

frontier

Vol. 55 : No. 38

ISSN 0016-2094

March 19-25, 2023

Founder-Editor : **SAMAR SEN**

On Other Pages

Comment	2
Note	3
CHALLENGING THE US ORDER The Limits of the 'No-Limits Partnership' Patricia M Kim	4
ONE YEAR OF WAR IN UKRAINE Emerging Re-configuration of Geo-political Forces Sumanta Banerjee	7
FIGURES ARE NOT FOR FUN Corporate Crime in Pharma Industry Debasis Bhattacharya	10
BUREAUCRACY MATTERS How to get Caste Certificate Johanna Deeksha	11
CRIME AND JUSTICE "Scapegoats and Holy Cows" Ram Puniyani	13
Letters	14

Editor : **TIMIR BASU**Assistant Editor : **Subhasis Mukherjee**

Published weekly for Germinal Publications Pvt. Ltd. by Sharmistha Dutta from 44, Balaram Dey Street, Kolkata-700006 and Printed by her at Laser Aid, 35A/3, Biplabi Barin Ghosh Sarani, Kolkata-700 067.

E-mail : frontierweekly@yahoo.co.in
frontierweekly@hotmail.com
Telephone : 2530-0065

[Typeset by THE D-COMLASER, 60 Sikdar Bagan Street, Kolkata-4, Ph : 98361-58319]

India, China and Russia

A GAINST THE BACKDROP OF G-20 SUMMIT IN NEW DELHI China's foreign minister expressed his willingness to speed up bilateral cooperation with India in various fields. China's foreign minister Qin Gang who met India's external affairs minister S Jaishankar on the margins of the G-20 foreign ministers' parley said China supported the Indian side in fulfilling its presidency of the G-20 and was ready to strengthen communication and cooperation to safeguard the common interests of developing countries and international equity so as to inject stability and positive energy into the world. For one thing this was the first encounter between Mr Jaishankar and Mr Qin who took office as China's foreign minister in December last year. At the press conference Mr Qin emphasised on resuming direct flights at the earliest date and facilitating people to people exchanges.

These days nothing is heard about India-China friendship initiative. The India-China Friendship Association, a Naxalite- Forward Bloc joint enterprise has been in limbo for quite some time. The same is true of India-Pakistan friendship culture, albeit this is precisely the area where a lot depends on improving bilateral relations. Once upon a time India was a major destination of Chinese literature, particularly Marxist literature because India's far left was fanatically pro-Chinese and the Chinese Communist Party was the ultimate ideological authority for them. Peking Review (Beijing Review) was almost like a bible to them as it used to dish out Chinese narratives of international events. Ironically they wanted to implement the Chinese model of revolution in the Indian context and failed miserably. Whether they like it or not, the Chinese Party was no less responsible for the set-back the Naxalite movement suffered in the late sixties and seventies. The Chinese supported the Naxalites from their national perspective—there was no revolutionary internationalism.

Gone are the days of hallucination. Pragmatic and ultra-nationalist China is developing capitalism all in the name of 'socialism with Chinese characteristics', seeking limited hegemony in its own way in some Afro-Asian countries. Right now relation between India and China is abnormal. But nobody knows how things could return to normal unless the stand-off on the border in Ladakh remains unresolved. Real estate is the bone of contention and both sides stick to their stated perception of vaguely defined boundary or what they call Line of Actual Control (LAC).

Meanwhile, the Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov at the same venue of G-20 desired friendly relations between India and China even as he slammed the Quad manoeuvring by America, apparently showing his displeasure about India's participation in this America-led grouping, basically aimed at containing China. Despite India's specially privileged strategic partnership with Russia—no other country has the same status on paper officially as Lavrov pointed out—Moscow is not going to back India in case of a bloody escalation along the LAC.

India's strategic relationship with Russia dates back to Soviet era and New Delhi has not condemned Russia's military operation in Ukraine, notwithstanding tremendous pressure by America. India's balancing act in the shifting geo-political power equation is recognised even by its adversaries. When it is the question of

Russia, both India and China have much in common though they don't have identical strategic interests.

Asked about Russia's military offensive in Ukraine, Lavrov hit back at the USA saying why no one was asking the White House what was happening in Iraq. In the same breath he said when Serbia was bombed nobody condemned NATO and America. They bombed Iraq and Afghanistan to the Stone Age and yet America remained the champion of democracy and human rights!

The latest UN resolution in the General Assembly condemning Russian aggression in Ukraine with 141 votes in favour and seven against while 32 members, including India, China, South Africa, Bangladesh and Pakistan abstained. The number of countries not toeing the US-NATO line may be small but when populations of abstaining nations are put together it is a world with a

huge middle class market which matters to the West. Surprisingly, Pakistan being a long-time lackey of America chose to abstain, hopefully to please its all-weather friend China.

For all practical purposes UN today is a paper tiger or a good international platform for agit-propaganda, having no biting power. People have stopped to count how many resolutions it has adopted so far on Palestine. And for Israel it is business as usual. The so-called international community doesn't bother about the ground reality—illegal occupation and brutality against Palestinians.

After foreign ministers' conclave the meeting of G-20 finance ministers and Central Bank Governors ended on March 4 without a joint communique as differences prevailed among member nations over how to describe Russia's military adventure or misadventure—in Ukraine. □□

COMMENT

The 'Raipur Declaration'

THE CONGRESS PARTY'S 85TH plenary ended on February 26 in Raipur, producing the 'Raipur Declaration' envisaging electoral calculus in view of the coming Parliamentary polls in 2024 while vowing never to compromise with the politics of BJP-RSS even as the party signalled its readiness to ally with like-minded parties to confront the saffron onslaught. To talk of secularism round the year without really fighting BJP on the streets makes little sense. They react to spontaneity while BJP sets the agenda. The 'Raipur Declaration' was all about how to set the tone for the 2024 parliamentary polls and some state elections that are due in this year in Karnataka, Chattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Mizoram, Rajasthan and Telangana. Also, it was an exercise to project

Rahul Gandhi as the party's prime ministerial face. But their statement of opposition unity on the basis of a 'constructive programme to preserve and protect the Constitution in letter and spirit and to address the three main challenges facing the country—growing economic inequality, intensifying social polarisation and deepening political dictatorship' was too naive to unify parties in the opposition camp, particularly regional outfits having no national perspective and political sincerity. They are opportunist to the core, only concerned about how to bargain with the centre for more doles and grants.

Some Congress stalwarts think there could be no opposition alliance without Congress. Then many opposition outfits don't subscribe the idea of a Congress-led front against

the BJP. Given the blooming of lotus in three north-eastern states they have started to believe that Congress is not a winner even if there is some sort of alliance of the motley crowd. Also some opposition leaders think Congress today has lost its national relevance. And this alliance culture, devoid of any principles, particularly on the part of non-left regional entities, has two aspects—pre-poll alliance and post-poll alliance. As for post-poll alliance things are not that difficult. Trouble starts during pre-poll negotiations as their resolve to fight BJP fail to produce any meaningful platform at the time of seat adjustments.

The 'Raipur Declaration' declares that the Congress party is ready to team up with like-minded parties without really explaining what they mean by 'like-minded'. Congress is not in a position to fight Modi's pro-corporate agenda because they are

March 19-25, 2023

FRONTIER

3

now saying in so many voices that they are not against business. And everybody understands that they are trying to send message to the big business, not small traders who are after all dying due to corporate thrust even in retail business. Then Congress won't make a deal with 'like-minded' parties that are averse to the idea of making Rahul Gandhi as the next prime minister. For one thing Mr Gandhi's credibility has not increased much despite a foot march from Kanyakumari to Kashmir and democracy campaign before a select audience at Cambridge.

