table." According to the newspaper, it was the Syrian insurgency that "*propelled the president back into the front ranks of effective world statesmen,*" when he managed to steer the West away from military intervention. He then used the escalating conflict to boost Russia's clout on the international stage.

"The narrow, but achievable and worthy aim of taking apart President Assad's chemical arsenal was a face-saver for the West. And it established Mr Putin as a Middle East player once again; for Arab leaders and the Iranians he was suddenly the man who knew how to head off Western-led regime change," The Times said.

Former NSA contractor and whistleblower Edward Snowden came in second, for having "*pulled off the year's most spectacular heist.*" Earlier this month, Foreign Policy voted *Edward Snowden as being the top 'Global Thinker' of 2013.*

Sham Democracies of South Asia

"The most important political distinction among countries," Huntington writes, "concerns not their form of government but their degree of government." In other words, strong democracies and strong dictatorships have more in common than strong democracies and weak democracies. This, in turn, is because *order usually comes before freedom -- for without a reasonable degree of administrative order, freedom can have little value.* The issue is not democracy per se, because weak democracies can spawn ineffective institutional orders. What individual in Pakistan, India and Bangladesh really want is justice. And justice is ultimately the fruit of enlightened administration. Justice, good governance and respect for human rights remain elusive in South Asia.

India remains a victim like the rest of the poor countries but India is rather unique not only it is corrupt to the core but has now been ‘conditioned’ to accept a criminal and mass murderer of Muslims to be the future Prime Minister of this great democracy. Humanity is in crisis here than ever before. India has seen yet another generations where bloodied hands are anointed as aspirant to be a Prime Minister. It is a very sorry state of affairs for India where Hindutva is emerging as a dominant force. It shall set in a new wave of Hindu extremism and communal violence. In India we are about to witness Hindutva aggressively militant sectarianism enforced by a powerful centralized state. One wonders if Hindutva is the concocted response to Maoism in India as Nazism was to communism in Germany.

India’s relations with its neighbours remain that of a bully. It keeps on beating the drums of war with them from time to time to keep them intimidated but in reality India is at war with itself as well. It is no wonder then that a Maoist/Naxalite insurrection is spreading across India like an oil stain across paper, already affecting 14 of India’s 28 States (Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Uttaranchal, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Maharashtra and Bihar). In figures, that means the Maoists are in control in 165 districts out of the total of 602 into which the country is divided. Today, the Naxalite heavily influence a third of the country, and India is no closer to eradicating the insurgency than it was 50 years ago.

While Kashmir remains occupied by nearly 700,000 Indian troops that has stained its hands with the blood of thousands of freedom fighters, the 220 Million Dalits continue to be treated as untouchables. Dalits are ‘outcastes’ falling outside the traditional four-fold caste system of Hinduism. They are considered impure and polluting and are therefore physically and socially excluded and isolated from the rest of society. Dalits suffer from this “hidden apartheid” of segregation, exclusion, and discrimination in India their plight is more pathetic. Through systematic Psy warfare it is made to be seen as the largest democracy in the world

Pakistan. A fellow journalist has put it so aptly; “Nothing has changed over the years except Pakistan is floating in a bubble of political, social, economic and strategic entanglement and it is just a matter of time that foreign masters

could undermine its flight without notice. Pakistanis are camouflaged into a world of fantasy and dream that crime-riddled corrupt politicians could rescue them from catastrophic consequences unthinkable to conventional wisdom at the present.”

Progressive nations encourage politicians of vision and integrity to make headways in political standing but not so in filthy politics of Pakistan, political actors pretend and deceive masses with illusions of change when nothing really changes on the ground once they get into power. Politicians of Pakistan have persistently betrayed the trust and expectations of the masses. Despite this odd and evil-mongering, they still rule the country under one or another fraudulent context of democracy.

Prime minister of Pakistan started the year by practically begging for talks with a terrorist organization, which has expressed its disinterest on countless occasions. How naive one can get! The PM must remember that his government is primarily responsible for protecting the lives of the people of this country. By mindlessly insisting on a flawed ‘strategy’, it is miserably failing in the performance of its basic duty, which means: deliver, or pack up and go home. The TTP refuses to accept the constitution along with the entire system through which a modern state functions. Why is Nawaz Sharif following a self destructive agenda?

The trial of General Musharraf is a convenient political escape from the pertinent facts of political history and pressing problems facing Pakistan. Musharraf made major political blunders and violated the constitution (who hasn’t) but is not a traitor. Those like Zardari and Nawaz Sharif crying treason should see the mirror. Time will pass but political shame will never go away from the image of Pakistan. None of the Pakistani politicians in the governance or at the National Assembly seem to enjoin individual conscience of honesty and intelligent credibility to be leaders at the national stage. This is what stalls all opportunities for change and development of the future-making. Good luck to Pakistan that calls its heroes traitors and easily turn the real traitors to heroes

A well known fellow journalist has this to say,” In our enlightened republic who’s entitled to speak of the rule of law? Lawyers who in the wake of their glorious movement have become more skilful in the use of their fists than their knowledge of the law? Judges who have presided over a system of selective

justice, very alive to some things, totally dead to others? Political leaders who are tax evaders and loan defaulters first and anything else afterwards, but whose looks of patriotism and national concern would convince even doubters of their dramatic skills? “

Bangladesh is in a total disarray; totally confused and helpless. It has still not grown out of the pains of its birth. Dark, tragic, corrupt and junk history of this Muslim nation is propelling its iron lady Shiekh Hasina to take this nation into bottomless pit of hatred, conspiracies, murder, vengeance and vendetta. Bangladesh hanged Abdul Quader Mollah an elderly leader of Jamaat Islami on Thursday despite pleas not to from the United Nations. It has also questioned why the Awami League is only now pressing forward on war crimes trials when it didn't do so while in power during the 1970s and 1990s. Jamaat, a major ally of the main opposition party Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), is a constant thorn in the side of the ruling Awami League. Jamaat enjoys considerable support, particularly in rural areas. And periodically, it mobilizes its adherents in large-scale demonstrations in Dhaka to show its strength.

Bangladesh is total turmoil – a nation on the brink. Human rights are at centre stage and a matter of serious concern besides the current political impasse. BNP of Khalida Zia and 18 other allied parties have boycotted the elections while the Jamaat is banned from taking part in it. With this instability will come political volatility. Many more people are likely to be killed and injured in future political violence Bangladesh, security forces don't usually exercise force in a measured and proportional way. On the contrary, as Human Rights Watch has repeatedly documented, Bangladesh security forces have a long track record of using excessive force against protestors, even targeting them intentionally—as well as arresting and abusing detainees. To put in simple terms, they shoot people, sometimes intentionally, and often with extreme recklessness

The tribunal's judgments of hanging elderly statesman would have profound impact on Bangladesh's political scene, which is why observers have offered their constructive criticisms of the process—criticisms which have not been accepted.

Despite India having heavily invested in Bangladesh elections to re-elect Hasina. Various Indian Muslim organizations have reacted to this hanging of

Abdul Quader Mollah it includes Civil Liberties Monitoring Committee (CLMC), Jamaat-e-Islami Hind and Mushawarat:

They said making effort for maintaining integrity of a country cannot be described as treason In the age of democracy it is unthinkable that a ruling party, just for revenge, would level wrong heinous charges against political opponents ignoring all the requirements of justice. They urged governments and people of entire world to raise voice against the oppression and brutality.

Dr Khan President of The All India Muslim Majlis-e Mushawarat, the umbrella body of Indian Muslim organisations said this judicial murder will go into history as one of the sins and misdeeds of the present Bangladeshi ruler. Dr Khan asked international human rights organisations to take the Bangladesh government and its discredited tribunal to the International Court of Justice as sanity and good counsel have failed to bring the present rulers of Bangladesh to their senses.

A very apt saying of Sarmila Bose for the whole of South Asia but in the present context perhaps more applicable to *Pakistan and Bangladesh*:-

“They have a flare to praise their corrupt and powerful but fail to honour their heroes. As Sarmila says “Rather, in failing to honour them, the nation dishonours itself”

Disclaimer

The views expressed in Lisa Journal articles are the sole responsibility of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of the London Institute of South Asia. London Institute of South Asia will not be held responsible or liable for any inaccurate or incorrect statements contained in the Lisa Journal articles.

Kashmir and Indo–Pak Relations: Politics of Reconciliation

Dr. Happymon Jacob Columns by Mahmood ur Rehman

Today, Kashmir will see the release of a new anthology – entitled Kashmir and Indo-Pak Relations: Politics of Reconciliation – of Happymon Jacob’s column in the opinion pages of Greater Kashmir. Dr. Jacob teaches International Relations at JNU (University of Jammu in Indian Held Kashmir). This article contains some thoughts and comments by Mahmood ur Rehman Editor and Columnist, of Greater Kashmir a daily newspaper

Part I: Thinking Kashmir

This subject is not only important to us by way of academics and scholarship, analysis and journalism, but is inescapably crucial to us by way of existence and life. We cannot help but wrestle with this subject. This subject hosts our demon, and the demon must be exorcised to rescue the life. India, Pakistan, Kashmir and then Reconciliation: it sounds like a boundless desert where there are “dunes behind dunes beyond dunes”. You leave behind a million of them, only to find that as many have formed a fresh, ahead. Except some moments of hope, lasting like a flicker, there are expanses of bewilderment and exhaustion. (Happymon has really done an incredible job by bringing all the four together in the title alone!)

Those who undertake this journey are either crazy, or have some measure of greatness stamped on them. The very thought to see India and Pakistan reconcile is courageous and caring. Courageous, because we know how nastily the two countries are tied to each other in a bond of ever growing animosity. Caring because it involves the fate of one and a half billion human lives. If you know well the level of impossibility, and still strive for it, you must have an extra dose of courage in you. And if you really step out of your person and think of this oceanic population living in the two countries, you are nearly as caring as saints are presumed to be. But only if you ensure clarity on the subject, and sincerity of purpose, are you the right ones to do the job. No measure of walking will exhaust you, and never will the monstrosity of the

challenge subdue you. But remember, there is a word that will test you on every step of this journey. It will test your mind for clarity and your heart for honesty. And that word is Kashmir.

Your failure on Indo-Pak reconciliation is only because of your failure on Kashmir. Kashmir is the real trial. Before it starts sounding like a boring garrulous prose, here is some funny stuff. Two very short stories from Mulla Nasruddin. Once Nasruddin bought some meat and on reaching home he asked his wife to prepare some kebabs. His wife did exactly what she was told to do. But while she was preparing the delicacy, she was so charmed by the smell wafting out from the hot Kebabs that she wanted to taste one, before she could make more. She tasted one, then another, another, and another; till she consumed the whole thing. Her temptation didn't let her rest till the plate was all clear. Now Mulla entered the kitchen expecting the dish to be served. He waited for a minute, but when nothing was placed before him, he could sense that something was wrong. He hurled an inquisitive look at his wife and was stunned when his wife pointed towards a little cat cringed in the corner. "What! You mean this little cat has taken one full Kg of meat." Mulla was in a state of disbelief. He stood up, and took the cat with himself. He went straight to the butcher's shop and asked him to weigh the cat. It was exactly one Kg. Now was the enigma: If this is the cat, where has the meat gone, and if this is the weight of meat, where is the cat. The same Mulla was once seen outside his house. He was keenly searching for something in his yard. Someone passed by and asked Mulla what he was looking for. On being replied that he was looking for his keys, the man joined him in the search. When the two couldn't find the keys and were nearing exhaustion, the man asked Mulla: "Where exactly did you drop the keys?" Mulla answered: "Inside my house." "Then why are you looking for them here?" Now listen to what Mulla said: "Because, there is more light here than in my house."

Now coming back to our topic: If this is Kashmir, a land that belongs to its people, why is this hundreds of thousands of troops, all alien, standing over their heads; and if this is India, where is Kashmir? And if the key to reconciliation is dropped in the house called Kashmir, why look for it somewhere else. Why not go into the darkness of the house and endure the difficulty that this search entails?

And that difficulty is to accept the truth and confess the guilt. This is where it all lies. We don't know what new theories of politics are waiting us just round the corner, we don't know what new norms of international relations will establish themselves soon, and we don't know what new formations of power will emerge; all this will inform the writings on international conflicts, including Kashmir. But we know one thing very clearly. Kashmir, and likewise, all other conflicted zones need the same old ways of telling truth. Telling in unambiguous terms that who has committed an armed robbery of land and whose land stands stolen. Who has been wronged by whom? It's an arduous task asking for tremendous effort. It not only needs the quality of effort, but also the bulk of effort.

Part II: Writing as Resistance *Scholarship is a silent act of rebellion; so know what you are really up to*

Two public intellectuals need a mention here. Eqbal Ahmed and Noam Chomsky. About Eqbal someone has said that he exhibited "such a devastating combination of knowledge, eloquence, and passion used with unerring precision to shatter the myths and lies that surrounded America's imperial adventure." We need exactly the same devastating mix of things to cut through the myths and lies that surround the India's military adventure in Kashmir. About Noam Chomsky, Arundhati Roy writes: "When I first read Noam Chomsky, it occurred to me that his marshalling of evidence, the volume of it, the relentlessness of it, was a little – how shall I put it? - Insane. Even a quarter of the evidence he had compiled would have been enough to convince me. I used to wonder why he needed to do so much work. But now I understand that the magnitude and the intensity of Chomsky's work is a barometer of the magnitude, scope, and relentlessness of the propaganda machine that he is up against. Being an American working in America, writing to convince Americans of his point of view must really be like having to tunnel through hard wood. Chomsky is one of a small band of individuals fighting a whole industry." So, it needs both: quality of work and magnitude of work.

And what is the kind of work that needs to be done. Foucault comes in to explain what constitutes work. Foucault defines work as this: "that which is susceptible of introducing a significant difference in the field of knowledge, at the cost of a certain difficulty for the author and the reader, with, however, the

eventual recompense of a certain pleasure, that is to say of access to another figure of truth.” To arrive at another figure of truth, that would make difference in the field of knowledge, doesn't come so easily. It entails difficulty. (And in this difficulty is stationed the spirituality of it. Draining out from you all the elements of untruth and self-interest.) And authors and readers can endure that difficulty only when a certain character is exhibited towards approaching problems. *Whatever Indian state, and most unfortunately, Indian nationalism (because the problem of Kashmir is rooted in the error-of-imagination, if not corruption-of-imagination, committed by the Indian National Movement) – so whatever has been produced on Kashmir has established a sort of political-episteme.* It is under the oppressive weight of this political-episteme that the governments in India can say certain things about Kashmir, and not the others; political parties can talk in a particular fashion and not otherwise, even the independent writers and analysts are limited in more ways than one, and then the Indian national media – here may be even God can't help us. If silly and ugly have to be explained together, just tune to some Indian national TV channel when they cover Kashmir.

The real task for people like Happymon, and it is a very frightening undertaking, is to dislodge this political-episteme and reverse the scheme; what is easy to say about Kashmir in India today becomes difficult to say tomorrow. And what is impossible for Indian readership, and audience, to think about Kashmir today, becomes most acceptable tomorrow. That is the time when reconciliation will start sounding like a possibility.

For this, the take off point is clarity. What do you think what the problem is: governance, political mishandling, geographical location, religious radicalism, or a denial of the most fundamental human value - freedom - by dint of placing an armed control over the land and over each of its human head. *An armed thuggery.* The work of an academic is to dig into the things till he discovers the original shapes to unearth the facts. We can understand that as individuals we are besieged by the compulsions that engender from our positions, as university teaches, as bureaucrats, as professionals working in corporate organizations.

We live, not just ourselves but with our families, in a system, and in many ways with the system, that has dug its claws deep into our body and being. A sudden, violent obfuscation, can't be a choice for everyone, and always. This is also a part of our truth as living, dependent, beings. May be in some measure, and in

some ways, Foucault can help us here. He says: “We need to escape the dilemma of being either for or against. One can after all, be face to face, and upright. One can work and be intransigent at the same time.” Nevertheless, writing is an ethical act, and when we do it volitionally it is by itself taking an ethical position. Here you have to make a clean and clear choice. Here is why I say this when we are discussing Happymon's book:

“Finally, I remain grateful to those Kashmiris who have read, critiqued, encouraged and countered me, but always with a caveat that they are indeed glad to see someone from far South is interested in their political plight. Kashmir and Kashmiris deserve their share of justice from the Indian State and all that I can do to support that demand is to write about it. So I do.” (Though I am hit by a problematic in the expression ' justice from the Indian State'.) Making Kashmir a subject carries huge ethical challenge. It is morally and ethically taxing, demanding. It means you are out to discover the truth and state it as you found it. And while stating a truth you cannot make everyone happy. Someone has to be seriously unhappy.

