



## Theory and practice

CPI(M)'s attempt to find ideological clarity will affect the shape of any anti-BJP front

**A** divergence of interests within a political party can take many forms. It is either raised to the level of an ideological divide that portrays the differences as a battle of ideas, or reduced to a clash of personalities that presents the differences as a struggle for power at the top of the organisational hierarchy. The fight within the Communist Party of India (Marxist) is essentially between the Kerala and West Bengal units. The tactical line at stake is alliance-formation, whether or not the party should be part of a larger broad-based alliance headed by the Congress at the national level. For the Kerala unit, whose principal rival is the Congress-led United Democratic Front, any such alliance is difficult to sell to the cadre. For the Bengal unit, which is ceding ground to the Trinamool and the BJP, the Congress is a natural ally. At present, the Kerala unit is stronger, and it got the CPI(M) Polit Bureau to veto a proposal to change the party line to allow for an alliance with the Congress and other secular opposition parties. The BJP is growing in Kerala, but the Congress remains the main adversary for the CPI(M) in the State. The efforts of party general secretary Sitaram Yechury to push through the proposal thus came to naught.

The pragmatic aspect to the differences within the party exists side by side with larger "theoretical" issues. For the CPI(M), this manifests itself in questions such as whether there exists a "fascist threat" in India, whether the BJP is a completely "fascist party looking to create an authoritarian state", and whether India is descending into "communal fascism". If the answer in the eyes of the party is that fascism has already arrived in India, then it is only logical for it to ally with social democratic forces to unseat the BJP. If the answer is more nuanced with caveats and qualifications, then it would enjoin the CPI(M) to pursue its own political goals independently of all so-called bourgeois parties. Clearly, the Polit Bureau did not view the BJP as a threat serious enough to reorient the party's political strategy and electoral tactics. But to the discomfiture of the CPI(M), the tussle within is also being perceived as a tug of war between Mr. Yechury and his predecessor as general secretary, Prakash Karat. The alliance issue now goes to the Central Committee, where Mr. Karat has greater support. Earlier, the CC had voted down an attempt by the Bengal unit to give Mr. Yechury a third term in the Rajya Sabha, marking an assertion of the Karat/Kerala faction over the Yechury/Bengal faction. However, as in 2004, the CPI(M) could still extend support to a Congress-led government after having fought the party electorally across the country. Any which way, the internal fights within the CPI(M) will have a bearing on the creation of a broad-based front against the BJP in 2019.

## The rhythm of life

The Medicine Nobel touches on our curiosity about an inner clock and links to nature

**T**ime and clocks have held a special fascination for humankind down the ages. So, it is particularly revealing that two of the three Nobel Prizes for the sciences announced this year have been linked to time. While the Nobel Prize for Physics was awarded to a trio of physicists for their work in the detection of gravitational waves emanating from the recesses of the space-time continuum, the 2017 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine was won by a triumvirate of chronobiologists for their work in discovering the mechanisms controlling the internal clocks that keep time in all living organisms, including humans. Jeffrey C. Hall, Michael Rosbash and Michael W. Young, three Americans born in the 1940s, made pioneering contributions in helping unravel the genetic coding and protein pathways that regulate the circadian rhythm — that rhythm which tells us when it is time to eat and sleep, or wake up even when we have no bedside alarm. Working with the humble fruit fly, the three scientists isolated a gene named *period* that studies had shown disrupted the fly's circadian clock. Dr. Hall and Dr. Rosbash then went on to discover that the protein PER, which acts as a functional communicator for this gene, accumulated at night and then diminished during the day. Independently, Dr. Young made a couple of seminal breakthroughs that helped complete the jigsaw puzzle — first by identifying a second gene *timeless* that through its TIM protein, working in conjunction with PER, helped engender the seesawing of cellular protein levels. He then spotted the third gene, *doubletime*, which through an encoded protein served as the regulator of the frequency of the oscillations.

In its nod to the trio's contributions, the Nobel Assembly at Sweden's Karolinska Institute referred to how their work had led to circadian biology developing into a "vast and highly dynamic research field, with implications for our health and well-being." It is this crucial human health angle that has spawned a mushrooming body of science centred on understanding the linkages between sleep and normal metabolic activity, and the potentially deleterious effect of sleep deprivation. From "jet lag", when people travel across different time zones challenging the internal biological clock, to the difficulties people engaged in shift-based jobs have in resetting their sleep-wake cycles, contemporary medical science acknowledges the hazards that lack of adequate sleep can pose. The ubiquitousness of the smartphone, tablet, computer and TV screens that may disrupt the circadian rhythm because of the light they emit is being studied extensively. The Nobel-winning researchers' contributions have also led to an improved understanding of the link between peak physical performance in sport and the time of the day. Ultimately, the prospect that the circadian rhythm may well hold the key to future breakthroughs in the modulation and treatment of various diseases is truly tantalising.