Hundreds of thousands of innocent people are behind bars for years as under-trials and Congress party never agitates for them demanding their early and unconditional release. They were no less ruthless in suppressing democratic voice of dissent when they were in power, under the spacious plea of containing left-wing extremism. The Congress was the pioneer in propagating the concept

that the left-wing extremism is the greatest threat to internal security. Then the 'Raipur Declaration' promising skill development for the youth and supporting labour-intensive manufacturing doesn't differ much from what the Modis are saying day in and day out. What about the plight of unorganised sector employees and migrants? They are virtually silent.

As per the 'Raipur Declaration' Congress is willing to emulate the so-called socialist or pro-Mandal parties such as Akhilesh Yadav's SP, Tejashwi Yadav's RJD and Nitish Kumar's JD (U), who have made the caste census the fulcrum of their caste politics, hoping it would transform OBC-Dalit consolidation in 2024 polls in their favour. But the Gandhis are too late to get reasonable return from this caste solidarity in which north Indian caste-based parties, particularly the Mandalites have acquired extra-ordinary skill. Ironically they never agitate for an-

BOOKS BY T VIJAYENDRA

Just Released

REQUIEM FOR OUR TIMES Rs. 100

AFTER ALL IT IS ONLY HIM!

AND OTHER STORIES Rs. 70

AN INTELLIGENT BIRD'S GUIDE

TO THE BIRDWATCHER AND

OTHER STORIES

Second reprint Rs. 80

THE LOSERS SHALL

INHERIT THE WORLD

Third Reprint Rs. 60

REGAINING PARADISE:

TOWARDS A FOSSIL FUEL FREE

SOCIETY Rs. 120

THE TEACHER AND

THE CHILD LABOUR Rs. 50

For Copies Contact :

MANCHI PUSTAKAM

12-13-439, St. No. 1 Tarnaka,

Secunderabad 500017

Email: info@manchipustakam.in

Cell: +91 73822 97430

nihilation of caste; what all they want is reservation, more reservation. □□□

NOTE

Reduced Allocations for Weaker Sections

Bharat Dogra writes:

THE UNEXPECTED REDUCTION in the union budget of allocations for NREGA works led to widespread opposition by social activists. Responding to this criticism the Rural Development Ministry said that NREGA budget allocation will be increased later in the year if there is higher demand for work.

In fact there is a strong case for upward revision of quite a few schemes meant for weaker sections as their allocations appear to be quite low compared to real needs.

The union budget for the year has been presented at a time of growing concerns that expectations regarding an inclusive recovery from

the COVID and lockdown related economic crisis have not been realised for millions of poor households, while inequalities have been increasing sharply. There were therefore strong reasons for using this budget as an instrument for providing immediate relief to the bottom half of the population (which now has access to only 3 to 6% of the total wealth, according to various estimates, and only 13% of the total income of the country) for improving its prospects for sustainable and stable livelihoods as well as better access to essential services like education, nutrition programmes, health and sanitation.

The work available under NREGA or National Rural Employment Guar-

antee Act can be very important for some of the poorest households in these difficult times. The allocation in the previous year was found to be adequate just for about just 40 days or so of employment. As NREGA stipulates the availability of 100 days of work and as the wage-rate as well as proportion of wage costs to material costs is broadly known, it is possible to find out the budget needed for the fulfilment of this legal obligation, once one assumes that number of workers seeking employment will be the same as the previous year.

According to calculations made by the People's Action for Employment Guarantee (PAEG), a budgetary provision of INR 271,000 crore is needed in the union budget for 2023-24 for NREGA to fulfill the obligation of 100 days of work for these workers. However this year

only INR 60,000 crore has been allocated for NREGA, compared to INR 89400 crore Revised Estimate for the previous year, which is really shocking as such a low allocation was never expected.

National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) is by far the most important programme for making available pensions to the elderly people, widows and disability affected persons in the unorganised sector. There is widespread concern over the stagnation in the budget for this programme (leaving aside any allocation made under the COVID package) in recent years, despite the obvious urgency of this programme. This year a big rise in NSAP was expected but the allocation at INR 9636 is even marginally lower than the allocation for the previous year.

For satisfactory implementation of the National Food Security Act, the budget of the Department of Food and Public Distribution is most important, but its budget has seen drastic reduction. The actual expenditure of this department was INR 304360 crore in 2031-22. Next year (2022-23) the allocation came down to 215959 crore but to cope with

needs of people this had to be increased to 296303 crore later in the year. This year again a significant increase later in the year will be needed as only INR 205513 crore has been provided initially in the budget for 2023-24.

The Nutrition programmes obviously have a high priority keeping in view the high levels of malnutrition. The government has been announcing plans for significant improvements without providing the budget for these, with the result that, not to talk of big improvements, even the maintenance of normal levels has become difficult. This year the budget for major allocations under food and nutrition are lower or stagnant.

Labour welfare is an important area of concern but the budget for important labour welfare schemes has come down. Overall the budget for the Ministry of Labour and Employment had received allocation of INR 16893 crore in the previous year but this is down to INR 13221 crore for 2023-24—this too at a time when workers in informal sector are facing a lot of difficulties and need help in the form of various welfare measures. Budgets for important schemes

of welfare of minorities too have suffered. The budget of schemes under Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities has also suffered. The allocation for the National Project for Child Labour has been decreased by about one-third from its already low level.

In times of inflation the department of consumer affairs can provide some relief but its budget allocation of INR 1724 crore last year has been reduced to just INR250 crore this year, a huge cut.

There is clearly urgent need for fiscal policy to make an important contribution to promoting inclusive recovery which provides relief to distressed people and also further creates linkages and a multiplier effect for broad-based economic growth. However as allocations for various schemes crucial for welfare of weaker sections have fallen far short of their needs and expectations, there is a strong case for upward revision of these allocations later in the year while preparing revised estimates. □□

[The writer is Honorary Convener, Campaign to Save Earth Now. His recent books include India's Quest for Sustainable Farming and Healthy Food, Man over Machine and Protecting Earth for Children.]

CHALLENGING THE US ORDER

The Limits of the 'No-Limits Partnership'

Patricia M Kim

ON FEBRUARY 4, 2022, Chinese President Xi Jinping hosted his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, at the opening of the Olympic Games in Beijing. After talks, the two sides released a joint statement declaring that China and Russia's bilateral partnership was greater than a traditional alliance and that their friendship would know "no limits". Twenty days later, Russia invaded Ukraine. Putin's brazen gambit immediately cast scrutiny on Beijing; many ob-

servers perceived that it had backed Putin's offensive or, at best, wilfully ignored it. Russia's tight embrace of China since then comes as no surprise, given its dire need for partners in the face of global isolation. More striking is Beijing's steadfast refusal to distance itself from Moscow, despite the costs to its global image and its strategic interests. Even as Russia has become a pariah, Beijing has not paused bilateral exchanges and joint military exercises or dialled down its public exhortations on deep-

ening strategic coordination with its friend to the north.

Beijing's resolve to maintain ties with Moscow is partly practical. Chinese leaders want to keep their nuclear-armed neighbour and former rival on their side as they look ahead to intense, long-term competition with the United States. But China's alignment with Russia is not only a matter of realpolitik. Beijing sees Moscow as its most important partner in the wider project of altering a global order that it perceives as skewed unfairly toward the West. In this order, according to the Chinese and Russian line, the United States and its allies set the rules to their advantage, defining what it means

March 19-25, 2023

FRONTIER

5

to be a democracy and to respect human rights while retaining the power to isolate and punish actors for failing to uphold those standards. Beijing and Moscow purport to seek a “fairer,” multi-polar order that better takes into accounts the views and interests of developing countries.

Such revisionist aspirations undoubtedly resonate in the global South and even in some quarters of the developed world. But Xi’s designation of Putin as a key ally in the push for a less Western-centric world has ultimately set Beijing back in accomplishing its objectives. China’s association with a revanchist Russia has only drawn more attention to its own aggressive posture toward Taiwan and India. The perception of a hardening Chinese-Russian axis has, in turn, reinforced ties among U.S. allies and partners. And China’s proximity to Russia has undermined the credibility of Beijing’s claims of being a champion for peace and development.

