

Unconvincing arguments

Now that the formal announcement has been made, the full story can be told of all the ways the bureaucracy tried to prevent the creation of the office of the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) and the Department of Military Affairs (DMA); and how the Prime Minister weighed in.

The outgoing Chief of Army Staff Gen. Bipin Rawat was to have become the CDS. He was to retire on December 31. The CDS was cleared by the Cabinet Committee on Security on December 24. Top bureaucrats kept advising the PM to rethink the proposal because of the "disquiet" in the bureaucracy. The retirement age of 65 and parity between the CDS and the cabinet secretary were presented as manifestations of this disquiet. It was also highlighted that unless the gazette notification was issued before December 31, Gen. Rawat could not progress from army chief to CDS in a seamless manner.

In response, PM Narendra Modi told officials he wanted it done the next day. Whatever the sense of disquiet, no bureaucrat was brave enough to disobey the PM.

A new fan

Deepika Padukone has an unlikely admirer: Former foreign minister K Natwar Singh! Singh writes that Padukone did not wrong by visiting the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU). He says: "I have never met Deepika Padukone, nor have I seen any of her films. From time to time, I have seen her photographs in magazines. By any standards, she is a stunningly beautiful lady."

**OPINION**

MICHAEL POMPEO

'Have re-established deterrence but it's not everlasting'

I was a young soldier back during the Cold War. You can have the greatest army in the world, but it doesn't matter if you are not prepared to use it to achieve your strategic objectives. As one of your scholars here, Victor Davis Hanson, said, "Deterrence is hard to establish and easy to lose."

And let's be honest. For decades, US administrations of both political parties never did enough against Iran to get the deterrence that is necessary to keep us all safe. The JCPOA itself — the nuclear deal — made things worse. It enabled that regime to create wealth, it opened up revenue streams for the Ayatollahs to build up the Shiite militia networks, the very networks — the very networks — that killed an American and imposed enormous risk at our — to our embassy in Baghdad. Rather than blocking those efforts, the deal put Iran on a clear pathway to a nuclear weapon as well, something President Trump began his remarks by saying would never happen on our watch.

So what did we do? We put together a campaign of diplomatic isolation, economic pressure, and military deterrence.

The goal is two-fold. First, we wanted to deprive the regime of resources, resources it needs to perpetrate its malign activity around the world. And second, we just want Iran to behave like a normal nation. Just be like Norway, right? (Laughter.)

Diplomatically, allies and partners have joined us. They are today patrolling the Straits of Hormuz alongside of us in the Persian Gulf to stop Iranian attacks on shipping. Let us not forget how many ships the Iranians pulled from the straits over the past month.

Germany, France, Italy have all put travel bans on a company called Mahan Air. It's an Iranian airline that ferries military — Iranian military assets and weapons to the battle zones.

Argentina and the United Kingdom have both now declared Hizballah a terrorist organisation.

And you have seen finally, too, the economic pressure that we have put in place to cut off roughly 80 per cent of the Iranian oil revenues. We are determined to get that last 20 per cent, too.

President Rouhani himself said that we have denied the Iranian regime some \$200 billion in lost foreign income and investment as a result of our activities. This is money that would have in large measure gone to support the very activities that would have put you and your fellow citizens at risk.

And you can see it, too. The Iranian people are increasingly angry at their own government for stealing their wealth and for the sake of violently spreading the regime at enormous cost to them.

On the military side, we've warned the Iranians repeatedly — I've done so personally myself — that an attack that took American lives would not be tolerated.

And they tested us, as they had tested previous administrations as well many times before. Past laxity had emboldened them.

But on December 27th, at Soleimani's direction, we changed that. On the 31st, Iranian-backed militias attacked our embassy in Baghdad and we changed that calculus for them.

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff said it perhaps best. Had we not taken that strike against Qasem Soleimani, our leadership — the recommendation that we made to President Trump — we would have been "culpably negligent" had we not made that recommendation, imposed a significant cost on the regime for their bad decision.

...And Iran hit back, and we're grateful that no lives were lost, and we will never downplay the seriousness of any attack on the United States or its forces. But judging from the type and intensity of the strike, the regime certainly must now understand what we will do if they ever again pose risk to American lives. If Iran escalates, we will end it on our terms.

President Trump reinforced that deterrence when he gave a set of remarks this past week. And these days Iran is making noise about leaving the nuclear deal.

...And our sanctions will continue until the regime stops its terrorist activity and commits to never having nuclear weapons and permits a verification regime which can give the world confidence that that will not take place.