I will make Happymon's first lines as my last lines. He dedicates this book to his son, Siddhartha. One can only wish Happymon to be what he hopes his son to turn into one day: *A rebel. Because scholarship is a silent act of rebellion. It is a declaration that you are not convinced with the things as they stand. You are out there to question them.* Question not just the things as they are, but the underlying assumptions. That can bring about a transformation, required to bring India and Pakistan into a mode of reconciliation

(Concluding part of the text of the paper read out at KU at the book review function of Kashmir and Indo–Pak Relations: Politics of Reconciliation, compilation of Happymon Jacob's columns)

Planned Killing in Guise of Judicial Trial in Bangladesh

Firoz Mahboob Kamal

A brief revisit to the 1971 genocide is in order. The facts are well detailed in a book Blood and Tears (Published 1974) by historian Qutubuddin Aziz. It details 170 eye witness accounts of atrocities on non-Bengalis and pro Pakistan Bengalis by Awami League militants and other rebels in 55 towns of then East Pakistan between March-April 1971 with photographs. Another interesting book by B Raman; “The Kaoboy of RAW: Down Memory Lane” talks about the role of Israel and Indian intelligence agencies in creation of Bangladesh in 1971. Raman has headed the counter-terrorism branch of India’s intelligence Research and Analysis Wing (RAW).

Media reported the hanging of Abdul Quader Molla in Bangladesh, a leading Jamaat-i-Islami leader; the first person to go to gallows for the alleged massacre of 1971. A leading newspaper reported, “Molla’s lawyers had protested the original order, saying the death penalty was awarded based on evidence given by only one prosecution witness, who had also earlier given two different versions of the same event... UN Human Rights Chief Navi Pillay wrote to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina seeking a stay of the execution, saying the trial did not meet stringent international standards for the death penalty.” (12, 12, 2013)

Judicial Murder

At the end, Shaikh Hasina’s autocratic regime could successfully hang one of her political foes. The hanged man was Abdul Qader Mollah –the assistant secretary general of Jamaat-e-Islami (JI). But that is not the end of Hasina’s politics of vendetta: many more are waiting in the row to be shortly hanged. The so-called International Crime Tribunal (ICT) –although entirely homemade without any foreign jurist, lawyer or observer in its midst, has already declared death penalty for another four. And, many more of the JI and Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) leaders are languishing in the court for the same verdict. Hasina has declared in a seminar in Dhaka on 14th December that no

amount of telephone call can stop her from hanging these people. It is an explicit reference to her recent dishonouring to such calls from world dignitaries. The UN secretary general Ban Ki Moon, the USA secretary of state Mr John Kerry, the Turkish Prime Minister Mr Erdogan personally rang Mrs Hasina to stop hanging of Mr Mollah. But such telephone calls could not persuade her to show them any decent response. Now she is publicly announcing: neither such calls will work in the future. She is arrogant enough to finish her foes with the help of the country's subservient judiciary. Hence, many more judicial killing are in the offing.

BAL Bangladesh Awami League's (BAL) Indian War

However, *Shaikh Hasina is not alone in such political pogrom. She enjoys full support from her mentor -the ruling clique in Delhi.* The recent visit of Indian foreign secretary Sujatha Singh has made her more emboldened to stay in power in all possible means. India has huge political investment in Bangladesh since the creation of Pakistan in 1947. And it was highest in 1971. The *Daily Naba Barta* of Assam made a lead story in its 21th October, 2013 issue that Indian government spent 8000 Million (eight billion) Indian rupees in 2008 election in Bangladesh to bring Bangladesh Awami League (BAL) to power. In 2014 election, they planned to spend 10000 Million (Ten Billion Indian Rupees). *As a consequence, whenever BAL comes to the power, they return back to India the best harvest. This is why Bangladesh not only became the huge captive market of Indian goods, but also a servile country to promote India's strategic interest.* Offering transit through Bangladesh to her eastern provinces, killing Islamists leaders and handing over the arrested ULFA rebel leaders to Indian authority are indeed the proof of such servile role.

In the war against Islam and the Islamists, the BAL is indeed fighting India's war. India considers Islamists as her real enemy. To fight the Islamist enemies, India takes BAL as the most obedient partner. BAL also considers India as the most dependable master. Hasina understands that without India's inclusive support her political existence will meet immediate collapse. Hence, what the Indian Army is doing in Kashmir, BAL is doing the same in Bangladesh. And exterminating the Islamists by both judicial and extra-judicial killings is the key strategy. More than 250 opposition activists have been kidnapped and killed only in last 2 months.

In order to continue the war against Islamists, India feels that BAL must stay in power. *Otherwise, all of her past investment will go in vain and Bangladesh will emerge as another Pakistan on her eastern border.* And to keep BAL in power, it needed some changes in the ground rules of the game plan. Shaikh Mujib needed such changes, too. That was one party system lead by Mujib himself. But his daughter Hasina took another route to strengthen her political grip. In Bangladesh in 1996, all political parties came to the consensus that the national election should be held only under a non-party caretaker government led by a retired judge of the Supreme Court. It was incorporated in the constitution by members of the parliament. It was a landmark decision in Bangladesh's political history. Such decision was taken as a consequence of election rigging by all partisan governments of the past. It made democratic transition more transparent and made election rigging quite difficult. But after election victory in 2008, Hasina changed her mind. She wants to stay in power but all means. And the non-party caretaker system was perceived as a big hindrance to that end. *Hence she annulled the caretaker system by a constitution amendment by her brute majority in the parliament.*

Politics of Conspiracy and Annihilation

The next election is on 5th of January, 2014. Hasina is now running the whole show on her own: already 154 MP candidates of her own party and ruling the alliance are declared elected unopposed out of 300 seats of the parliament. *She knew that she cannot escape an electoral wipe-out in the forthcoming election - as was demonstrated by her party's defeat in all recent city corporation elections.* So she conspired to win the election before the day of election. She is using her embedded party men in the judiciary, police and Army's Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) to exterminate her opponents so that her rigged victory goes down unopposed in the public. She is not ready to tolerate any viable opposition to her power-grabbing politics. Her father Shaikh Mujib introduced one party BASAL system to impose his one-man rule. The ex-President Ershad, Hasina's political partner since 2008 election, denied endorsing such one party election. As a consequence he was arrested, and still being pressurised to be fully subdued.

Almost all the central and district leaders of JI have been arrested; and only a few could escape the arrest by going underground. All of the JI's central, district, sub-district and union level offices are locked. The government does

not allow JI and its student wing Islami Chatra Shibir (ICS) to hold any public gatherings and procession. Whenever they bring out any procession, they meet with police firing and tear gas. Most of the BNP leaders are also arrested. John Pilger has rightly captioned his recent article on Bangladesh, published in the Guardian on 15/12/13, “**The prison that is Bangladesh**”. The JI leader Abdul Qader Molla was indeed the victim of such annihilation project.

The Extra-judicial Killing

Apart from judicial killing, the extra-judicial killing by the police and the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) is so rampant that only on one day on 14th December more than 14 people are killed. Of them, 8 are killed in a small town of Companigonj in Noakhali. On 15th December, JI called for country-wide strike. On that day, the police and the RAB killed 9 people and wounded about 300 people and arrested 200. On 13th December, the RAB brutally killed Dr. Faiz Ahmed -a popular medical doctor cum social worker and philanthropist in the district of Lakhmipur. He was known for free treatment for the poor patients. His wife Marjia Faiz reported to the press that in the middle of the night, several armed RAB cadres broke through the main door of his house. They took the doctor to the roof and shoot him. His body was thrown onto the ground from the roof-top of the building and the body was taken away. After a long searching, the family discovered his body in a local hospital. The hospital doctor revealed that somebody left him in front of the hospital without informing the staff. He was found dead and the body showed marks of bullet injury and torture. Only crime of Dr. Faiz Ahmed was that he was the vice Amir (chief) of JI of the local district. The case tells a lot about Hasina’s heinous design. The country’s judiciary and the prosecution have little interest to bring these killers to justice. Their only mandate is to chase the political enemies of the ruling clique, not the accomplice of the government sponsored murder.

The Killing Industry

In any autocratic rule, fair trial is the first casualty. The trusted accomplices of the tyrant not only get embedded in the administration, police and security services but also in the judiciary. They become the part and parcel of the tyrant’s killing apparatus. Annihilation of the political opponents flourishes as a

state run industry. So the judges in Turkey could easily hang the elected Prime Minister Mr Adnan Menderes. The judges of Egypt, too, could overlook the recent killings of more than thousand people by the Army, but didn't hesitate to hang Syed Qutb and others on concocted grounds. The case of Bangladesh is no different either.

One of the embedded Bangladesh Supreme Court judge is Surendra Kumar Sinha. He told one of the ICT judge Mr Najmul to give some quick death sentence verdicts, and in exchange promised him to appoint him as a Supreme Court judge. Mr Najmul revealed that in his Skype conversation with one of his friend in Brussels. During the rule of Shaikh Mujib -the father of the current Prime Minister Hasina, 40 thousands political opponents were killed without any trial. After killing the Marxist leader Mr Shiraj Sikder under police custody, Mujib rejoiced in the parliament by sarcastically asking “where is Shiraj Sikder?”

The defence council for Mr Mollah told the press that his client was denied a fair trial. Mr Mollah was charged with the alleged crime of killing six family members of a single family in Mirpur in the city of Dhaka and also of rape. The single witness of the case was Momena Begum – a daughter of the household. She was only 13 at the time of episode; and claimed that she witnessed the killing while hiding under the bed. She gave three different narrations at three different places. The Independence War Museum in Dhaka recorded her statement that she was not in the house at the time, and was told by others that someone named Qader Mollah was the killer of her father and other family members. The killing happened 42 years ago. How could one recollect and identify a real killer after such a long time? As a matter of chance Abdul Qader Mollah of a village in Faridpur happened to have the same name as had the alleged killer in Mirpur in Dhaka. Such similar names exist in every locality in Bangladesh. Can it be considered a valid proof for his involvement in the alleged killing? In a civilised country, a court never issues death sentence relying on dubious statement of such a single witness. But in Bangladesh, the ruling clique faces dire political necessity to manufacture such ground to justify annihilation of its political foes.

The International Crime Tribunal (ICT) has turned into a huge factory to manufacture such artificial grounds to hang the politically targeted people. Shaikh Hasina has deployed hundreds of cronies with fat salaries to do the job.

And Abdul Qader Mollah has been made the targeted victim. He was not given the legal right to appeal in the Supreme Court. The Amnesty International remarked on his case by saying: “This is the first known case of a prisoner sentenced to death directly by the highest court in Bangladesh. It is also the first known death sentence in Bangladesh with no right of appeal. Death sentence without right of judicial appeal defies human rights.

A Total Fabrication

The alleged killing took place in April in 1971. Mr Abdul Qader Mollah was 22 at the time, and was studying Physics in the University of Dhaka for his Masters. Since the university was closed in March due to political turmoil and the military action, he left the university campus for his paternal home in a remote village of Faridpur. In those horrendous days, most of the university students did the same. Hence his presence in Mirpur in Dhaka in the month of April to carry out the alleged killing is a total fabrication. The court did not engage to understand why he should stay in Dhaka in those awful days? Mr Mollah was a student, and he had neither a job nor a house in Dhaka. Hence he did not have any discernible reason to stay in Dhaka. In those days, the only purpose of his stay in Dhaka was the study in the university; and that too, came to a standstill due to political turmoil. Even those who had a job or owned a house in Dhaka, they left the city for better security. Why the court should think otherwise in his case?

Moreover, crime never takes place without an explicit or implicit motive. No one throws a stone at anybody without a motive, let alone killing him. Hence it was the duty of the judges and the prosecution team to discover such a motive in Mr Mollah’s case. To attribute any manufactured motive to an innocent man is itself a big crime. And the state prosecution and the judges did that crime in his case. Momena Begum’s family was not a personal foe of Abdul Qader Mollah. Her family was not known for any political prominence either. Then why should he kill 6 persons of that family? In 1971, ethnic hatred based on ethnic and linguistic differences reached its climax due to Shaikh Mujib’s jingoistic Bengali nationalism. His people killed thousands of non-Bengalis who came from India after creation of Pakistan in 1947 to enjoy safe haven. The non-Bengalis too killed Bengalis to take the revenge. Thus, thousands of innocent Bengali and non-Bengalis were slaughtered only to feed the hatred.

Dhaka's Mirpur area and Momena Begum's family was not immune to that. But such hatred cannot fit into Mr Mollah's case. Even in 1971, the JI activists, for their pan-Islamism, were known for their distinctive character for surpassing the linguistic or ethnic barriers. Moreover, Momena Begum's Bengali ethnicity could not have any reason to instigate another Bengali like Mr Mollah to kill her whole family. It beggars belief. But the judges did not show any judicial acumen to understand that basics. Thus, the hanging of Abdul Qader Mollah is itself a showcase revelation of the dismal failure of the judiciary in Bangladesh. So the country is fully set for presenting many more hanged Abdul Qader Mollah in the future. Already another four JI and BNP leaders are in the row. The country has already made world records by becoming the most corrupt country in the world for five consecutive years. That too started with Hasina's first time premiership. It looks, this time she is determined to make another world record. That's by turning the country's judiciary into a hanging industry for the innocents.

Posted by The Editor

Martin Woollcott in a brilliant book review of "Dead Reckoning" by Sarmila Bose says, "Bose's case-by-case arithmetic leads her in the end to estimate that between 50,000 and 100,000 people died in 1971." He goes on to state, "The wider revision of the conflict's history she implies exonerates the Pakistani government of any plot to rule the east by force, suggests that the Bengali leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman let the genie of nationalism out of the bottle but could not control it, and insists that the conflict was a civil war within East Pakistan...Yet when she underlines how stretched the Pakistani forces were, how unready they were for the role of suppression that was thrust on them, and how perplexed they were in the face of a Bengali hostility that seemed to them so disproportionate, what she writes rings very true. The killings by Bengalis of non-Bengali minorities, of Bengalis who stuck with the idea of a united Pakistan, and even of some Hindu Bengalis – all of whose deaths were attributed at the time to the Pakistani army – needs to be reckoned in any fair balance." (The Guardian July 1, 2011)

1971 Pakistan – India War: Unbiased views and facts

Sarmila Bose

This article is reproduced for those in South Asia particularly Pakistan who have a flare to praise their corrupt and powerful but fail to honour their heroes. As Sarmila says “Rather, in failing to honour them, the nation dishonours itself”

There is much for Pakistan to come to terms with what happened in 1971. But the answers don't lie in unthinking vilification of the fighting men who performed so well in the war against such heavy odds in defence of the national policy. Rather, in failing to honour them, the nation dishonours itself.

My introduction to international politics was 1971, as a schoolgirl in Calcutta. Many images from that year are still etched in my mind, but the culminating one was the photo on Ramna racecourse of two men sitting at a table — the smart, turbaned Sikh, ‘our’ war-hero, Jagjit Singh Aurora, and the large man in a beret, A K Niazi, commander of the other side, signing the instrument of surrender.

Nearly a generation later, a chance interview for the BBC with Lt Gen. Aurora took me back to 1971. The interview was not about 1971, but about injustices suffered by Sikhs at the hands of the state General Aurora had served.

I thought he was a bigger hero for what he had to say then. That view was reinforced as I read — with incredulity — the disparaging remarks by other Indian officers about him, and each other, in their books. If this is what happened to the winning commander, I wondered what had happened to the other man in the photo. The result was a revelation.

It turns out that General Niazi has been my ‘enemy’ since the Second World War. As Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and his Indian National Army fought on the Burma front in 1943-45 in their quest for India's freedom, Niazi was fighting on the other side, for the British Indian Army, under the overall

command of General (later Field Marshal) William Joseph Slim. Slim and his 14th Army halted the advance of the INA and the Japanese at the Imphal campaign and turned the course of the war.

In the process of inflicting military defeat upon my ancestor, Niazi's performance was so exceptional that the British awarded him an on-the-spot Military Cross for action on the Assam-Burma front in June 1944. On another occasion they wanted to award a DSO, but he was too junior, so a Mention in Dispatches was recorded.

In the original record of his MC signed by his commanding officers all the way up to Slim, which I obtained from the British Ministry of Defence, the British commanders describe Niazi's gallantry in detail: "He organized the attack with such skill that his leading platoon succeeded in achieving complete surprise over the enemy." They speak of how he personally led his men, the 'great skill and coolness' under fire with which he changed tactics with changing circumstances, created diversionary attacks, extricated his wounded, defeated the enemy and withdrew his men by section, remaining personally at the rear in every case.

The British honoured Niazi for "personal leadership, bravery and complete disregard for his own personal safety." On 15 December 1944 the Viceroy Lord Wavell flew to Imphal and in the presence of Lord Mountbatten knighted Slim and his corps commanders Stopford, Scoones and Christison. Only two 'Indian' officers were chosen to be decorated by the Viceroy at that ceremony — 'Tiger' Niazi was one of them.

In 1971 Niazi was a highly decorated Pakistani general, twice receiving the Hilal-e-Jurat. He was sent to East Pakistan in April 1971 — part of a sorry tradition in South Asia of political rulers attempting to find military solutions to political problems. By then Tikka Khan had already launched the crackdown of 25 March for which he has been known to Bengalis as the 'butcher of Bengal' ever since. The population of East Bengal was completely hostile and Pakistan condemned around the world.

