



Cease fire

India and Pakistan must restore calm along the LoC and International Boundary

The 2003 ceasefire agreement between India and Pakistan is now alive only in the breach, with violations intensifying in number and much damage to life and livelihood along the border. The drift can only be arrested through high-level political intervention to save this very significant bilateral agreement between the two nuclear-armed neighbours. In the latest incident, four Indian soldiers, including an Army Captain, were killed in the Bhimber Gali sector in cross-border firing that went on through most of Sunday. These casualties are a natural extension of what has been unfolding along the International Boundary as well as the Line of Control for the past several months. As a result, 2017 has turned out to be the worst year since the agreement brought calm to the border 15 years ago. The ceasefire agreement had resulted in a dramatic drop in military casualties, and thousands of border residents had been able to return home from temporary shelters on both sides. It is important to see the 2003 agreement in the immediate context of the time. It came just four years after the Kargil war, and soon after India and Pakistan almost went to war following the December 13, 2001 terrorist attack on the Indian Parliament. The agreement was historic, and a triumph of diplomacy – Pakistan Prime Minister Mir Zafarullah Khan Jamali announced a unilateral ceasefire on the Line of Control on Id; India suggested including the Siachen heights, and the ceasefire was eventually extended to the International Boundary. It was the high point of Atal Bihari Vajpayee's premiership, and his successor, Manmohan Singh, heeded the legacy.

Now, as the two countries are caught in a spiral of almost daily exchanges of fire along the border, there is a danger of political rhetoric acquiring its own momentum. Already, 2017 has been the worst year along the border since the ceasefire came into force, with at least 860 incidents of ceasefire violations recorded on the LoC alone. By way of comparison, in 2015 there had been 152 incidents, and in 2016 there were 228. January 2018 recorded the highest number of ceasefire violations in a month since 2003, according to estimates. According to data mentioned in the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly, between January 18 and 22, 14 people including seven civilians were killed and over 70 were injured in firing from the Pakistan side along the International Boundary in Jammu, Kathua and Samba districts as well as along the LoC in Poonch and Rajouri districts. Thousands of civilians have been forced to flee their border homes. Peace on the border is difficult to achieve at the tactical level by military leaders. Restoring the ceasefire requires real statesmanship, not brinkmanship.

The Zuma hurdle

Ending the protracted power struggle is key to the ANC's plans for revival

With Jacob Zuma appearing to be finally willing to resign as President of South Africa, a protracted power struggle could soon draw to a close. Calls for the anti-apartheid veteran's exit acquired momentum after South African Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa was elected leader of the African National Congress in December. Litigation in countless cases, the overhang of a 1990s arms deal and actions that undermined judicial investigations have marred Mr. Zuma's decade-long presidency. But the controversy that has come to define his tenure is the questionable access an immigrant Indian business family, the Guptas, gained with ANC apparatchiks and state institutions, a nexus widely dubbed as 'state capture'. The financial dealings of the Guptas and their interface with the government in South Africa have tarnished the reputation of top global accountancy and public relations firms. As this succession of scandals dampened the optimism over the post-apartheid democratic transition, the ANC, Africa's oldest national liberation movement, saw its support plunge in the regional elections of 2016. The party conference in December 2017 was viewed as an opportunity for the ANC leadership to stem the rot before the next general elections, due in 2019. But the narrow win for Mr. Ramaphosa in the party polls over Mr. Zuma's ex-wife and preferred candidate meant the political transition was always going to be bitter.

As his supporters took top positions in the new ANC executive, Mr. Zuma brazened it out in the face of growing demands, within and outside the party and government, for his resignation as President. Over the past decade he has survived many parliamentary motions against his rule, thanks largely to the ANC's reluctance to rely on the opposition for such a manoeuvre. Recently, the South African Supreme Court criticised the legislature for failing to hold Mr. Zuma to account, giving succour to those calling for his impeachment. But rather than pursue an extreme parliamentary procedure, the ANC leadership has preferred an internal mechanism to ease the President out. Mr. Ramaphosa and other ANC leaders have engaged Mr. Zuma in discussions over a speedy political transition. The postponement of the President's annual state of the nation address, as also an emergency meeting of the ANC national executive signal that a resolution is in the making. The 2019 elections will be an acid test of the ANC's credibility. A change of guard could also pull the government away from the populist slide of recent years. An icon of the entrepreneurial spirit of South Africa's black majority and Nelson Mandela's preferred successor, Mr. Ramaphosa is a pragmatist. A business tycoon who has also been a trade union leader, he is well-placed to balance business interests and political imperatives. The days ahead may prove crucial for him and the ANC.

