

Future power

India is better placed to counter China's moves in the region after joining the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation

Diplomacy is all about managing contradictions artfully, or to put it less elegantly, sitting on both sides of the fence and looking comfortable. And the art of diplomacy at its very best was on full view at the 17th summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in Astana, Kazakhstan. There, we were presented with the rare sight of India and Pakistan both joining the SCO on the same day with observers raising the possibility that the two arch-enemies might one day be involved in joint SCO military exercises. In the spirit of the occasion, Prime Minister Narendra Modi steered clear of prickly issues during a meeting described as "very positive and cordial" with Chinese supremo Xi Jinping. It's an open secret the Chinese weren't overly enthusiastic about India signing on as a full-fledged SCO member even though we've had observer status with the organisation since 2005. Our backers were the Russians who nurse hopes India will serve as a counterweight to the Chinese who're becoming more powerful by the day and dominating the organisation. The Chinese, in turn, insisted Pakistan should also simultaneously be made a member to counter India. The lone potentially awkward note during the summit came when the prime minister raised the issue of terrorism – though he diplomatically refrained from naming Pakistan.

The 21st century has been hailed as the Asian Century and certainly Asia is taking its place alongside Europe in global clout. So for India it's useful to branch out and establish its presence across the region, especially in Central Asia, which it has always considered part of its extended neighbourhood. India's membership also means that the SCO can claim to represent half the globe in terms of population and gives the organisation more heft and credibility. On a possibly more troubling note, India stands out because it's the SCO's only fully democratic country and it takes its place alongside countries like China, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, all dominated by strongman rulers.

For India, though, joining the SCO is part of a long game. It will provide opportunities for interactions with other countries in the grouping and it might even emerge as a constructive forum where the Russians and Chinese combine to pressure the Pakistanis into curbing their jihadi fighters – many of whom come from the Central Asian region. One institution, already established by the SCO in Tashkent, is the colourfully named RATS (the Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure) and India may hope it can usefully contribute and participate in that organisation. At another level, the SCO could be useful to India if it wants to become a part, in any way, of China's grand Belt and Road Initiative. Some observers have even suggested the SCO might emerge as the Asian equivalent of NATO but that seems unlikely because its members – especially India and Pakistan – have quite disparate interests. Still, for India, being part of the SCO, is a diplomatic step forward that could bear rich fruit in coming years.

OTHER VOICES

Muslim world in turmoil

Militants have unleashed an orgy of violence. But the rulers of Muslim lands appear too busy in acrimonious exchanges and petty rivalries. The Saudi-Iran spat was already a matter of concern. In the days since, tensions between Qatar on one side and Saudi Arabia and the UAE on the other have exposed even more rifts and divisions within the Islamic bloc. The message this confrontation is sending is that despite the dangers posed by extremists, the rulers of Muslim countries are far too obsessed with infighting and power plays. KARACHI, JUNE 12, 2017

Weak, weak, weak

Before 8 June, Theresa May had sketched out a new cabinet. It would reflect her mighty status as the prime minister who had won the nation's endorsement. By Saturday morning it was clear that she lacked even the muscle to appoint her own top team. Every senior minister was to stay. The phrase "in office but not in power" might have been coined for this moment. So when the reshuffle arrived, it was a demonstration not of strength but of weakness, Mrs May's last feeble bid to cling to ebbing power. LONDON, 11 JUNE 2017

Singapore's flip-flop stance toward China

Singaporean PM Lee Hsien Loong said that many countries, including Singapore, see the Belt and Road initiative as a constructive way for China to integrate with other countries. He said his country supports the initiative as well as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. These could be the most positive remarks Lee has made on China recently. China and Singapore have witnessed a cooling relationship due to the latter's siding with the US. BEIJING, 11 JUNE 2017

Climate diplomacy enters a new phase

With the US walking out on the Paris agreement, both China and the EU are likely to determine future processes

AJAYA BANDYOPADHYAY

The clear consequence of President Trump's decision to withdraw from the landmark Paris accord is that, the global climate agenda would be pushed to the back burner at least for the entire tenure of his presidency.

The 'domino effect' is forcing a few other countries to follow suit. During 2010-15, the US significantly increased its climate-related spending and outward investment in developing countries. It committed nearly \$15.6 billion on bilateral programmes for promoting clean energy, sustainable infrastructure and land use. Moreover, the US used to bear about one fifth of the administrative budget of the UNFCCC and, was the largest contributor to the IPCC, the two most important international bodies on climate change.

The proposed budget cuts by the Trump administration could dry up the endowment of the Green Climate Fund (GCF), set up in 2010, as a part of an international pledge to mobilise \$100 billion from advanced to the poorer nations by 2020. The US committed \$3 billion and till date has transferred only \$1 billion to GCF, which currently possesses a kitty of \$10.3 billion.

Leadership vacuum

Moving ahead, the EU (European Union) and China, have rightly stepped in to fill up the leadership vacuum and counter the voices seeking to slow the fight against global warming. Both these powers are largely seen as the only viable diplomatic alternative to the US leadership, as the world wrangles over how to build on its commitments to the Paris accord.