Authoritative scholarly analyses of 1971 are rare. The best work is Richard Sisson and Leo Rose's *War and Secession*. Robert Jackson, fellow of All Soul's College, Oxford, wrote an account shortly after the events. Most of the

principal participants did not write about it, a notable exception being Gen. Niazi's recent memoirs (1998). Some Indian officers have written books of uneven quality — they make for an embarrassing read for what the Indians have to say about one another.

However, a consistent picture emerges from the more objective accounts of the war. Sisson and Rose describe how India started assisting Bengali rebels since April, but “the Mukti Bahini had not been able to prevent the Pakistani army from regaining control over all the major urban centers on the East Pakistani-Indian border and even establishing a tenuous authority in most of the rural areas.” From July to October there was direct involvement of Indian military personnel. “...mid-October to 20 November... Indian artillery was used much more extensively in support ...and Indian military forces, including tanks and air power on a few occasions, were also used...Indian units were withdrawn to Indian territory once their objectives had been brought under the control of the Mukti Bahini — though at times this was only for short periods, as, to the irritation of the Indians, the Mukti Bahini forces rarely held their ground when the Pakistani army launched a counterattack.”

Clearly, the Pakistani army regained East Pakistan for their masters in Islamabad by April-May, creating an opportunity for a political settlement, and held off both Bengali guerrillas and their Indian supporters till November, buying more time — time and opportunity that Pakistan's rulers and politicians failed to utilize.

Contrary to Indian reports, full-scale war between India and Pakistan started in East Bengal on 21 November, making it a four-week war rather than a ‘lightning campaign’. Sisson and Rose state bluntly: “After the night of 21 November...Indian forces did not withdraw. From 21 to 25 November several Indian army divisions...launched simultaneous military actions on all of the key border regions of East Pakistan, and from all directions, with both armored and air support.” Indian officers like Sukhwant Singh and Lachhman Singh write quite openly in their books about India invading East Pakistani territory in November, which they knew was ‘an act of war’.

None of the outside scholars expected the Eastern garrison to withstand a full Indian invasion. On the contrary, Pakistan's longstanding strategy was “the

defense of the east is in the west”. Jackson writes, “Pakistani forces had largely withdrawn from scattered border-protection duties into cleverly fortified defensive positions at the major centres inside the frontiers, where they held all the major ‘place names’ against Mukti Bahini attacks, and blocked the routes of entry from India...”

Sisson and Rose point out the incongruity of Islamabad tolerating India’s invasion of East Pakistani territory in November. On 30 November Niazi received a message from General Hamid stating, “The whole nation is proud of you and you have their full support.” The same day Islamabad decided to launch an attack in the West on 2 December, later postponed to 3 December, after a two-week wait, but did not inform the Eastern command about it. According to Jackson, the Western offensive was frustrated by 10 December.

Though futile, the Western offensive allowed India to openly invade the East, with overwhelming advantages. “...despite all these advantages, the war did not go as smoothly and easily for the Indian army...”, but Sisson and Rose come to the balanced judgment that “The Pakistanis fought hard and well; the Indian army won an impressive victory.” Even Indian officers concede the personal bravery of Niazi and the spirited fight put up by the Pakistanis in the East. That the troops fought so well against such overwhelming odds is a credit both to them, and to their commanders, for an army does not fight well in the absence of good leadership.

However, as Jackson put it, “...India’s success was inevitable from the moment the general war broke out — unless diplomatic intervention could frustrate it.” As is well known, Pakistan failed to secure military or diplomatic intervention. Sisson and Rose also say, “The outcome of the conflict on the eastern front after 6 December was not in doubt, as the Indian military had all the advantages.” On 14 December Niazi received the following message from Yahya Khan: “You have fought a heroic battle against overwhelming odds. The nation is proud of you ... You have now reached a stage where further resistance is no longer humanly possible nor will it serve any useful purpose... You should now take all necessary measures to stop the fighting and preserve the lives of armed forces personnel, all those from West Pakistan and all loyal elements...” Sisson and Rose naturally describe this message as “implying that the armed forces in East Pakistan should surrender”.

No matter how traumatic the outcome of 1971 for Pakistan, the Eastern command did not create the conflict, nor were they responsible for the failure of the political and diplomatic process. Sent to do the dirty work of the political manoeuvrers, the fighting men seem to have performed remarkably well against overwhelming odds. It is shocking therefore to discover that they were not received with honour by their nation on their return. Their commander, Niazi, appears to have been singled out, along with one aide, to be punished arbitrarily with dismissal and denial of pension, without being given the basic right to defend himself through a court-martial, which he asked for.

The commission set up allegedly to examine what had happened in 1971 was too flawed in its terms of reference and report to have any international credibility. However, even its recommendations of holding public trials and court-martials were ignored. There is much for Pakistan to come to terms with what happened in 1971. But the answers don't lie in unthinking vilification of the fighting men who performed so well in the war against such heavy odds in defence of the national policy. Rather, in failing to honour them, the nation dishonours itself.

By Sarmila Bose

Sarmila Bose is a British academic and senior research associate at the Centre for International Studies at Oxford University. Sarmila Bose is an academic and practitioner with principal interests in the politics and public policies of South Asia. Her current work is on the practice of democracy in India, and conflict and governance issues of the frontier "tribal" areas of India and Pakistan. She recently completed a major study of the 1971 war in South Asia. Her book "Dead Reckoning" is a great research work that has unravelled many myths about Indian war in creation of Bangladesh and role of Pakistan army trying hard to save the situation in Her book confirms that geographical boundaries do not create differences for those who have the courage and capacity to reveal and uphold truth. Sarmila Bose stands out

India's next move in Afghanistan

M K Bhadrakumar

By any reckoning, Afghan President Hamid Karzai's visit to India took place at a tumultuous juncture in the regional security situation. A paradigm shift becomes necessary in the Indian policies. Any proclivity to view the Afghan situation through the prism of India-Pakistan differences is grossly inadequate.

The ground beneath the feet is shifting rapidly. Karzai's equations with the Obama administration have reached a point of no return. The Americans are confronting a similar fate as they faced in Iraq four years ago by failing to establish permanent military bases in Afghanistan. Unlike in Iraq, the Afghan theatre is vital to the US' rebalancing strategy in Asia.

Suffice to say, Karzai finds himself at the epicentre of a momentous happening that holds the potential to impact regional politics. India needs to decide where its core concerns and vital interests lie.

Karzai's interview with *Le Monde* that was published on Tuesday underscores beyond doubt that Karzai's standoff with the US goes much beyond a mere spat, as the western propaganda portrays. The rift is far too deep and there is a profound crisis of confidence between the two sides. Karzai has disclosed many startling details about the deviousness of the US's AfPak policy.

According to Karzai, Americans have a secret track to the Taliban and have been all along playing the Afghan insurgents against the Kabul government and the various ethnic groups against each other with a view to dominating the chessboard and perpetuating the western military occupation.

He hinted that the so-called peace talks at Qatar two years ago too were a diabolical American plot of 'divide and rule'. Karzai repeatedly alleged that the US is resorting to threats and arm twisting to get him to sign the bilateral security agreement.

He interpreted that during his last visit to Kabul, US special representative for AfPak, James Dobbins might have held out a crude threat, "If you don't sign the BSA, we [US] will cause you trouble and provoke disturbances in the

country.” Karzai made an extremely serious allegation that he has evidence to show that the Americans deliberately misrepresented matters by disseminating the canard that the Taliban are opposed to talks with Karzai, whereas, he does have direct dealings with the Taliban. He implied that the so-called Taliban statement in Qatar in this regard was drafted by the Americans.

Karzai further flagged that the US game plan has been to wrap up the BSA and thereafter to strike a deal with the Taliban independently, which explains why the Obama administration deliberately scuttled the peace talks. Karzai noted with bitterness that the American behaviour has been that of a colonial power. “Americans can’t push us into a corner... What I hear these days, and what I’ve heard before, sounds like classic colonial exploitation. The Afghans don’t bow down, they have defeated in the past colonial powers. They’ll accept a respectful relationship; they are an honourable people and will treat friends honourably.”

Interestingly, Karzai spoke about a future Afghanistan without the Americans — “We will not cease to be a nation if that [US's "zero option"] were to happen. It will be harsher for us, it will be more difficult, but we will continue to be a nation and a state.”

Another important point made by Karzai is that he came to an understanding with Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif during the latter’s recent visit to Kabul. Without divulging details, he said, “we hope to see movements towards a peace process in Afghanistan.” Indeed, Karzai made warm references to Sharif’s commitment to normalize Pakistan’s ties with Afghanistan and India.

Karzai said it was an American ploy to have Qatar as the venue of the peace talks and “Qatar is no longer an option for us.” He’d prefer that the talks are held in Afghanistan itself but if the Taliban want another venue, “then for the sake of peace, we would agree.” Presumably, he discussed this with Sharif.

Of course, any such understanding between Karzai and Sharif would annoy Washington. According to media leaks by unnamed Pentagon officials, US secretary of defence Chuck Hagel warned Sharif at their meeting in Islamabad on Monday that Pakistan risked billions of dollars in American aid if it didn’t resolve the current protests in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province that are blocking

NATO convoys. The Pentagon spokesman Carl Woog claimed that Sharif promised he would take “immediate action.” (Bloomberg)

Against the above backdrop, to be sure, Delhi needs to have strategic clarity in handling the Afghan president’s visit on Friday. The Indian media have made it out to be that Karzai is coming primarily to procure weapons. This is by far simplifying a highly complex matrix of global politics.

The Afghan armed forces certainly need Indian help, but then, this is also a war with a geopolitical dimension (and it has all along been so.) The flood gates have literally opened and there is a torrential flow of the pent-up undercurrents and eddies that accumulated over time. Most important, all this is directly related to the US’ rebalance to Asia.

Of course, Karzai (and Afghanistan) will survive with or without India’s assistance. But Delhi needs to factor in that it is terribly important strategically for India’s long term interests that it remains engaged with Karzai, who is in many ways far better placed than Najibullah was in 1989 following the Soviet withdrawal — contrary to what the American propaganda makes out.

The bottom line is that none of Afghanistan’s neighbouring countries (including Pakistan) can afford a collapse of the Afghan state. By the way, amidst all these tensions, the third round of the Afghan-Pakistan-China trilateral was held in Kabul this week and China was represented at a senior level. Beijing is clearly moving into a position to mediate between Kabul and Islamabad. (Xinhua).

China’s State Councillor Yang Jiechi just visited Tehran over the weekend. He travelled to Tehran from Cape Town where he met with the powerful head of the Russian national Security Council Nikolai Patrushev (who is also a key aide to President Vladimir Putin). China and Russia closely coordinate their moves over Afghanistan.

The Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov is arriving in Tehran today, closely on the heels of Yang’s consultations. Clearly, a Russian-Chinese-Iranian convergence on Afghanistan is shaping up. Considering that the Russian special envoy on Afghanistan Zamir Kabulov, who is a key point person for the Kremlin, visited Islamabad last month only a fortnight ago (Xinhua), it stands to reason that Pakistan is well in the loop.

Unlike in 1989 when Najib found himself at the mercy of the Soviet Union totally for assistance, Karzai enjoys much wider international and regional support. Again, the co-relation of forces in regional and world politics has transformed beyond recognition since 1989 and the phenomenal shifts in the strategic balance works to the advantage of Karzai.

As for China, it was hostile toward the PDPA regime, while Iran was just coming out of the devastating war with Iraq and was in any case ambivalent toward Najib.

But the state of play is vastly different today. The most crucial difference, arguably, is that Pakistan cannot really afford a civil war in Afghanistan and may not even push for a Taliban takeover, given its profound ramifications for Pakistan's own internal security. Besides, an outright Taliban takeover in Kabul is not considered desirable by any of the regional powers today, including China.

The heart of the matter is that India needs a leap of faith to comprehend the Pakistani thinking, as it evolved, regarding Afghanistan.

Suffice to say, Pakistan is no more seeking "strategic depth" as much as safeguarding its territorial integrity and internal security which faces an existential crisis. Does India have the farsightedness to comprehend this? That's the million dollar question facing the Indian policymakers today as Karzai arrives in Delhi.

A sensible American policy would have been to sincerely commit the US assistance to the stabilization of the Afghan economy rather than to bulldoze its way through to establish the military bases. But then, the US has its global strategies to pursue and Afghan military bases are vital for its containment project toward China and for encircling Russia.

Having said that, the Americans are being downright arrogant to suggest that Afghanistan will go to dogs without their military presence.

True, strong vested interests have formed among sections of the Afghan elites who want the US presence (and the war) to continue but wars breed speculators and these parasites are of limited relevance in the ultimate analysis.

Karzai's stance that the Americans must terminate raids on American homes and end the drone attacks on civilian hamlets will find huge resonance in the public opinion. Being a shrewd coalition builder, Karzai knows his opposition to the western occupation and his upholding of Afghan national honour will be seen by his people as the right thing to do.

Therefore, it is a macabre American joke to claim that Karzai would be left high and dry without President Barack Obama holding his hand. On the contrary, the danger lies in the regional powers competing for influence in Kabul.

The Indian policies toward Afghanistan need a completely new framework attuned to the emergent geopolitical realities. The challenge is to remain engaged in all respects with Karzai and to harmonize Indian interests with the legitimate interests of Pakistan. Unfortunately, the India-Pakistan dialogue process is at a standstill. This should have been the time to open a line to Islamabad regarding Afghan developments. But the good thing is that Karzai is a very savvy politician (as Afghan statesmen throughout modern history have been vis-a-vis India-Pakistan relations) and he would know the 'red line' which he should not cross while seeking India's help.

For transcript of Karzai's Le Monde interview visit

http://www.lemonde.fr/asia-pacifique/article/2013/12/10/hamid-karzai-the-united-states-behaves-in-afghanistan-like-a-colonialpower_3528719_3216.html.

Muzaffarnagar Riots

Betwa Sharma

SHAMLI, Uttar Pradesh — On a sunny winter afternoon last week, 12-year-old Gulbaar drifted among the dusty pile of rocks that marked the graves of infants and children in a cemetery close to the camp called Malakpur. The camp houses more than 7,000 Muslims who have taken refuge here since violence broke out three months ago between Muslims and the Jat clan of the Hindus in the nearby districts of Shamli and Muzaffarnagar in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh.

One grave resting in the dry grass and bramble, a camp supervisor said, was of a 15-month-old baby, who had perished from the cold last month. Residents of this camp in the district of Shamli say that 22 children and four elders have died from the cold since November, which is disputed by state officials. (<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/11-children-have-died-in-relief-camp-Muzaffarnagar-DM-says/movie-review/27368910.cms>)

Squatting next to the mound, Gulbaar, who goes by one name described how his four siblings squeeze together to keep warm while sleeping. “We survive by sticking to each other, but a lot of cotton is coming out of our old bedding,” he said.

Gulbaar’s family left their home in the village of Kaserva in Shamli when clashes erupted on Sept. 7 between Muslims and Hindu Jats in the sugarcane-producing hamlets of India’s most populous state, 150 kilometers north of Delhi. Before they fled, Gulbaar recalled how he helped make crude weapons with sticks and sickles.

The clashes claimed over 60 lives and displaced more than 50,000 Muslims, who took shelter in camps like Malakpur. In Shamli, 16 families each received 1.2 million rupees, or \$20,000, as compensation for deaths of family members, and 500,000 rupees was given to each of the 680 families from the worst-hit villages, who could not return home out of fear or because their property had been destroyed. *Wary of false claims, the state government imposed one*

condition for compensation: recipients could live anywhere but their home villages. While local officials say that this condition was in response to a steely resolve by Muslims to stay away from their Jat neighbours, civil society advocates contend that the policy permanently divides communities along religious lines because the majority of the displaced end up moving to Muslim-majority areas.

A six-member fact-finding team from the Centre for Policy Analysis based in Delhi, which visited Muzaffarnagar this month, wrote in their report that this policy could cause the “most enduring damage,” and has “in effect provided an incentive for ethnic cleansing.”

Most people have moved out of the camps, having receiving the money to relocate, but between 10,000 and 20,000 who don't qualify for compensation still remain, against the government's wishes. They include Muslims who are fearful of their Hindu-Jat neighbours but cannot claim physical damages, as well as those who are merely angling for some cash.

This puts state government officials in an awkward position because while they do not want to give monetary relief to people they don't see as victims, it is the children in the camps who suffer the most from the standoff, as winter's chill sets in. Gulbaar described how frost seeped through the plastic sheets of his family's tent and dripped on all of them. “Tip, tip, tip. That's the worst bit. Everything gets wet and horrible,” he said.

Most of the Muslims still living in the Malakpur camp make a living as labourers in brick kilns or as farmhands. They said that fear of reprisals from their more affluent landowning Jat neighbours keeps them from returning home. State officials, however, say that most of the camp's current inhabitants belong to villages that saw no violence.

