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Look beyond N Korea's threats

US should not give legitimacy to Pyongyang's nuclear blackmail

Unlike animals and humans, a rogue nation can only go astray as far as its sponsors allow it to. This is especially true for North Korea. China has provided it the economic and political cover for almost all of the latter's destabilising actions.

This has been true for the past few weeks of confrontation between Washington and Pyongyang. China may

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have supported the United Nations sanctions against North Korea but it did little to stop the flow of essential supplies that could have applied pressure on the rogue regime. The latest crisis seems to have begun to wind down. There have been reports of back channel diplomatic activity. But what seems to be the fundamental North Korean motive of forcing the US to accept it as a de facto nuclear state and thus capable of nuclear blackmail against the US and the world may yet prove a step too far for both sides to take.

Indians should experience a sense of déjà vu while considering North Korea's manipulation of geopolitics through rogue action. Pakistan has done similar actions in its march towards international nuclear acceptance. Islamabad has a long history of persuading Washington to help it financially and militarily by arguing that the fallout would be a destabilised Pakistan filled with loose nukes and jihadis. And its ultimate patron was also China. Insofar as a difficult Pakistan serves to geopolitically limit India, the real beneficiary has been China.

A parallel tale can be made of China's use of North Korea. Pyongyang does not aim its missiles at Beijing. And its seemingly irrational belligerence helps keep Northeast Asia from becoming a US lake but also holds back Japan's strategic vision and keeps South Korea from a larger Asian role. More than anything else, this is why the Trump administration should resist any temptation to confer a nuclear legitimacy, no matter how tentative, to Kim Jong-un's deadly toys. That may mean further nuclear crises in the region, but this should be treated as a further form of management and one less harmful than accepting a status quo of blackmail.

Bengaluru floods were a disaster waiting to happen

Unchecked urbanisation and destruction of lakes have led to this dire situation

Yet another major Indian city finds itself in the throes of a flood situation. While it is an unprecedented and massive downpour that has resulted in several areas of Bengaluru becoming inundated, it is once again, a man-made disaster that could perhaps have been avoided by building the city in a sustainable way. The flood situation in Bihar, Assam and several other parts of the country is proof that we are living in challenging environmental times; and the spectre of climate change must now be dealt with on an immediate basis. Cities in which lakes catch fire because of the build-up of toxic effluents in it, and groves of trees have been sacrificed at the altar of development; cannot expect to live insulated from the furies of nature. It is these very development projects that have contributed to the blocking of natural waterways that could have helped drain the rain water harmlessly. As we witnessed in Chennai in 2015, rampant construction and blocking waterways to the sea had flooded a city at the edge of the ocean. The situation in Bengaluru is no different. There have been many warnings about the unsustainability of urbanisation in this area, with warnings that Bengaluru could become unlivable by 2025.

The city has been an environmental disaster for many years now. In the face of unchecked urbanisation that came with the IT revolution, Bengaluru's lakes — that could have relieved the pressure of an unusual downpour — have all but vanished. According to studies conducted by the Indian Institute of Science, there has been a 1005% increase in paved surfaces in the city between 1973 and 2016. The vegetation of the city on the other hand has decreased by a whopping 88% and water by 85% between 2000 and 2014. This flood, therefore, should come as no surprise at all.

What is required now is a drastic, immediate, and concerted effort to save what remains of the city, and ensure that its citizens can continue to live there in the next decade.

Nitish could be another Mehbooba

If the BJP goes for assembly polls in 2019, the CM may face the prospect a truncated tenure



The stage for apportioning blame is over. It's time now to assess what future holds in store for the dramatis personae in Bihar? On the face of it, the BJP is the undisputed winner — the way it was in Jammu and Kashmir.

Regardless of his de jure status as chief minister, Nitish Kumar is the de facto junior partner of the increasingly pan-Indian BJP. He's a kind of mirror image of Mehbooba Mufti whose PDP's tie-up with the saffron outfit was as much in disregard of the popular mandate as is her Bihar counterpart's volte face. They're both sleeping with the party they painted as villainous.

But there's a difference. Unlike Mufti whose image is down from zenith to nadir in her citadel of south Kashmir, Nitish hasn't entirely lost his core base. The least empowered scheduled castes (mahadalits) and the extremely backward among the OBCs (aati pichadas) are broadly with him. So are his clansmen, the historically BJP-inclined Kurmis.

The danger for him isn't as much from friend-turned-detractor Lalu Yadav. The RJD leader's Muslim-Yadav constituency is

at once his asset and liability. The extremely weaker sections Nitish roped in through assiduous social engineering, besides women voters, are more likely to be poached away by the mighty BJP.

It was that very social mobilisation — besides the forward castes — that carried the day for Narendra Modi in Uttar Pradesh. Veteran observers of Bihar politics foresee in this backdrop a dim future for the BJP's newest ally. With the passage of time, Nitish's relevance in the NDA would only be marginally more significant than Anupriya Patel's. The junior central minister's Kurmi-centric Apna Dal had mopped up assembly seats in certain districts of eastern UP adjoining Bihar.

