

Lies, Damn Lies and Statistics THE (MIS)USE OF OPINION POLLS

My good friend M.P. Goodpoll, the famous political analyst and pollster dropped in the other day. 'MP, I said, long time no see, how's business?'

our clients want is a "representative poll", one that represents their point of view. We "poll to please, and are pleased to poll."

we care about, the "sons of the soil". 'And another thing, how come so few women were represented. What about the "common woman", the "little woman", the "daughters of the soil"?'

them a jolt. They could barely identify our two clients Mr Son of the Soil and Mr Man of the People. When asked who they would prefer, they said, neither. I tell you, I was not a happy pollster last week.

the CAE analysts came up with a superb strategy. 'What was that MP?' 'Of our original sample, which was half men and half women, we threw out most of the women. These were the uncooperative "pesky women" who didn't care

nately, half of the men were undecided as to who to vote for — they were waiting to see who would pay them the most, what a mockery of our democratic institutions, I tell you! These we decided to ignore. Thus we were left with a quarter of our original sample who actually had an opinion.'

'Well, that's when the CAE's chief analyst, Mr "Bend with the Wind", in a brilliantly obscure piece of analysis came up with the colored lungi strategy — MP paused dramatically.'

etc., BW launches into his dense analysis, the more obscure the better. Then you have a panel packed with political partisans on both sides, each of whom claim victory for their own candidate, buttressed by an appropriately selective reading of the poll. Then to stop it all, the next day, the newspapers carry banner headlines, of course varying with the ideological bent of the paper which say "80% vote for Man of the People" or "Most people want Mr Son of the Soil".



REFLECTIONS by Dr Omar Rahman

'Well, I tell you those Center for the Analysis of Everything (CAE) guys are just great, geniuses at making gold out of straw, silk purses out of sow's ears (or should that be the other way around) — I can never get these metaphors right. No matter, what I meant to say was that

about either candidate and the great issues confronting our country. Then we were left with a sample of 80% great, a much more representative group for our purpose.'

'I see, after throwing out the inconvenient people, you were left with a more amenable sample.'

'I suppose you could put it that way, I prefer to think that we were left with a more "effective sample". This effective sample was still not enough however to give us the results we wanted, because those ungrateful uncooperative wretches were divided evenly amongst our two main candidates.'

'Not entirely. Unfortunately, half of the men were undecided as to who to vote for — they were waiting to see who would pay them the most, what a mockery of our democratic institutions, I tell you! These we decided to ignore. Thus we were left with a quarter of our original sample who actually had an opinion.'

By arrangement with India Today

An Interview with Henry Kissinger

"US Must Acknowledge India's Emergence as a Major Power"

Perhaps there can be no greater proof that a nation has no permanent friends or permanent enemies than the visit to New Delhi of former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. Kissinger, 72, whose name is forever linked with the dramatic US tilt towards Pakistan during the 1971 Bangladesh crisis, now heads the highly influential firm, Kissinger Associates, and was in New Delhi recently at the invitation of Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao to share his legendary understanding of international realpolitik with Indian defence and foreign-policy analysts.

Q. The passing of the Brown amendment has created anxieties of another arms race in the subcontinent. Why do you feel it was so important for the US Administration to support the amendment?

A. My impression is that the US Administration felt this was an obligation that had been incurred by previous administrations, and that it was unjust to hold up items which had already been paid for. The Administration probably felt pressed to fulfil that part of the obligation that was least likely to lead to a real arms race, and therefore they did not deliver the F-16s.

Q. Do you believe it could trigger an arms race? A. Given the attitudes of the United States Congress, and also given the attitudes of the Administration, I don't foresee that a new military-aid programme is on the cards. I can't think of any realistic possibility of the United States sparking an arms race in this region. Even if the United States considers something threatening its national interests with regard to say Central Asia, I can't conceive this (the resumption of arms aid to Pakistan).

Q. Doesn't the US see Pakistan as an ally in a region where it is concerned about the energy reserves in Central Asia? A. The United States has friendly relations with Pakistan, but I've not heard the proposition that the United States looks at Pakistan as the lynchpin of its policy in Central Asia. That's not accurate.

"India and the US have a common interest in preventing Islamic fundamentalism from becoming a dominant force in Islamic politics."

which involved a substantial amount of money, because the problem was over a particular issue, it was not a permanent feature of American foreign policy. And in that crisis, if we had to do it again, I would do it again.