“This is no longer a relief camp, but we cannot forcibly evict them on humanitarian grounds, especially during winter,” said Praveen Kumar Singh, district magistrate of the district of Shamli, in an interview on Friday. Mr. Singh said doctors who were regularly dispatched to the Malakpur camp had examined thousands of people, but found no one who had died from the cold. “Say if the cold made some illnesses worse,” he said. “Why are parents exposing their own children to such conditions when they can go back?” He

said that the government had been sending basic food supplies, milk and water to the camp but that it would stop doing so soon. Over the weekend, camp dwellers protested the dwindling government supplies, even though nonprofit groups and religious charities were sending the bulk of provisions.

With the temperatures dipping, inhabitants of the camp are receiving warm bedding, donated from neighbouring villages as well as religious charitable organizations. Waterproof tents and solar lights donated by Oxfam are already being used in some tents. Several camp dwellers, some of who are staying with five to 10 children, said that they want to settle in Malakpur permanently since it is located in a Muslim-majority area of Shamli. Officials, however, dismiss this idea outright since the camp stands on protected forestland belonging to the central government. They have been calling on its inhabitants to leave.

Harsh Mander, a human rights activist who was part of the team from Centre for Policy Analysis, criticized the government for attempting to forcibly close shelters, even though his team estimated that 20,000 people are still displaced in camps or staying with relatives. “Nobody wants to live in these camps,” he said. “They have genuine fears, and the government needs to create the safe environment for them to return.”

Local residents pointed out that the recent clashes were the first in the countryside in Uttar Pradesh since India gained independence in 1947. The intimate familiarity common in villages ended up deepening the sense of betrayal and loss after the violence, according to the team from the Centre for Policy Analysis. For generations, Muslims have worked on sugarcane fields belonging to Hindu-Jats, but those in the Malakpur camp vow to never return to Hindu fields.

Mohammed Shaukeen, 50, whose 4-year-old daughter died on Dec. 4, said he wouldn't go back to their home in Baman Hedi village even if it means exposing his four other small children to freezing nights in the Malakpur camp. Mr. Shaukeen and his family lived in the Baghpat district, which saw sporadic instances of violence, but did not bear the brunt of the riots like neighboring Muzaffarnagar and Shamli. Mr. Shaukeen explained that it was not the threat of violence but the insult to Muslims that had driven him away. His 8-year-old daughter, Dilrooba, stared at him, wide-eyed, as he shouted, “We have been

spat out of there. I would rather all of us die in the cold night by the will of Allah than at the hands of Hindus.”

Close to midnight, only the silhouettes of the tents were visible in the blinding darkness of the wilderness. Dilrooba and her three siblings slept under one duvet as water seeped into the plastic sheet hung above them, and the wind blew through the holes in the flimsy cloth walls. Across the camp, children burrowed in their bedding and clung to each other against the cold.

Three months after the riots, over 200 arrests have been made, including of local politicians of national parties like the Bharatiya Janata Party, or B.J.P., and Bahujan Samaj Party, for allegedly inciting religious violence, but conversations in the villages and towns of the riot-hit districts are still rancid with hate and accusations. Aggravating an already tense environment is a price dispute between sugar mill owners and farmers, delaying the reaping of the sugarcane this year and threatening the key industry in the region, which is putting everyone on edge, local residents said.

Even the deaths of the Muslim children have failed to evoke sympathy. Instead, Hindu-Jats described the inhabitants of the Malakpur camp as freeloaders and debt dodgers who continue to marry and have babies in the camps.

Jats speak with bitterness about what they see as a witch-hunt by the authorities, saying that the Samajwadi Party, which governs the state, was trying to appease Muslims. They discuss voting for the Narendra Modi-led B.J.P(the mass murderer of well over 3000 Muslims in Gujraat). in the national elections next year as the only way to protect Hindu interests. And many of the villages where they once lived together are dangerously close to being cleansed of diversity. Even though he sat in a dusty cemetery, young Gulbaar was happy to talk about the games he once played with his Hindu friends after classes. But now, the fourth-grade student would rather be wet and chilled to the bone every night under a leaky tent rather than return home to patch up his friendships.

“I miss school a lot, but they will insult us for coming back,” he said, shuddering a little at a cold gust of wind. “We are now enemies.”

Is India's potential Prime Minister driven by anti-Muslim prejudice?

Sarmila Bose

Narendra Modi's use of the 2002 Gujarat violence in electoral campaigning is not an isolated case. If Modi wins next year, would India have elected an allegedly murderous anti-Muslim bigot as its leader?

Since 2002, when violence against Muslims racked the state of Gujarat in India, its Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, has been tainted with the allegation of complicity in a pogrom. Riots had occurred in Gujarat before, but 2002 acquired a particularly dark reputation. Despite being elected thrice as chief minister of Gujarat, Modi was widely believed to have ruined his chances ever to lead the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) at the national level. But a decade later Modi is leading the BJP's 2014 campaign as de facto prime-ministerial candidate.

Modi's political rehabilitation was predictable. Gujarat enjoys a reputation for enterprise and commerce, independent of its politicians. While being vilified on human rights grounds, Modi focused on building an image of encouraging pro-business economic development. Money talks and public memory is short. Within a short time, for business it was business as usual in Gujarat. This may not have been sufficient to capture national leadership, but the failure of the incumbent Congress-led government and the lack of a rival within the BJP contributed to Modi's success. *If Modi wins next year, would India have elected an allegedly murderous anti-Muslim bigot as its leader?*

Sectarian beginning

I visited Gujarat in early 2002 amid the still smouldering violence, again mid-year and finally at the end of the year during the state election campaign. For a better understanding of what Modi's rise means, we need to remember what his goals were in Gujarat in 2002, what his party represents, and the polarising electoral politics in India and other countries.

Modi's campaign was unabashedly "communal" - he campaigned as though he was running against "Mian Musharraf", the military ruler of neighbouring Pakistan, ignoring the Congress candidate who was actually his opponent. The manoeuvre blended aggressive Hindu nationalism with jingoistic patriotism for a potent, toxic mix.

When the Godhra train incident, in which dozens of Hindus were killed and which triggered the anti-Muslim violence, happened in February 2002, Modi had been chief minister of Gujarat for only about four months. He had been dispatched to replace the sitting BJP chief minister, to stem the slide in support. Before that Modi had been a party strategist, but had never been fielded in electoral politics and had no experience of governance. He had only a year to ensure BJP's re-election. As he put it, he had come to play a "one-day match".

Modi's party has long been accused of whipping up religious conflicts to win votes. In his book *The Politics of India since Independence*, Paul Brass observed that in 1990-91 the BJP and Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) played a significant role in deliberately instigated violence in north India. In 1990 BJP President L K Advani **went on** a "rathayatra" - a "chariot" procession - across several states, triggering riots in its wake. Using religious mobilisation for political ends, the BJP went from practically no presence in parliament in 1984 to becoming the second largest party by 1991.

However, the manipulation of incidents of violence for electoral gain is not unique to the BJP. Brass found that it is a central feature of Indian politics by the 1980s, with Indira Gandhi adept at the "politics of crisis".

Riding to power on violence is also an established practice elsewhere. Paul Collier found that where the "bottom billion" lives, violence has been the predominant route to power, and democracy tended to increase political violence. Incumbents who wanted to remain in power found "scapegoating a minority" a strategy that "worked". Steven Wilkinson has argued (in *Votes and Violence: Electoral Competition and Ethnic Riots in India*) that it was not institutional weakness that explained the variations in state response to riots in India, but instructions given by politicians whether or not to protect minorities. When multiple parties compete, minority votes have more value than where there are only two

contenders, like Gujarat.

In 2002 I found Godhra itself subdued during the campaign, while the state election was fought in its name. T-shirts bearing a photo of the burnt-out train had the slogan (in Gujarati): "We won't let our village become Godhra." Godhra had become a concept, which had little to do with the neglected town.

To many people thronging to hear Modi during his campaign in 2002, he was a hero. Some told me that the previous chief minister had been too "soft"; in Modi they had found the "strong" leader they sought. The charismatic demagoguery of Modi was on full display in that campaign. It may not be obvious to those who have only heard him speak in slightly halting English, but in 2002 I found Modi to be an immensely effective orator in Gujarati. He played the crowds' emotions skilfully, and stoked their prejudices with bone-chilling messages about "enemies of the state". Modi's campaign was unabashedly "communal" - he campaigned as though he was running against "Mian Musharraf", the military ruler of neighbouring Pakistan, ignoring the Congress candidate who was actually his opponent. The manoeuvre blended aggressive Hindu nationalism with jingoistic patriotism for a potent, toxic mix.

Given his campaigning skills, it was astonishing that the BJP had not fielded him in elections before. If such a politician had chosen to work for all citizens, he could have done much good, and Muslims would have voted for him too. But in 2002 Modi was focused on winning the "one day match" he had come to play. To ensure sufficient consolidation of the Hindu vote, he seemed prepared to write-off the Muslim minority altogether. He did not need, or want, their votes.

Logically, if Modi let Muslims in his state die in 2002 to ensure victory through Hindu consolidation, he would protect them if he needs Muslim votes in multi-cornered contests, or if he is likely to win without resorting to polarisation.

National elections are a different game, with numerous parties and the high likelihood of another coalition. Modi has shifted focus to governance and development. However, as Christophe Jaffrelot detailed in his work on the Hindu nationalist movement, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), where Modi was "pracharak" (activist), was built on the stigmatisation of "others". RSS leaders

openly drew inspiration from European fascism.

A 'common' practice

Perhaps there is nothing special about Modi, except that he seems more capable, and more ruthless, than others. The use of violence for electoral gain is widespread in the world and in India.

The BJP was already in power in India from 1998 to 2004 and has been the main opposition since. Former BJP Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee had the image of everybody's favourite uncle, even though he too had been an RSS "pracharak". So had L K Advani, former deputy prime minister and home minister, who had undertaken the "rathayatra". Gujarat was known for religious riots long before the BJP or Modi. The ugly truth about India's democracy is that life is cheap here and Indian voters have long been used by politicians as expendable pawns in their battles for power.

Modi may have anti-Muslim prejudices, but that did not seem to be his primary motivation for failing to protect Muslims in 2002. Rather, it seemed to be his single-minded focus on winning by manipulating the Godhra incident and its violent aftermath to consolidate the Hindu vote. He seemed callously indifferent to the fate of the victims of this strategy. In this regard he has plenty of company in India and in other countries. Many politicians who practise the politics of hate do not necessarily hate any group personally as much as they incite their followers. Yogendra Yadav - an Indian political analyst who has entered politics - **argues** that while Modi is not the only one to indulge in authoritarianism or majoritarianism, multiple flaws of India's democracy appear to converge in him.

Logically, if Modi let Muslims in his state die in 2002 to ensure victory through Hindu consolidation, he would protect them if he needs Muslim votes in multi-cornered contests, or if he is likely to win without resorting to polarisation. Equally, if sacrificing some other group might better serve his electoral purpose, perhaps they would be at risk rather than Muslims. The cold-blooded nature of these calculations is chilling. Repugnant when practised by run-of-the-mill politicians, it seems terrifying in the hands of a man of high-ability.

There is no effective humanist opposition to this phenomenon in Indian politics.

The only bulwark might be the sheer heterogeneity of national politics in India. Modi's rise may be a troubling prospect, but the problem is bigger than Modi.

Sarmila Bose is Senior Research Associate, Centre for International Studies, Department of Politics and International Relations, University of Oxford. The views expressed in this article are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect Al Jazeera's editorial policy.

Indian Economy: Inflation at 14 Month High

Policymakers have been grappling with high prices for food staples such as onions and potatoes even after the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) raised interest rates by a quarter percentage point in each of its previous two reviews.

India is suffering from longstanding problems with infrastructure and supply chains. High food prices are also becoming a major headache for an embattled government facing elections by May next year. India's wholesale price inflation to a 14-month high in November, reinforcing expectations the central bank will have to raise interest rates again this week at a time the country's economy is flagging.

India's wholesale price index (WPI) climbed 7.52 percent in November from a year earlier, its quickest pace since September 2012, compared with 7 percent in October, the Commerce and Industry Ministry said on Monday.

Monday's data showed the food price index shot up 19.93 percent in November from a year earlier, the biggest rise since June 2010. At times, high food prices have brought down Indian governments, and they were seen as a major factor behind the drubbing suffered by the ruling Congress party in state elections held during the past month.

India and Ideology

Perry Anderson

Perry Anderson's new book, The Indian Ideology describes, India's democracy -- routinely celebrated as the world's largest -- is actually a sham. It is fatally compromised by its origins in an ant colonial struggle led by the "monolithically Hindu" Congress party, which Anderson holds largely responsible for the bloodiness of the partition of the British-ruled subcontinent in 1947. Anderson describes India's most famous leader, Mahatma ("Great Soul") Gandhi, as a crank and a "stranger" to "real intellectual exchange." Jawaharlal Nehru, Gandhi's political disciple and India's first prime minister, was a mediocrity.

And both of these upper-caste maladroits were considerably inferior to their sharpest critic, B. R. Ambedkar, the leader of the Dalits (low-caste Hindus) and the main framer of India's constitution nad Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan.

Many readers will be struck by the evidence Anderson adduces of the insidious dominance of upper-caste Hindus in every realm of social and political life and by his portrait of the primordial politics of caste and religion, which have enshrined a patrimonial state built on nepotism and dynasty worship

***Pankaj Mishra** has reviewed this book in good detail due to shortage of space it has been reproduced here in an abridged form*

In Anderson's telling, Nehru, who inherited the colonial "machinery of administration and coercion," entrenched dynastic rule, thus blighting India's political progress and failing to make an effort "to meet even quite modest requirements of social equality or justice" for the Indian poor. The much-vaunted secularism that Nehru bequeathed to India was nothing more than a cover for "Hindu confessionalism," which is enforced to this day in the Muslim-majority valley of Kashmir, where Indian troops and paramilitaries enjoy a "license to murder" that is even broader than the one their British predecessors exercised during colonial times. Yet despite these compound flaws, liberal Indian intellectuals continue to "fall over themselves in tributes to their native land,"

exalting what Anderson deems to be fabricated notions of its diversity, unity, secularism, and democracy.

Such severe criticism of India has been routine in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, Western observers ceaselessly deplored the country's deficient democracy and ineffectual protectionist economy. In the last decade, however, India's reputation in the West as a respectable counterweight to authoritarian China and an economic powerhouse in its own right has been steadily rising. Thus, Anderson's indictment of "the Indian ideology" provoked much distress and outrage among India's intelligentsia when it originally appeared last year as a series of essays in the *London Review of Books*. This reaction was at least partly a result of the fact that the Anglo-Irish author is, as the journalist Christopher Hitchens wrote in 2006, "the most polymathic, and at the same time the most profound, essayist currently wielding a pen" -- in addition to being one of the English-speaking world's foremost Marxist historians and critics.

It should be no surprise, that in his first foray into South Asian politics and history, he has sought -- and found -- evidence of delusion and self-delusion in Indian assertions of national and civilizational exceptionalism. Anderson's Indian critics have accused him of quasi-imperialist condescension, Orientalist caricature, and ignorance. But Anderson can easily swat such charges away. He has spent more time and energy than most of his Indian critics in excoriating the pretensions of the British ruling class, and he even briefly partook of the Third Worldist fervour of the 1960s. His large and varied body of work belongs to a tradition of Enlightenment universalism that both Max Weber and Karl Marx reflected in different ways. His belief in rationalism -- which presupposes that the basic laws of history can be known with certainty and that this knowledge can help bring about freedom and justice anywhere in the world -- distinguishes Anderson from those callow supremacists who condemn the East to insuperable backwardness by proclaiming that the West was, and is, best.

In any case, it would be hard to argue with many of his judgments. Anderson is unanswerable when he points to a consistent Indian pattern of silence, evasion, and distortion about India's military occupation of Kashmir and its attendant regime of extrajudicial execution, torture, and detention. *Many readers will be struck by the evidence Anderson adduces of the insidious dominance of upper-caste Hindus in every realm of social and political life and by his portrait of the*

primordial politics of caste and religion, which have enshrined a patrimonial state built on nepotism and dynasty worship. Admirers of Gandhi and Nehru will encounter many awkward facts, especially regarding their roles in the partition of India, a calamity usually blamed by Indians on British colonial administrators and Indian Muslim leaders.

But even those who assent to most of his criticisms might balk at following *Anderson to his final destination, which is to bluntly deny India much of a future in the modern world.* This world-historical pessimism is made possible largely by his reflexive distrust of religion and caste and his indifference to the distinctive characteristics of India's politics and economy. For all its lapidary elegance and caustic energy, Anderson's bleakness is a no more reliable guide to India than pro-globalization utopianism, with its cheery promises of imminent Indian superpowerdom, or than the more recent angry disillusion in the West about India's economy, an attitude that has resurrected nineteenth-century European images of India's incorrigible backwardness and venality.