...We have re-established deterrence, but we know it's not everlasting, that risk remains. We are determined not to lose that deterrence. In all cases, we have to do this.

We have to do this to defend freedom and liberty around the world. That's the whole point of President Trump's work, to make our military the strongest it's ever been.

We saw, not just in Iran, but in other places, too, where American deterrence was weak. We watched Russia's 2014 occupation of the Crimea and support for aggression against Ukraine because deterrence had been undermined. We have resumed lethal support to the Ukrainian military.

...For years, too, China has restricted access for American products in its markets, while demanding access for their stuff here. We've made clear that we're going to have a fair and reciprocal trading arrangement with China. We'll demand it. I hope, here in the next handful of hours, we sign the first part of what will be a significant agreement which will improve the lives of American citizens, raise wages for citizens here at home, and increase the economic relationship between our two countries on a set of terms that work for both China and for the United States.

There is a second mission, too. China has stolen massive quantities of American innovation, innovation created at campuses right like this one I'm standing on — everything from genetically engineered crop seeds to self-driving car technology. They stole it. They didn't have to invest or take risk.

We're making progress to make sure that the next part of the deal will improve on the IP protections that are in Phase One of the Chinese trade deal.

Edited excerpts from a speech by US Secretary of State, Michael Pompeo at the Hoover Institute, Stanford University, California on The Restoration of Deterrence: The Iranian Example, January 13

DID THEY REALLY SAY THAT?

"Mamata Banerjee is the chief minister of West Bengal and not the leader of the entire country. At least she should understand her constitutional duties."

Minister for Minority Affairs, Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, in New Delhi on January 16



ILLUSTRATION BY BINAY SINHA

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'Voters casting ballot on clear economic issues in many states'

Prime Minister Narendra Modi stormed back to power in 2019 — despite poor economic performance, a badly managed slowdown and high unemployment — on the back of nationalist appeal. Is it all catching up with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) now? Are street demonstrations on diverse issues a manifestation of economic discontentment?

Economic discontent is a background condition that is adding fuel to the fire of student movements and other spontaneous movements. To JNU, Jamia, Aligarh, and various other university campuses have now been added the IITs and IIMs — the issue of economic distress cannot be underestimated. Onion and vegetable prices that have driven a surge in the consumer price index, joblessness, even the worry that banks may put a limit on withdrawal, is bringing Hindus and Muslims together on the platform of economic distress. Prashant Kishore of the Janata Dal (United) was the first to point out that the National Register of Citizens (NRC) will divide India on a class basis because of the transactions costs associated with the NRC. After all, did not the Assam NRC leave a lot of Hindus out?

If the economy had been in a better shape, the protests could be muted. It is possible that Hindu-Muslim polarisation would have been even greater in that case.

To add fuel to fire, the government is behaving as if the dismal rate of growth, and the disgraceful unemployment and consumption sta-

tics are not a matter of fact. The prime minister and his colleagues pretend that all is well. Often statistics are sought to be hidden from the public gaze. But citizens must worry, when onion prices and joblessness are at an all-time high, the government is only withholding statistics and praising its own performance. Many who voted the BJP now feel the pinch, be it construction work, delayed MGNREGS payments, or factory or corporate job losses. It is noteworthy that 250 million Indians went on strike on January 8. Many students who are now opposing the government would have also voted the BJP thinking that the prime minister would deliver on his long-standing promise: *Sab ka saath, sab ka vikas* (with everyone for their development).

The strategy of distracting citizens with Pulwama, Balakote, Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the NRC has begun to boomerang in the face of poor governance. The BJP is losing state-level elections when just a few months ago it seemed that the BJP would sweep the country. At that time, Mr. Modi went all the distance to bat with the idea that national- and the state-level elections should be held at the same time. Was India going to turn into a kind of "hybrid democracy" like Bangladesh with no opposition?

This optimism of the ruling party was somewhat overturned when it could not form the government in Maharashtra. Maharashtra is an important state considering its size and wealth.

CHECKLIST**THE BJP'S NEXT CHALLENGE: RAJYA SABHA**

■ **Where:** In the Rajya Sabha where with 83 seats out of 245, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) does not have a majority on its own. Ordinarily, this wouldn't have mattered given that the party has a network of friends, visible and invisible. But in the fraught political atmosphere in the country today, being at the mercy of friends who have their own agendas is not a secure place to be in. Therefore, the government would like to ensure it has a degree of autonomy of action in the upper house.

