

# The Resurgent India

A Monthly National Review

May 2018



***“Let us all work for the Greatness of India.”***

*– The Mother*

Year 9

Issue 2

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**Editor : Ms. Garima Sharma,** B-45, Batra Colony, Village Bharatpur, P.O. Kaushal Ganj, Bilaspur Distt. Rampur (U.P)

# THE RESURGENT INDIA

A Monthly National Review

May 2018



## SUCCESSFUL FUTURE

(Full of Promise and Joyful Surprises)

*Botanical name: Gaillardia Pulchella*

*Common name: Indian blanket, Blanket flower, Fire-wheels*

Year 9

Issue 2

# CONTENTS

|   |    |
|---|----|
| India's New Relationships<br>and Global Status .....    | 6  |
| The Politics of Karnataka Elections .....               | 13 |
| THE REAL LOSERS OF THE<br>IRAN NUCLEAR DEAL CRISIS..... | 19 |
| Rohingya Radicalization<br>and Indian Politics.....     | 26 |

## **A Declaration**

We do not fight against any creed, any religion.

We do not fight against any form of government.

We do not fight against any social class.

We do not fight against any nation or civilisation.

We are fighting division, unconsciousness, ignorance, inertia and falsehood.

We are endeavouring to establish upon earth union, knowledge, consciousness, Truth, and we fight whatever opposes the advent of this new creation of Light, Peace, Truth and Love.

— The Mother

(Collected works of the Mother 13, p. 124-25)

## INDIA'S NEW RELATIONSHIPS AND GLOBAL STATUS

PM Modi's 'informal summit' with the Chinese President, Xi Jinping, last month, came at a time when India-China ties have reached the strongest point since Modi took over. It was always clear that the initiative had to come from the Indian side and it could come only after the PMO stopped listening to overzealous experts with active imaginations, who had, of late, developed a tendency to brand every Chinese infrastructural activity around the border as an aggression and threat to India, and had, for years, been urging India to compete with China in every possible sphere. The tendency still persists, as was evident from recent wild speculations on Chinese mining activities on its side of Arunachal Pradesh border and from India's position that it needs to develop its technological capabilities (in fields like Artificial Intelligence) in response to Chinese deployment of AI for military purposes. Allegations of Chinese mining activities have now been vehemently denied by Chinese newspapers, who have urged the Indian media not to obstruct the India-China relationship by getting excited about unfounded reports.

The India-China relationship has become crucial to both countries, both immediately and in the long-run. It suits idealism as well as practical considerations. In the long-run, it coheres well with China's (and perhaps, now even India's) vision of two ancient cultural powerhouses coming together and shaping the future progress of Asia in a cooperative manner. This is not a pipedream (something that China should know about given its history with opium) but reality, albeit one based on a broad and daring vision. ***Such a vision leaves absolutely no scope for weakness or a weakling. Only countries that are alert, powerful and capable of being assertive and magnanimous at the same time are fit to lead the charge in Asia,***

***and India and China view themselves and each other as fit for such a role. All the other countries – especially those under the grip of unwanted elements and external forces – will have little choice but to be led. The attempt demands power, patience, self-giving and a cultural vision based on extensive perception.***

One will not have to be a US or a Russia to be called powerful in the times to come; they are only following the norms of lawlessness and strategy, respectively. But India and China are moving towards powerful self-expression and national self-realization within their domains, whose effects are inevitably and automatically being felt globally. The trajectory of both the countries represents the giving way of the earlier liberal institutional norms of the global system to relations based on a cultural and historic spirit. The informal Wuhan summit between the two countries was a step in this direction.

The informality was extremely significant presenting a deliberate contrast to the usual formal bilateral summits between countries. Being unbound by the proprieties and interventions of diplomatic niceties, the summit established a personal rapport between the two leaders who feel passionately about the future of their nations. The atmosphere was so conducive that even the two or three substantive outcomes that were gleaned from the summit – such as cooperation in Afghanistan, working against terrorism and providing strategic guidance to their border military personnel to maintain peace – meant more than the laboriously-arrived at technical outcomes during the 20 annual rounds of Special Representative talks in the last few years, or the technical outcomes negotiated by diplomats well in advance of a formal summit, leaving the leaders to sign a pre-negotiated declaration as mere figureheads. Unlike such past superficialities, this agenda-less summit was a heart-to-heart talk about the direction the two leaders see their countries taking and their common future.

***Under such conditions, even minimum outcomes count for more than years of negotiated technicalities, and will actually see the light of day. As some philosopher has said — there are decades where nothing happens and then there are weeks where decades happen. India-China relations have now reached such a point.*** The Wuhan summit – free from cumbersome superficialities and pre-negotiated hand-outs – marks a turning point in the relations between the two countries, from which they can be expected to climb from height to height.