In 2016, China signed the historic deal with the US for clean energy partnership and, cooperated with

them to lead the Paris summit to fruition. In the last, World Economic Forum President Xi voiced his unequivocal commitment to the Paris Agreement, as China realised the distinct opportunity for it to expand its influence on the global stage. China has suspended construction of 103 new coal-fired power plants, and announced plans to invest more than \$360 billion into renewable energy by the end of the decade.

Questions about China

According to the People's Bank of China, the country will need \$600 billion a year to realise its dream of a "Green economy". China's green credit, as it stands today, is almost 10 per cent of the total banking sector portfolios. China today is the world's largest issuer of green bonds. The Chinese government has already mobilised massive policy and fiscal support, to enable sustainable mobility and urban infrastructure and put in place the framework for a robust domestic carbon market.

However, there are some important questions. What will China's mode and scope of engagement with the rest of the world be to lead the complicated highly political climate negotiation process? How much acceptable will be the 'Chinese model' of climate leadership, given that China is the largest emitter of greenhouse gases? As China attempts to grow green, are dirty industries likely to migrate to the poorer countries? Will China become a new hegemon in the evolving power dynamics? As the US withdraws, who will drive innovations and technological progress for low-carbon growth? Will China, the largest manufacturers of wind and solar equipment, be able to sustain its market dominance, with US backing off from clean energy



In denial Of climate change AFP

transition and the market dipping?

The cooperation between EU and China marks a turning point in climate negotiations and global diplomacy. Perhaps we are on the verge of experiencing a multipolar, collective leadership forcing the world to look beyond the Western alliance that dominated the scene for long.

EU-China alliance

China and the EU need to act together and significantly intensify their political, technological, economic and scientific cooperation on climate change and clean energy. In the past, the US did the heavy lifting to convince China and some other major emerging economies to commit to climate change mitigation. The EU too invested major efforts in building coalitions with developing and under-developed nations, vulnerable to climate risks. For the EU continuing the past momentum seems in-

dispensable, mostly by engaging and collaborating with China, India and, other major GHG emitters. However, the looming challenges over Brexit, cross-border migration and, rising threats of terrorism make it difficult for EU to lead a globally coordinated effort on climate change.

Emerging possibilities

US' scepticism on climate change provides an opportunity for countries like India and China to act on their common interests such as transformation of the coal sector, rapid deployment of renewable and electric vehicles, building sustainable urban infrastructure and, collaboration on R&D and cross-border transfer of climate-friendly technologies.

India has always practised smart climate diplomacy. To stay on course on its INDC (Intended Nationally Determined Contribution)

The writer is a Partner of infrastructure and government services at KPMG. The views are personal

appointed in the Watergate investigation and the time Nixon resigned.)

Unfortunately American expectations are tuned to a Netflix sensibility in which we want to binge a complete season in a single sitting. A proper investigation will not indulge our impatience. The best bet is for Democrats to win a majority in the House in 2018, which is possible and maybe even likely, but winning a majority in the Senate that year is a much steeper climb.

I know well that impeachment is one of the only rays of hope cutting through these dark times. But, I believe that it's important to face the very real possibility that removal may not come, and if it does, it won't come swiftly. And even a Trump impeachment would leave America with a President Mike Pence, a nightmare of a different stripe but no less a nightmare.

In the end, the Resistance must be bigger than impeachment; it must be about political realignment. It must be built upon solid rock of principle and not hang solely on the slender hope of expulsion. This is a long game and will not come to an abrupt conclusion. Perseverance must be the precept. NYT

Trump's impeachment, a tall order

FBI's James Comey did not deliver the knock-out punch. The special counsel's report may take a long time coming

CHARLES M BLOW

Last week, in a highly anticipated Senate testimony, fired FBI Director James Comey delivered a stinging rebuke and strong indictment of Donald Trump as an abuser of power, twister of arms and, above all, a spewer of lies.

No fewer than five times did Comey accuse Trump of lying.

The White House's response as issued from the mouth of spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders: "I can definitely say the president is not a liar, and I think it's, frankly, insulting that question would be asked."

No, you saying he's not a liar is a lie, and it is the American people who are insulted.

Trump took to Twitter on Friday morning, writing: "Despite so many false statements and lies, total and complete vindication... and WOW, Comey is a leaker!"

That was a lie.

During a Rose Garden press conference Friday afternoon with the president of Romania, Trump answered the question of why he felt "complete vindication" by speaking in a hodgepodge of hashtags: "No collusion, no obstruction,

he's a leaker." If America is confronted with a he-said, he-said standoff between Trump and Comey, the former having a documented history as a pathological liar and the latter not, who one grants the benefit of the doubt to is easily answered: Comey.

No knock out blow

And yet, there was something many seemed to find unsatisfying about Comey's testimony: There was no knockout blow. It wasn't the penultimate moment that guaranteed impeachment, but rather just another moment in what will likely be a plodding inquiry.

