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Now's the time for BJP to deliver

By blaming EVMs for the MCD loss, Kejriwal is being myopic

The BJP's victory in the elections to the national capital's three civic bodies was emphatic to say the least. How the BJP managed to ensure this victory despite its poor management of the three municipal corporations — north, south and east — will be debated in the days to come. Here is a quick post-mortem: First, the BJP played smart politics. It realised that the demography of the Capital has changed and so it fielded a large number of candidates with a Poorvanchal — migrants from eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar — background. Second, the party, as it had done in Uttar Pradesh, beefed up its organisational strength. Third, the popular perception against AAP that it had failed to keep its promises made before the election except power subsidy and rebate on water bills went against it. Its drubbing in Goa and poor show in Punjab including the defeat in Rajouri Garden bypoll proved to be last nail in the coffin and this helped the BJP. Last but not the least, the Modi factor. Even three years into power, Prime Minister Narendra Modi remains a vote magnet.

In the end, many saw AAP leader and Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal as 'a complaint boy' who unfairly raised questions about Electronic Voting Machines. A quick scan of the social media shows that people think Mr Kejriwal should give up his politics of victimhood and political street fighting. In an open letter to Mr Kejriwal, former AAP leader Mayank Gandhi slammed the Delhi CM and said he should give up national ambition and focus on ruling Delhi well. Mr Kejriwal must pay heed to this.

Such national ambitions of leaders such as Mr Kejriwal and the time and money political parties have spent on the recent local polls in Odisha, Maharashtra and now Delhi — have given these elections a huge billing. The victory in Delhi now puts a lot of responsibilities on the BJP. In its election manifesto, the party promised social security cards to avail of insurance, education, and health facilities and nutritious food and medical facilities for pregnant women and infants. Now is the time to deliver.

One step closer to an integrated military

A new doctrine must encompass space, cyber-security and non-state terrorism

India took another small step towards ensuring its defence preparedness is a lot more integrated with the release of joint doctrine encompassing all three military services. The doctrine, an expansion of an earlier more limited version issued in 2010 after the Kargil conflict, also incorporates new domains like cyber-security, non-state terrorism and space.

India, after all, has been kicking around the idea of tri-service joint operations since the 1990s. And the Army, Navy and Air Force still operate 17 separate commands that can carry out military operations together on the basis of the officer corps' jogaad rather than actual institutional togetherness. Ad hoc operational co-ordination is a serious problem on a construction site or football team, it is downright dangerous when it comes to a country's national security. The Kargil conflict, and the difficulties that the Army and Air Force had in combining forces, was the last time the issue of joint military action was taken seriously. Since then the concept has been kicked around by various papers, committees and reports with little evidence that the political system even saw the issue as important. The new doctrine has taken the theoretical aspect even further, postulating tri-service coordination when it comes to cyberspace and other less tangible military theatres. The first step towards making a joint doctrine actually functional would be the creation of a joint chief of defence staff and creating means for officers to be rotated through all three services and provide the backbone for such a position. The creation of the chief of defence staff has been reportedly on the Narendra Modi government's to-do list for at least the past year.

Buying weapons is only part of any country's defence story. How they are used effectively and efficiently is a much larger part. And an integrated military at the top and on the ground is an essential step in accomplishing the latter.

line of sight

SRINATH RAGHAVAN



Wars don't interest our historians

Owing to this absence of engagement, India's role in World War II has been airbrushed out

A little over six months ago, the government announced an international competition to design a 'National War Memorial' in New Delhi. The memorial is intended to honour all Indian soldiers who served in the various wars and counter-insurgency campaigns from 1947 onwards. While the demand for a war memorial has been voiced periodically, there has been little public discussion on how and why we should commemorate our wars. The absence of such a debate struck me forcefully when I landed in Australia ahead of Anzac Day.

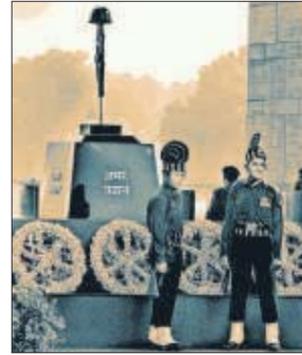
April 25, 2017, marked the 102nd anniversary of the Allied landings in Gallipoli during the World War I. Among the forces that took part in the campaign was the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC). The death of over 8,000 Australian soldiers in this star-crossed campaign left a profound and seemingly indelible impression back home. Over the following decades, April 25 became the most significant day in the national calendar — an occasion to commemorate not just Gallipoli, but all Australian wars and campaigns down to Iraq and Afghanistan.

Australians' understanding of these values has changed considerably over the past cen-

tury and has been the locus of serious public debates. In its first telling — especially by the official historian Charles Bean — the Anzac legend emphasised the racial vitality and manliness of the Australian soldiers. Their sacrifice had washed the stain of the country's convict heritage. This hugely influential narrative of military baptism was not unchallenged, however.