The outer impact of the psychological boost given by the Wuhan summit was also immediate, unlike previous routine summits. ***The broad public signal that went out to the Chinese public and investors was that relations with India were of the highest priority for China,*** especially after China removed high import tariffs on 28 medicines imported from India, right after the Wuhan summit. This was, in the words of Chinese ambassador, to show that Wuhan was not just a ‘talk shop’, but meant a lot to the Chinese.

***More significantly, two important developments took place in China-Pakistan relations, after the Wuhan summit. One, the heavily indebted Pakistan had to borrow money from China to combat its escalating balance of payments crisis. Two, China pointedly asked Pakistan to shift banned terrorist and 26/11 mastermind, Hafiz Saeed, to West Asia. We will now have a Pakistan, forsaken by the rest of the international community and completely beholden to and consequently in the strong grip of China.***

***Already, China is holding talks with Baloch separatists without Pakistan’s involvement and has also become increasingly aggressive in its efforts to dismantle Islam within China, through measures like the infamous ‘re-education camps’ for Muslims – including both Uighur and Hui Muslims – and focusing on revival of Confucian values, emphasizing China’s zero tolerance for jihad. After Wuhan,***



China and India have also decided to partner in relations with countries like Afghanistan and maybe Nepal and Bangladesh as well. This means Pakistan will be completely sidelined, and through initiatives like CPEC (China Pakistan Economic Corridor) would be reduced to a dependency of China.

***Such collaborative arrangements between India and China – and initiatives taken by China within its own territory to curb extremism – will further check the activities of jihadi networks in the South and South-east Asian regions. As quickly as the wave of jihadi fundamentalism had started touching Asia, it has receded into oblivion.*** Maldives is already in check and powerless against its neighbours, especially China, to whom it is again economically beholden. Malaysia has seen a historic election catapulting its erstwhile leader, Mahathir Mohammed, into power, whose descent is from the Kerala state of India, and who has vowed to end the country's decades-old policy of racial discrimination in favour of Malay Muslims, even appointing an Indian to his Cabinet. Modi is also actively pursuing partnership with Indonesia, after the Cold War slumber and negligence, to develop maritime infrastructure.

Thus, Asia – or to be more accurate, Eurasia – is bustling with changes. Modi's informal Sochi summit with Vladimir Putin, which came right after the Wuhan summit, was more cement to the Eurasian ties with India. While one of the main concerns at Sochi was how to circumvent the US-imposed CAATSA (Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act) sanctions – imposed by US against its 'enemies' and all who deal with them – on Russia, India and Russia have decided to give a green signal to their key defence deals.

The success and symbolic power of the Wuhan and Sochi summits has got more work done and created more impact than typical formal summits which will take place later this year. Leaders

like Putin, Xi and Modi are here to stay, at least in the near future. So, the informal summits fed into the idea of cultivating personal and long-term relationships with countries that matter for India. It was the same with China, which has gone out of the way to accommodate India, while Modi already shares a great personal rapport with both Xi and Russia. This rapport explains why the 'reset' in Indo-Russia or Indo-China ties came so fast during the informal summits.

***As for the USA's CAATSA obstruction to Indo-Russia relations, the US realizes that India – of all the countries – will not succumb to bullying. The days of Non-alignment may have died with Nehru, but India continues to retain her independent position, often making it a neutral powerful swing state in global politics. India has developed strong relationships with all powerful countries who are also mutual rivals, but has retained its independence. Which is why the US Defence Secretary, Jim Mattis, last month, appealed to the US Congress to urgently provide a 'national security waiver' to India from CAATSA, since India's deal with Russia would go ahead.***

India's increasingly deft maneuverings in international politics came with the direct intervention of the PMO, instead of the foreign ministry, a signal on its own. The Wuhan summit came right before a follow-up 'informal summit' with Vladimir Putin in Sochi, with India strengthening its ties with Iran right after the US pull-out from the nuclear deal and with very subtle and under-the-wraps visit by Gen. V.K. Singh to North Korea which successfully consolidated the diplomatic position of India's new ambassador to the country. This shows India asserting its own independent stand in the changes taking place on the Korean peninsula. It has increased India's stature – India is not just a tool to be used to tilt the balance of power this way or that under external pressures or will not always be in a reactionary mode, but a deciding voice shaping the course of events

in other countries.

India has also stopped competing with Pakistan, with the result that the latter is faced with a fast disappearing identity, cocooned in its isolated world of Kashmiri militants and other terrorists, and of no use to any country in the fast-paced changes taking place internationally. ***The upshot is that, in today's world of sharp polarizations between the US versus the rest, everyone wants India in its corner.*** In the next couple of weeks, the US is likely to rename its US Pacific base as the Indo-US Pacific base, to signal its seriousness about the Indo-Pacific strategy to contain China in the region, along with Australia, Japan and India. These symbolic moves and the US's increasingly suffocating gestures towards India contributed to India making its own stand clear on developing good relations with countries like China, Iran and Russia.