In short, the Chinese-Russian alignment has proved far more threatening to the US-led order in its conception than in its operation. To be sure, the partnership can still cause damage—for instance, by shielding the likes of Russia and North Korea from punitive measures at the United Nations and enabling their continued aggression. But Beijing’s and Moscow’s conflicting priorities and the latter’s generally dismal prospects limit the pair’s ability to revise the existing global order in a truly coordinated and radical way. Western leaders should nevertheless accept that efforts to push Beijing to cut its ties with Moscow are likely to fail. In the near term, the United States and its allies should focus instead on preventing the partnership from veering down a more destructive path by taking advantage of Beijing’s strong interest

in the preservation of global stability. More broadly, Washington and its allies should recognise that China and Russia are channeling real disaffection with the existing international order in many parts of the world—and should get to work bridging the gap between the West and the rest.

Since Xi’s rise to power in 2012, Russia has become one of China’s key partners with the steady strengthening of economic, political, and military ties. Moscow and Beijing may have started off as allies in the early days of the Cold War, but decades of rivalry and mistrust followed a split over ideological differences that emerged in the late 1950s. Beijing and Moscow have been brought together again in the twenty-first century by shared grievances with the West and the clear parallels they perceive in their respective situations, with Russia accusing NATO of encirclement and China feeling hemmed in by U S alliances in Asia. Chinese and Russian leaders also share a fear of “colour revolutions”—popular uprisings that have ousted autocratic governments around the world, including in former Soviet states—which they allege are Western-sponsored attempts at regime change.

Last year’s rhetoric about a friendship with “no limits” followed an earlier upgrade to relations in 2019, when China and Russia announced they had forged a “comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for a new era” during Xi’s visit to Moscow. China accords this deliberately long moniker to relations with no other state. And by invoking “a new era” (a phrase Xi coined to reflect China’s bid for national rejuvenation in a shifting geopolitical landscape), the label also underscored the two states’ intention to work hand in hand during a period of strategic opportunity.

In recent decades, China has shunned formal alliances for both pragmatic and ideological reasons and has criticised the United States’ vast alliance network as a “vestige of the Cold War.” But Beijing has increasingly resorted to semantic gymnastics to talk about its alignment with Russia. Chinese statements regularly insist that the bilateral partnership is “not an alliance” and “not targeted” against any third party while also making the case that China and Russia’s relationship “surpasses” traditional alliances. Even before the joint statement in February 2022, Beijing had stressed that no areas of cooperation were off limits and that the partnership would stand firm in the face of international headwinds.

Hard military ties have grown alongside this rhetorical camaraderie since the first joint Chinese-Russian military exercise conducted in 2005. Since 2012, the two sides have engaged in increasingly ambitious and frequent training, including naval exercises in the East China and South China Seas and joint engagements with third parties, such as Iran, South Africa, and members of

গড্ডালিকা প্রবাহ থেকে
বাংলা ভাষা তথা মাতৃভাষা বাঁচান
‘শুধু পূর্বাশা’
সাড়া জাগানো বাংলা পাক্ষিক পত্রিকা
ও ‘পূর্বাশা এখন’ মাসিক পত্রিকা
এখনই সংগ্রহ করুন
সব স্টলে পাওয়া যাচ্ছে। ‘শুধু পূর্বাশা’ দাম ৫
টাকা মাত্র ও ‘পূর্বাশা এখন’ ২৫ টাকা মাত্র।
‘শুধু পূর্বাশা’-এর বার্ষিক গ্রাহক চাঁদা ১৭০
টাকা। ‘পূর্বাশা এখন’-এর গ্রাহকরা অতিরিক্ত
১০০ টাকায় পাক্ষিকটিরও গ্রাহক হতে পারেন।
কলকাতা কার্যালয় :
২৩, ডাঃ কার্তিক বসু স্ট্রিট, কলকাতা-৭০০০০৯
চলভাষ : ৮৪২০৮২৪২৮৬
email : editorpurbasha@gmail.com

the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), a China-led grouping of states. In late 2021, China and Russia made headlines by holding their first joint naval exercise in the western Pacific, during which their vessels sailed through key waterways around Japan.

Economic ties, too, have deepened in the last decade, with the two sides signing dozens of agreements outlining cooperation on energy, infrastructure, agriculture, finance, and technology. Bilateral trade has grown in volume over the last two decades, but it has also become increasingly unbalanced, with China's economy rapidly eclipsing Russia's. As of 2021, China accounted for 18 percent of Russia's total trade, while Russia only accounted for two percent of China's. Russia's top exports to China are natural resources, such as gas, oil, and coal, that may be important today but will become less so as Beijing turns more toward renewable energy sources. China's top exports to Russia, however, are largely manufactured goods, such as machinery and electronics. Russia depends over-

DOORSTEP COMPOSITOR

[Contact for Bengali DTP Operator at your Doorstep]

At present, we have started a new facility, throughout India. The Bengali language is now used in many places. Thus, there is a need now to have Bengali Computer Operators for publishing in Magazines, Books, Periodicals, Souvenirs. Further, we have created this new facility for preparing Question Papers for Schools, Colleges and Universities. So, you need not send the confidential works to outside. We can go to your Office or Institution to complete such works. We shall also make them in printable formats. Moreover, the translation to Bengali is also done. You may contact us for these types of work.

However, you have to arrange or pay the expenses for our Travel and Stay. We thus also accept some amount as Honorarium; it depends on the importance and quantum of work. We sincerely expect that you will use the facility.

Please contact: **THE D-COMLASER**

BHASKAR DAS (Proprietor)

39A, Nalin Sarkar Street, Kolkata 700004

Mobile : 98361-58319

Email : bhaskar_sananda@yahoo.com

whelmingly on the more advanced Chinese economy for technology imports, from semiconductors to telecommunications equipment.

This material relationship sits alongside an intensifying ideological alignment. China and Russia both seek to challenge what they perceive to be a Western-dominated global order that allows the United States and its allies to impose their interests on others. The two countries have frequently protested the primacy of "Western values" in international forums and have argued for a conditional understanding of human rights and democracy, defined "in accordance with the specific situation in each country." In their joint statement from February 2022, China and Russia insisted that they, too, are democracies and took a swipe at "certain states" for using the "pretext of protecting democracy and human rights" to sow discord among other countries and intervene in their internal affairs.

Beijing and Moscow accuse Washington of unfairly using its economic power, including the privileged position of the U S.dollar in the global financial system, to impose punitive measures on its rivals. China and Russia have both pushed back on Western sanctions, despite employing economic coercion themselves against others. Beijing has argued that sanctions levied outside the auspices of the UN violate states' "right to development," a framing that has its roots in the Chinese Communist Party's efforts after the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests to prioritise the "right to subsistence" above civil liberties and political freedoms. Although China no longer struggles with concerns about basic subsistence, Beijing has criticised high-tech export restrictions and other decoupling measures adopted by the United States and its allies as unfairly constraining China's develop-

ment and "right to rejuvenation." Beijing has also used this language to object to Western sanctions on Russia regardless of its offences, claiming that the sanctions infringe on Russia's economic rights and have damaging side effects on developing countries.

In the global South, China continues to market itself as an apolitical champion for development, a position that Russia supports. The two have extolled the virtues of Chinese projects, such as the Belt and Road Initiative, a vast infrastructure development programme, and the more recently announced Global Development Initiative, a still vaguely defined scheme seen as a successor to the BRI that, according to Beijing, brings development "back" to the centre of the global agenda. Such initiatives, along with Chinese messaging about development, have found receptive audiences in the global South, given that many low-income countries want rapid development but remain averse to international scrutiny on their domestic governance.

Xi and Putin have met in person 39 times since 2012.