There's speculation already that the BJP might take Bihar (where elections are due in 2020) to polls with the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. If that happens, Nitish's fait accompli will be a truncated tenure with no guarantee of continuing as CM.

One reason for which he dumped Lalu — besides corruption and his overbearing swagger — was the RJD chief's anxiety to see his son Tejasvi elevated as CM. In that limited sense, the JD (U)'s alliance with the saffron parivar is no safe bet. They too want someone from the Hindutva stock in the top slot.

But that's politics without constants; a game where rivals and companions aren't permanent. Nor are vote banks! Even the most inveterate of Nitish's admirers found hard to reconcile to the indecent haste with



■ Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar with deputy chief minister Sushil Modi

which he resigned and reassumed office. At one moment he stood like a Bodhi tree willing to reject power that came with taint; at another he seemed a bonsai in the BJP pot he had outgrown so promisingly.

The dramatic swerve brought him down in the esteem of peers and public alike. Erased in one stroke was the renown of being asked to the PM's conceivable challenger recanting on the very principles he cited in 2013 to declare him a political untouchable?

But could the grand alliance that derailed

the Modi juggernaut have been salvaged? The blame for it goes to both sides: Lalulerring before the breakup and Nitish after resigning.

The rebellious Sharad Yadav had advised the CM to desist joining the BJP the way he had counselled him against deserting the NDA before the 2014 elections. But he ignored such advice, knowing fully well that the BJP of today wasn't the party of the AB Vajpayee era.

Unlike the NDA-I that was dependent on regional crutches, an ally of Nitish's size cannot be a restraining influence on the BJP-led formation's second edition. It has overwhelming numbers today in parliament and governments in 18 state capitals.

So the core agenda of Ram mandir, Common Civil Code and abrogation of Article 370 that was deferred in its earlier incarnation is very much on the front burner. The tail will wag the dog no more.

The BJP's majoritarian pitch predicated on these issues might telescope over time Nitish's silos of caste support. The extremely weaker sections among Dalits and Backwards could gravitate towards the BJP, what with the appeal of Ramvilas Paswan and Jitan Manjhi who's no friend of the CM.

In the long run, the residual opposition to the Modi bandwagon would be the Muslim-Yadav compact. It'll find new leadership or reconcile to remote control or old-guard such as Sharad if Lalu's entire family is jailed.

In short, the losses of the inherently atomic JD (U) could be mutual and equal. Unless of course a major crisis comes to bedevil the BJP.

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GLOBAL WARMING



■ Steam and exhaust rise from a chemical company and a coking plant in Germany. Greenhouse gases are among the chief causes of climate change

GETTY IMAGES

How corporations can help fight climate change

Smart businesses are creating drought-resistant crops, micro irrigation solutions and renewable energy systems



India is the third largest carbon emitter in the world. Our per capita energy consumption at 25 GJ, however, represents approximately a quarter of the energy required for a decent quality of life. The global trajectory to a low carbon economy that limits global warming induced climate change needs to be balanced with our developmental needs. This calls for innovative solutions.

The economic loss in excess of \$2 billion caused by the Chennai floods of 2015, an extreme climate event, brought home to corporate India the possible adverse impacts of climate change. Smart businesses are creating new products and services, such as drought and pest resistant crops, micro irrigation solutions, big data based smart grid solutions, and renewable energy systems. Enlightened companies are also embracing the concept of the circular economy, where resources are circulated within the system releasing minimal waste into the biosphere, and focusing on sustainable supply chain management; for instance, Jaguar Land Rover's REALCAR (REcycled ALuminium CAR) project recycles over 50,000 tonnes of aluminium — the weight of 200,000 XE body shells in one year.

The government is putting in place regula-

tory frameworks to measure emission. In February 2017, the Securities Exchange Board of India (SEBI) suggested that the top 500 companies adopt Integrated Reporting on a voluntary basis from FY 2017-18. The task force on climate-related financial disclosure advocates that businesses disclose material climate-related risks in their financial filings, and companies like Tata Steel are already making such disclosures.

A huge body of research by public policy institutes is also emerging to offer pathways to a low-carbon future. The Energy Transitions Commission is exploring how we can accelerate change towards low-carbon energy systems that enable robust economic development and limit the rise in global temperature to well below 2°C.

The Commission forecasts progress on four dimensions: One, decarbonisation of power, combined with extended electrification. Two, decarbonisation of difficult to electrify activities, through routes such as fuel substitution, carbon capture and storage or use, and product substitution. Three, acceleration in the pace of energy productivity improvement, including the shift towards more service-based and digital economies, more efficient urban design, and the development of a circular and sharing economy. And finally, optimisation of fossil fuel use.