Indeed, to this effect, India also prevented Australia from participating in the Malabar exercise, despite Australia's still-continuing efforts to secure a space with India. India has thus rejected the QUAD alliance (US, Japan, India and Australia) in favour of better relationships within Asia.

***It is also a fact that, thanks to Trump, the next few months, will likely see the beginning of the process of the complete dismantling of the liberal political economic system instituted by the West after the Cold War, as anchored by institutions like the WTO.*** Trump's ban politics with Chinese company, ZTE, higher tariffs on aluminum and steel and now, the ridiculous terming of auto imports as a threat to US's 'national security' – thereby directly hitting EU, Japan and South Korea – have collectively led to the declaration of a massive trade war on all major fronts with almost everyone, antagonizing EU, Japan, China, South Korea and even the US's NAFTA partners, Mexico and Canada. Its antics with North Korea, Russia and Iran have not helped either. Effectively, except for the

UAE, Saudi Arabia and Israel, the US has virtually no other country on its side. In the latest move, US is also pressurizing China to import a list of agricultural and energy items from US (to reduce the trade deficit), which China currently imports from Europe and other countries, thereby further antagonizing the latter.

With this unfolding ominous background, India's decision to keep the US at bay and in symbolic good humor, while forging active partnerships with Russia, China, Iran and Japan, is for the best.

With these developments and India's active foreign overtures (for which the PM has been unfairly targeted domestically), India has become a strategic and powerful country for all who want to successfully navigate through the Asian geopolitics, which is where the real international affairs will be conducted and shaped. ***In international relations, it never pays to be a silent doll. India has now finally combined its neutrality with a vocal assertion and the pro-active combination has already placed India in a leading regional position.***

Unlike during the time of erstwhile governments, India has come to a point where it no longer needs to target Pakistan or try to act the irritating, interfering big brother within South Asia. Both the attitudes had led to India's isolation and its confinement within the subcontinent. With its newfound wideness, akin to that of China, India has gone beyond petty territorial wrangles and is spreading her wings. ***That India could adopt these stances in the last few months without pulling off any forceful outer changes, shows that international affairs, more than anything, is a game of consciousness and psychological perception.***

# THE POLITICS OF KARNATAKA ELECTIONS

The pandemonium that followed the Karnataka election results is finally settling down. The BJP emerged as a winner, being the single largest party with 104 seats to Congress's 78 and JD (S)'s 38, falling 8 seats short of majority. But by not forming the government in Karnataka, the BJP puts itself in a stronger position in both Karnataka and for the 2019 general elections. With the media and regional parties displaying the usual tendency to bat for the underdog, the post-poll alliance of sworn enemies, Congress and JD (S), is being hailed as a game-changer for 'opposition unity'. Nothing could be farther from the truth, for these two parties have nothing in common except the need to keep the BJP out. How long the alliance will last is a matter of uncertainty, given Kumaraswamy's untrustworthy record with both the Congress and the BJP, and Congress's hero, DK Shivakumar's personal hatred for the JD (S).

## **Popular mandate for the BJP**

Despite a number of post-poll analyses attributing Congress's failure to the devious First-Past-the-Post system, where the party with the majority wins, despite lower vote share and higher seat share, the fact remains that this does not apply in Karnataka. Here the Congress and BJP fought on completely different turfs. The BJP's vote-share increase has been in concentrated areas and constituencies where the Hindu vote-bank could be consolidated, such as coastal Karnataka and among the Lingayats.

***On the other hand, while the Congress's vote-share is about 2 percent higher than that of the BJP, all the Congress's turfs coincided with that of the JD (S) – the BJP made sure it ensured a direct contest between the Congress and the JD (S). So, a lot of times, in places where the Congress is the runner-up, the JD (S) has won and in places where JD (S) is the runner-up, Congress***

**has won, suggesting cut-throat competition between the two parties.** *In 26 of the 37 seats the JD(S) won, the candidate who came second was from the Congress, while in 18 of the 78 seats that the Congress won, the defeated candidate was from the JD(S) (Shastri 2018).*

**The mandate for BJP was for BJP alone and it was clear-cut and out of the way of the overlaps between Congress and JD (S) – so, Congress’s lower vote-share and extremely low seats was exactly what the people gave it. There is no discrepancy in it, except if you irrationally compare Congress’s low vote-share with BJP’s high seat share – which would be completely misplaced in the Karnataka context. It is ironical that Karnataka’s new CM will be, HD Kumaraswamy, from JD (S), given that JD (S)’s vote share and seat share has not shown any improvement, and has, in fact, marginally gone down.**

While there is nothing wrong with post-poll alliances per se, but when such an alliance happens between two sworn enemies locked in direct contest, it is the people who end up with egg on their face. The voters of JD (S) and Congress voted for each of these respective parties, on the basis of the venomous rhetoric they flung at each other during campaigning. This is particularly true of the Vokkaligas – JD (S)’s core voter base, since during the campaign, the Vokkaliga leaders of the JD (S) and the Congress were at each other’s throats.