This becomes the critical and increasingly urgent question for many: Will Trump be impeached – or indicted – and when? The anticipation has produced a throbbing anxiety. There is so much emotional investment in Trump's removal that I fear that it blinds people to the fact that it is a long shot and, in any case, a long way off.

As Adam Liptak wrote last month in NYT, about special counsel Robert S. Mueller's investigation: "Would the Constitution allow Mr. Mueller to indict Mr. Trump if he finds evidence of criminal conduct? The prevailing view among most



Too optimistic About impeachment AFP

legal experts is no. They say the president is immune from prosecution so long as he is in office."

As to the point of impeachment, the founders made this difficult on purpose. Only two US presidents – Andrew Johnson and Bill Clinton – have ever been impeached by the House of Representatives. The Senate refused to convict in both cases, and both men remained in office.

Richard Nixon may well have been impeached, but resigned before the House could vote on his articles of impeachment. Yes, there is a

first time for everything, and this may well be the first time that a president is impeached by the House and convicted by the Senate, or that a president is successfully indicted, but think hard about how remote that possibility is.

At this moment both the House and Senate are led by Republicans who show no inclination to hold Trump accountable and who, in fact, are now making excuses for his aberrant behaviour.

Last week House Speaker Paul Ryan excused Trump's highly inappropriate contacts with Comey, making the silly argument that Trump is "just new to this."

Republican Sen. Susan Collins on Friday engaged in the outlandish speculation that Comey had set the precedent for one-on-one meetings with Trump when Comey pulled Trump aside to discuss the salacious "pee-pate" dossier.

Sorry folks, ignorance – even the towering ignorance of Trump – is no excuse.

Long road ahead

A damning report from Mueller could change Republican reticence, but such a report is likely quite far off. (Fifteen months passed from the time a special prosecutor was

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Time to act

The editorial 'Angry Bharat' (June 12) has touched on salient points that merit immediate attention. Agriculture has always been the backbone of our economy and unless the ruling government adopts a sympathetic attitude, the problems will continue, be it the ruling party or any other Opposition party.

Ashok Jayaram
Bangalore

Acute distress

In a country where most of the population derives its income from agriculture, the government should pay utmost attention to farmers' welfare. We have a flawed taxation system, where many people declare themselves farmers for the sake of evading taxes. Hence, if the government allows en masse loan waivers, these so-called farmers will also reap the benefits. Suicide cases can be

avoided if we are able to counsel the farmers at the right time. For this the government should take the help of good counsellors and NGOs. It is not only the burden of debts, but a gloomy future which drives farmers to suicide. Waiver of farm loans is only a small step to prevent suicides, but taking care of their families' medical and other needs with CSR efforts is the right way forward.

By encouraging small scale and cottage industries in the villages, families of poor farmers should be given alternate employment.

Veeena Shenoy
Thanai

Market access

Successive policies, though on paper, do not address the problem of agriculture marketing. Farm gate prices are never close to consumer prices and it is only the middleman who benefits. Technology and accessibility to global mar-

kets, leave alone domestic markets, have not been fully exploited. With the disposable income of Indians in the high end consumer market growing, the demand for quality food has also increased.

The Government should guide farmers to raise crops that match the demand. Besides, a predetermined price has to be assured for crops. The government should absorb the loss if the market prices are not favourable. Farmers are not considered in major policy decisions as they are not a dominant pressure group, unlike the industry and service sectors.

Though the amount involved in farm loans is only a fraction of the exposure to a few corporates, successive waiver schemes has only rewarded wilful defaulters more than the genuine failures.

Farm insurance has only made the insurance companies richer and the farmers poorer. Policies at affordable premia should also

cover the unremunerative prices for the produce.

S Veeraraghavan
Coimbatore

The Government needs to go beyond farm loan waivers, and start thinking out of the box, providing cold storage houses and access to global markets to our farmers so that they are not dependent only on local consumption. And technology must reach to small farmers.

Bal Govind
Noida

RBI justified

This refers to "Why RBI has turned a perma-hawk" by Arati Krishnan (June 12). Going by the popular demand, had RBI cut interest rates, that would have fuelled inflation due to increase in retail spending with supply side concerns. Further GDP growth was less than expected during the last quarter and in-

fation control and growth cannot go hand in hand. The debate on potential impact of GST on inflation is still on. With so much of uncertainty around, it is but logical for RBI to maintain a neutral stance.

Srinivasan Velamur
Chennai

GST and inflation

The GST Council has cut tax rates on 66 essential items. That the list includes insulin is relevant to a nation with the largest diabetes population. An insulin pen priced ₹540 two years ago now costs ₹640 even as manufacturers claim an annual spike of no more than 1.6 per cent from 2010. Enforcement agencies should ensure that companies do not increase the price in anticipation of GST. Governments that have implemented GST have put in place an oversight committee for this.

R Narayanan
Ghaziabad