As early as 1925, the Labour government in Western Australia forbade Anzac Day speeches in schools as these were "directed to the glorification of war." Although this proved an abortive attempt, the underlying concerns resurfaced in the late 1960s — now in the light of protests against Australian participation in the Vietnam War and the accompanying counter-culture that sought to puncture the claims of the nation. While older generations took pride in espousing Australia's imperial connection with Britain, the young radicals denounced imperialism.

The grip of the Anzac legend on public memory grew. Starting with Prime Minister Bob Hawke, who visited Gallipoli on Anzac Day 1990, Australian leaders began heavily deploying the state's resources to revive the legend of Anzac. The deepening role of the state in promoting the Anzac legend, especially ahead of the centenary in 2015, was



The old, imperial war memorial at India Gate in New Delhi

sharply criticised by leading historians. A group of scholars led by Marilyn Young lamented the "veritable tidal wave of military history" that was sweeping over history curricula. Joan Beaumont wrote scathingly of a "memory orgy" and the "commodification" of the past. The Australian people made sense of the commemorations in diverse ways. If anything, the study of war history enabled critical perspectives on both the past and the present. These ideas, in turn, infect discussions in newspapers, television and radio.

While India may soon have the panoply of

war memorial and commemorations, it is unlikely that we will witness debates of this quality. Our historians have scant interest in wars or soldiers. The notion that war might be an important motor of historical change is alien to most Indian scholars. As such they are ill equipped to critique or question the military myths that will be purveyed by the state in fostering new forms of nationalism. The silence of academic historians over the absurd "commemoration and celebration" organised on the 50th anniversary of the 1965 war presages their likely contribution in the future.

Nor have the proposals for the new war memorial received any critical scrutiny. The terms of the reference specified that the new structure would have to be built adjacent to the India Gate — a memorial to the Indian soldiers who died in the World War I. So, between the old imperialist memorial and the proposed nationalist one, India's contribution to the World War II is literally airbrushed out. Isn't it curious that the war that most impacted the lives of ordinary Indians and that resulted in serious popular mobilisation should have no purchase on our collective imagination?

The absence of academic engagement with military history leaves the field wide open for ideological appropriation. At a time when the military is being placed on a pedestal and the rest of us told to adopt a posture of foetal admiration, such disinterest could prove costly.

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The views expressed are personal

WAR - CRY



Women protest against the clergy and the regressive practice of proclaiming triple talaq through the Internet, Azad Maidan, Mumbai

FILE PHOTO

A song without an end, words without substance

The Muslim personal law board's new ruling that men who misuse triple talaq must be excommunicated is untenable

SYEDA HAMEED



The All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) recently met in Lucknow on the issue of triple talaq (TT). With the case coming up in the Supreme Court on May 11, the meeting was historic for many reasons. Let me give you the good news first. The AIMPLB issued a few directives: The big one was on the 'boycott' of those who misuse TT. Others included strengthening of its women's cell and helpline, using social media to educate people on the Sharia and declaring nikah halala anti-Sharia. Now the bad one: The AIMPLB said TT via WhatsApp is valid. Triple talaq, whether it is via phone or WhatsApp is unfair: Recently, a national level netball player Shumayala Javed's husband gave her triple talaq over the phone after she gave birth to a girl child.

The AIMPLB meeting was held at Darul Uloom Nadwatul Ulama with its president Maulana Rabe Nadwi in the chair. As an aside, the institution's Arabic name — Darul Uloom Nadwatul Ulama — means 'City of Scholars, Centre of Learning'. I like to understand Arabic formulations, and not allow language to beat me down. When I do that I find it simple. This has been my practice in reading and imbibing the Quran. I

have learnt this from the liberal and enlightened men and women in my family who by every standard were exemplary in their profession and practice of Islam. They told me: "Understand the revealed word of Allah according to your own light". Intermediaries are not needed in a religion like Islam which does not have an organised church, a pope or an archbishop. But that pristine strength of Islam, we Muslims abandoned soon after the prophet and the four khalfas. So I have no use for those who claim exclusive prerogative to speak for Islam.

On the directives issued by AIMPLB, I have concerns. While in the right direction, there is no clarity on the implication of 'boycott' of men who misuse triple talaq. Will their relatives and neighbours ostracise them? Since there is no provision of excommunication in Islam, will the darul qazas (Islamic courts), which have no status or power, be in a position to sentence them? This is a song without an end, words without substance. On the more ludicrous side is the directive that triple talaq will be valid on WhatsApp if the woman has seen it.

Are matters of life and death such as marriage and divorce to be reduced to connectivity on the Net and virtual blue ticks on the smart phone?

Need I say more except quote Allama Iqbal?

Tumhari tehzeeb apne khandjar se aap khudkushi karegi (Your civilisation will commit suicide with your own dagger).