Faith in our Fathers

Students of Marxism's history in Asia will perhaps be less surprised than Indian liberals by some aspects of Anderson's critique, particularly his caustic appraisals of Gandhi and Nehru. In 1939, Leon Trotsky summed up a widespread Marxist suspicion when he denounced Gandhi as an ally of bourgeois capitalism -- "a fake leader and a false prophet." The problem, for Trotsky and other communists, was that Gandhi had appropriated the left's form of popular ant colonialism but opposed the Marxist trajectory of proletarian revolution. Marx had seen India as a morass of superstitious, caste-ridden village communities, which industrialization might have made fit for revolution. But Gandhi, deeply hostile to scientism and industrialism, actually advocated the re-creation of self-sufficient village communities.

Anderson's assessment of Nehru is also fairly standard Marxist fare, but Anderson brings to it a special vigor and personal distaste. Nehru was often dismissed by American cold warriors as a pro-Soviet socialist. But as Anderson points out, the "conservative coalition" of upper-caste Hindus who led the ant colonial movement "neither required nor welcomed an awakening of the poor." *When unable to secure hegemony through consent, Nehru and his upper-caste-*

dominated state resorted to coercion, repressing India's minority populations through military rule and draconian laws. In this Marxist vision of India's revolution, the leaders of the Congress party enlisted the masses in the struggle only to ignore them after independence, instead manipulating the resources of the state to advance the interests of their own castes, classes, and communities.

Anderson writes that a "rigid social hierarchy was the basis of [India's] original democratic stability," in the first three decades of independence. This arrangement was altered by the rise of anti-Congress Dalit political parties in the 1980s, most visibly in the state of Uttar Pradesh, where one of them has periodically held power ever since. *The unleashing of Dalit energies has also restored Ambedkar to his rightful place in India's political and intellectual history. Anderson is a forceful supporter of the scholarly Dalit leader, who was the main author of India's constitution before breaking with his uniformly upper-caste associates. At the same time, the secular rationalist in Anderson cannot endorse the "compartmentalized identity politics" of Ambedkar's latter-day followers, including politicians such as Mayawati, formerly the chief minister of Uttar Pradesh, who have become known primarily for corruption and for building grand public monuments to themselves. These prodigal retailers of collective dignity seek not "to abolish caste, as Ambedkar had wanted, but to affirm it," Anderson writes.*

Anderson argues that an even greater impediment to India's progress is the continuing role of religious faith in politics. Postcolonial India has yet to recover from Gandhi's injection of "a massive dose of religion -- mythology, symbology, theology -- into the national movement." The Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the emergence of which in the 1980s reshaped Indian politics and culture, is merely the latest symptom of that initial contamination. In Anderson's eyes, Hinduism is written into India's genetic code. But India's primary religion contains a broader range of practices and beliefs than Anderson assumes. Amorphous and protean, Hinduism cannot be used for prolonged political mobilization on confessional grounds alone, as the BJP has discovered; whatever primeval furies it evokes must be combined with rational calculations based on other factors, such as class and caste loyalties.

Anderson does not see how Hindu nationalism has become intertwined with economic liberalization. Beginning in the early 1990s, the growth and opening up

of India's economy triggered a middle-class demand for ruthlessly technocratic leaders, along with militant disaffection among those left, or pushed, behind by the state and private business. More recently, bourgeois elite, which feels besieged by the increasingly assertive have-nots, has begun casting around for sturdier leaders to replace its tainted idol, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, whose economic reforms, once much loved, are now widely regarded as populist sops to the poor. *These groups, along with the country's corporate titans, hope that India's next prime minister will be the Hindu nationalist chief minister of Gujarat, Narendra Modi, who is best known for his suspected complicity in the murder of more than a thousand Muslims during riots in the state in 2002.* Owing to these accusations, the U.S. government has barred Modi from entering the United States. But despite (or perhaps because of) his condemnation abroad and at home, Modi, who has presided over strong economic growth in his home state, has leveraged his reputation as a tough guy and transformed himself into a no-nonsense champion of India's long-overdue economic modernization.

A Million Mutinies

. India's communist parties have frequently held power in two major Indian states, Kerala and West Bengal, since the late 1950s. Since 2004, they have propped up Singh's coalition government, exacting his support for social welfare policies as the price for their backing. Meanwhile, the militant Maoist (or Naxalite) peasant movement that began in West Bengal in the late 1960s has mutated, after a long gestation, into an uprising against mining corporations in central India, and the Maoists remain so prevalent -- they are present in one-third of India's districts -- that Singh has described them as India's "greatest internal security threat." The country also faces a range of other secular-minded agitators, from farmers fighting their dispossession to make way for big dam projects to a movement to carve out a new state in a neglected region of southern India called Telangana; fierce protests, featuring more than a dozen acts of self-immolation, recently forced New Delhi to accede to the movement's demands and begin the process of establishing the new state.

A Marxist examining this variety of political movements might conclude that the contradictions that emerged in 1947 between a bourgeois-ruled Indian state and the mass of India's people -- especially the poor, the low caste, and minority groups -- have been rendered starker by the new inequalities of global capitalism.

Uneven growth seems likely to lead to greater fragmentation and regionalization, especially as the ruling elite loses cohesion and credibility. Certainly, the current clamor by minorities for more small states and greater autonomy is likely only to get louder. Such ferment confirms India's democracy to be an extraordinarily volatile experiment, one that leftists as well as liberals ought to closely monitor. But the rapid decline of, and challenges to, the central state's legitimacy fails to draw Anderson's attention.

Anderson correctly argues that India's independence, expedited by British enfeeblement during World War II, and did not result in the widespread provision of public goods, such as primary education and health care. India's bourgeois rulers also failed to achieve control of domestic politics through either consent or coercion. As for the Chinese, they founded their republic through success on the battlefield. The victory of the People's Liberation Army, as Anderson has written, "far from leaving the economy and society ravaged, delivered recovery and stability. Inflation was mastered; corruption banished; supplies resumed. In the countryside, landlordism was abolished. . . . The People's Republic, embodying patriotic ideals and social discipline, entered life enjoying a degree of popular assent that the Soviet Union never knew."

Meanwhile, more than a century after Marx warned against them and hoped for their eradication by modern science and industry, caste consciousness and religious belief remain sources of bitter division in India and deprive the country of the cohesion and collective energy necessary for national reconstruction. As Weber defined it, true modernity is "a world robbed of gods," and in Anderson's surprisingly Weberian view, India's revolutionaries failed to grasp this as thoroughly as China's, who carried out "a complete demolition of scriptural Confucianism, which had been the ruling doctrine of China's socio-political order and the moral framework of educated life since Han times. Within a few years, virtually nothing was left of it: an achievement no opponents of any comparable creed, world religions -- Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist -- occupying a similar position in the ideological firmament of their civilizations, have ever matched."

Anderson sees both the ineffectually liberal and the overtly feudal and invariably sectarian-minded Indian leaders who inherited an independent state from Gandhi and Nehru as having botched their country's progress. Meanwhile, their Chinese

counterparts, inspired by a Leninist ethos, have remained “radical, disciplined, imaginative -- capable at once of tactical patience and prudent experimentation, and of the boldest initiatives and most dramatic switches of direction.”

Anderson accuses postcolonial Indian intellectuals of peddling an “Indian ideology” infused with their views of India’s founders as awe-inspiring men who led a triumphant revolution and presided over a formidable state apparatus. But his paean to Chinese leaders exhibits a similar romanticism. Perhaps this reflects the ideological disorientation of the early twenty-first century. Or perhaps Anderson’s contrasting views on India and China are consistent with his praise for Fukuyama’s “end of history” thesis and with his own admiration for the ideological insouciance of his neoliberal adversaries. Convinced of a new inevitability in human affairs, Anderson admires China’s technocratic elites for confidently charting their country’s progress to capitalist modernity. And he cannot help but dislike an Indian ruling class that, lurching between a hollow liberalism and a debilitating Hindu confessionalism, fails to get with it.

Iron Cages

The relentless harshness of *The Indian Ideology* suggests that, as far as Anderson is concerned, “populations as steeped in the supernatural as those of South Asia” may find it impossible to enter Weber’s “iron cage” -- or “the Golden Straitjacket,” in Friedman’s phrase -- of modernity. It may actually be harder for observers of South Asia to liberate themselves from the iron cage of Western interpretative categories. Anderson, too, assesses India, and its potential for even incremental change, by reference to the sociopolitical ingredients it lacks as opposed to the ones it has. He laments that in India, “caste, not class, and alas, least of all the working-class, is what counts most in popular life.” It seems as though Anderson believes that caste cannot be a viable basis for social solidarity and political change. But had he shifted his gaze southward from Uttar Pradesh’s self-monumentalizing Dalit leaders, he would have noticed how low-caste Hindus in the state of Tamil Nadu, although also mired in personality politics, have created a social and political movement that has won power and turned the state into a national exemplar of social welfares.

Getting real on Siachen

Asif Ezdi

This article was written in May 2012 by Asif Ezdi a reputable former ambassador who is highly respected for his vision and realism. This is being reproduced well after one and a half years.

It is now clear that Nawaz's suggestion for unilateral concessions on Siachen seems not to have been a one-time aberration. On May 6, 2012 he called for the immediate, unilateral abolition of the "visa regime" between Pakistan and India. Those who recall Nawaz's speech at a SAFMA seminar last August would notice that his statements on Siachen and on abolishing visas for the Indians are part of a pattern. Since he is now the Prime minister of Pakistan would he follow the pattern or has he become wiser, maturer and more realistic?

The tragedy of the Gayari landslide has generated a spate of comments in Pakistan on the huge financial and environmental costs of stationing soldiers under unbelievably inhospitable conditions in an area of dubious strategic importance. Some of our "analysts" and political leaders have also proposed "solutions" to the dispute that are quite divorced from reality. The top honours must go to Nawaz Sharif, who called for a unilateral withdrawal from Siachen. He later tried unconvincingly to explain it away. He was of course not the only one. But it is a far more serious matter when such a proposal comes from the leader of the second-largest political party in the country and a two-time prime minister who hopes to return to that job in the next election.

Besides, Nawaz's suggestion for unilateral concessions on Siachen seems not to have been a one-time aberration. On May 6, he called for the immediate, unilateral abolition of the "visa regime" between Pakistan and India. Those who recall Nawaz's speech at a SAFMA seminar last August would notice that his statements on Siachen and on abolishing visas for the Indians are part of a pattern.

Reflecting a popular view, former foreign secretary Najmuddin Shaikh wrote in

an article two weeks ago that the dispute over Siachen was one of the two items on the agenda of the bilateral dialogue-the other being Sir Creek-on which progress could be made quickly, the so-called low-hanging fruit that could be plucked immediately. He suggested that the main obstacle to a Siachen settlement was India's fear, however ill-founded, especially after Kargil, that Pakistan might "renege upon or breach" an agreement on mutual troop withdrawal from Siachen and that this possibility had made the Indian army extremely reluctant to leave the glacier.

If that was the reason for India's inflexibility on Siachen, a solution could still have been found. But India's real considerations, as articulated by several official and unofficial spokesmen of the Indian establishment, are quite different.

First, in the opinion of many Indian defence analysts, Siachen is a great strategic prize because of its location at the Pakistan-India-China tri-junction. India's control of the Soltoro Ridge, in this view, prevents Pakistan and China from joining up through the Karakoram Pass at Xaidulla (Shahidullah) on the Kashgar-Xigatse road, the main Chinese route between Xinjiang and Tibet that runs through Aksai Chin. Such a linkup between Pakistan and China, in the imagination of India's armchair strategists, could threaten India's control of Laddakh. Besides, the possession of the Soltoro Ridge also gives India strategic high ground over Gilgit-Baltistan. Vikram Sood, a former RAW chief, writes that the "China factor" was not so evident in 1984 when India seized Siachen, but it is much more important now in view of the larger Chinese footprint in the area and China's "strategic interest" in Gilgit-Baltistan. In this connection, Sood points to the widening of the Karakoram Highway and reported plans of a rail link with Pakistan and an oil and gas pipeline from Gwadar to Xinjiang.

Second, India's possession of Siachen strengthens India's hand in any eventual Kashmir settlement with Pakistan based on the status quo, in keeping with the maxim that "possession is nine-tenths of the law." Siachen should therefore be the "last issue on the table, not the first."

Third, Indira Col, in the northern-most part of the Soltoro Ridge, directly overlooks the Shaksgam valley "that was illegally ceded by Pakistan to China" in the 1963 border agreement. India's control of this ridge, in the words of one Indian expert, enables India to "legitimately and effectively dispute the illegal

Chinese presence there.”

Most of these arguments are far-fetched and some are quite fanciful, but together they constitute a formidable obstacle to a settlement. Kanwal Sibal, a former foreign secretary, asked rhetorically in a recent article: “Why withdraw...and lose available defence depth?” Evidently, the concept of “strategic depth” is not a Pakistani monopoly. Sood also warns that India should “not repeat the strategic mistakes of the past, like halting our advance at Uri in 1948 or not capturing Skardu; or giving up Haji Pir in 1966; or returning 93,000 troops and territory in 1972.”

The next round of talks on the Siachen issue will be held in June in Islamabad. The positions of the two sides remain far apart and little progress can be expected. As the army chief has pointed out, the Indian position has hardened. In addition to the “authentication” of troop positions on the ground, India is now also demanding a “demarcation” of the Line of Control in the Siachen sector. The Indian aim evidently is to get a legitimisation of its occupation of Siachen in violation of the Simla Agreement.

While formally denying that there had been any hardening of the Indian stand, Indian defence minister A K Antony has in fact not only confirmed the substance of Kayani’s remarks but gone beyond that. In a statement in the Indian parliament last Tuesday, Antony declared that the two sides had to agree first on “authentication” of the respective troop positions along the Soltoro Ridge, then on the “delineation” of these positions on the map and finally on the “demarcation” of the agreed border on the ground. This, Antony said, was India’s long-standing national position, not government position.

Given this stand, no movement is expected in the next round of talks. As The Financial Times of London wrote, hopes of new thinking in India on Siachen seem as remote as the prospects of pulling anyone out alive from Gayari. Pakistani analysts who speak of Siachen being a low-hanging fruit need to wake up. In negotiations with India, there is no such thing.

The question for our policymakers is: What is to be done? The answer is not difficult. First, we need to realise that unilateral concessions such as those Pakistan has made on trade with India and of the type that Nawaz has been

pushing for on Siachen and the visa regime will get us nowhere. Diplomacy is about give-and-take in a way that satisfies all parties. Our leaders need to learn this elementary lesson. Even at this stage, it is not too late to review our decision to grant MFN status to India without reciprocity on the part of Delhi. Getting freedom for Khalil Chishti is not enough. The least we should demand as a precondition for opening our market to Indian goods is that India first dismantles its non-tariff barriers against Pakistan.

Second, we should raise in international forums the issue of the environmental damage being caused by the Indian deployment in Siachen. It is a serious threat to the glaciers which feed the Indus River, Pakistan's lifeline. Pakistan has to bear the environmental and health consequences of the human and military waste that the Indian deployment produces. Every single drop of water from the Siachen glacier eventually flows into Pakistan. As an upper riparian, albeit through illegal occupation, India is under international obligation not to pollute the water flowing downstream. India's recent experimentation with geothermal energy in the area adds a new and extremely serious dimension to this problem. To make our case effectively, we should collect data to measure the damage that India is causing and to quantify India's financial liability for making it good.

Third, we should install an avalanche forecasting system in the area where our troops are stationed. There can be no absolute protection, but we can identify areas which are prone to a heightened risk of landslides or avalanches so that we can avoid stationing our soldiers there. That is the least that we should be doing for those who are defending our borders in that desolate and dangerous terrain.

The Crisis And Challenge Of Dalit-Bahujans

Braj Ranjan Mani

There is no competing cultural vision from below for the mind and heart of India. Dalit-bahujans are still absent in the contest of ideas, policies and visions—the fundamentals on which democratic competition takes place. This paralysis of the mind is linked to their systemic cultural, intellectual and spiritual destruction. Without reference to history one cannot find even poor answers to the complex problems that keep them divided and demoralized, but the corruption and capitulation of the current dalit-OBC leadership has also aggravated the crisis. There is a burning need to renew and reconstruct an ideology—attempted in the past by Phule, Ambedkar and Periyar—that can pave the way to a broad-based unity for social reconstruction.

Constancy of change is the basic principle of life. Heraclitus made the illusion of permanence clear in the sixth century bce, and a little later Buddha articulated the same in his theory of dependent origin. As ‘everything changes but change itself’, it is not surprising that social change is the central tendency in human societies. But the direction of change is largely determined by aspirations and visions of change agents. This implies that things can change a great deal, and yet the social order can remain more or less the same, since the people in the vanguard of change have a vested interest to retain the established hierarchy. Thus, there is a crucial difference between change and social change, development and social development.