Over the years, Beijing and Moscow have advanced various measures to weaken U S control of the international economy. They have cooperated to create alternative financial institutions and mechanisms to dent the dollar's dominance and blunt the impact of Western sanctions. This effort has gained greater urgency since Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the subsequent cutting off of major Russian banks from the SWIFT international payment system. Since Beijing and Moscow agreed in 2019 to boost the use of national currencies in cross-border trade, the Russian central bank has significantly reduced its dollar holdings and increased its investment in Chinese yuan. About a quarter of

March 19-25, 2023

FRONTIER

7

Chinese-Russian trade is now settled in renminbi and rubles, and this percentage will increase following the announcement last fall that China will begin to pay for Russian gas half in renminbi and half in rubles. Beijing and Moscow's efforts to reduce the dominance of the dollar have been warmly welcomed in friendly groupings such as the SCO and the BRICS, which brings together Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa.

At the heart of China and Russia's ideological alignment is a common desire to weaken the vast U S-led alliance architecture in Europe and Asia. The two countries accuse Washington and its allies of violating the principle of "indivisible

security" by advancing their security interests at the expense of others'. The Kremlin has employed this argument to justify its war in Ukraine and to redirect blame for the conflict on NATO. And this narrative has caught on in many parts of the global South, thanks in part to Chinese state media amplifying Russian talking points. In Asia, Beijing has pointed to the strengthening of the U S alliance network—including the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, a security partnership between Australia, India, Japan, and the United States, and AUKUS, a partnership between Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States—as evidence of the U S-led containment of China. But Beijing faces an uphill

battle in challenging the U S presence, given that many Asian governments are concerned about China's aggressive behaviour and welcome the United States' balancing role in the region.

Despite seeking to change elements of the current global order, Beijing and Moscow do not wish to revise all elements of the existing architecture. They continue to stress that the United Nations and UN Security Council should play a leading role in the international arena. This position is unsurprising, given the privileges China and Russia enjoy as permanent members of the Security Council and their ability to rally developing world partners at the UN. □□□ [Source: *Foreign Affair*]

ONE YEAR OF WAR IN UKRAINE

Emerging Re-configuration of Geo-political Forces

Sumanta Banerjee

THE WAR OF DEVASTATION in Ukraine has completed one year. Despite appeals for peace by the UN, other international bodies and prominent personalities, both the two fighting powers—Russia which started the war by invading Ukraine on the one hand, and the US-led NATO-backed Ukraine which is retaliating on the other—are betraying an intransigent attitude. Refusing to sit around a table for negotiation, both are sticking to their respective positions and claims.

The situation has been further aggravated by some of the recent developments, following one upon another. In September last year, Russian President Putin issued a threat of nuclear retaliation against pro-Ukraine Western powers. After some months of exchanges of belligerent rhetoric between Moscow and Washington, on February 21 this

year, US President Biden asserted his physical presence in Ukraine by visiting Kyiv and spending hours with its President. He openly declared the continuation of his country's military support to Ukraine till Russia was defeated. Thus, in this US strategy, there is no scope for any peace talks, or a compromise formula to end the war. Biden's statement is an open challenge to Russia. As if in a tit for tat gesture, on the same day Russian President Putin announced that he was suspending the last remaining nuclear arms control pact with the US. This can be viewed as yet another example of upping the ante in bargaining over nuclear threats and attempting to blackmail its rival. Is Putin threatening the US that it can use its option of using nuclear armaments against the weaponry that Washington and its allies are sending to Ukraine?

If the present trend is allowed to drift, the world will be on the edge of the outbreak of another world war involving confrontation between two major capitalist powers, the US and Russia—each working upon the fears of the other with threats of nuclear blackmailing. But this new world war will acquire a different shape. Instead of engaging in the old practice of a direct battle between the two, they are now using small states as proxies to further their respective plans of territorial expansion. One may therefore see more Ukraine-like wars in other parts of the world in the near future. In the Middle East, Syria and Iraq have already emerged as battlefields—sites of contest between the US and Russia.

The re-alignment of these two global powers in their relationship with other states, around the war in Ukraine, assumes significance. The Western states have fully thrown in their weight behind the US-backed military campaign to aid Ukraine in its resistance against Russia—although at times they express reservations about the need to continue the war.

In contrast, Russia has failed to garner much support from major members of the international community, except China.

The only advantage that Russia has gained is the neutral stance which has been adopted by some states in South Asia and other parts of the world. They keep on abstaining from voting for resolutions condemning Russian invasion of Ukraine, in the UN and other international fora. Incidentally, most of these abstaining states benefit from trade with Russia and import military equipment from it. For instance, the Modi government in India is a beneficiary of Russian oil at concessional rates, and Russian military equipment that empowers its armed forces. Yet, instead of totally supporting Russia, Modi has taken on the posture of a neutral advisor, telling Putin that this is not an era of war. The UAE and other countries in the Middle East have been adopting a similar neutral stance.

As at present, the only states that Russia has managed to attract as its supporters are China, Saudi Arabia and Iran, which have been in different ways subsidising Russian war efforts in Ukraine. China remains a firm political ally, true to the pledge that it took in February, 2002 (on the eve of the Russian invasion of Ukraine), describing its relationship with Russia as “a friendship without limits.” As for Saudi Arabia (which was a loyal ally of the US till recently), its collaboration with Russia in the OPEC oil cartel, and Putin’s personal rapport with Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman, have ensured Saudi support for Russia. Russia’s alliance with Iran is entrenched in military roots. Moscow is buying drones from Iran and using them against Ukraine.

Interestingly enough, all these allies of Russia share certain common characteristics. They are (i)

authoritarian in their domestic policies, crushing political dissent and suppressing freedom of speech and media ; (ii) persecute religious and ethnic minorities inhabiting their territories; and (iii) assert nationalist ambition through both militarist rhetoric and aggressive actions against neighbouring states.

To start with Russia, under Putin it has acquired a long record of authoritarianism by punishing those who refuse to obey the oppressive rules that he has imposed on the citizens. The two most infamous examples are (i) the killing of the journalist Anna Politkovskaya in Moscow on October 7, 2006. Human rights activists and journalists have alleged that she was targeted because she exposed Putin’s misdeeds in her reports. (Till now, the Putin government has not yet carried out a fair investigation into her killing, and has failed to clear itself of the allegation); (ii) the victimisation of Alexei Navalny, a political opponent of the Putin regime, who was first poisoned, allegedly by Russian secret service agents in August, 2020, and then incarcerated, now undergoing a nine year prison sentence.

China, the other partner of Russia, shares a similar record of violation of human rights of its citizens. The World Report 2022 of Human Rights Watch lists cases of arbitrary detention, torture, and suppression of media under the regime of Xi. A typical instance is the arrest of the journalist Zhang Jialong, who wrote against the government’s censorship of reports, and was therefore sentenced to one and a half years in prison.

When people turn to Russia’s latest ally, Saudi Arabia, they come across a regime, notorious for the worst crimes against its citizens—ranging from sexual assaults on women to imprisonment and killing of political opponents—all documented in

reports by international human rights organisations like Amnesty International. One of the most infamous cases was the killing of the Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi (an outspoken critic of the regime) in 2018 inside the premises of the Saudi embassy in Istanbul, by agents of Crown Prince Muhammad Bin Salman—Putin’s present friend.

Russia’s other ally Iran is no better, as far as the record of human rights violation is concerned. The recent reports of the Ali Khamenei-led Islamist orthodox regime’s brutal offensive against women who are asserting their right to refuse to wear the hijab, bear testimony to the authoritarian character of the regime. The Iranian women’s anti-hijab demonstration was sparked off by the death of a young woman Mahsa Amini, who was arrested for not wearing hijab and died in the custody of the state-sponsored ‘morality police’.