The situation cannot be compared to other post-poll alliances, like those struck by BJP in the North-east or Goa, since, in such areas, BJP was never locked in a direct contest with these parties. The Karnataka story is more like BSP and SP allying together for the UP by-polls earlier this year, albeit in a pre-poll alliance – while the alliance won votes, it left the cadres of both the parties unenthused and fighting amongst themselves.

When the only reason for an alliance – that too, between sworn enemies – is to desperately grab power to keep a major national party out, it erodes the popular credibility of such an arrangement. It is very likely that BJP – which already has a strong position in Karnataka – will reap the benefits of Congress-JD (S) betrayal in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls. Since Kannadigas have a tendency to vote against the incumbent, the larger war seems to be in BJP's favour. By the time of general elections, the alliance would have already been an incumbent with many missteps and infighting.

On the other hand, the BJP can be a formidable opposition, and can utilize this time, to mobilize public opinion by exposing the incumbent. Being in opposition, it can also freely talk about the Cauvery dispute with Tamil Nadu. It is obvious that Karnataka does not have water to release to Tamil Nadu, but if the BJP were in power in Karnataka, it would have been battered in both Karnataka and Tamil Nadu in 2019 general elections, since Cauvery is a very emotive issue for the people of both the states.

### **BJP's mandate was meant to be much better**

Even though BJP won 104 seats, its mandate could have been much better. We are currently commending a single largest party – just short of majority – on its performance in a state where BJP's internal unit has been badly divided. The divide between Yeddyurappa and KS Easwarappa has never been bridged. Even during these elections, a section of the state BJP hoped, all along, that the party would win no more than 90 seats, so that their rivals could be kept out of power. Deliberate politicking by internal rivals prevented the inevitable outcome – at least 120 seats, if not 130, which the Yeddyurappa camp was confident of winning on its own. The denial of ticket to Yeddyurappa's son, from Varuna constituency, is also known to have deeply antagonized the cadres and the Lingayats, since the denial happened despite massive popular demand that

Yeddyurappa's son be allowed to contest.

*The fact that a united BJP under Yeddyurappa is an undoubted election-winner does not take away from the reality that Karnataka BJP is also mired in intense corruption. Of course, the Reddy brothers could have got the BJP 120 seats, but the fact is that the national BJP leadership never allowed them that much leeway. **Keeping Yeddyurappa and the corrupt Reddy brothers in check may have cost the BJP the government – but this outcome is infinitely better than having a BJP government tarnished with the image of corruption just one year short of the coming general elections. It might have been a tough call to make – but Modi chose rightly. It is like saying that the national BJP leadership got their cake and ate it too. They proved that they were the single largest party in Karnataka and have decimated the Congress and the JD (S), but having established their victory, they gave up the battle for the larger war.***

**The defeat of the incumbent Congress also becomes worse, because Siddaramiah tried every dirty trick in his bag to create communal divisions and somehow win. He promulgated the 'anti-superstition bill' to create a secular-communal divide, he passed a police order in January this year instructing the release of all 'innocent Muslim' prisoners from jails, he ensured that Gauri Lankesh's death was politicized to highlight 'Hindu fanaticism', he played the soft Hindutva card by calling himself a good Hindu while his boss (Rahul Gandhi) mechanically did photo ops at a couple of temples, he attempted to divide the Lingayats on the basis of religion and left no stone unturned in mimicking the late Jayalalitha by passing a number of meaningless schemes and programmes for 'social welfare' hoping to become as electorally invincible as Jayalalitha.**

**To the list of these desperate measures, we must also recall and add the violent 'Bharat bandh' that was carefully orchestrated and funded to incite the Dalits and alienate BJP's**



**Dalit vote-bank.** *It happened a month before Karnataka elections, clearly indicating that opposition wanted to benefit from it. It failed, just like Siddaramiah's AHINDA grouping of backward castes, Muslims and poor failed to work for him. Karnataka has a huge population of Dalits and STs, between 20-23%. They voted in large numbers for the BJP. BJP got 31 SC/ST seats to the Congress's 34 and JD (S)'s dismal 8. The Congress ended up losing 15 Dalit seats, while BJP gained 22 Dalit seats from 2013! This shows the Congress's Dalit politics has failed miserably, while JD (S), in contravention of all mandate, now rules the state.*

In fact, it has been said of Siddaramiah that he went into the “election mode” right after winning in 2013 – he has been preparing for these polls for the last 5 years! Given these conditions, neither the Congress's vote-share nor seat-share inspire any confidence. **What exactly is the opposition celebrating?** *That the Congress and JD (S) somehow managed to hang onto their votes – without any improvement in tally – and got to power?*