Q. Do you see any common strategic interests between the US and India? A. I don't know how you define "strategic". We certainly have an interest, both of us, in preventing Islamic fundamentalism from becoming a dominant force in Islamic politics. We may have a certain common interest in the ability of the Central Asian countries to export their energy reserves. I've noticed in some Indian papers that this is supposed to be of great benefit to the United States. I think it is of greater benefit to India and China and those countries whose energy requirements are going to be increasing dramatically. Because we can probably supply ourselves from the Middle East, from Latin America and from our own production. And of course, oil being fungible, whoever gets it from one area increases the supply in another area. So I can conceive that we have some common interest to discuss the future of these areas as regards China and Russia and, to some extent, Iran.

Q. You were one of the authors of the US tilt towards Pakistan in the '70s. What do you think is different in the region today? A. In 1971 we had a very specific problem. We had just opened to China through the help of Pakistan. A crisis developed (in Bangladesh) and India allied itself with the Soviet Union. And even before President Nixon had reached China, we simply could not abandon countries that had helped us. As soon as the crisis was over, we forgave the PL480 loans.

Q. How far does Benazir Bhutto's ability to attract public attention in the US help Pakistan? A. She is a dramatic personality and she is a woman and she is somewhat better known than other leaders from the region. But even so, I would be amazed if even 10 per cent of the American public knew who she is. Though that would be true also of the Indian prime minister.

Q. So do you believe the US Administration made a mistake when it pursued an active public role on issues like human rights in Kashmir and on nuclear non-proliferation? A. I think foreign policy should be non-partisan. I've supported the President and the present Administration on a number of items—Most Favoured Nation status to China, on the recent improvement of relations with China. And I'm in contact with the Administration, so there is no hostility on my part. I have disagreed with the tendency, whoever does it—and some Republicans have done it as well—to pro-



Q. But the Brown amendment is being seen as tacit US acceptance of Pakistan's clandestine nuclear programme. A. I disagree. This is certainly not true. This Administration is totally committed to the non-proliferation policy. Its commitment sometimes outruns its ability to achieve it, which is a different issue. And we have to face the fact that in relation to a number of countries, we have to make distinctions. It's tough. But I have sympathies for the Administration. So I do not think that it was an approval of Pakistan's project. It was a recognition of reality. Just as we are not applying Pressler to India.

Q. But what hasn't changed is the Kashmir problem and the antagonistic relationship between India and Pakistan. A. My view is not necessarily the current view. My view is that the United States cannot involve itself in every crisis that exists in the world. Kashmir is just about as far away from the United States as it is possible to be. It should be settled between India and Pakistan, and there is no law of nature that helps the United States to involve itself. Incidentally, I had said this in 1962 when I was here.

Q. How far does Benazir Bhutto's ability to attract public attention in the US help Pakistan? A. She is a dramatic personality and she is a woman and she is somewhat better known than other leaders from the region. But even so, I would be amazed if even 10 per cent of the American public knew who she is. Though that would be true also of the Indian prime minister.

Q. But do you feel Pakistan has handled its case better than India in Washington? A. Indian-American relations are improving dramatically. But it doesn't mean each of us will always do things that the other side inevitably approves. I think our relationship is fundamentally improving. It would be a big mistake to build this (the Brown amendment) into some kind of a symptom that there is really no basis for the relationship. That would be very unfortunate.

Q. Consider this scenario: India now feels compelled to deploy the Prithvi missile, which makes Pakistan bring out the M-11 ballistic missiles clandestinely supplied by China. Under the Missile

Q. Is your firm Kissinger Associates taking up any offer to represent the Indian Government in the US? A. No, no, no. Let me make one thing absolutely clear. We do not take money from governments. We do not represent governments ever. We require any client of Kissinger Associates to sign a contract that makes clear that we do not intervene with the United States Government. So there is no possibility whatever that we will do anything of a financial nature with the Indian Government.

Q. There's both optimism and pessimism about economic ties between India and the US. What is your own assessment? A. India among developing countries has probably one of the highest percentages of educated people; it has an efficient, sometimes excessively heavy civil service; people speak English; and it has an entrepreneurial class which has a lot of experience. I keep meeting some of them, and they are certainly world class.

Q. What has brought you this time to New Delhi? A. What has brought me to New Delhi is that the prime minister, the last time that I was here, asked me to meet the various think-tanks to discuss foreign policy issues. And that is practically the only thing that I have done here.

Q. What has brought about this change of relationship from your side with India? A. My position was always that India was a major country which should be treated respectfully. I paid several visits to India as Secretary of State, and there has been a relationship on both sides. Conditions have changed. India is now prepared to enter international politics in a way that it was not 15 to 20 years ago.

Q. Do you think the low-key manner in which Prime Minister Rao is going about it is proving successful? A. Yes, it's proving successful. What is yet needed in the future is, it is amazing actually that India is a country which speaks English, and which can communicate most easily with Americans.