Russia, China, Saudi Arabia and Iran—all of them discriminate against and oppress ethnic and religious minorities who inhabit their territories. Russia for instance is embroiled in a continuing war to suppress the Muslim Chechens, who inhabit the southwestern part of the country and who have been fighting for independence from Russia. Similarly, China is trying to destroy the identity of the Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang by herding them into camps, in order to ‘re-educate’ them—in other words, to force them to sink their cultural identity and join the majoritarian Chinese nationalist mainstream. To turn to the next ally of Russia’s—Saudi Arabia; it has earned notoriety for persecution of those Muslim citizens who follow religious practices that are different from the state-imposed Wahabi doctrine. It mainly targets the Muslim Shia citizens, who constitute a religious minority in the Sunni-dominated Saudi society. As

March 19-25, 2023

FRONTIER

9

for Iran, which is ruled by the orthodox Shias—rivals of the Sunnis—a UN-appointed experts committee which examined the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, came out with its report dated August 22, 2022, where it stated: “We are deeply concerned at the increasing arbitrary arrests, andenforced disappearances of members of the Bahai faith”. The latter belong to a section of the Muslim community, following different practices.

Coming to the third characteristic shared by these allies of Russia, they all indulge in militarist rhetoric and aggressive acts in relation to neighbouring states. Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, under the euphemism of ‘special military operation’ is a case in point.

China is embroiled in a long standing border dispute with India, often marked by armed clashes. It is also engaged in regular sabre rattling against Taiwan. As for the other two allies of Russia—Saudi Arabia and Iran—although they have not yet invaded any state (like Russia), they have been directly conducting military operations in some of their neighbouring states. In such operations, they choose their supporters and opponents according to their respective religio-political priorities. For instance, since 2015 the Sunni-ruled Saudi Arabia has been leading a military operation in Yemen in support of its present ruler against the Houthi militants (loyal to the former ruler Ali Abdullah Saleh)—who are incidentally being militarily aided by Shia-ruled Iran. The UN and human rights organisations have accused Saudi Arabia of widespread and systematic airstrikes that have led to the killing of civilians there (echoes of the after effects of the present Russian airstrikes in Ukraine).

Similarly, Iran has asserted its military presence in the Middle East

by forging an alliance with Syria’s ruler Bashar al-Asad—who happens to belong to its Shia faith. It has been providing military aid to his regime—which is facing opposition and rebellion from heterogeneous groups ranging from Sunni victims of religious persecution to pro-democracy activists, many of whom are being aided by the US. Iran has also found an ally in Russia which is militarily helping Bashar al-Asad to remain in power. Thus, Syria is fast becoming another arena of a proxy war between the US and Russia.

The growing convergence of Russia, China, Saudi Arabia and Iran, over the war in Ukraine, as well as their collaboration over commercial deals, indicates the appearance of a new constellation of powers on the global scene. Interestingly enough, this constellation is replicating the same pattern of military invasion that was pursued by the US and its Western allies in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya a few years ago. Devoid of any alternative political ideology, this emerging group of states will become yet another replica of the US-led camp—a rival within the same boxing ring.

But there is a problem. While building up this axis, can Putin’s Russia, aiming to expand its influence in the Middle East, bring together on the same table the two rivals divided by religious loyalties—a Sunni dominated Saudi Arabia and a Shia dominated Iran?

If anything this global conglomeration may also become a 21st century replica of the axis forged in the 1930-40 period by Germany’s Hitler, Italy’s Mussolini and Japan’s emperor Tojo. The policies and practices pursued by this new Sino-Russian led alliance, both in their domestic sphere and foreign affairs often resemble those followed by that infamous Nazi German-Fascist Italy-imperial Japan axis. □□□

FRONTIER

44, Baram Dey Street, Kolkata-700006

Phone: (033) 2530-0065

Mail: frontierweekly@yahoo.co.in

frontierweekly@hotmail.com

Site: www.frontierweekly.com

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

(W.e.f January, 2022)

India [Annual] Rs. 500

Frontier Associate [Annual] Rs. 1500

Life Subscription [Inland] Rs. 5000+

Make payment by Cheque/Draft
in favour of FRONTIER or
GERMINAL PUBLICATIONS PVT. LTD.

or
FRONTIER [GERMINAL PUBLICATIONS
PVT. LTD.]

MO should be addressed to Frontier
Please add Rs. 40/- to inland outstation
cheques towards bank charges, all
remittances to FRONTIER

Payment should be made by cheque/
Draft in favour of

FRONTIER or
GERMINAL PUBLICATIONS PVT. LTD.

Or, in favour of
FRONTIER [GERMINAL PUBLICATIONS
PVT. LTD.]

**Payment could be made directly to
our bank accounts as given below.**

**Check the bank details before
transferring money. Also inform us
through e-mail after sending money.**

Beneficiary Name:

GERMINAL PUBLICATIONS PVT. LTD.

Bank Name: CENTRAL BANK OF INDIA

Address: 8, Lenin Sarani, Kol-700013

Branch: Esplanade Branch

Current Account Number: 3116713216

IFSC Code: CBIN0280098

Swift Code: CBININBBCAL

or

Beneficiary Name:

GERMINAL PUBLICATIONS PVT. LTD.

Bank Name: PUNJAB NATIONAL BANK

Address : 223, C. R. Avenue, Kolkata-6

Branch: Jorasanko Branch

Current Account Number: 0085050001319

IFSC Code: PUNB0008020

Branch Code : 0008020

Swift Code: UTBIINBBBOCB

or

Beneficiary Name: **FRONTIER**

(GERMINAL PUBLICATIONS PVT. LTD)

Bank Name: PUNJAB NATIONAL BANK

Address : 223,C. R. Avenue, Kolkata-6

Branch: Jorasanko Branch

Current Account Number: 0085050001378

IFSC Code: PUNB0008020

Branch Code : 0008020

Swift Code: UTBIINBBBOCB

FIGURES ARE NOT FOR FUN

Corporate Crime in Pharma Industry

Debasis Bhattacharya

WE EXTEND OUR FUTURE readiness purpose to creating a positive social impact.... Corporate Crime in the Pharmaceutical Industry appears to be on the rise.... this documents the problems ranging from false advertising and counterfeiting to corruption waste and overpricing".

[Pharmaceuticals, Corporate Crime and Public Health—Graham Dukes, John Braithwaite, J P Molony.]

"A CSR approach can help improve corporate governance, transparency, accountability & ethical standard."

(—health 21 initiative.org)

The total world and domestic Pharma market is simply mind-boggling:

World pharma market 2020—93,686,226 million US Dollar.

Domestic Pharma Industries' annual turnover in 2021—42 billion US dollars.

—2018—18 billion dollars

—2024—65 billion dollars (projected)

—2030—120 billion dollars

With the already identified stigmas like transparency, ethical, social, CSR etc the recent research wonders are equally frightening:

*] Zolgensma—Rs 18 crore per dose to treat a generic disorder by Novartis, Switzerland is the most expensive drug that the world has ever seen.

*] Spinraza (API Nursinersen) Biogen, USA.
—375,000 USD annual cost.
—750,000 (first year)

*] Lumizyme (API Alglucosidase alfa) (Pompe disease) (Annual cost 520,000-625,000 USD) Sanofi Genzyme, MA US.

*] Other multi million drugs which are much beyond the reach of common people of 3rd world countries are—

*] Elaprase, *]Brineura, *]Soliris, *] Carbaglu, *]Ravicti, *]Luxturna, *] Zokinvy.

These high-cost drugs can even remotely help the poverty-stricken Afro Asian people and where does the word 'Social' fit in as far as the BPL people are concerned!

Yes, Pharmaceutical is the lone Industry which has never been unprofitable, or, in de-growth.

That is also inevitable since this is a lone marketing exception where the users do not have any choice while the non using prescribers have enough of choices with varieties of allurements in some form or other. And, hence the manufacturers have ample opportunities at their disposal to influence, manoeuvre, exploit. Hence the most suffering section of this industry is the employees in general and, Sales Promotion Employees in particular. Nevertheless it's these tireless, rightless sleepless hard working employees' toil and sweat that the base and pillars of this big Industries are built up. Ungrateful millionaires/ billionaires do not hesitate to trample down these builders of pharma empires while conveniently ignoring the tragic sufferings of their families and children—whereas the industry leaders mostly—MNCs as well as domestic big giants like Cadilla, Zydus are in reality works hand in gloves with the ruling governments to manipulate advantages for unlawful activities. They don't find any obstacles to raise the drug price at their will almost yearly. On the contrary people at large are also neglected in health budget regularly. Low GDP is a constraint for the anti people outlook of the government. Over and

above GST for medicine is truly an unbearable load for the suffering millions and an excuse for the industry for price rise! Who cares?