*Giving up power will also work for the BJP in another sense – hoodwinking the opposition. The present state of our political opposition – especially the Congress – is such that they easily lapse back into complacency and a sense of self-gratification. Recall how many obituaries and epitaphs have been written about the BJP by the media, every single day, since 2014. Every big development, every protest and every sign of unrest, was declared as BJP's time-up. The media left no stone unturned in villainizing Modi, as subtly as it could, but nothing worked. Every smallest constituency-level victory of the Congress was magnified to write Modi's obituary. It didn't work.*

The same thing is happening now. Like every other by-poll before it where the BJP lost, as usual, Karnataka is also being viewed as

the ultimate point of BJP's defeat and of Rahul Gandhi's having reached "maturity", much to the relief of self-certified liberals. The way ahead, as the opposition and their intellectuals see it, is for all regional parties and Congress to come together against the BJP for 2019. Uncomfortable questions about the survival of such an alliance – how Mamata, the Left, Akhilesh and Mayawati and Rahul can stomach the prospect of declaring someone other than themselves as the PM candidate – are being papered over for now. Imaginary talks about such an alliance – which also has zero organizational base and has cadres that hate each other in many places – has already given some of them a sense that they will win in 2019, even though there is no alliance in place and none will likely materialize.

But their sense of euphoria and complacency after every little defeat of the BJP ends up working in latter's favour. One can sense the same thing happening now. With such a mindless and spineless opposition – which has no agenda except to stay in power and parrot unappealing and irrelevant bygone ideologies – it is no wonder that the Indian voter has yet to see an alternative to the BJP.

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## THE REAL LOSERS OF THE IRAN NUCLEAR DEAL CRISIS

The recent withdrawal of US from the Iran nuclear deal of 2015 comes amidst a series of executive actions that will hasten the uprooting of the present international order which since the last few decades has been based on US hegemony. While wrangling over the US pullout from the Iran deal continues on one front, on several other fronts, the US is waging increasingly hostile trade wars that have ended up alienating even its all-weather allies EU and Japan, besides the irrational trade conditions put before its arch-rival China. As a result of US's higher tariffs on aluminum and steel imports from June 1<sup>st</sup> onwards, ostensibly in the name of 'national security', EU, India and Japan have already submitted, to the WTO, a list of items from the US on which they would impose higher import tariffs. In the sphere of education, recent data reveals that students no longer want to go to USA to pursue higher education, due to a criminal culture of mass shootings and other disabling policies of Trump administration.

The upshot of US isolation and the weakness of Europe is that Asia is increasingly integrating itself and turning inwards, while Europe is gravitating towards Asia for partnership and support, particularly China. As is becoming obvious, the US in particular, and the model of western dominance in general, is on a wane. It is increasingly becoming costly to have economic relations or interdependence with US – widely viewed as untrustworthy – and countries are now looking for alternatives to US. This has become crystal clear in the aftermath of the dismantling of the Iran deal.

The deal was signed in 2015 between the US, UK, France, Germany, China, Russia and Iran with the simple limited objective of restricting Iran's nuclear programme in return for granting it limited access to global markets. It was a deal of convenience and aimed at

ensuring some safety buffer. It had no conditions related to other aspects, such as Iranian political activities in West Asia or its ballistic missile programme, even though the US's differences with Iran have always run deep. Even though Iran was complying, Trump now wants a 'giant' negotiation that would enable the US to curb all aspects of Iran that bother it. The list of 12 absurd demands released by the US – including Iran's withdrawal from Syria, curbing of ballistic missile programme etc. – are both unrealistic and clearly aimed at bringing Iran to its knees and ensuring regime change in the country. The US has a prolific record with regime changes – Libya, Iraq and meddling in Afghanistan. It would preferably hobnob with Israel and Saudi Arabia and prop up a Sunni regime in the Shia country. Europe and Iran have obviously slammed these unworkable demands.

There is no reason for Iran or Europe to heed the US. The only thing that is raising trepidation in Europe is not the US walkout from the deal, but its imposition of secondary sanctions on any parties that do business with Iran. Otherwise, the US walkout affects little. And for Russia – itself hit with severe US sanctions in the wake of the Crimea crisis – and China, these considerations would matter less than for Europe and UK, whose dependence and friendship with the US has been historical, but is now increasingly becoming a costly liability for them.

Iran, itself, would not be crippled by the US sanctions, even though it will take a temporary hit. There are many reasons for Iran being favourably placed, such as its relations with countries that have little to do with the US, its parallel political economy and Shiite military power centers that have always supported the country and its economy, and, its rising clout in West Asia.

Iran is presently going from strength to strength in West Asia. Shiite Hezbollah – termed by US as a terrorist group – has gained immense popularity in the recently concluded elections in Lebanon,

while elections in Iraq are seeing an unprecedented contest between five factions, all of which belong to Shia sect and owe allegiance to Iran. Besides this rising clout, Iran is already funding the Houthi rebels in Yemen to keep off Saudi Arabia. In Syria, it has spent a major part of its money in propping up the Assad regime with the help of Russia and Turkey and in contravention of US, Saudi Arabia and France. In the recent past, the legendary Iranian Revolutionary Guards and its overseas Quds force fought to curb the rise of the ISIS, rebel factions of which were being funded by the Western powers to ensure regime change in Syria. All in all, it is not difficult to understand why Iran's invincibility is threatening everyone, especially the US allies in the region.