# States in Indian diplomacy

The outcome of the Sharjah ruler's Kerala visit shows why more needs to be done to involve States in foreign policy



T.P. SREENIVASAN

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's concept of competitive federalism, particularly in matters of foreign affairs, was on display in Kerala during the five-day visit of the Sharjah ruler, Sultan bin Mohammed Al-Qasimi. Apart from holding discussions with the Sultan on trade and commercial cooperation and presenting a road map on joint projects between Kerala and Sharjah, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan announced at a convocation ceremony of the Calicut University to confer a D.Litt on the Sultan that the ruler had agreed to release 149 Indian prisoners from Sharjah jails. "The request I made was to release those people in jail. But why should they be returned, they will be allowed to live there. I will give them jobs, was the response of Sheikh Sultan," Mr. Vijayan said. In his speech, the Sharjah ruler said: "There are not just people from Kerala or India in jails. We will release all nationals who have completed three years in jail in such cases. And why should they go back home, they will be allowed to continue to work there itself."

### The local touch

A subsequent tweet by External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj carried the news of the amnesty, but did not mention the role played by the Chief Minister of Kerala, leading to questions about jurisdiction of the State in such matters. Mr. Vijayan had taken the precaution of writing to Ms. Swaraj about the announcement in Thiruvananthapuram and advised the Government of India to pursue it in other Emirates, so that other Indians could also be released. Moreover, the Indian Ambassador



PTI

to the UAE, Navdeep Suri, was present in Thiruvananthapuram to keep New Delhi informed of developments.

Although traditionalists may argue that foreign affairs are in the exclusive domain of the Union government, the successful outcome of a request made by the Kerala Chief Minister has been widely applauded. The visit of the ruler was in response to an invitation by the Chief Minister, who was impressed by the warm hospitality and the good words the Sultan said about Keralites when he had visited Sharjah earlier. Moreover, the Sultan has special ties with Kerala. The optimal use of such linkages is what Mr. Modi envisaged in the BJP manifesto: "Team India shall not be limited to the Prime Minister-led team in Delhi, but will also include Chief Ministers and other functionaries as equal partners."

Having been Chief Minister of Gujarat for nearly 13 years, Mr. Modi is acutely aware of the need for inclusion of State governments in foreign policymaking, particularly in matters relating to trade and investment. He had visited Japan, China and Singapore and seen for himself the potential for the States to play a role in securing the best deals for themselves within the overall policy of the Central

government. In his earlier stint as Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister, Chandrababu Naidu negotiated with foreign governments to make Hyderabad an IT capital, prompting even presidents and prime ministers to visit the city on state visits. Given his personal reputation, the Government of India invited Mr. Naidu to lead an Indian delegation on IT. The policy of countries like the U.S. and China to encourage their State governments to take economic delegations to foreign countries and even to establish their own trading offices abroad was the model.

### Remodelling the MEA

After three years as Prime Minister, Mr. Modi claimed that he had established the basic mechanism for the States to play an important role in not only implementing foreign policy, but also in formulating it. The Ministry of External Affairs now has a States division, which keeps in touch with the States to assist them in building bridges with the countries in which they have a special interest on account of proximity or the presence of diaspora from that State. IFS officers have been asked to choose a State each to understand its special requirements and to advise them. Gone are the days when regional affini-

ties were considered undesirable in their handling of international issues. A Foreign Secretary used to say, half in jest, that no Punjabi should deal with Pakistan and no Tamil should deal with Sri Lanka! In the new dispensation, diplomats are expected to bring their regional expertise to take the correct decisions on neighbours.

Pandit Nehru wrote letters to the Chief Ministers, explaining certain aspects of foreign policy, but did not solicit their views, though they could ask questions or make suggestions. But those were the days when he could do no wrong as he was considered infallible and unflappable. But as regional parties began to exert influence at the national level, States began to dictate terms even in foreign policy. The States exercised veto on crucial issues, making it difficult for the Prime Minister to have his way in formulating policy. The Chief Minister of West Bengal stopped then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh from signing an agreement on sharing of Teesta waters with Bangladesh after the agreement was negotiated. Political parties in Tamil Nadu not only insisted that India should support the U.S. resolution against Sri Lanka in the Human Rights Council, but also stopped the Prime Minister from attending a Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) on the ground that Sri Lanka was not safeguarding the interests of the Tamil minority. Kerala itself had insisted that the Italian marines who killed two fishermen should be tried in India and punished here, causing a rift in India's relations with the European Union. In all these cases, the larger interests of India on the global scene were sacrificed to make life easier for the leaders of the States concerned. Even strategic and security issues were ignored in the process.