The obvious question, therefore, is the benefits, perks, dignity, welfare, legal and moral rights in favour of the employees. It's a fact that Indian constitution does offer inalienable rights to protest against wrongs, to form and act in coordination with collective forums. Violation of ILO guidelines for workers is uncompromisable and should be legally adhered to bilaterally.

Here are some of the irregularities on the part of the industry:

Quoting below a list of banned drugs circulated by an eminent medical personality, viz,

Dr Anjali Mathur, Chairman & CMO, Indo American Hosp (IAH), South Dakota, USA—declaring avoid these tabs, they are dangerous as they contain Phenyl Propanol Amide (PPA), which is likely to cause strokes and are banned in USA : D-Cold, Vicks Action500, Actifed, Coldarin, Cosome, Nice, Nimulid, Cetrizet-D.

Here is another pertinent note from Dr Swapan Jana of Society of Social Pharmacology—There's a probable link of a cough syrup by Meden Pharmaceuticals Ltd with the 66 child deaths by severe kidney damage in Gambia, W. Africa. (ref: WHO, dt 05/10/2022.)

Incidentally, Meden Pharma manufactures medicines in Indian Cos., sales here, exports in Asia, Africa, Latin America. The poisonous ingredient here is Die Ethylene Glycol.

In fact he refers to another incident in J J Hospital, Mumbai—where 14 recovering patients suddenly died there by consuming glycerol having industrial glycol in it. In 1986 Lentin Commission termed the concerned pharma co as the "Death Monger" and "Hawker of Poison"!

There are some state of the art pharma PSUs, viz, IDPL, Hindustan Antibiotics Ltd, Karnataka Antibiotics, Bengal Immunity and Bengal Chemicals and Pharmaceuticals. These were the pride of Asia in respect of quality, economy and tradition. They have been closed down

because of negligence on the part of Governments. In the present scenario of high priced patented MNC monopoly they could have been useful to manufacture costly drugs at a lower price under compulsory trade license for National interest.

In truth profit is a never ending

thirst. Sometimes innocent lives are lost, sometimes it goes for mass termination/transfers to far off places without any valid reasons whatsoever. In both cases corporate greed prevails.

Both are inhuman and unacceptable in a democratic society. □□

BUREAUCRACY MATTERS

How to get Caste Certificate

Johanna Deeksha

THE CASTE CERTIFICATES are meant to help marginalised students access opportunities. But often, the process of obtaining them only oppresses students further.

When Selvam Muthukumar's son completed his Class 12 studies a year ago, it should have been a time for celebration. But instead, an old burden resurfaced in Muthukumar's life.

The family belongs to the Kattunayakar tribal community in Tamil Nadu's Villupuram district. Muthukumar knew that to secure his son's admission in a college under a reservation quota, and to access funding support, his son would need a community certificate, issued by the government. The document is essential for members of India's marginalised communities to avail of government benefits meant for them, which include reservations in employment and, for students, scholarships and reservations in education.

But Muthukumar's son did not have one.

Procuring the certificate would have been easier if Muthukumar himself had one—but he, too, did not have one.

In fact, Muthukumar, who is 42 years old, has been trying to obtain a certificate for himself for 30 years, with no luck.

The tribal community he belongs to traditionally reared pigs for a

living. But Muthukumar works in construction and has never reared pigs in his life; neither had his parents. Yet other members of his community have often advised him to keep a few pigs in his house so that if revenue officers visit, they will believe he is Kattunayakan and issue him the certificate.

Indeed, he has seen revenue officers who have visited the homes of other members of his community in the past ask them similar questions. "I remember they would ask us details about the gods we worship, all our rituals, and would make us show that we knew how to handle pigs", he said.

Krithika Srinivasan, a journalist based in Villupuram, said that officials regularly put people through such tests. She explained that these methods of verification were created in a different era and that lifestyles had changed over the years, but that there was little awareness amongst officials about this.

Muthukumar has not heeded the advice he received: he lacks the space in his house to keep pigs, and the time to rear them. Further, said, "My children have no interest in rearing pigs, I want them to study so that they can sit in an office and do work".

For decades, Muthukumar has been made to run around in circles in government offices. (He and other

applicants are referred to by pseudonyms for this article, since they feared reprisal from government authorities for talking to the media.)

In this time, whenever he and five members of his extended family who are also seeking certificates visited a government office, they repeatedly received some version of the same response: they were asked to return the following week, or the following month. Together, they have spent Rs 1 lakh so far on brokers who claimed that they would facilitate the process. "About three months ago, I spent Rs 20,000 on someone who promised to help me with the certificate", Muthukumar said.

But the certificate never came.

The last time that officers visited Muthukumar's home to verify his claims was eight years ago.

Students check their hall ticket numbers ahead of an exam. At both the school and college level, community certificates help students access reservations and scholarships.

Some colleges offered to give him some extra time to submit the certificate, but Muthukumar did not know when, or even if, his son would be able to obtain one. He had no choice but to ask his son to delay his college application by a year.

Across the country, if a student wishes to avail of opportunities available to members of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, they must at the very least furnish a community certificate with their application. These certificates are commonly referred to as "caste certificates", though they may be issued to an

individual from a Scheduled Caste or a Scheduled Tribe. As Muthukumar's story shows, obtaining this certificate is far from easy.

"It is true that students struggle to get community certificates", said Paul Diwakar, chair of the Asia Dalit Rights Forum. "We hear of such cases all the time". Diwakar argued that the onus should not be on students to prove their identity and that instead, the government should bear the responsibility of identifying those who are eligible and providing community certificates to them.

"It is unfortunate that even after 75 years of Independence, we still don't have a system in place that allows for students to get their community certificates without any hassle", he said. "We've been able to get the whole country Aadhaar cards but this we are still struggling with?"

Typically, a key requirement is that applicants have to submit their father's or another paternal relative's community certificate. They must then usually prove their links with that relative, with a document such as a birth certificate. They must also usually prove their own, or that relative's, place of residence, with a document such as an electricity bill, a property tax receipt or a ration card.

Applications are processed at the level of the tehsildar, who has a great deal of discretionary power over what documents to demand. The tehsildar may also choose to pay a visit to the applicant's home to conduct a background check, sometimes resulting in crude inquiries such as the ones Muthukumar was warned about.

For many students, the problem starts with the first requirement, of submitting proof that their father belongs to the community in question. Often, as in Muthukumar's case, students are first-generation learners whose parents do not pos-

sess documents that can prove their community origins.

Krithika Srinivasan, a journalist in Villupuram, said applicants for community certificates are often asked to prove their knowledge of the community's traditional occupation, even if they have no links with the work.

In Anil Rajat's case, a technicality nearly cost him his certificate. Rajat's family had lived in Maharashtra all his life, and Rajat was required to submit a document, like an older relative's school leaving certificate, or a land ownership or lease record, to show that his family had been living in Maharashtra on or before August 10, 1950.

Rajat's grandfather had lived in a small village near Nagpur city till 1954, when he moved to the city for work opportunities. That year, the family settled on a piece of land developed by the Nagpur Improvement Trust, a local civic government body.

Nearly 70 years later, the family still has the lease document between the trust and Rajat's grandfather as proof of residence in the city. "To bolster my claim, I had submitted the lease deed by Nagpur Improvement Trust dated May 5, 1954, which had mentioned that land on lease had been provided to the Scheduled Caste community", Rajat said.