In the present conflict in West Asia, it is ironic for Saudi Arabia and its western allies to term Iran a terrorist state. Historically, Saudi Arabia has funded – and continues to do so – Sunni Islamic extremism all over the world. Its pathetic results are now showing, closer home, in countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh, Maldives and Indonesia. It has also funded setting up of extremist madrassas in Kashmir. Sunni Islamic terrorism – particularly Saudi Arabia's brand of hardline Wahhabism – has been responsible for jihad around the world. Yet, the West labels Iran as being extremist. ***What frustrates Iran's enemies is its resilience and persistence. One has to remember that Saudi Arabia and US – both young countries comparatively immature – are no match for Iran's ancient civilization. In international politics, Iran has always played for long-term stakes and mostly succeeded.***

Under the present conditions, the sanctions are not likely to hit Iran too badly. They will mostly be useless as Iran's largest trading partners are the sworn enemies of the US – like Russia and China. Ever since limited sanctions relief was provided after the 2015 deal, Europe has been fumbling for ways to explore Iran. But two years is

too short a time to say that Iran was getting effective investments from the West. In fact, even after the lifting of the sanctions, many western banks did not initiate business with Iran because of the wariness of the US, while other major European and US companies had only initiated contracts to be operationalized. Now few of them have announced withdrawal, while aircrafts like Boeing will also have to withdraw. This does not mean that Iran will be deprived of the money it needs. It simply means that the process of modernisation of infrastructure that Iran could have started will now be put on hold, if at all, since Iran has always had non-Western backups. If anything, the collapse of the deal will make US and EU the real losers.

On the other hand, Iran's bilateral trade with Russia – its major defence partner – is already touching 10 billion USD, while China has become the third-largest importer of Iranian oil, providing Iran large credit lines through its banks and has placed Iran at the heart of its Belt and Road Initiative. In another major project, India, Russia and Iran have partnered for the International North South Corridor (INSC). Besides these three, 11 more countries have joined in, enabling shipments from India to reach right up to Russia, by shortening the transit time from 40 days to less than 25 days.

India has strongly supported Iran. Not only did it announce a doubling of oil imports from Iran in February, but, after the recent the US pullout, immediately moved to 'insulate' its relationship with Iran. It has announced that it will not allow its relationship with Iran to be dictated by third parties, even as the US has called on 12 key allies, including India, to support it. But ***by now, India sees the US for its unprincipled politics and for the last few months has been proactively strengthening its separate relationships with China, Russia and Iran, through a series of 'informal summits'. India is just superficially entertaining US by talking about alignments like QUAD (between India, Japan, US and Australia), even as it privately***

***recognizes that nothing good will come out of engagement with the US.*** India's most crucial partnership with Iran is on the Chabahar project, which will bypass Pakistan and give India direct access to Afghanistan.

Moreover, from a long-term perspective, a strong Shia power dominating in the Gulf is good news for India. It will keep the Sunni extremism in check and doesn't export Islamic terrorism all over the world. In recent times, Wahhabism has hit India in Kashmir and Kerala and, to some extent, in UP. Back home, Shias have a cozy relationship with the Modi government, with official Shia boards endorsing Modi's policies on banning cow slaughter and constructing Ram temple at Ayodhya. It would be in India's interests to have such a power globally too. It would also keep Pakistan in check.

Iran's partners, like India, had already anticipated arbitrary actions from the US and had, therefore, put the necessary safeguards in place. For instance, for the first time India and Iran agreed on a method in which India can invest in Iran in rupees through the UCO bank of India – the first time such arrangement is working outside of South Asia. And if, as Europe has indicated, it plans to remain in the deal, India can continue making payments in Euro. **These arrangements, which could be the last straw to finish off US hegemony, raise a larger possibility for the future namely, the prospect of completely bypassing the dollar payment system and, eventually, the dollar losing its status as the reserve currency of the world. Europe, now, would certainly prefer such an option. For Europe, staying with the US has become costly and unproductive, with threats at every step. If dollar were to lose its hegemony in the future, due to increasing mistrust of the Americans, it would bring a complete end to US power. Alternatives like Chinese renminbi are already being worked upon, while Europe continues to be confident of the Euro.**