Syeda Hameed is founder, Muslim Women's Forum

The views expressed are personal

Mehbooba is the buffer that the Centre needs

New Delhi could end up spoiling its case in Kashmir if dialogue, or a semblance of it, isn't given a chance soon

VINOD SHARMA



Sacking Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Mehbooba Mufti and imposing Governor's rule won't resolve the security conundrum that's Kashmir. The antidote lies in vesting in her some authority to make the coalition work administratively — and towards brokering dialogue with stakeholders including the agitating youth.

Though discredited in the eyes of the agitators, Mufti is the buffer the Centre needs to build ground for talks — as and when advisable or possible — without direct accountability for the risky proposition. That's if the Narendra Modi dispensation is inclined to blend military action with political outreach.

No matter what the hawks in the security establishment think, New Delhi could end up spoiling its case in the Valley if regular dialogue, or at least a semblance of it, isn't given a chance soon.

The unending cycle of violent protests and retributive security measures have stained our democracy, optically and politically, in the eyes of international opinion. The loss shouldn't be weighed against electoral gains from Kashmir's polarising effect elsewhere in the country.

The absence of a political initiative to break the impasse is also hurting India's ideological positioning on Kashmir — that as a non-denominational secular State, it has space for a Muslim majority province. The Army versus-the-Kashmiri youth spectre strikes at the very roots of the lofty ideal. Each stone pelted or a bullet fired in the Valley is to the advantage of the adversary across the border.

Add to that the attacks by self-styled nationalists on Kashmiri students in colleges and universities in other states including those ruled by the BJP. Mere lip-service on this, as has been the Centre's

THE UNENDING CYCLE OF VIOLENT PROTESTS AND RETRIBUTIVE SECURITY MEASURES HAVE STAINED OUR DEMOCRACY, OPTICALLY AND POLITICALLY, IN THE EYES OF INTERNATIONAL OPINION

won't help. The trend needs putting down with a heavy hand, detrimental as it is to the intent of promoting Kashmiri stakes in provinces outside their home State.

The fallout from such attacks could force Kashmiri Muslims to ghettoise in the Valley. In such an eventuality, the possibility of them being misled by foreign-inspired militant group could be real. It doesn't take a shrink to understand that kind of psychological secession from mainland India.

The security czars in New Delhi should realise that armies are trained to fight enemies, not the citizenry. In that sense, the BJP's Ram Madhav's defence of a Kashmiri boy being used as a human shield by security-men against stone-pelters did more harm than a million words. His proverbial 'all is fair in love and war' comment had about it a ring of insensitivity.

The fuel of State extremism is what militancy seeks. It helps them recruit cadres, get public opinion on their side and showcase globally the cause. An illustration: The New York Times editorial criticising the security crackdown on the newspaper felt would feed, not contain, militancy.

The NYT termed the human shield episode "a new low in the long history of alleged human rights abuses." The perception it mirrored raises questions about Project Democracy in Kashmir that took a debilitating blow in the recent by-polls for the Srinagar parliamentary seat.

The 7.14% voter turnout in Srinagar this time was comparable with the worst since the 1989 upheaval. The constituency then was won uncontested. But the other two seats in the Valley, Anantnag and Baramulla witnessed a fraction above 5% vote.

Quite obviously, the gains of the elections since 1999 that helped India recoup the moral high ground as a vibrant democracy vis-à-vis Pakistan have dissipated. We're back to square one with no signs of alarm at the Centre.

The need to chart a fresh course hasn't in many years been more tangible. For at stake in the Valley is the very existence of regional pro-India voices represented by Mufti's PDP and Omar Abdullah's National Conference. The militancy's new face has obliterated the anti-India Hurriyat also.

The Centre has to strengthen the political forces whose survival is crucial to the Indian campaign in Kashmir. If they're shown as mere appendages of the Centre, Pakistani proxies that are already there will move in to fill the dangerous vacuum.

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innervoice

LIFE LESSONS CAN EMERGE FROM BOTH SUCCESS AND FAILURE



Vineet Singh Galhotra

Success makes one crave for more success, leading one to believe that it's a continuous phenomenon and shall last forever. In the process, some important lessons are forgotten: the most important being how to handle failure. That mind, which has become so used to elation for a prolonged period of time, isn't prepared to face any rejection.

An important lesson here is to distance ourselves from our successes. No doubt, success is the result of our dedication and

hard work, but there are many more deserving and dedicated people who have never tasted any success despite possessing immense talent and capabilities. Also, while enjoying our success, we should stay away from owning it, since the ownership of this success changes very frequently and our mind is left gasping in failure.

Our decisions translate into success only when there is consistent frequency and the Almighty's will. Our actions can be in our control but God's intentions are purely in His control. Our actions are purely a func-

tion of our choice and we have a choice over the choices that we exercise.

But the result of these actions is a consequence — a consequence where we are absolutely without choice. Our maturity lies in humbly, gracefully and choicelessly accepting the consequence, whether that consequence is a success or a failure.

(Innervoice comprises contributions from our readers.)

The views expressed are personal

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