With proactive governance and enlightened corporate leadership, we may just win the battle against climate change.

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**PARENTS MUST SET AN
EXAMPLE FOR THEIR
CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOUR**

Jayati Goel

Parenting plays a huge role in shaping up a child's behaviour and personality. They are mostly responsible for what a child carries forward. What can parents pass to children? Only what they know. Is it enough for children? Even they get good teachers in school, but do they get good gurus? That is more important. Parenting is an art and having a good education is a wonderful backup.

The human brain soaks in information from various stimuli, stored as neurons in

Special laws can't be the answer to growing crime

Uttar Pradesh does not need the UPCOCA because the existing laws arm the police with the requisite powers



Does the State need a special law to deal with crimes committed by organised groups? This is a tough question to answer. The crime graph has shown a dramatic upward rise in the recent past across India. Reasons like poverty, social structures, failure of the agricultural sector coupled with the inability of the nation to create job opportunities for millions of young men and women, the nature and style of politics, the intense interference with the police force (from recruitment to postings) and the extremely slow pace of the judiciary to deal with criminal cases are responsible. India has a population of 1.3 billion people and neither the size of the police nor that of the judiciary can keep pace with the need of providing sufficient manpower and resources to both.

Uttar Pradesh is the largest state in India in terms of population and economically it is comparatively backward. Opportunities for jobs in agricultural and non-agricultural sectors are few and far between. Add to these the emergence of a criminal-politician nexus. A large number of MLAs and MPs across India, especially in UP, are facing criminal charges and have criminal antecedents. The emergence of regional parties in UP has further complicated the situation.

Therefore the Uttar Pradesh Control of Organised Crime Act (UPCOCA), proposed by the UP government, is no solution to deal with the situation. The provisions of the existing laws, especially the IPC, CrPC and the Evidence Act, provide sufficient powers to the police. The enforcement of the existing laws is the solution. The emergence of criminals on a large scale in UP is a reflection of poor governance and even poorer policing.

The government under the new chief minister can perhaps prove that with better governance and policing, the law and order situation can be effectively dealt with. UP stands apart from Maharashtra, where the existence of dangerous organised criminal

**LET US HOPE THAT THE
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groups is a reality. But even with the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA), National Crime Records Bureau statistics show the number of crimes increased from 603,408 in 2000 to 828,010 in 2015. Special laws like MCOCA are generally prone to abuse by the police and give them reason to hide their failures in implementing ordinary laws. While its provisions have been held to be constitutionally valid, there is no doubt that these provisions are misused quite regularly. The citizen's constitutional and fundamental rights are seriously eroded. In the garb of such laws, political rivals and many a times ordinary citizens who espouse the cause of the underprivileged and the vulnerable are targeted.

A balance is needed between security needs and individual rights. IFUP is really serious it can bring a special law not to deal with 'organised crime', but crimes against women, Dalits and Muslims. Mob lynchings need to be curbed with an iron hand.

One must remember that many a times such organised gangs are born out of State policies. It is well known that in the United States, the mafia was a product of the prohibition policy in the 1920s. In India, for the first 50 years, major criminal gangs indulging in smuggling were born on account of thoughtless policies regulating import and export. Currently, the influx of narcotics, which are destroying a whole generation of young Indians, are being smuggled in despite the presence of paramilitary forces on the western border, the existence of coast guards, intelligence agencies and the police.

India is a democracy but its citizens are overly governed. Far from dealing with the crying need of reducing the laws, the State wants to bring more laws. Perhaps the effort is to do away with the well-known principles of criminal jurisprudence, 'Presumed Innocence' and 'Burden of Proof', which clearly demand that every accused is innocent till found guilty and that the burden to prove that he/she is guilty, rests on the prosecution. Let us hope that the government of UP will not go ahead with UPCOCA and instead provide better governance and effective policing. One can only be reminded of the sobering words of the full bench of the Supreme Court of Israel, a country often cited for justifying stringent laws and actions, that: "at times democracy fights with one hand tied behind her back. Despite that, democracy has the upper hand, since preserving the rule of law and recognition of individual liberties constitute an important component of her security stance."

(For the full text of the article go to <http://read.ht/B5Bk>)

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various sections of the nervous system. All these sections actually form pathways, which determine some behaviour that the body-mind complex expresses. In the first 7-10 years of a human life, the neuron pathways are formed at the quickest pace and so these neural circuits become highly action potent as they form. Therefore, to the extent of that period of time, as most human beings spend the most time with their parents, it may be concluded that parents do become the major influencers.

However, as the human being engages

with other environments such as school, friends, action groups and clubs, the list of influencers keeps growing.

Some traits are inherited as well as the behaviour patterns of any individual from the parents. So it's important for the parents to check their flaws so that the child doesn't pick up these bad habits, as it's going to affect the future generations too.

(Inner Voice comprises contributions from our readers. The views expressed are personal.)

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