Besides these non-Western backups and Iran's growing relationship with countries that have little to do with the US, one has to also factor in the fact that Iran is not a country which will suddenly be hit by new sanctions. ***Iran has learned to survive under sanctions for years. As a result, the real clout in Iran is not the superficial economy that Europe wants to invest in, but rather, a parallel economy run by the Iranian deep state under the control of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards and other Shiite hardliner forces, who decide what gets done in the economy and where the money has to go – which is mostly visible in Iran's strong forays across the Gulf and its external funding of Shiite groups like Hezbollah and Hamas. That is why even after the sanctions were lifted, post-2015, foreign investors have had a difficult time trying to navigate the corrupt and entrenched bureaucratic systems of the country – everything, the whole political economy, remained the same, because the prospect of the opening up of Iran after sanctions has never suited the geopolitical aims of the real centers who have always controlled the country.***

In a way, the blow dealt to the Iran deal by the US has been good. It has ended up exposing and isolating the US, which has opened up several war fronts with many non-Western countries. Nobody will ever trust the US enough to get into a deal with it, even after a change of government. Alternative global arrangements that can insulate economies from the US will be developed and are already being worked out at regional levels. The imposition US sanctions is also good news from India's point of view for the reasons discussed above, in addition to the fact that India will now be able to get cheaper oil deals out of Iran, since Iran's non-modernized system of oil extraction is suited to India's old refineries. The growing closeness of India, Russia, China and Iran and Japanese alienation from the US also means that Asia can continue to grow powerfully.



In the process, historical western supports and props for Sunni extremism are taking a hit. China has already cracked down powerfully on Islam within its Uighur and now, Hui, populations and has completely banned traditional Muslim architecture, so much so, that now even mosques will be designed in the 'Chinese' style.

These developments are heralding a positive era in international politics well-suited to the rise of Asia and further embroiling the Western world in its own political contradictions and divisions. The monsters of global terrorism spawned by the West for long, are finally coming back to bite it. It is quite possible that even centers of terror activities will now be shifted to Western soil, and be driven out by counter-forces like Iran from Central Asia, thereby crippling the West. These developments are a precursor to the different kind of terms on which global politics is beginning to be conducted.

## ROHINGYA RADICALIZATION AND INDIAN POLITICS

To talk about the Rohingya these days is like talking about certain 'sacred' and politically sacrosanct concepts like secularism. It will require courage to depart from the majority view and actually show the darker side of these things. Today, the Rohingya have become a convenient prop for humanitarian, democratic and secular politics. It does not matter that the community is fast turning into a radical Sunni Islamist group, aiming at both self-multiplication and attacks on other communities. All that matters is the show of it. And the show is dictated by the irrational logic that if you are blindly seen to be supporting the community, you can hope to salvage your secular credentials. But the moment you start talking about terrorism and the jihadi activities of the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), you will be vilified as anti-minority and anti-humanitarian.

It is in this context that the hard-hitting reality brought forth in the latest report of Amnesty International needs to be seen. In a report released on May 22<sup>nd</sup>, Amnesty documents how the ARSA massacred the Hindus living in the Rakhine region of Myanmar. They massacred close to 100 Hindus – mostly children – on August 25<sup>th</sup> 2017, the same fateful day when they launched their attack on the Myanmar army and initiated the beginning of an irreversible process of genocidal exodus for the entire population of the Rakhine region.

Reportedly, the Rohingya committed the mass killings of Hindus in the far north of the Rakhine region. When last year, the Myanmar military had shown the Hindu graves to international media, it was dismissed and did not generate any outcry. It was just Myanmar's word against that of the rest of the world. But now with Amnesty International confirming the same and declaring that justice for these Hindus was every bit as important as those of the common Rohingya

victims, people are expressing surprise. In what was probably the most outrageous reaction, Bangladesh's foreign minister, the very next day, dismissed the Amnesty report and cast aspersions on the credibility of NGOs. In doing so, the minister betrayed his religious bias. Nobody wants to disturb the perfect, depressive narrative of the Rohingya as victims of ethnic cleansing.

Once you start talking about the unspeakable crimes committed by ARSA (for which the militant group deserved exactly the response they got from the Myanmar's army), its terror funding networks from Sunni terrorist organizations like ISIS and Al-Qaeda and other such groups, and its commitment to spreading jihad, the story changes. At least, it would be difficult to view the ARSA as a victim. But if we take the argument further, it also becomes hard to miss that ARSA is hugely popular and has lot of support from the Rohingya people themselves. This makes the community, as a whole, more prone to radicalization at any point in the future. They may or may not be radicalized now, but the signs for the future are very strong.

Bangladesh itself is now looking for ways to unburden itself. Sheikh Hasina's government has shown immense spine while dealing with terrorists in the last 4 years, but it has to always walk a fine line in a country where the popularity of Sunni clerics is competing to shape the otherwise historically neutral temperament of the Bengali Muslims. The Rohingya genocide last year generated, for a time, widespread public protests in Bangladesh against Myanmar and all who supported it, including a public backlash against India as well. Playing its cards correctly, the Hasina government preferred all kinds of material and public support for the Rohingya it has sheltered in its Cox's Bazar area in various camps. India also toned down its instinctive reaction of support for Myanmar. As did China.