It was not unusual for visiting foreign dignitaries to visit State capitals, but it was Mr. Modi who

set the trend to entertain them in Ahmedabad rather than in New Delhi. President Xi Jinping of China and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan received a royal welcome in Gujarat and pledged support for mammoth projects like smart cities and the bullet train in the State. It was unthinkable earlier for Prime Ministers to establish major projects in their own States without considering the merits of competing venues.

### Half-hearted measures

The promise made in the BJP manifesto that States would be involved more in foreign affairs has not been kept as yet as the moves made so far are tentative and half-hearted. A States division in the Ministry of External Affairs, by itself, cannot make a difference in policymaking. A new structure, in which the States are fully represented, should be established and the Ministry of External Affairs should have offices in key States. Think tanks should be established in States to facilitate policy options and to provide inputs to the States and the Centre.

Kerala's Sharjah diplomacy may have succeeded more by chance than by a deliberate allocation of responsibilities to the State and the Centre. Kerala has legitimate interests not only in the Gulf, but also in many distant lands, including the U.S., because of the representation of Kerala in the Indian diaspora there. The Sharjah success can be replicated only if a new architecture is devised to involve the States in issues identified as crucial to them. A major change in mindset is necessary to accomplish it. The States must also develop expertise on foreign affairs to be able to take responsible decisions in their interaction with foreign lands.

T.P. Sreenivasan is a former Ambassador of India and currently Director General, Kerala International Centre, Thiruvananthapuram

# Tri-service integration or consolidation?

Recent comments from the armed forces raise disturbing questions



DINAKAR PERI

While India aspires to jointmanship among the three services, statements over the last few weeks point disturbingly to renewed inter-service rivalry to protect their turf. Last week, addressing the 14th Subroto Mukerjee seminar organised by the Centre for Air Power Studies and the Indian Air Force, Vice Chief of Air Staff, Air Marshal S.B. Deo, said jointmanship was also about optimal utilisation of resources. "Ours is a growing country, our budget is limited. We cannot afford duplicating capabilities," he said. "We cannot have an Air Force with the Army, an Air Force with the Navy and another Air Force."

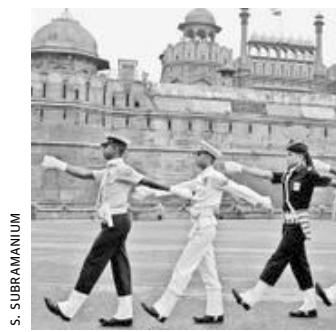
His comments are significant against the backdrop of the government sanctioning six AH-64 Apache helicopters for the Army, something the service has been seeking for a while. At the same time the Navy is expanding its fighter strength though the carri-

ers to operate them would accommodate less.

### Army's supremacy?

In turn, speaking at a seminar by the Centre for Land Warfare Studies early last month, Army Chief General Bipin Rawat gave a peek into his idea of tri-service integration when he said that the "supremacy and primacy of the Army in a joint services environment" should be maintained. "The other services, the Navy and Air Force, will play a very major role in support of the Army which will be operating on the ground because no matter what happens, we may be dominating the sea or the air, but finally war will be to ensure territorial integrity of the nation," he said. "And therefore the supremacy and primacy of the Army in a joint services environment becomes that much more relevant and important."

The question is, will these developments unleash another round of inter-service turf war and further delay several important decisions on tri-service integration such as the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), specialised commands for cyber, space and Special Forces? Also, are we moving towards tri-service integration or consolidation?



S. SUBRAMANIAM

The comments also come shortly after the Union Cabinet had cleared 65 of 99 recommendations, all related to the Army, of the Lt General D.B. Shekatkar Committee for enhancing combat capability and rebalancing defence expenditure of the armed forces to increase the teeth-to-tail ratio (that is, ratio of combatants to soldiers in support roles). The remaining 34 recommendations pertaining to the tri-services, in addition to the Navy and Air Force, are to be taken up soon. Among them is a proposal on the appointment of a single point military adviser to the Prime Minister on strategic issues. Despite the NDA government accord high priority to the issue and Prime Minister Narendra Modi himself sitting through presenta-

tions, progress has been minimal. After much deliberation, the consensus has veered towards a Permanent Chairman Chiefs of Staff Committee (CoSC), a four star officer equivalent to the three service chiefs, while ideally what the country needs is a full-fledged five star officer. The four star officer would serve no real purpose except adding to the already existing protocol nightmare and complicating the situation further.