■ **When:** As many as 69 MPs will retire from the upper house this year: 51 in April alone. Not much will change in the BJP's favour because in the interim, some states in which they had a majority are now with the Opposition. In Maharashtra, where seven MPs retire, the BJP will have to exert itself to ensure its tally does not fall, now that the Shiv Sena-led opposition alliance is in power. In Uttar Pradesh (11 seats up for grabs), the Opposition

is expected to suffer after the BJP's stunning victory in the last Assembly elections. So the Samajwadi Party's tally in the upper house might go down further. Intriguingly, there is no clarity on the seats from Jammu and Kashmir which was downgraded to a Union Territory and is under President's rule right now.

■ **How:** The Rajya Sabha elections are held indirectly on the basis of an electoral college comprising MLAs from each state Assembly. MLAs don't vote for seats — they vote for candidates based on preference. The more state Assemblies in which a party is in power, the more will be its representation in the upper house.

■ **What it means:** While the BJP will continue to be the single largest party, its hopes of getting a majority in the upper house have been dashed by a rash of recent Assembly election losses, especially in big states like Maharashtra.

Soon thereafter, the BJP lost Jharkhand. The fact that the BJP government was not working for forest rights of the tribal people did not help. No one is complaining about electronic voting machines (EVMs) any more. It seems voters in India are casting their ballot on clear economic issues in many states. The forthcoming Delhi election will test the idea of India once again.

When we attempt to study "the crowd" in the demonstrations going on all over India, we find there is little in common among it. It is not the Navnirman movement; nor is it the Naxalbari uprising. There are young people from (relatively) wealthy families as well as the middle class and the poor. There are Muslims protesting as well as Hindus. How do you read it?

These current protests are neither like the Navnirman movement led by Jayaprakash Narayan (JP) nor the Maoist revolt in Naxalbari. What was common to all these movements was political leadership. And, there were parties behind these movements. In the case of the movement led by JP, his towering and uncompromising Gandhi-like presence was a pole star.

Today's women and youth are openly expressing themselves in favour of an alternative idea of inclusive India. Muslim women in Shaheen Bagh, many of them housewives devoid of high academic credentials, could teach scholars a lesson or two in political representation. They are saying that the Muslim in India is an Indian who will not tolerate the status of a second class citizen. It is an affront to Indians if they have to produce special certificates to prove their identity under the threat of NRC. Once upon a time the slogan was "quit India" today it is "hum dekhenge" (we will see!) and "kago amra dekhabo na" (paper, we shall not show!).

The protests in Jamia and JNU have turned into nationwide campaigns. There are a number of causes to struggle for. If higher education can be free in Germany why not in India? Who will take care of the poverty-stricken and talented youth who must contribute to the country's well-being? Should academic institutions be autonomous or should they be ruled by a party-state reminiscent of ones in many former communist and authoritarian regimes?

The manner in which recruitment, appointments and the fees in JNU were sought to be managed — along with caricaturing it as an enemy of the nation — it was clear that JNU was the target of the ruling dispensation. If JNU is such an evil institution, then one must also acknowledge the two alumni in the cabinet and numerous civil servants who run the country, apart from its profound contribution to the life of the intellect. Not only is the current Nobel Prize winner an alumni, scholars in JNU have contributed to the way India has debated its problems, and some even hold chairs in the world's renowned universities.

The idea of India is much deeper than what political parties with anointed leaders can imagine. For example, Swami Vivekananda, the patron saint of the Indian renaissance, contended that the Indian tradition was so inclusive that Hinduism was not just about toleration but assimilation as well. His remarks at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893 was the boldest expression of the cosmopolitan view at that time. He articulated the Vedantic ideal lived and experienced by his Master Sri

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Ramakrishna Paramahansa — all paths no matter how contradictory they may appear — all lead to the same goal. The next generation that produced Gandhi, Tagore and Azad practised the cosmopolitan version of Hinduism and Islam.

The idea of living with, accepting and learning from diversity is an integral part of national identity that cannot easily be challenged. It is the people of India who are battling for this idea of India — cherished by the founding father and inscribed in the Constitution drafted under the leadership of Dr. Ambedkar. These spontaneous protests devoid of political calculation and expressing the will of the people hold substantial promise for the people of India. Those very persons for whom the Constitution was made wish to abide by it. They foresee the threats posed by an alternative idea of India.

What do we know about spontaneous, leaderless, organisation-less movements? Is Indian democracy and the Indian state resilient and flexible enough to absorb this challenge?

We do not know much about spontaneous leaderless movements like the ones described above. One would worry that these causes may not last in the absence of political parties and leadership that naturally gives shape to social movements.