In the complex political balance of Bangladesh, where sometimes the military ground staff and other branches like the coast

guard, have been caught trying to act against the government policy, Hasina has had to face difficulties. Despite her stand on not allowing the Rohingya influx, the Bangladesh Border Guard (BGB) would subtly circumvent those orders to protect the community who they viewed as their religious brethren. Similarly, other institutions like the judiciary and election commission too are intensely steeped in their Muslim conservative bias. Hasina – who personally has a solid relationship with India – has had to balance this entire sea of subtle opposition forces, not to mention outright unsubtle Islamic groups which are trying to become popular with people.

Keeping this background in mind, we can now appreciate how Bangladesh is dealing with the Rohingya refugee burden. Hasina has ensured – with all appearances of human rights intact, of course – that the Rohingya remain segregated from the rest of the society. In the recent past those that have strayed outside the camps, have been arrested. Now, the government is also considering – before the monsoon – to deport them altogether to an uninhabited island in the south of Bangladesh.

Clearly, even our neighbour takes the national security threat from unwanted refugees seriously. But what is India doing? Even the obvious proof of ARSA's culpability in heinous crimes has failed to arouse us from our stupor. Apparently, the centre is still stuck in a war of words with two main culprits, Mamata Banerjee and Mehbooba Mufti, on question of allowing Rohingya shelter. There is a difference between the two ladies. Mufti has not actively and personally pursued the Rohingya agenda, but has allowed Kashmiri extremists to go scot-free in their endeavour to buy land in Jammu and settling Muslims and the Rohingyas in Jammu. The result has been a Jammu on the boil – which we saw clearly only after the Kathua case, but has been in evidence for the last 2-3 years, and as usual was under-reported by the media. Both Hindus and Buddhists

are now fearing a demographic change because of the underhanded tactics of Kashmiri Muslims and have started retaliating as a form of self-protection, since no help from either the BJP or the Congress was forthcoming, even as Kashmiri militants got full political support for their nefarious land-grab designs.

In the case of West Bengal, it is a little different. Unlike Mufti, Mamata Banerjee has shown intense personal interest in resettling the Rohingya in Bengal's hill districts like Darjeeling, Kalimpong etc, which share international borders. From day one, like in most other issues, she abandoned all reason for the sake of opposing the central government's stand. So, when the central government petitioned in the court to allow the deportation of Rohingya on national security grounds, Banerjee obviously had to oppose it. Her opposition is coming at a big cost. Hill leaders, like Bimal Gurung, have already released statements indicating the intensifying resettlement of Rohingya there. Banerjee has also given a free hand to NGOs to settle Rohingya in Bengal's restive South-24 Parganas, which has been a site of lot of anti-TMC agitations of late, mostly related to forcible land grabs by TMC goons.

According to Union minister, SS Ahluwalia, Banerjee has settled about 320 Rohingya families at Deolo, Lava Forest, Melli and Rangpo in north Bengal hills. There is a pattern to this. First, Banerjee is settling Rohingyas in areas where TMC faces opposition and where she can consolidate Muslim votes. Second, her settlement of the community in hill areas – where TMC is universally hated – might be geared with sinister designs to change the demographics. After all, the more Muslims, the merrier for Banerjee.

The centre has done little in response up till now. The BJP's expansion in Bengal may help. But, for some reason, Banerjee is being allowed to disrupt India's sensitive foreign security concerns. It might be too late by the time the government decides to take action

against Bengal's impunity. The state of affairs and the nature of politics in Bengal and Kashmir shows the degraded political culture of the country. This is exactly what is meant when it is often said that the country's national unity and national character needs to be revived. It can only be done once selfish politicians finally see the end of their ambitions.



## The Remarkable Political Instinct and Capacity of the Cultural Mind of India

*“THE SOCIO-POLITICAL evolution of Indian civilisation, as far as one can judge from the available records, passed through four historical stages, first the simple Aryan community, then a long period of transition in which the national life was proceeding through a considerable variety of experimental formations in political structure and synthesis, thirdly, the definite formation of the monarchical state coordinating all the complex elements of the communal life of the people into regional and imperial unities, and last the era of decline in which there was an internal arrest and stagnation and an imposition of new cultures and systems from western Asia and Europe. The distinguishing character of the first three periods is a remarkable solidity and stability in all the formations and a sound and vital and powerful evolution of the life of the people rendered slow and leisurely by this fundamental conservative stability of the system but all the more sure in its building and living and complete in its structure. And even in the decline this solidity opposes a strong resistance to the process of demolition. The structure breaks up at the top under foreign pressure, but preserves for a long time its basis, keeps, wherever it can maintain itself against invasion, much of its characteristic system and is even towards the end capable of attempts at revival of its form and its spirit. ...the long stability of its constructions and the greatness of the life they sheltered is certainly no sign of incapacity, but rather of a remarkable political instinct and capacity in the cultural mind of India.”*

– Sri Aurobindo  
(CWSA 20: 407-08)