But the document was rejected because it was from 1954, four years after the specified cut-off date. At the office, Rajat was not given any assistance, and was just told to go to the tehsildar's office to find any other land records that might help his case. "How is one supposed to know where to go and whom to ask?" he said. "It is such a difficult space to navigate when you don't know anybody in the system".

Raghav Kumar, who hails from Bihar's Gaya district, also recounted undergoing an ordeal to procure his caste certificate.

"In Bihar, it is very difficult", he said. "If you are left to get the job done on your own, then you just find yourself lost in the system". At the tehsildar office, there was no one to explain to him how it was to be done. "Unless you know someone on the inside, it is impossible", he said.

Like Rajat, he, too, was approached by brokers. "They know we are desperate", he said.

Sometimes, he would have to call a clerk three or four times before the clerk chose to respond to him. "They would keep asking me to come back next week," Kumar said. "Sometimes they would wait until it was my turn and then say it was tea time." Even when the certificate had been prepared, he added, "they would not tell us when it was ready to be picked up from the office."

If obtaining a caste certificate wasn't frustrating enough, students often also have to submit a caste or tribe "validity certificate" to prove that their certificates are authentic.

This is essentially a document that states that another document—the community certificate—is valid and true. Validity certificates were introduced about 20 years ago, ostensibly because a large number of fake community certificates had come into circulation.

In order to procure the validity certificate, a student has to submit to the authorities their own community certificate, along with some combination of various other supporting documents, including the father or a close paternal relative's community certificate, and their validity certificate.

"These validity certificates are harder to get", said Rajiv Khobragade, a member of the Nagpur-based organisation The Platform, which provides students from marginalised communities support

with admission and scholarship applications. “The number of documents that the students are required to produce to the government to validate their community certificates are so many, that students fail to gather these in time for their admissions or to meet scholarship deadlines”, he explained.

Khobragade said he knew of stu-

dents who had lost out on opportunities because they could not procure validity certificates, or procured them late. Sometimes, bureaucratic errors can shatter families’ hopes. This was the nature of the problem Pavithra Peter faced, which left her in despair after each visit to her son James’s school hostel, around 15 km from her home in Kodaikanal, in Dindigul district.

When she was interviewed in August, Peter explained that she was distressed by her son’s repeated questions about whether he would be able to go to college or not—he was a good student and aspired to study chemistry. But with each passing month, she felt more and more concerned that the answer would be in the negative. □□□

CRIME AND JUSTICE

“Scapegoats and Holy Cows”

Ram Puniyani

IN THE CASE OF JAMIA VIOLENCE of 2019, 11 students were arrested. One of them was Sharjeel Imam, who was a student of JNU. The others included likes of Safoora Zargar and Asif Iqbal Tanha. While discharging those Court observes, “police was unable to apprehend “actual perpetrators” and “surely managed to rope them (accused) as scapegoats in the matter.” Court also noticed that police had been filing supplementary charge sheets with nothing new to offer. Surely it was to drag the case and keep these eleven in the jail. Many others like Umar Khalid who were talking of harmony and peace are behind the bar while Anurag Thakur got promotion from Minister of state to Cabinet minister after his provocative comment-Golimar (Shoot them).

In the wake of Covid-19, it came to be known that many Tablighi Jamaat (TJ) members were having a conclave in Delhi. Some had come from abroad. The pro-government media seized the opportunity and blamed the TJ members for the spread of Corona calling it Corona Jihad and Corona Bomb, many delegates were arrested. Around the same time a massive Namaste Trump meeting was held in Ahmadabad, Kanika Kapoor a noted singer had come from aboard and was holding many

shows, a Sikh Granthi who had come from abroad was having many meetings. Those arrested underwent a painful ordeal and later were released as High Court observed, “A political Government tries to find the scapegoat when there is pandemic or calamity and the circumstances show that there is probability that these foreigners were chosen to make them scapegoats. The aforesaid circumstances and the latest figures of infection in India show that such action against present petitioners should not have been taken.”

In the wake of series of blasts--- Malegaon, Mecca Masjid and Ajmer--- many Muslim youth were arrested and later released for the lack of any evidence, but meanwhile their careers stood ruined and their families defamed. ANHAD, the human rights organisation did come out with a report “Scapegoats and Holy Cows”. Similarly Jamia Teachers Association published a report, ‘Framed, Dammed and Acquitted’. The report points out as to how usually Muslims are implicated, tried and later released after long period of imprisonment. It is the Courts which occasionally come to their rescue and they are released.

There is ‘other’ side of the story. Many saffronites owing their allegiance to sectarian agenda spread hate without being booked. One re-

calls the fairly recent utterance of the Bhopal MP, Pragya Singh Thakur, who is currently on bail in Malegaon blast case, asking people to keep sharp knives for punishing those indulging in love jihad. There are rallies where Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders are seen and Hate speech is blurted in gay abandon.

One ‘Hindu Janakrosh Morcha’ held over 20 rallies in Maharashtra and spewed hate against Muslim community on the issue of conversion and love jihad. It had planned a rally in Mumbai on 6th February in which in addition of conversion and love jihad it was to give the call of boycott Muslim traders. The petition was filed against its plan. The Court in its wisdom directed the police to take action against Hate speech under section 151. When this provision is there why have the police not taking any action remains unanswered.

A rally of various Hindutva groups was held in Delhi at Jantar Mantar (5th Feb 2023), where the call was given to stock weapons to kill Muslims and Christians. As per a report in The Scroll “In one of the videos, which has been widely shared on social media, a monk is seen asking Hindus to stock weapons to kill Muslims and Christians. In another video, Bharatiya Janata Party leader Suraj Pal Amu is seen calling for violence...” People have been witnessing such calls being given in Dharm Sansads by the likes of Yati Narsinghnanand and company, who surely are having a state cover and enjoy the impunity.

Many FIRS were lodged against him for his comments against women and his Hardwar Dharm Sansad Hate speech. He was even arrested but later got bail with ease.

On the contrary the Muslim youth are generally put under UAPA and other notorious acts where the bail is difficult or the deliberate delay is organised by authorities to keep them in jails. The Hindutva/BJP/Saffron clad saints are put against mild charges and jail is exceptionally rare if at all.

In a way two sets of justice delivery systems have developed in the society due to the rise of communal politics. The myths, prejudices and biases against minority communities are very deep-rooted due to organised

propaganda. Large section of media, IT cell, and thousands of Whatsapp groups have been set up by them. At one level, the ground level shakhas work the type of history stories about Shivaji, Govind Singh, Rana Pratap vis a vis Allauddin Khilji, Aurangzeb and Muslim rulers in general are the staple diet on which the swayam-sevaks of RSS are trained in a thorough manner. Their further deepening occurs at pracharak level after months of indoctrination of the Hindu Rashtra ideology.

This is at basic level. As they go up in the hierarchy of political structure and organisations floated by them, they try to put on sophisticated language to hide the Hate ideology. So a RSS chief will say that “we are

all Hindus, will talk of Vasudhiava Kutumbkam” due to which many intellectuals and thinkers feel it is worth having a dialogue with this organisation. But their hidden agenda leads to a stage where Yogi Adityanath will talk of Sanatan Hindu Rashtra.

Can the deep-set Hate be combated in any rational way? The emotive issues are further worsening the situation and starting from Ram Temple, to beef to various types of jihad and lately love jihad becomes the divisive and hate spreading slogan on which the sectarian nationalist ideology thrives. There is a need to promote fraternity and the police/state officials in particular need to be trained in the Indian culture and history, which is plural and inclusive. □

LETTERS

Justice and Punishment

Three of the four upper-caste men accused of gang-raping and murdering a Dalit woman in Hathras district in 2020 were acquitted of all charges by a Uttar Pradesh court on March 2.

Those cleared of all charges are Ramu, Luv Kush and Ravi.

Sandeep, the fourth person and the main accused person in the case, was also found not guilty of rape, but he was convicted on charges of culpable homicide not amounting to murder under Section 304 of the Indian Penal Code and for offences under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government in Uttar Pradesh has consistently denied that the Dalit woman was raped.