Development and Social Development Are Not the Same Thing

While development is a necessary condition of social development, the latter involves the specific direction of development that can ensure larger social justice. Symbolically speaking, development can take a handful of people to the moon—it can produce billionaires like the Ambanis and Mittals with their private planes and palaces while the many remain hungry and homeless—but social development takes place through active participation and conscious choice of majority of citizens. Based on people's voice and choice, social development is co-terminus with uplifting the society as a whole, especially the disadvantaged

who have been left behind or kept suppressed, historically and culturally.

In other words, development is value-free, while social development is value-loaded and value-driven. Social development cannot take place unless inclusive values and visions become the driving force of polity and society. That is why, when we talk of material and economic development, we should ask first who are at the centre of change, and what are their values and visions. For, development does not bring development in a similar way to everyone—many are left behind or hardly affected or even turned into victims of development.

Unfortunately, the *chosen few* who have ruled India since Independence under the benign banner of democracy have by and large concentrated on development, and not social development. As Meghnad Desai candidly stated recently, 'The Indian State can deliver a nuclear bomb and launch satellites but not universal primary education and decent public health. This is not an accident. It is a choice made by the elite who have been in power for 60 years and reflects their values.' I am quoting Desai since similar plain speaking by any dalit-bahujan scholar is simply ignored or dismissed by the caste elites as 'sectarian'.

Indian society lacks a very basic element, which is present in most societies. This is the equality of respect, the basic idea that all human beings have equal status. Hindu society is caste society and caste denies the simple idea of status equality. In class societies, there is inequality of income and wealth but once feudalism disappeared, there was no status inequality. In the US, race was central to the denial of status equality, but that was fixed by the struggle for civil rights. India has adopted the political equality of 'one adult one vote'. But in social terms, caste inequalities add to class inequalities. The Indian State has been mainly manned by upper-caste elites and they do not consider the lower orders deserving of education and health. (Meghnad Desai, 'The Hindu Rate of Backwardness', *The Indian Express*, 28 July 2013).

Desai also stresses quite rightly that the Indian state has failed to deliver basic things like health and education not just during for the past 20 years since the liberalization, but even during the 'halcyon days of Nehru-Gandhi socialism'. 'Indian progressives love to talk about socialism but what they mean by it is very different from what it means in the West. Western socialism used the State to help

poor masses. Indian socialists used the state to project elite power' (ibid.).

As I have underlined elsewhere, Pandit Nehru espoused socialist rhetoric but allowed the dominant groups to appropriate the developmental state, industrialization and public institutions. The investment priorities of the successive Five Years Plans under Nehru and his successors were enormously biased in favour of upper castes. A nexus of brahmanic-feudal-bureaucratic influence reinforced the hold of the traditional power structure through manipulations of the newly introduced participatory democracy. During the 'socialist' development, the focus was not on mass education and mass health but on building big dams and steel mines and machines to build machines that catered to the needs of special interests and big business. Private interests thus benefitted the most from the public sector. In the realm of higher education, state-funded universities, institutions, and the centres of excellence like Indian Institutes of Technology and Indian Institutes of Management were turned into new fiefdoms of the privileged. By and large, these institutions educated the elites on government subsidies, equipping them with the intellectual capital that they were to use in the age of privatization that began in the early 1990s with the economic liberalization. Now, the same elements that reaped the most from Nehru-Gandhi's state socialism are blaming the 'socialist era' for India's backwardness and pushing for the aggressive privatization of everything (from natural resources to education) as a panacea for mass illiteracy, mass hunger and all other problems afflicting India.

We see the ruling set making a song and dance about the market and technology as a great liberating force for everyone. The reality is, no technology or economics can empower the suppressed in a hierarchical society unless they are driven by the ethics of inclusiveness as the measure of human progress. Social development can only be ensured by the political and philosophical task of evolving an inclusive vision—and making them a lived reality through inclusive institutions. As Ambedkar pointed out, 'History shows that where ethics and economics come in conflict, victory is always with economics. Vested interests have never been known to have willingly divested themselves unless there was sufficient force to compel them.' This insight—that real transformation does not come without a decisive struggle between the privileged and commoners—has been validated by a new global research on power, poverty and prosperity.

Inclusive economic and political institutions do not emerge by themselves. They are often the outcome of significant conflict between elites resisting economic growth and political change and those wishing to limit the economic and political power of existing elites. Inclusive institutions emerge during critical junctures, ...when a series of factors weaken the hold of the elites in power, make their opponent stronger, and create incentives for the formation of a pluralistic society. (D. Acemoglu and J. Robinson, *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity and Poverty* , 2012)

No Competing Indian Vision from Below

The tragedy of India is, despite all the changes, the upper-caste elites remain the norm-setting groups (by virtue of being highly educated, highly manipulative, highly rewarded) and the majority of Indians—dalit-advantaged, OBCs and Muslims—still face many kinds of overt or covert deprivation, disadvantage and exclusion. Reservations, subsidies, grants, cultural tokenism, and the rhetoric of democracy and justice notwithstanding, the basic economics and politics of caste remain intact. (For a comprehensive illustration of this point, see Chapter 2—‘Understanding the Modernization of Oppressive Tradition’—of my new work *Knowledge and Power*.) Though the castes are increasingly getting separated from their former assigned tasks, the link between privilege and high caste status remains strong. And so remains the relation between low caste status and assignment of most laborious and non-intellectual tasks. In its contemporary reinvented forms (which may not be often easily visible), caste retains its sinister salience in the new India, making a mockery of its democracy. As Perry Anderson (*The Indian Ideology* , 2012) has brilliantly pointed out, the role of caste in democratic politics has changed, yet ‘what would not change [is] its structural significance as the ultimate secret of Indian democracy’.

The most demoralizing thing is: the dalit-bahujans, despite a longstanding struggle against their social degradation, have not been able to construct a unified vision (due to several external compulsions as well as their own contradictions and capitulations) that can bring about a significant turnaround in the near future.

The three mainstream or competing national visions about (the past and future of) India are essentially elitist—envisioned by the upper-caste minds. The first is cultural pluralism (*unity-in-diversity*) represented by the Congress. Hidden

behind this show of multiculturalism, the Congress promotes an idea of India in which the brahmanic core of caste culture and tradition forms the centre around which the diversities of castes, ethnicities and religions are accommodated. The second idea of India is cultural nationalism constructed around Hinduism or Hindutva—represented by the BJP-RSS. Hindutva is nothing but a code name of militant brahmanism: its valorization of Veda-Purana and Varnashrama Dharma and its pretence of 'Hindu unity' against 'alien' Muslims and Christians are basically oriented to keep the dalit-bahujans in traditional subjugation. (For illustration of these points, see my *Debrahmanising History* .) The third ideological-political formation—not as powerful as the first two, and confined to specific regions and states—is represented by the fragmented communist, socialist and regional parties, and can be termed cultural federalism. This is an ideology of seeing the Indian nation a confederation of various ethnicities, languages and subcultures. More liberal and open-ended than the first two, it lays stress on decentralization and federalism as a necessary condition for national unity.

Political parties dominated by the dalit-advocates and OBCs—the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, Samajwadi Party, Bahujan Samaj Party, Rashtriya Janata Dal, Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, and so forth—neither have a coherent cultural – national formulation nor an all-India presence; willy-nilly, they follow one of the three dominant formations. We may quibble on this or that, but the stark reality is: dalit-bahujans do not as yet have a competing national vision for the future of India.

It has been correctly observed that Congress is not a party but a system (we should be grateful to Rajni Kothari for this insight); and that whichever party comes to power looks like Congress. Indeed, if we see closely, the BJP, sans its Muslim-phobia, looks like the B-team of Congress, and vice versa. Between them, they have developed a communal – secular discourse that subsumes all national space, eliding or evading real issues concerning education, health and empowerment of the vast majority. Within this binary opposition, all other sources of conflicts, contradictions and social inequalities are glossed over, and the perspective of dalit-bahujans (represented in the ideas of Phule, Ambedkar and Periyar) given a quiet burial. As both (the Congress and BJP-RSS) share an innate hostility to the Phule-Ambedkarite visions of politics, culture, and a casteless reconstruction, the Congress' brand of secularism (which is little more than a façade for the soft brahmanism) never fails to foster the invidious Hindutva of the

RSS-BJP. (The Congress opens the locks of the disputed Babri Masjid-Ramjanma Bhumi and the BJP demolishes the mosque; the Congress butchers the Sikhs in Delhi and the BJP organizes the anti-Muslim pogrom in Gujarat; one exalts the Gandhian Hinduism and the other swears by the Savarkarite Hindutva.) Beyond the secular – communal quibbling, there is no genuine policy competitiveness between them: both stand by the status quo of polity and the privatization – corporatization of economy. This 'national politics' serves the entrenched upper-caste interests very well as it keeps hidden their politics of discrimination in every institution and structure like governance and administration, legal and judicial system, political economy and infrastructure, management of natural resources, education and culture, thereby denying life with dignity to the majority of Indians.

The point is, the non-emergence of a viable dalit-bahujan vision for social reconstruction is one of the main reasons for India's huge democratic deficit. Earlier, Phule, Periyar and Ambedkar dared to construct a dalit-bahujan ideology for egalitarian change. But that could not evolve due to various reasons, including the crucial contradictions of castes and regions, into a unified all-India ideology. One can surmise this in the Gramscian terms thus: Dominance through political – moral leadership of the traditionally privileged castes from Ram Mohun Roy and Dayananda – Vivekananda to Gandhi – Nehru became after Independence almost hegemonic through the state power and procedural democracy. Resistance from below represented by the likes of Phule, Ambedkar, Periyar—through war of positions and movements against the upper castes as the primary source of injustice and exploitation—could not evolve into a revolution or counter-hegemony.

'Cultural nationalism' forged in resistance to British rule gave the upper castes a unique opportunity to present their petty interest as national interest. Hidden behind the deceptive labels of traditional Hinduism or modern secularism, the new brahmanism was equated with nationalism and the shaper of Indian unity. Thus, a brahmanic-bourgeois cultural revolution accompanied the freedom that came in 1947, though the mainstream social science keeps this aspect hidden by keeping the focus exclusively on the external—colonial—sources of oppression.

The Betrayal by the Dalit-OBC leadership

After Independence, the Congress reigned supreme and the social justice

movement of dalits and OBCs revolved around reservation and electoral politics. At the best, the politics of dalit-bahujans remained tethered to group representation, not structural transformation. Despite the anti-caste rhetoric and name-dropping of Phule, Ambedkar and Periyar, their social radicalism and passion for cultural transformation were seldom renewed or pursued. 'Empowerment' took place in the mould of Sanskritization or Gandhianization at the cost of broader alliances, ideological as well as organizational. Despite the felt need for transcending divisiveness, inherent as well as promoted (by the Congress, BJP and other brahmanic parties), the dalit-bahujan leadership could not thwart the upper-caste designs (through promoting sectarian interests and attitudes) to sow and strengthen the seeds of discord so that the possibility of larger unity got destroyed. Social mobility, economic uplift, and political empowerment of a section of dalit-bahujans took place without threatening the existing hierarchies—as the fundamentals (the kernel of the caste system that reproduces hierarchies) were left intact.

The dalit-bahujan assertion in 1990s, especially in the northern states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, soon lost its steam. The leaders who rose on the crest of reservation politics were not interested in changing the established order but anyhow clinging to their newfound power and pelf. Their politics did not attack the hierarchical order but merely caused a shift in status and privileges. This empty struggle against caste allowed the upper castes to retain, even strengthen, their dominance in the changed socio-political set-up in the wake of liberalization and privatization with the charade of 'deepening democracy' and economic trickle-down.

Contrary to the popular notion of 'democratic upsurge' of the marginalized majority, the fundamental objective of dismantling the caste system (that earlier animated dalit-bahujan movements)—was 'given up in the wake of the crumbs dropped to them in the form of material benefits.' As T. K. Oommen has pointed out in a recent article, 'While this certainly did facilitate limited upward mobility in the secular context, the status system anchored in the iron law of the ritual hierarchy remains intact even now. Unless this is interrogated and smashed the ultimate emancipation of dalit-bahujans will remain aborted.'

This is the crux of the matter. Hindu society, as we saw earlier, is a caste society and caste denies the idea of status equality. Moreover, caste is a system of graded inequality (not just inequality) and exploitation. Many castes among a single class

(occupying a similar position within the division of labour) fragment and divide that class, making unity impossible. Graded hierarchy and graded exploitation embody a built-in mechanism, which guarantees the perpetuation of the social system and prevent the rise of united discontent against discrimination of caste and class. Thus, the most glaring contradiction of dalit-bahujans is the same thing that they share—caste-class discrimination is also the thing that divides them.

As there are important and rampant contradictions even among the subjugated castes, especially between dalits and OBCs, the lowered castes have to honestly recognize and resolve them. In this the lead for reconciliation and unity for a joint struggle must come from castes higher in hierarchy; thus, the OBCs must reach out to dalit and more exploited castes and communities. But most of OBC politicians, obsessed as they are with petty power politics, don't want to grasp the complexity and contradictions of caste, let alone resolve them. They do not even have the vocabulary to reach out to more suppressed communities.

On the whole, the OBC politicians have shown little imaginative commitment to egalitarianism and democracy in the sense of making society more just and sharing dignity and power with dalits, adivasis and Muslim masses. The dalit politicians hardly fare better. The pitfalls of blind identity politics, competitive indulgence in corruption, and bitter fragmentations along caste-subcaste lines among the dalit-OBC parties are now out in the open. The SP-BSP bitter parting of ways, Kanimozhi-Laloo's imprisonment in the corruption cases, and the shameless silence of entire dalit-bahujan leadership over the acquittal of all the accused of Laxmanpur-Bathe massacre (in which 61 dalit-subalterns were brutally killed by the upper-caste goons), to take just three telling examples, make this abundantly clear.

The urban middle class (which consists mainly of upper castes) often accuses dalit-OBC politicians of perpetuating caste-based politics. But what hides and festers behind the caste politics is little more than *amoral familism*—treating the family as the only realm of trust and empowerment: concentrating and centralizing all power in the family. Karunanidhi, Mulayam, Laloo, and Ramvilas Paswan do not trust their own caste people, let alone the larger communities of OBCs or dalits; they do not trust anyone beyond a tight family circle. (When Laloo was implicated in the fodder scam and had to resign as the chief minister of Bihar, he did not bring in any OBC or even a fellow Yadav stalwart, let alone an

able Muslim or a dalit leader, to succeed him, he brought in his apolitical, semi-literate wife and gave her the 'throne'. But why blame only the 'clowning glory of Bihar'? Are the sinister dynastic sagas of Mulayam, Karunanidhi and Paswan any less disgusting?) Their venal power politics, ideological bankruptcy, and a complete lack of empathy for the suffering dalit-bahujans now stand thoroughly exposed. It is these gentlemen (and their counterparts everywhere) who have given national politics on a platter to the Congress and BJP which represent two sides of the brahmanical politics at the highest level. Denial of all this and defence of their perfidious politics profit no one except the most corrupt and the most compromised.

The upshot of all this is: dalit-bahujans are still absent in the contest of ideas, policies and visions—the fundamentals on which democratic competition takes place. There is no intellectual-political framework in sight within which dalit-bahujans can come together. *The project of critiquing and dismantling the caste system—started by Phule, Ambedkar and Periyar—has practically been given up for crumbs from the state and its institutions.* There is no serious engagement with the new matrix and mechanism of dominance in the wake of massive material-technological changes brought by modernization, urbanization and marketization. There is no attempt to create a new political imaginary that can challenge the seductive myths of meritocracy, equal opportunity, and upward mobility. Similarly, in this age of privatization, obsession with some rag-tag welfarism, narrow reservationism, and cultural tokenism is proving counter-productive. The extremely unrepresentative character of judiciary, bureaucracy, the army, the media and academia continues. Affirmative action in private sector remains a pipe dream. In the realm of education, its increasing commercialization are reinforcing a new caste-class system, whose worst victims are none other than the dalit-bahujans.

Imperative of fresh cultural – political imaginary

Summarizing, there have been ideas and movements in history from the days of Buddha to our own to cast away the chains of subjugation (which has resulted in some social mobility and changes), but the subjugation—multiple and cumulative, hidden or reflected in the contemporary surveys and statistics—remains. Unless the dalit-advocates and OBCs grasp the reasons behind this—especially the bi-dimensional (secular as well as religious, and thus all-pervasive) nature of Indian

status system anchored in the graded caste hierarchy and its nexus with gender hierarchy and interrogate the entire system from a liberating perspective, they cannot forge an effective ideology and struggle for an exploitation-free society.