### Need for Chief of Defence Staff

The last time India fought a major battle was the Kargil conflict in 1999 in which the Navy played a silent role while the Army and Air Force collaborated to evict intruders from Indian soil. The lessons learnt then prompted the K. Subrahmanyam Committee to propose having a CDS for the first time. Those who advocate instituting a Permanent Chairman CoSC must understand that once that happens, then there would be four people opposing the CDS's creation compared to three now. Incrementalism doesn't always work; sometimes a giant leap is the need of the hour. But with the latest comments, it appears that the other services would oppose the proposal for a CDS tooth and

nailed. India has traditionally been a land power and, yes, the primary threats are still on land, from the northern and western borders. But the threat matrix has changed since 1947 and the Indian Ocean region is fast metamorphosing into a major arena of friction, with increasing forays by the Chinese Navy and building up of regional navies with help from China. Also, while the threat of war still exists in the subcontinent under the nuclear overhang, the room for large conventional manoeuvres is over. In a conflict situation, what would unfold are short and swift skirmishes which call for agility and swift action by the three services in unison.

With threat perceptions heightened in the neighbourhood and newer challenges rising in the region and beyond, it is unfortunate that the mighty "armed forces", which are the drivers of the nationalistic discourse in the country, are engaged in squabbles. The recently released "Joint military doctrine of the Indian armed forces 2017" made the right noise on "jointness" and "integration", but much work is needed on the ground to achieve even a fraction of what has been enunciated.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

### Tackling the economy

Prime Minister Narendra Modi was as eloquent as ever in taking on the Opposition and his critics even as he admitted that growth has fallen ("Growth has fallen, but govt. can reverse trend, says PM", Oct. 5). On the other hand, the Reserve Bank of India presented a gloomy picture and batted for strict fiscal discipline ("RBI holds interest rates, warns against fiscal laxity", Oct. 5). It cautioned against the reported plan of the government to impart fiscal stimulus to provide a fillip to the economy, which is not advisable given the astronomical deficits being encountered by the State and Central governments. It also found fault with the implementation of the Goods and Services Tax, but I think some allowance should be given as GST is a new move and this government is not averse to

rectifications. However, it is not appropriate on the government's part to continue to defend demonetisation as a slump in growth rate is directly proportional to a great extent to its after-effects. Mr. Modi retains the goodwill of most of India but he should not get carried away by his invincibility. Time is ticking for the government to bring the economy back on track, but at an alarming speed.

V. SUBRAMANIAM,  
Chennai

Small businesses are struggling, even shutting down, after a major overhaul to both the country's currency and sales tax system. Policymakers need to act now. Without a stimulus of sufficient magnitude, the economy is likely to see a decline in growth, or even a formal recession, leading to higher unemployment, declining or stagnant wages,

and a host of other economic problems. Combined with a broader unravelling of credit markets, we can expect to see continued spillovers into other areas of the economy, most importantly the labour market.

K.M.K. MURTHY,  
Secunderabad

It is not unusual to see negative results immediately after a reform. Indira Gandhi as Prime Minister had nationalised banks, but did the country get good results overnight without any problems? Her government's slogan was 'Garibi Hatao' but has poverty left the country?

J.P. REDDY,  
Nalgonda

The debate on the economy has failed to tackle a key question: If demonetisation and GST have both been suicidal for the economy, why did the Prime Minister

initiate these steps? The middle class is said to be the BJP's core constituency. Anecdotal evidence suggests that it is deeply disappointed and even angry with the Prime Minister. WhatsApp groups that had elevated Mr. Modi to a demigod status are now brimming with indignation.

R. SIVAKUMAR,  
Chennai

While it is good that Mr. Modi has admitted to an economic slowdown, much of his talk sounds like bravado. His slogan, "No to pessimism", is not a talisman that can wish away the slump in the economy nor can his oft-repeated slogan "no short-term benefits at the cost of long-term gains" assuage the hardship of the common man already harassed by rising prices due to the GST implementation fiasco. We expect Mr. Modi to chalk out a slew of concrete steps

instead of chest-thumping. It is disappointing that he could not come out with any such plan. Has he run out of ideas?

R.V. EASWAR,  
New Delhi

It was prudent of Mr. Modi to have stressed that the government will focus on structural reforms rather than give out doles to win accolades. Whatever his detractors may say, Mr. Modi appeared forthright and oozed confidence in his address.

C.G. KURIKOSSE,  
Kothamangalam

### Harassment online

Online harassment seems to have reached epic proportions ("8 out of 10 Indians harassed online", Oct. 5). This phenomenon has the potential to alter and distort the psyche of a huge number of people as the number of social media users has been growing at

an exponential rate. While social media has democratised the way information is shared and allows us to express our opinions freely, it has led to a dangerous trend. It is incumbent on parents, teachers, and social media platforms to devise methods to educate the young about the dangers of social media. While parents and teachers can teach children how to guard themselves from online abuse, social media platforms should devise methods to disallow posts that are aimed to harass, abuse, threaten, attack, bully and troll. Stringent laws to punish the offenders, even while protecting the right to freedom of expression, should be enforced.

KYSARAJU CHANDRAMOULI,  
Hyderabad

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