In different courts

Selective judicial activism is now seen as the dominant force against democratic representation in Pakistan



S. AKBAR ZAIDI

Nawaz Sharif is not giving up. The deposed former Prime Minister of Pakistan, who has been debarred (perhaps for life) from public office by the Supreme Court of Pakistan, is not just fighting back, but has been reinvigorated by the huge public response that he has been receiving in jalsas across the country, as he takes his case to the people with elections due in the next few months. While there is still some confusion whether Mr. Sharif has been barred for life or for a number of years, and the stipulated time period is under review by the Supreme Court, he continues to posit the superior judiciary against the people, particularly the voters who brought him to power in 2013. His main argument has been that his dismissal is an affront to the will of the people, and that the Supreme Court has delegitimised their democratic voice.

Recent disqualifications

It is not only Mr. Sharif who has been removed from the Prime Minister's Office by the Supreme Court in recent years – in 2012 so was Yousuf Raza Gilani of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), who had been elected following Benazir Bhutto's assassination, when the PPP formed the government in 2008. Moreover, following Mr. Sharif's ouster in July 2017 and his diatribe against the judiciary, in the last few days, one Senator of his party, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PMLN), has also

been disqualified for making statements against Supreme Court judges. And two ministers have been issued notices for contempt of court, and asked to present themselves at the Supreme Court to explain themselves, also for making statements against the Supreme Court judges. For the moment, selective judicial activism has replaced military interference and adventurism as the dominant force against democratic voice and representation on the political map of Pakistan.

With Pakistan dominated by the military for many decades, all conspiracy theories regarding changes in government, or the dismissal of Prime Ministers, naturally land on the military's door. Hence, many retired generals and analysts stated, without offering any proof, that Mr. Sharif's dismissal by the Supreme Court was on the behest of the military, rather than a decision made independently by the court. While the military may not have been unhappy with the decision, such speculation takes away all independent agency being exercised by a Supreme Court which has found a new life and mission over the last decade.

In the past when the military has rightly been seen as Pakistan's main anti-democratic institution, it had always been the Supreme Court which provided constitutional cover to military regimes. Under a notion of the 'Doctrine of Necessity', the Supreme Court legitimised the three military takeovers – in 1958, 1977 and 1999. Each time, while the military regime differed as did its actions, the Court came to support such anti-democratic intervention, allowing ample space for military rule in Pakistan. For almost all of Pakistan's history, the Supreme Court has been complicit in military rule in



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Pakistan. Some lawyers, who have analysed the role of the judiciary since 1947, have made the argument that this support has not been simply on account of military pressure, but because the judges of the superior court themselves, and independently, shared the same world view as the military and were happy to articulate their position when called upon.

Inflexion point?

This view changed when Pakistan's last military general-president, Pervez Musharraf, trampled on the toes of the judiciary, dismissing the Chief Justice of Pakistan in 2007. Since then, following great popular support, the judiciary had acquired considerable respect for its independence and pro-democratic position and statements, declaring on numerous occasions that it would never again support or condone a military takeover. Whether this is simply bravado or a genuine sign of independence affirming a born-again judiciary has not, as yet, been put to the test, and we will not know unless something to the effect takes place. Yet, as the possibility of a military intervention – at least in the form of a direct military takeover – recedes, one does find the revived institution of the judiciary flexing its muscles demonstrating considerable confidence and much

independence.

This confidence is also being manifest by a hyperactive judiciary taking up suo motu cases largely seen to be in the public interest. Recent interventions have been made on a number of rape cases, of those regarding the disappeared, and even in cases of extra-judicial killings. While some lawyers have criticised this recent activism by the Supreme Court on account of it undermining the overall legal process and procedures and its many associated institutions, and have made the valid argument that only a few high-profile cases are selectively chosen, the first port of call for anyone with a grievance of any kind is now the Chief Justice of Pakistan himself, who is asked to intervene directly. Such activism has made the judiciary immensely popular in the public mind.