Arguably, the greatest obstacle in the understanding of systemic domination and reproduction of caste and class, despite the incendiary role of some dalit-bahujan minds, is the lack of critical education among the disadvantaged majority, and their continued and near-total absence from the process of production and dissemination of knowledge. The roots of cumulative dominance and cumulative demoralization can be traced to the historical exclusion of the shudra and atishudra castes from receiving any education and its manifold consequences. We cannot grasp the paralysis of the mind of dalit-bahujans without grasping their systemic cultural, social, intellectual and spiritual destruction under the system of caste and untouchability. Without reference to history we cannot find even poor answers to the extremely complex problems we face today. A cutting-edge understanding of the larger dominant paradigm—the long-standing political and intellectual dominance of caste and its consequences—remains the challenge. This cannot be done without overcoming the internalization of caste values and the closed mindset of the dalit-bahujans, especially the OBCs. The imperative to be clear about the dalit-bahujan fundamentals and priorities of politics cannot be overstressed. There is a burning need to renew and reconstruct a dalit-bahujan ideology—nurtured in the earlier era by the likes of Phule, Ambedkar and Peiyar—that can pave the way to a unity for social reconstruction.

Braj Ranjan Mani is the author of Debrahmanising History: Dominance and Resistance in Indian Society (2005). Manohar has recently published Mani's important new work Knowledge and Power: A Discourse for Transformation .

The Great Kashmir Wall

Abdul Majid Zargar

Military occupation of Kashmir by 700,000 troops, intimidation, violence,, murder, rapes and social strangulation and now a great Indian Wall to divide Kashmir is in the offing. Building walls and iron-fisted approaches are bound to build pressure over the Kashmiris, who already are pushed to the wall. This increased pressure will manifest itself into another intifada and rebellion against the occupiers. When will India learn that Kashmir needs a soft and constructive approach keeping in view the aspirations of the Kashmiris and existing UN Resolutions.

India now appears all set to partition Jammu & Kashmir by metes & bounds by erecting a 10-metre high wall – First along its 197 KM stretch of boundary with Pakistan and later along the Line of control in J&K. If the media reports are to be believed, Work has already begun on the proposed partition wall. Land stands identified and revenue papers have been processed for a formal no-objection certificate to be obtained from the state government. *The proposed wall will be 135 feet wide which means that it will be higher and wider than both the Berlin Wall and the serpentine barrier that Tel Aviv has constructed to usurp occupied territories in Palestine.* It will pass through 118 villages in Jammu sector alone. On the other side (Pakistan side) of the wall, a trench of several feet depth will be excavated-similar to one witnessed along the Outer wall of Red Fort in New-Delhi. The State Govt. has adopted a stoic silence on the issue. The proposed wall will be in flagrant violation to UN resolutions on J&K issue.

A clarification at the outset will be in order though. India calls that portion of the Border as “International Border” which demarcates the State of Jammu & Kashmir with Pakistan’s Sialkot sector. It is a misnomer. Given the disputed nature of whole of J&K State, recognized internationally, this portion can never be called International Border but only a working boundary till the resolution of the dispute.

India, Pakistan & Jammu and Kashmir already stand divided by a barrier erected by India that consists of double-row fencing and concertina wire eight to twelve

feet (2.4–3.7 m) in height, electrified and connected to a network of motion sensors, thermal imaging devices, lighting systems and alarms. India's fresh bid to construct a long wall along the divided border is a sign of regressive nostalgia.

History is replete with instances where walls have been built to preserve occupied lands but without any success. The Romans built Hadrian's Wall in England to keep the Picots out and the East Germans built the Berlin wall to prevent its people from meeting people on the other side. The paranoid regime in Israel constructed a number of walls in a span of six decades. And it plans many more protective walls" in future. Similarly there are walls which separate Americans from Mexicans. The success of these walls is for anybody to see. The Berlin wall fell like a pack of cards & occupation of Palestine has not made the citizens of 'Israel' any safer than before.

Good fences or walls have never made good policy, just as they have never made good neighbours. In 221 BC Chinese emperor, Qin Shi Huang ordered the construction of a wall to guard China's territorial gains against the land claims of the Xiongn people from Mongolia, who claimed the Chinese had stolen their land & sought its return. It started a great bloodbath & left a bitter taste among various tribes of the time. When the Great Wall of China was finally finished in the 16th Century - the construction of which claimed over 3,000 lives - it did little to prevent the Ming Dynasty from keeping out the Manchus, who nonetheless overthrew the government.

By constructing a wall as planned, India will only convert itself into a ghetto-state. At best it could be a strong & armed ghetto but a ghetto nevertheless. It cannot attain peace by erecting barricades, how-so-ever long & strong these may be which can only be achieved by mending fences with its neighbours. And to achieve peace it is imperative that India takes concrete steps with Pakistan to solve Kashmir problem in its historical perspective.

The author is a practicing chartered Accountant. E-mail

atabdulmajidzargar@gmail.com

The robbing class of Pakistan

Asif Ezdi

At a meeting with businessmen and industrialists on November 28, the prime minister announced with great fanfare what was billed as an economic revival package for the country. In the background of the podium from which Nawaz spoke was a large banner proclaiming “new facilities for industrialisation”. But the speech was devoted not so much to the promotion of industry as to yet another amnesty for tax cheats, and a chance for them to launder their black money.

Nawaz promised that those who invest their undeclared and illegally acquired wealth in a selected group of industries – green-field construction projects, livestock, captive power plants, Thar coal and mining in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa – would be exempt from any investigation about the source of the money. This concession would not be available on funds generated from drug trafficking, terrorist acts and money-laundering. But those who earn money by committing ‘lesser’ crimes such as those under the country’s penal code would benefit from the exemption.

In addition, the prime minister also promised exemption from penalties, default surcharge and detailed FBR audit to a whole lot of other tax cheats who do not qualify as industrial ‘investors’: those who pay 25 percent more tax than in the previous year; or bring themselves voluntarily under the tax net; or file missing income tax returns for the last five years and pay a minimum tax of Rs20,000 for each year. He also assured the gathering that the FBR would not have access to the bank accounts of taxpayers.

If Ishaq Dar, the author of this ingenious scheme, is to be believed, the amnesty provides the panacea for the country’s economic problems. In a TV interview, he expressed confidence that it would revive economic activity, stimulate GDP growth, reduce inflation, create jobs and promote industrialisation. For good measure, he also predicted an early reversal of the rapid slide in the value of the rupee on the foreign exchange market

The uninitiated, who do not have the economic perspicacity of Ishaq Dar, will have great difficulty in sharing his optimism. Past experience with tax amnesties is instructive. They have done little to raise additional revenue, expand the tax base, document the economy or promote growth. Dar himself said in the interview that the last one only brought additional revenue of Rs2 billion, while the one before that netted Rs7 billion. These are not exactly astronomical figures. Besides, the number of taxpayers hardly increased and the tax-to-GDP ratio has continued to decline.

The present scheme is not likely to yield any benefits to the state, but it will completely undermine the FBR's effort to broaden the tax base, which the finance minister promised in his budget speech and to which Pakistan is committed under the IMF's loan conditions. After the amnesty, those who have not filed tax returns only need to wait until they receive a tax notice and then pay a minimum tax of Rs25,000.

Another disquieting aspect of the amnesty scheme is that it was hammered out in private talks between the government and representatives of the business lobby without having been debated in public. There was no hint of these concessions when the government presented the budget last June. According to an FBR official, the business community presented 26 taxation-related demands during the Nawaz government's five months in power, out of which 25 have been accepted. Ishaq Dar has indicated that when the tax amnesty is given legal cover later this month through SROs, there might be even more benefits for tax defaulters.

After this tax amnesty, the government's commitment to raise the tax-to-GDP ratio from the present abysmally low of nine percent to 15 percent by 2018 has become even more difficult to achieve. It is clear that instead of collecting direct taxes from the more well-to-do sections of society, the Nawaz government intends to continue squeezing the already overburdened common man by raising indirect taxes.

That is not to say that previous governments have been any better. Grant of amnesty for the rich tax defaulters has become almost routine and hardly a voice is raised against it by our political parties. Last year, the Zardari government gave amnesty to those who invested their black money in the stock market. In March this year, shortly before its tenure ran out, the PPP-led government allowed the

owners of tens of thousands of cars imported without the payment of customs duties to legalise their crimes if they paid a nominal amount as duty. In June, a judge of the Islamabad High Court declared this amnesty illegal and ordered the confiscation of the nearly 50,000 smuggled vehicles. But last month, the order was set aside by the court on appeal.

In most countries of the world, taxes are levied mainly from the more affluent, while the proceeds are used to provide essential services like education and medical care for the benefit of the less well-to-do. In Pakistan, the reverse is true. The poorer sections of the society are the most heavily burdened, while the government expenditure goes largely to benefit those who are already well-off. For instance, the public transport system and the railways have been completely neglected, while the national airline, which is used by the richest section of the population, is heavily subsidised. On top of that, a large part of the national wealth is siphoned off by our ruling classes and ends up in overseas bank accounts and foreign investment.

Pakistan's record of taxing the rich and powerful is so poor that even foreign agencies and governments have been urging the government to collect more taxes from the wealthier citizens of the country. Hillary Clinton, then US secretary of state, did so in October 2010. The same message was conveyed by British Prime Minister Cameron on a visit to Pakistan in April 2011. Last month, Justine Greening, Britain's international development secretary, offered to help Pakistan improve its tax receipts by sending officials from their revenue and customs department. This offer is unlikely to be accepted.

Because our ruling 'elite' refuses to pay taxes, Pakistan today has one of the lowest tax-to-GDP ratios in the world. It was 13.8 percent in 1987, now it is barely nine percent, if not lower. This level is similar to countries like Afghanistan and Ethiopia. In one respect, Afghanistan does better than Pakistan. The Afghan tax department has jailed a number of tax evaders. In our country, there is no record of anyone having been sent to the prison for a tax offence.

The percentage of people who pay taxes in Pakistan is also among the lowest in the world. Last year, only 0.57 percent of Pakistanis – 768,000 individuals – paid

income tax. In India, the figure is 2.77 percent, about five times that for Pakistan.

The incidence of tax cheating is the worst at the top. That is the root cause of the problem. According to a study published last year, 69 percent of the members of the National Assembly and 63 percent of the Senate did not pay taxes in 2011. Among those who did, many cheated by paying far less than the amount due from them. Several leading politicians were among the defaulters.

In this situation, it is no wonder that our entire tax system is in shambles. This is reflected in the heavy dependence on indirect taxes, exemptions given to the privileged classes, such as on agricultural income, and a pathetic rate of tax collection. It is clear that unless our legislatures and governments are cleansed of tax thieves and robbers, no meaningful improvement is possible.

How difficult that will be should be evident from the fact that despite the public outrage caused by last year's report on tax cheating by our lawmakers and the assurances by the Election Commission earlier this year that there would be "ruthless scrutiny" of the property and tax records of all candidates, not one of them has been disqualified for tax evasion.

The writer is a former member of the Pakistan Foreign Service.

Email: asifezdi@yahoo.com

Tehelka's Fall: Will The Indian Media Hold The Mirror Up To Itself?

Satya Sagar

The ToIs, the Hindu, Indian Express, Hindustan Times and the numerous noisy TV channels that have emerged in the last two decades are mostly run by well-entrenched, family-run business groups projecting a facade of civilised norms while protecting the colonial kleptocracy called 'India.

If maintream Indian media really had an iota of shame or honesty - along with following the Tejpal story- they should be 'outing' the numerous other Tejpal's who continue to occupy exalted status within their own hierarchies. Those cameras chasing the former editor of Tehelka, should go back to their media offices and record how junior employees- particularly women- are being treated every day by their bosses.

Eight years ago I remember listening to Tarun Tejpal in Bangalore as he held forth on how the news media could change the world for the better. It was a gathering of journalism students from Catholic institutions around the country and Tejpal was impressive in his defence of media freedoms.

He was passionate, charismatic, extremely articulate and as Chief Editor of Tehelka- with some of the best stories of Indian journalism behind them- very credible too. After his speech Tejpal left in a hurry, like a star priest dashing off to his next flaming sermon and fawning audience.

I was the following speaker and was openly skeptical of Tejpal valorising the profession of journalism and the potential of the media in general to transform anything beyond superficialities. (At that time I had no idea Mr Tejpal would turn out to be the complete fake he has proved to be now.)

My simple point to the students and the media studies professors before me was - there is no such thing as 'journalism' outside the framework of the media industry. The so-called fourth pillar of democracy was in fact the fifth column of capital- this role being somewhat hidden in the past but flaunted quite openly

these days.

The business interests of the media owners were the single most important factor shaping the limits of journalism and the biggest threat to the 'freedom of the press' lay within the media organisation itself. Every journalist who ever roared like a lion at a press conference was sure to tuck tail between legs, while in his own office.

The security of a job and privileges of the trade were, for most journalists, far more important than the values of the profession they claimed to stand for. Nothing unique or surprising about this of course, as this is the norm in all industries- not just the media. However, this abject surrender of most media persons to their paymasters is the real reason why they deliberately miss out on all the really important news stories that stare them in the face every day and instead pass off frivolous trivialities as 'scoops'. Just as it is not possible these days to find religion in temples, mosques or churches; health in the hospitals; education in our schools; or revolution in the revolutionary parties - it is meaningless to expect any truth from the news industry. To rub it all I added, while there was a good chance of getting some insights into the society we live in by watching soap operas or cinema - for pure entertainment news channels are the medium to go to.

All this I recollect now as Tejpal – the much feted journalist, publisher, novelist, impresario turned alleged sex offender has been arrested and is hounded by the rest of the Indian media. His story has hogged headline space for an incredible five days in a row already as if nothing more important is happening in a land of 1.2 billion people!

There is no doubt at all in my mind that what Tejpal is accused of – sexual assault on a defenceless young woman employee - is a shocking act of pure criminality. Tarun Tejpal happened to operate in a circuit that was like the IPL of sexual abuse - where the high and mighty do whatever they please with anybody lower down the pecking order. He was part of a planet where power, wealth and fame not only acted as aphrodisiac but offered the bonus of endless impunity too. Preying upon (known in these circles as 'scoring') a young female, even one the age of your daughter, was just part of the daily '20-20' routine.

Further, as the skeletons come dancing out of the Tehelka cupboard, it turns out

Tejpal and those in the top echelons of the magazine (at least in recent years) had turned against every principle they themselves preached the loudest. Suppressing stories in order to ‘monetize’ them, plugging on behalf of corporate sponsors, using media privileges to amass property and forging business alliances with known crooks. All this while getting employees of Tehelka to constantly ‘tighten’ their belts and slave on for the cause of ‘great’ journalism.

For this Tejpal should be tried and punished as severely as the law permits. Uptil now it seems difficult for him to escape a long time in prison and rightly so too. Having said all this, I am not very sure if the rest of the Indian media has the credibility to do endless talk shows or write pompous editorials about the Tehelka editor as if he were a freak accident in their midst. Nobody it seems wants to investigate the fact that Tarun Tejpal’s behaviour was perhaps the norm and not an aberration in the media industry.

First of all I don’t even think most of the news channels or newspapers are covering the story because of the gravity of the crime Tejpal is supposed to have committed. Anyone, who has followed how the 24 by 7 media really operates, knows all this frenzy is because the idea of a ‘rape in a 5 star setting’, with celebrities (Robert de Niro in a cameo role) at the center of the story to boot can send the hearts of their audiences racing and TRPs of their channels zooming.

“CCTV cameras show woman journalist walking out of lift and adjusting her skirts” said a ‘Titillation’ Times of India headline recently. Many journalists routinely punch out obnoxious sentences like that on the front pages of their newspapers every day deliberately insensitive to the context involved.

Years ago, working for this idiotic media group, I was pulled up for doing a story on the growth of the poultry industry. In an official letter I was informed that it was the group’s policy ‘not to promote the meat industry’- presumably because the owners were vegetable-loving Jains. Today even a casual look at the stories and visuals on their website would reveal the ToI is foremost in projecting all women as ‘meat’ or as ‘chicks’. Rape in particular is a favourite subject for this newspaper (being an important pillar of India’s ‘erectoral democracy’) and it would be very nice if Mr Arnab ‘Outrage’ Goswami grills his bosses about this some day (the Nation wants to know you @#\$%&!) Secondly, some of the glee evident among mainstream journalists at Tehelka’s downfall is because the outfit

was always an upstart interloper in the world of Indian media and never really accepted it as ‘one of its own’. As a new entrant in the media market Tehelka was willing to break with convention, both in terms of content and methods, immediately earning the suspicion of the defenders of old-style and more conservative journalism.

The ToIs, the Hindu, Indian Express, Hindustan Times and the numerous noisy TV channels that have emerged in the last two decades are mostly run by well-entrenched, family-run business groups projecting a facade of civilised norms while protecting the colonial kleptocracy called ‘India’. When it launched with a bang over a decade and half ago, Tehelka’s operation was based on little more than sheer audacity, something the rest of the media (emasculated by the vested interests of its owners) had lost a long time ago.