The four upper-caste men had allegedly raped and brutally assaulted the Dalit woman in Hathras on September 14, 2020.

The Dalit woman died of her injuries a fortnight later in New Delhi's Safdarjung Hospital. The woman had suffered multiple fractures, a

spinal injury and a deep cut on her tongue.

The woman was cremated in the dead of the night without the presence of her family members.

The incident triggered a massive protest from Dalit community across India.

The Supreme Court had called the incident “extraordinary and shocking” and directed the High Court to monitor the inquiry led by the Central Bureau of Investigation.

A forensic lab had said there were no traces of sperm in samples taken from the Dalit woman.

The chief medical officer at Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College—where the Dalit woman was admitted—had said the forensic lab's report “holds no value” as it relied on samples taken 11 days after the brutal crime was committed.

The autopsy report of the Dalit woman had shown that she was strangled and suffered a cervical spine injury. The final diagnosis had pointed out that there were tears in her genitalia and there had been “use of force”.

Organisational Principles

Lenin reiterated many times that one can work with third rate Politics but a first rate Organisation is mandatory. He formulated Democratic Centralism as the corner stone of Organisational Principles in a Communist Party Movement.

As a Party member this writer had always wondered why the Communist Party, which is constituted by professional revolutionaries and who are committed to the cause equally, cannot take decisions based on Consensus, instead of resorting to division of votes wherein the minority is bound to submit to the majority, willy-nilly.

In a committee of three, two forms the majority, one will be a minority.

In a committee of five, three will form the majority and two will end up as minority.

It is believed that the minority submitting to the majority is the effective way of organisational functioning. But in a smaller group, one should strive to achieve consensus, rather than resorting to division of votes.

A Reader

In truth the division paves the way for manipulation of numbers. While the minority looks at the majority grudgingly, the majority looks at the minority with suspicion. One waiting to overawe the other, instead of respecting the differences! In the Communist Party, it is also believed or rather assumed that the majority in the Party reflects the majority in the society, and hence believed that the majority is justified in making the minority to submit to the decisions of the majority.

In conclusion, in a small group of communist activists the decisions will have to be primarily by consensus. Majority should keep striving to convince the minority, in the larger interest of the party and revolution.

Minority should sincerely and magnanimously accept the decision of the majority and implement it wholeheartedly.

This can fructify, if and only if, there is mutual respect between the two sections.

In a larger group, if consensus cannot be achieved, practically, then the group could resort to voting, preferably through secret ballot, monitored by individuals or a committee agreed by all. This would obviate avoidable misgivings within the organisation. Lower committees submitting to the higher committees is yet another organisational principle of Democratic Centralism.

Democratic Centralism ideally assures free and frank discussions at all levels while insisting that the Action has to be united, despite the differences.

If the lower committee disagrees with the higher committee the issue ought to be discussed among the larger membership for a wider discussions as per the norms of Democratic Centralism.

Whereas the Higher Committee, in practice, imposes its decision on the lower committees and resort to imposing punishments for violations,

if any. This will only lead to irreconcilable division, purging and split within. It is an irony that such splits are conceived as a positive Dialectical process (One thing dividing into two) and as the process of rectification and purging. Such a process, instead of facilitating healthy rectification, damages and weakens the organisation. Very importantly, It also shatters the hope among the masses and make them disillusioned about the prospects of social transformation. This proposal is in the form of a draft seeking wide discussion.

Pon Chandran, Coimbatore

[The observation made by the author in this short letter is based on his experiences in mass organising for the last three decades in various mass organisations led by the Communist Movement.]

***Sons of Babur**

The play—Sons of Babur—is about Bahadur Shah Zafar: Zafar's view of his times and his ancestors, and his vision of India. It is written not from a historian's perspective but from that of a tragic king and poet analysing the Mughal past. The protagonist is a Bengali research scholar of history who is deeply fascinated by Zafar, the subject of his latest research. In a state of hallucination, he meets Zafar, witnesses Mughal history and the events of 1857 from Zafar's perspective, and asks pertinent questions. Zafar has no unnecessary sympathy for his ancestors and analyses them objectively, at times even ruthlessly. Most important is his objective analysis of the events of 1857. Towards the end of the play, the protagonist calls Zafar the 'last Mughal emperor'. Quickly, Zafar corrects him, calling himself the 'first democratically elected Emperor of India'.

Salman Khurshid, New Delhi

[Sons of Babur is written by Salman Khurshid, Adaptation by Ather Farooqui and directed by Dr M Sayeed Alam. It was recently staged at LTG auditorium, Mandi House, New Delhi]

Hate Speech

This is an appeal to the Chief Minister of Maharashtra and the Director General of Police to take action against hate speech and provocative speeches that are targeting minorities in the state. The letter points out that since December 2022, repeat offenders have been spreading offensive speeches through gatherings organised by outfits such as the Hindu Jan Jagran Samiti, Hindu Janagran Morcha, Bajrang Dal, Vishwa Hindu Parishad, and Antarashtriy Hindu Parishad. The letter questions the sudden interest in the state and raises concerns about social harmony. The letter calls upon all Maharashtra Indian citizens to demand that their elected representatives and In-Charge IPS and IAS officers abide by the Oath of Allegiance to the Constitution of India. The letter also highlights the oath that IAS and IPS officers take to uphold the principles and values of the Indian Constitution. The letter urges the authorities to take action before it is too late.

**Citizens for Justice
and Peace, Mumbai**

**Just Published
WITH THE
PASSING TIME**

by
Farooque Chowdhury
Published by
NGG Books

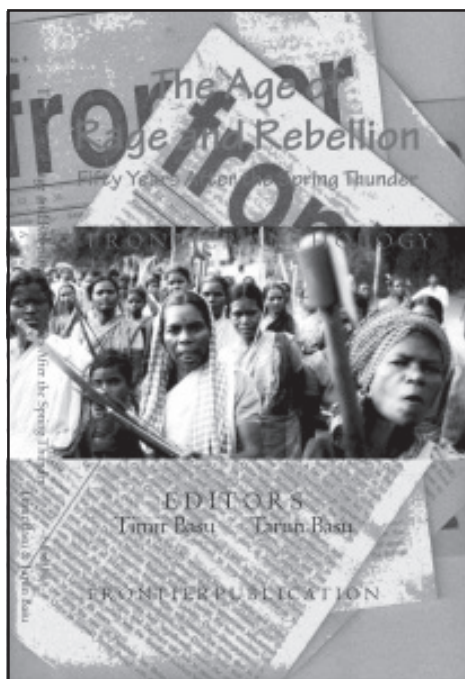
4, Aati Bazar, Keraniganj,
Dhaka, Bangladesh
Email: nggbooks@gmail.com

Website: www.nggbooks.wordpress.com

Price: 400tk
[300tk for teachers and students,
if collected from the publisher.]

A **frontier** Publication

Just Released



THE AGE OF RAGE AND REBELLION: 50 YEARS AFTER THE SPRING THUNDER

[Price: INR 300+ 100 for postage]

(An anthology of articles and interviews published in frontier to commemorate and re-assess the Naxalbari uprising)

Editors:

Timir Basu and Tarun Basu

Contributors: Santosh Rana, Debabrata Panda, Arup Baisya, Farooque Chowdhury, Jan Myrdal, Harsh Thakor, Bernard D'Mello, Timir Basu, Gautam Navlakha, Lawrence Lifschultz, Ranabir Samaddar, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Nazes Afroz, Subhendu Dasgupta, Sumanta Banerjee, Varavara Rao, Ramachandra Guha, Dipanjan Raychowdhuri, Alope Mukherjee, T Vijayendra, Mallikarjuna Sharma and Nirmal Brahmachari

Available at: FRONTIER Office and PATIRAM STALL (College Street) MANISHA, DHAYNBINDU (College Square) and other book stalls selling regular issues of frontier.