In the past, it has always been the military which determined what is permissible as public discourse, always reacting to criticism against it, claiming that views against the actions of the military and criticism of it are some form of anti-nationalism, or anti-patriotic. The fact that the military has been publicly criticised – by scholars, social media participants and politicians – in recent years gives some indication of the relative denuding of power and hegemony of the military in Pakistan. The rise of the judiciary as an alternative, perhaps parallel, institution in terms of dominance needs to be seen in this light. Yet, when it comes to decisions which are clearly seen as 'political', there has been criticism, notably from Nawaz Sharif and members of his party, that the judiciary, like the military before it, has been partisan and selective in its treatment of democratic and political acti-

on and points of view. Moreover, having gained such dominance, the claim is also made that it is now the judiciary which reacts with a heavy hand to criticism against its decisions, curtailing freedom of expression, suppressing voices which have differences of opinion. The people's verdict in support of or against Nawaz Sharif is expected later this year, and if he were to win again, the Supreme Court's decision is bound to come into conflict with the democratic choice of who the voters want as their Prime Minister.

The Musharraf test

Public discourse now pivots around this new-found ambition of the judiciary, although it has been often suggested that it is still a junior partner of the military, and doing the latter's bidding. The one key case on which such allegations rest is General Musharraf's treason trial. While Prime Ministers have been debarred and dismissed, and Ministers and Senators hauled up in front of the court, an undertrial military dictator is absconding with much ease and living in luxury abroad. Failing to address this key case makes one suggest that it seems that the judiciary has been more concerned with the contempt of court, rather than the contempt of the Constitution. Perhaps the key test of how independent the judiciary really is, whether its pro-democracy credentials are substantive and how much respect and trust it truly deserves, rests on how the Musharraf case is addressed.

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Big discoveries have small origins

One route to help the cause of science is to provide more funds for small-scale research projects



M.S. SANTHANAM

In a rather belated official admission that scientific and technological innovations underpin economic prosperity, the Economic Survey, released ahead of the Budget, carries an entire chapter on transforming science and technology in India. It calls for doubling research and development expenditure from its current level of about ₹1 lakh crore, amounting to 0.8% of the gross domestic product (GDP). Even if instantly doubled through a miraculous diktat, it would still lag behind China, Israel, Japan and the U.S., each spending more than 2% of their GDP on research. For long, attaining the 2% GDP level had remained elusive for Indian science, but this is only a part of the story.

Diminishing funds

The other critical part, diminishing funds for exploratory small-scale science research, escapes at-

tention in the din of the debate based on comparative GDP figures. Seminal innovations often result from the efforts of scientists working alone or in small groups with a tight budget rather than in well-funded mega projects. In 2012, the discovery of Higgs boson ('God particle' in popular media) at CERN, the European Organisation for Nuclear Research in Geneva, hit the world's headlines. With \$1 billion annual expenditure, CERN's work is big science by any yardstick. Yet, Higgs boson had its humble origins in seminal theoretical works of several scientists, including Peter Higgs, working independently. Even the \$100 billion enterprise Google began as an innovative mathematical idea of Larry Page and Sergey Brin, funded by modest grants from the National Science Foundation (NSF), at Stanford University.

Today, the global market for Raman spectrometers is about \$1.2 billion. In 1928, C.V. Raman spent about ₹200 on his laboratory-built spectrometer that heralded the era of Raman spectroscopy as an analytical tool and also brought to India its first science Nobel prize. Through the 1960s, Vikram Sarabhai was experimenting with sim-



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ple sounding rockets that ultimately grew into the Indian Space Research Organisation of today, that we can justifiably be proud of. Time and again, small science projects have demonstrated the potential to emerge as harbingers of technological changes. Debates based on gross budget figures and GDP benchmarks miss the fact that over the years, funding for smaller, as opposed to large-scale big ticket, projects are dwindling.

Reading the fine print

Consider the fine print in this year's Budget. Of the ₹27,910 crore allotted to science ministries, ₹900 crore, or 3.22%, is earmarked for basic science projects to be disbursed as competitive research grants by the statutory bo-

dy, Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB). In comparison, the apex body for medical research in the U.S., the National Institutes of Health, alone disbursed \$25 billion as research grants in 2017, representing 36% of the country's non-defence science budget. This figure can be higher if combined with the contribution of other agencies such as the NSF. The U.K.'s Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council distributes nearly 10% of the research budget as grants. Clearly, India's provision for competitive research grants needs upward revision.

In India, as elsewhere, a significant fraction of the science budget goes to mission-oriented projects in the areas of defence, space, nuclear and environmental sciences. The mission-oriented work in these areas need not be diluted to favour small research grants. The operational missions are important but so is the research ecosystem that provides human resources and feeds the innovation pipelines connected to these missions. Throttling smaller-scale research is akin to cutting off the innovation pipelines. Enhanced competitive research grants for the Indian Institutes of Technolo-

gy, the Indian Institutes of Science Education and Research, and universities will help address the needs of a larger pool of scientific talent outside national labs and bring in returns by way of publications, patents and innovations that can meet immediate needs.