Interestingly, despite its reputation for ‘rocking the boat’ there was little that Tehelka’s famous sting operations revealed that the rest of the media did not already know or the public already suspect. *Many journalists for example knew that top Indian army officials were purchaseable for bottles of Scotch or that cricket matches were being fixed for money and leaders of ‘nationalist’ political parties were taking bribes to sell national security.* However, no news outlet had the cojones to take them up for the simple reason that attacking the Indian army, cricket and Hindu nationalism – all holy cows of the great Indian middle-classes-meant bringing down their idea of what ‘India’ was all about. ‘Sabko nanga karne wala ab khud nanga ho gaya’ goes the typical refrain one finds on social media platforms posted by anonymous characters who have an opinion on everything and a stake in nothing. Some of this middle-class anger is now being reflected in the way the Tejpal story has also been taken up by the media – as a way of showing him ‘his place’.

(If mainstream Indian media really had an iota of shame or honesty - along with following the Tejpal story- they should be ‘outing’ the numerous other Tejpals who continue to occupy exalted status within their own hierarchies. Those cameras chasing the former editor of Tehelka, should go back to their media offices and record how junior employees- particularly women- are being treated every day by their bosses.

Some of them should also examine the track record of their bosses both present

and from the past. Does anyone in the Indian media have the guts to investigate long-standing charges of sexual predation against women employees by the late and 'legendary' founder of a newspaper that claims to do 'journalism of courage'? Will every journalist who ever won an award in this 'great media defender's' name return it if they found evidence of his atrocities? Is anyone within the media even interested in finding out by tracking down and talking to the survivors of his predations and gathering such evidence?

Why confine coverage to just the news media sector- is the media willing to touch the sexual shenanigans that happen within the Indian corporate and business sector in general? The case a few years ago involving a senior executive in India's top IT company – who constantly mixed up software with underwear- was just the tip of the iceberg as far as rampant sexual harassment within India Inc. goes.

And if one chooses to look beyond middle and upper middle class India then the cases of sexual assault and rape are equally numerous and horrific, particularly in the construction industry where women are routinely forced to give 'sexual favours' in order to get daily wage work. Or for that matter among agricultural labour where institutionalised forms of sexual exploitation of women by landlords are passed off as 'tradition'.

Also, given that the Tehelka story has gone beyond just sexual abuse to one of molesting the core values of journalism, the coverage today should be of how every single media organisation is in the vice-like grip of one major corporation or the other. Is the Indian media willing to tell us what are the kinds of bribes it accepts to publish promotional stories or suppress uncomfortable ones on a daily basis? Or even tell us who really owns their bloody publications and channels? Or, how many senior journalists have acquired land, houses, free junkets abroad or other favours from either the state or corporates for acting as their PR agents?

The list goes on but I do not expect the Indian media to investigate itself or its wealthy patrons- that is something for the rest of the country to take up. The least one can do in the meanwhile is to switch off the television at home, throw the newspaper back at the newspaper boy and look out of the window to see what is happening in the real world out there. We don't need big media to brainwash us and set our agenda as if we were the walking dead.

And some words here for activists, however well-meaning, who like to appear on TV talk-shows. The fresh experience of jhatka given by Tehelka to liberal and leftist causes should caution them against blindly lending credibility to the tamasha of the Indian media by rushing to participate in their hypocritical debates.

It is time to understand that the media is not a mere neutral messenger but among the masters of the vast slave-camp this country has become. What we need today are ways to directly communicate with the people of India while putting the 24x7 'StinkFest' called the Indian media where it really belongs- in the dustbin.

Satya Sagar is a former journalist and public health worker based in Santiniketan, West Bengal. He can be contacted at sagarnama@gmail.com

Larger Mirror Image of Indian Media is to be found in Pakistan Media

Satya Sagar has exposed the corruption and dishonesty of Indian media but Pakistan media is an enlarged mirror image of their comrades across the border in India. Mainstream media houses that own newspapers, periodicals and TV stations are run either by well-entrenched, family-run business groups projecting a facade of democracy and civilised norms while protecting the corrupt and the mighty politicians. Since the last five years they are in big game as money is passed on to them by foreign nation's intelligence agencies to promote agenda of their respective nations. The so-called fourth pillar of democracy is in fact the fifth column masquerading freely in the land of the pure. Geo TV, The News and Jang group are the leaders of the pack of wolves. **Media is like untouchable mafia so well entrenched that even the Pakistan Army and the mighty ISI watches it helplessly despite the fact that they are themselves the principal focus of their propaganda.**

Taliban back in the saddle in Afghanistan by 2017 - leaked intel report

A report by RT

Afghanistan president Hamid Karzai has delayed signing a long-term security pact with the US. The Taliban have urged the Afghan president, Hamid Karzai, to turn this delay in signing a long-term security deal with the United States into outright rejection, in an unusually polite statement directed at a leader the insurgents have repeatedly denounced as a US puppet.

It is interesting to note that the Taliban have offered Karzai rare support and say 'the decision of Afghan nation is clear: they don't want any occupier in our homeland'. Most intelligence agencies in the world report resurgence of Taliban in due course by 2015 or 2017? It is not a question whether they are coming or not; it is when? If this be the case then clearly the only intelligence agency that has been persistent in warning Pakistan and the United States of the inevitability of Taliban resurgence in Afghanistan.

Any success the US and its allies have enjoyed in Afghanistan in the past three years will be dramatically reduced by 2017, even if a US military presence remains in the country, according to a US intelligence report. The National Intelligence Estimate calculates that the Taliban and other regional players, including Al-Qaeda, will begin to assert themselves as the United States winds down military operations in the war-torn country, the Washington Post reported, quoting officials familiar with the classified report.

The estimate includes analysis from the country's 16 intelligence services.

The situation will deteriorate even more rapidly in the event that Washington and Kabul fail to sign a security agreement that allows a US-led military contingent on Afghan territory beyond 2014, an agreement that also promises to free up billions of dollars in financial aid to Afghanistan.

"In the absence of a continuing presence and continuing financial support," the intelligence estimate "suggests the situation would deteriorate very rapidly," the newspaper quoted one US official familiar with the report as saying.

Some officials, however, expressed the opinion that the intelligence estimate of the longest war in American history was “*overly pessimistic*” and failed to consider various factors, including the improved effectiveness of Afghanistan's security forces, which will be handed the task of preventing Taliban resurgence, as well as the outcome of next year's presidential election.

"I think what we're going to see is a recalibration of political power, territory and that kind of thing," the paper quoted another official as commenting. *"It's not going to be an inevitable rise of the Taliban."*

A senior administration official told the newspaper that the intelligence estimate has a tendency to paint a gloomy picture of the situation in Afghanistan.

“An assessment that says things are going to be gloomy no matter what you do, that you're just delaying the inevitable, that's just a view,” said the official. “I would not think it would be the determining view.”

“By no means has the surge defeated the Taliban,” the official said, but it did help to “reverse the Taliban's momentum and give the government more of an edge. I think we achieved that.”

Afghan President Hamid Karzai has kept Washington waiting on the Bilateral Security Agreement that would allow a US-led contingency, including some 15,000 American troops, to remain in the country beyond 2014. The reason is clear: Karzai, under Afghan public opinion pressure, is reluctant to grant immunity for any US troops left on the ground in Afghanistan, following the declared 2014 pullout date.

The Afghan people have witnessed too much indiscriminate killing of innocent citizens to give license for more such behavior. On the American holiday of Thanksgiving, for example, a US drone attack left one child dead and two women injured as NATO forces claimed they were trying to kill a lone “known militant” in Helmand Province. Meanwhile, analysts fear that Kabul's grip on power is likely to become increasingly irrelevant as it loses “purchase” over various regions of the country, another official said. The White House refused to comment on the NIE's report. A senior administration official said intelligence assessments are “only one tool in our policy analysis toolbox.” One of the intelligence community's principal duties is to warn about potential upsides and downsides to US policy, and we frequently use their assessments to identify vulnerabilities and

take steps to correct them,” the statement said. “We will be weighing inputs from the [intelligence services] alongside those of the military, our diplomats and development experts as we look at the consequential decisions ahead of us, including making a decision on whether to leave troops in Afghanistan after the end of 2014.”

Stephen Biddle, a defense policy expert at the Council on Foreign Relations, said experts are largely pulled between two views on the future prospects in Afghanistan. One side sees Afghan security forces eventually forcing the Taliban into some sort of political agreement. Another side forecasts that the Taliban, which the United States blamed for harboring Al-Qaeda mastermind, Osama bin Laden, will gradually regain its former influence in the country.

Biddle said much depends on how Congress, which is becoming increasingly wary of continuing its military presence in the country, decides on the matter.

“Whether it’s a worse or better stalemate depends on the rate at which Congress defunds the war,” he said.

At the moment Washington still has 63,000 troops on the ground. Earlier in December, an Associated Press-GfK poll found that 57 percent of Americans say going to war in Afghanistan as response to the September-11 terrorist attacks was probably the “wrong thing to do.” A minority of US citizens is in favor of the current withdrawal plan, with 53 percent saying the process is taking too long and 34 percent responding that the troop withdrawal is about right.

Political Deadlock: Will History Repeat Itself In Bangladesh?

M Mukhlesur Rahman Chowdhury

Abdul Quader Molla's execution has exposed the hollowness of Bangladesh's Truth and Reconciliation Committee. While the founder of the concept of truth and reconciliation, Nelson Mandela, was being paid homage by the world leaders, a mockery of his concept was made in Bangladesh. Mandela's model certainly sought compassion, understanding and forgiveness, not retribution and settling of personal scores

Molla's execution was carried out in a run-up to December 16 „Victory Day“, to serve as a diversionary tool to shift the public focus from deep political crisis through which this unfortunate country is passing. Opposition parties have refused to take part in the forthcoming elections unless an independent interim government is put in place for conducting free, fair and credible elections. While people of Bangladesh need a healing touch, the government of Bangladesh is following a dangerous trajectory of re-invoking historical events to settle current scores. The sham trials have been unanimously criticised by the international community for failing well short of acceptable standards of justice

The people are out in the streets of Bangladesh and there are reports of violent demonstrations in all districts. The mood is ugly the Victory Day could turn into a death dance. The matters could eventually end up in another military takeover

As the United Nations (UN) failed to solve the political crisis of Bangladesh with the end of recent fruitless discussions between the ruling Awami League (AL) and main opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), the trend of violence has been increasing. The manifestation of increased violence includes the attacks on Bangladesh Supreme Court, Jatiya Press Club and Dhaka University on 29 December 2013. A one-sided parliamentary election is scheduled to be held on

next 5 January 2014, which has virtually divided the nation. Government took risk by deploying army in the whole country on last 26 December in aid to civil power. It can be said that if situation goes out of control of the government there is a chance to declare a State of Emergency. Actually, that will be the only option to overcome the deadlock as well as volatile situation.

Track record shows, every after emergency follows a change with difference. Bangladeshi people in home and abroad are in tension due to growing uncertainty. Ruling Awami League is going ahead desperately with the elections where 154 MP candidates have already been elected uncontested in absence of almost all opposition parties including main opposition BNP and its allies. The Government defied world's objections where UN, USA, EU, China, Japan and Commonwealth even Russia requested to stop this poll as it will not reflect the people's verdict and franchise while will fuel ongoing violence into a deep crisis. Army was deployed countrywide to assist election commission to hold elections in 59 districts out of 64 districts in the country. In all constituencies of the rest 5 districts, candidates were elected with understanding among ruling party and its alliances.

Trend of suppression and oppression which include mass arrest, detention, abduction and remand has been increased followed by the 'March for Democracy' of 29 December called by 18 Party Alliance and like minded other political parties leader *Khaleda Zia*. *Begum Zia is unofficially house arrest since she announced the programme 4 days before the programme*. On the 29 December law enforcement agencies stopped Leader of the Opposition while she made an attempt to start for scheduled programme at her party office at Dhaka's Nayapaltan area by using her official car. She commented, "Parliament has not been dissolved yet and thereby I am still the Leader of the Opposition. How did you stop my movement?"

Institutions and organisations have been destroyed in Bangladesh over the years. Judiciary and Anti Corruption Commission became government tools. Highly political people were appointed in non-political constitutional and government senior positions. Cases of ruling party were withdrawn by the government and opposition political parties cases remain. The government of the day became government of party in power instead of the people. Corruption has been

encouraged by the government.

Regarding ensuing parliamentary election, 21 registered political parties are away from election. Reportedly, a third biggest party is in a mess on the issue of participation in the polls. H M Ershad predicted that this election will not be held. UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon and US Secretary of State John Kerry requested Prime Minister to stop the election. They recommended for a participatory election and end of violence in Bangladesh. Whole World backs UN. It is reported only India backs ruling Awami League in Bangladesh while America has been dealing with this. However, denying the allegation India recently issued a statement saying it does not want to interfere on internal affairs of Bangladesh. On the other hand, main opposition party BNP asked the Indian government to maintain relation with Bangladesh instead of maintaining exclusive relation with any particular political party.

Government used judiciary in annulling Caretaker Government system although Supreme Court gave opinion that next 2 parliamentary elections can be held under the CTG system. Before releasing the highest court's verdict government hurriedly changed the constitution's relevant provision.

Today's situation is worse than January 2007. Army leadership is one of the factors in taking over power. It depends on the army chief or some senior army officers whether they are ambitious. Government has taken a risk with deployment of army countrywide. At present, there are only few options left. If situation cannot be controlled, another State of emergency may be declared. Every after emergency follows either change of regime or military intervention. Previously that intervention brought martial law while new phenomenon shows that it brings military backed government. Example of last Martial Law and Military-backed Government occurred in 1982 and 2007 respectively both following State of Emergency. Army can act on its own or can wait for UN action. UN action can take some time as they need to go to UN General Assembly and Security Council. Regarding sending observers to the parliamentary election of Bangladesh lastly Russia supported USA as well. If government can hold the election and then gets some more time they will crack down on main opposition and there will be absence of check and balance.

This time government may overcome but at the end people will win in course of

time and then it will be a great loss for Awami league. A democratic party may lose in one election while it may come back in following polls. However, if it makes a blunder it is deemed to be doomed. According to former President General Hussain Muhammad Ershad, who is an ally of the present government, AL made everybody its enemy. He mentioned the recent incident where the AL government attacked Hefazat-e Islami, a non-political organisation as well.

General Ershad has been confined at Combined Military Hospital (CMH) for about a month as he does not want to support the AL government this time. AL came to power with JP's support twice.

There is no level playing field for all the political parties. Bangladesh has been practicing democracy on only one day which is on the day of election. Rest days of the tenure are far away from the people's rule. Only an election cannot help Bangladesh which needs a total recast of the government machinery where the system can work like developed countries. There must be a charter where all parties agree. There should not be any dispute on basic or fundamental issues such as values, religion, culture etc. As I have been witnessing governance of Bangladesh closely, I can draw a conclusion that the main problems of Bangladeshi politics are ego, mistrust, suspicion and discord. Right men are not rightly placed. In democracy there has to be compromise, not ego. Only the living Nobel laureate of Bangladesh Dr Muhammad Yunus is being honoured worldwide while he has been humiliated in his own country.

In the present political stalemate in Bangladesh, military takeover is not the solution. On the contrary, an authoritarian government system must go and there should be checks and balances where all actors as well as organs should be accountable and transparent.

M Mukhlesur Rahman Chowdhury is a London-based Researcher as well as Independent Analyst in Politics and International Relations. He is a Former Minister and Adviser to the President of Bangladesh.
Email: mukhleschow@gmail.com

Bangladesh: Bloody Victory Day

Air Cdr Khalid Iqbal

Given the fractured and vindictive political climate in Bangladesh, the risks of new injustices occurring are very real. Dramatic hanging of Abdul Qader Molla symbolises two axioms about gross miscarriage of justice: “justice delayed is justice denied” and justice hurried is justice buried”; both were operative in this case. Opening of cases after over forty years of the alleged crime, enactment of law by the parliament empowering government to appeal for enhancement of punishment and its retrospect application to Molla’s case, alongside dramatic U-turns by the Bangladeshi Supreme Court with regard to handling of the appeal, followed by hanging of Molla within hours of rejection of appeal speak volumes about the way in which political expediency has overtaken the incumbent Prime Minister of Bangladesh.

After the creation of Bangladesh, concocted narratives of war crimes were constructed, by the Bangladesh government to malign Pakistan and its Army. Initially Sheik Mujibur Rahman had set up special tribunals to try the „collaborators“. Several thousand cases were filed, but good sense prevailed and Sheik Mujibur declared a general amnesty. Hasina Sheikh’s current tenure as Prime Minister has witnessed recurring demonstrations of personal vendetta. Earlier after 34 years of assassination of Sheikh Mujib, she got his assassins hanged. Khondaker Mushtaq Ahmed, who took over as Bangladesh’s president after Mujib’s assassination, had granted them immunity. General Ziaur Rehman, who later became president, also confirmed the immunity.

Pakistan Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan has expressed deep grief and concern over the hanging of Mullah, calling it a judicial murder. He said there was no doubt the JI leader was punished for his loyalty to Pakistan in 1971. “The execution of Abdul Quader Molla is a very unfortunate and tragic step... [Molla] remained a supporter of a united Pakistan till the very end...today every Pakistani is saddened and grieved over his death.”