There is a positive side too. Political calculations that drive parties do not always reflect citizen needs. Opposition parties are sometimes confused regarding whether or not this overt support for the millennial idea of India will boomerang against them. After all, there could be a silent majority that might vote the BJP with even greater fervour if it buys into Hindutva nationalism as a harbinger of long-term progress for the majority population of Hindus.

In this respect, it is truly remarkable that the people of India are leading the polity where political parties often fear to tread. Was the constitution, after all, not about: We the people? The people of India have not only challenged the ruling dispensation with the constitution, they have also opened the eyes of the leadership that sits in the Opposition.

Do established political parties need to change the way they mobilise in the face of spontaneous protest? Just when they thought they had cracked the social media tool? But the story seems to have gone beyond.

Political power has battled for all kinds of ideas — such as those that produced the Hindu rate of growth, as well as, those that led to the most remarkable growth surge. India suffered substantial poverty and governance challenges. In response, politics and the state unleashed the rights-based approach to compensate the poor. Politics was leading from the front, reading the aspirations of the poor and of those who create wealth for the country.

That politics is missing today. On the one hand Hindutva nationalism seeks to alter the millennial idea of India, while on the other, the upholders of the dominant millennial tradition who can contribute to the inclusive character of India so prominent in its federal character, seem to have lost the verve to lead from the front. The people could lose despite their toil, if politics did not find a way of incorporating them. This is a serious challenge where the promise of social mobilisation must meet with politics that protects and uplifts the character of our Constitution.

Saving lives: One drop at a time

Swarnami Mondal on a Bengaluru-based organisation that is creating a database of voluntary blood donors to ensure timely supply and prevent wastage

The *Lancet Haematology* study, published in November 2019, points out that India tops the chart when it comes to unmet blood needs and that the country needs to rethink its estimation of how much blood it needs in order to match its demands. The study says, globally, India is battling a shortfall of 41 million units, and demand outstrips supply by 400 per cent; the overall global shortfall is 100 million units.

Thousands of lives each year is lost due to shortage of blood. Bengaluru-based Chethan Gowda faced a similar loss when his teacher died due to shortage of blood. He realised there was a lack of channel connecting the donors to the recipients and awareness around blood donation needed to be spread among youngsters. Chethan's first-hand encounter with blood crisis prompted him to start Khoon — an NGO which aims to resolve blood shortage in India and motivates more people to donate blood — in 2016.

Speaking to *Business Standard*, he says, "A lack of awareness, incorrect information around blood donation in India are some of the main reasons behind us falling short of 3

million units of blood required annually. Even if 1-2 per cent youngsters begin donating blood regularly, we can bridge this gap."

How did Khoon begin its journey?

"It all began with a blood donation camp, but the USP of this blood donation camp was its theme setting," says Chethan, who is now studying for a B.Tech in mechanical engineering. The camp tried to keep the mood light with a musical concert. The turnout was above expectation and they managed to collect quite a lot of blood. "We figured this way we could attract more young people to these blood donation drives and we organised several such theme-based camps since 2016. In four years, the NGO has collected over 87,000 signatories from all over India. Now we conduct six donation camps annually," he says.

The initiative has successfully built a strong database of over 4,000 donors in Bengaluru. The organisation spread its wings to the Northeast in 2017, where a 24X7 blood helpline has been established. In 2018, Khoon forayed in Chhattisgarh's Bhillai. Blood donation camps and awareness programmes were



Gowda donating blood at one of the camps

arranged in Bhillai to bust myths around blood donation.

In 2019, Khoon stepped up its game in research and development and its area of impact was North Karnataka. It partnered with Facebook to implement the tool — Facebook for blood donation — across all the

214 blood banks in Karnataka. The organisation is now mentoring blood bank technicians on using this Facebook tool towards creating a larger community of donors. It has also partnered with AIDS prevention society to come up with concepts to cut down wastage of blood during medical procedures such as transfusion. Khoon has come up with 100 ml and 50 ml blood sachets for blood transfusion in new-born babies who need less blood than adults.

What challenges does Khoon face? Chethan says, "Blood donation as an ecosystem needs more support. Blood donation, preserving blood and prevention of wastage — all of these needs training, mentorship and funding." He further says, "We can eradicate shortage of blood in the country only if youngsters come up, donate and mobilise others too."

Khoon is a 44-member strong team now and it has over 350 registered volunteers.

The road ahead

"Soon we want to create a similar network of donors for pets, specially cats and dogs. As of now, there are only two Facebook groups working for this cause and many pets die due to the want of blood. The plan is in process and this project will be done in collaboration with veterinary hospitals," Chethan says. Khoon also looks at creating training modules for blood bank technicians in regional languages in times to come.