A glimmer of hope

Remarkably, the Economic Survey too has flagged this issue and recommends that India "gradually move to have a greater share of an investigator-driven model for funding science research". It also talks of the "need to expand with more resources and creative governance structures". Nearly every big science venture of today began as a budding small idea yesterday. It is imperative to incentivise the small ideas as some of them might ultimately scale up to join the big league. One route to help the cause of science is by provisioning more funds for small-scale research projects as well. The Economic Survey offers that glimmer of hope.

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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.

Attacking the Congress

The Congress was taught a lesson in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections for its nonperformance and corruption. So, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's accusations at every opportunity, and on every platform, are no longer appealing ("Congress carved up nation, ruined democracy, says PM", Feb. 8). The government should think of how to provide employment rather than dwell on decisions made in the past. The byelections in Rajasthan serve as a warning to the Bharatiya Janata Party.

R. SRIDHARAN, Chennai

Mr. Modi's remarks are a fitting reply to his detractors. Congress President Rahul Gandhi is forever unleashing tirades against Mr. Modi, so he should be prepared for such a backlash. It is high time Mr. Gandhi starts

speaking about meaningful things. Does he have any constructive suggestions on governance? The people of this country are no longer fools to be guided by empty rhetoric from a person who hardly inspires confidence. The media also needs to give less attention to what Mr. Gandhi says, since he mostly seems to be finding fault with the BJP rather than offering solutions.

C.M. UMANATH, Calicut

It is an irony that Mr. Modi invoked Gandhi for wanting a "Congress-mukt Bharat" on the one hand and pointed to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel not being made Prime Minister on the other, because it was Gandhi himself who declared Nehru as his successor and also asked Patel to withdraw his nomination in favour of Nehru. Perhaps some Indian politicians are ill-informed about India's

history, but the people are not.

DEEPISH MANI, The Nilgiris

Mr. Modi seems to be in a hurry for the next general elections. There is no other explanation for him using precious hours in the Lok Sabha to make a political speech. One wonders whether the BJP has become nervous after the Gujarat Assembly elections and the Rajasthan byelections. By accusing the Congress of sowing the seeds of hatred through Partition, Mr. Modi is questioning the credibility of several eminent leaders like Rajendra Prasad and C. Rajagopalachari, not just Nehru, all of whom played a significant role at the time. If the Congress had really ruined democracy, Mr. Modi would not be holding the position of Prime Minister now. By digging up the past, which is no longer relevant, rather

than speaking about the achievements of his government, Mr. Modi is only paving the way for the Congress' resurgence without any effort on its part. He has very little time to bring in the *ache din* that he had promised in 2014.

V. SUBRAMANIAN, Chennai

The nation expected the Prime Minister to shed some light on his government's policies and programmes and address concerns, such as over the opaque Rafale deal. Instead, he chose this opportunity to pour scorn on the Congress. He is supposed to address the House as the Prime Minister and not as a leader of the BJP. This was a big letdown.

MANOHAR ALEMBAATH, Kannur

Four years have passed since this government came

to power, yet the Prime Minister has not come out of election mode. Instead of criticising the Opposition, he should have responded to the queries regarding the new health scheme. He speaks of Gandhi's India, but he hasn't said a word against the fringe groups who are trying to ruin this country.

ABDUL JABBAR, New Delhi

Where quacks thrive

This incident points to the sorry state of healthcare in India: poor infrastructure, high out-of-pocket expenses, and lack of doctors, all of which lead to a situation where quacks thrive and exploit the poor ("₹10 doctor blamed for spurt in HIV cases had a long queue of patients," Feb. 8). A deadly combination of ignorance and incompetence can lead to a catastrophe like this one. While the need of the hour is to be vigilant of

such practices, what is more important is to create awareness.

APARAJITA SINGH, Lucknow

The fact that neither the quack who used the syringe nor the sick who thronged to him were aware of the harm caused by using the same syringe again and again tells us about the total lack of health awareness in remote areas of the country. It looks as though these unlucky sections survive on the strength of their natural immunity alone. One thing is clear: vaccination, antibiotics, and modern infrastructure are of no use unless there is awareness on diseases and medicines. It is essential that we focus on health education.

P. VIJAYACHANDRAN, Thiruvananthapuram

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