

# Doomed to a Coalition Politics

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INDIAN politics is once again moving towards the centre. Too long a rule by the Congress or its feebleness had created a situation where regional parties found space to assert themselves. In a way, it was an expression of identity by the states against New Delhi's efforts at centralism.

The Janata Party experiment in 1977 was more or less on the same lines. Regional parties came together to supplant the Congress, which had been buffeted during the emergency. And their ascendancy mattered in the governance at the centre for many years.

On their part, the all-India parties, essentially the Congress, recognised the fact that they did not count for much in certain areas. It would be politic to leave those places. They did not even condescend to them, at least not seriously. Realising their clout, the state parties began to flex their muscles.

It was they who accommodated the all-India parties and it was they who chose the Prime Minister. Indeed, it was the working of socialist leader Ram Manohar Lohia's formula that the anti-Congress vote should be pooled to have an alternative. This, no doubt, gave importance to regional parties. But the polity too acquired a federal look.

In the last couple of elections, which means for the last two years or so, the country has been going to the polls annually since 1998 to elect a new Lok Sabha — the trend has got reversed. Regional parties have lessened in importance. The all-India parties have gained visibility on their own in the stronghold of regional set-ups. The bias of anti-Congress or anti-BJP-ism is no longer that strong.

The current election has accelerated the process. There is practically no regional party which is going to the polls by itself. The alliance or the adjustment is with either the BJP or the Congress, the two real all-India parties. A regional party plus and all-India party — that plus has become necessary to win votes. This only proves the point: the regional parties are losing their sheen — and strength — and they have no option except to align themselves with the parties that count at

the centre. New Delhi has again emerged strong, although the unfortunate fallout is the dominance of centrifugal elements. However, the saving grace is that no all-India party will have a majority in the 546-member Lok Sabha. Regional parties will assert themselves after the elections and acquire importance.

It sounds strange when Congress president Sonia Gandhi denounces the coalition. The Congress is at the mercy of Jayalalitha in Tamil Nadu and Laloo Prasad Yadav in Bihar. Jayalalitha is not even bothered about the sensitivity of the Congress. She has fielded former Supreme Court judge Ramaswamy, who faced an impeachment motion in parliament because of his dishonest conduct. Laloo Prasad Yadav himself is involved in

the country has to realise that India is doomed to a coalition politics for many years to come. Regional or other parties, drawing votes on the basis of caste or local factors, will come in the way of any single party trying to get a majority. Even after hogging all the credit for Kargil, the BJP cannot win a majority on its own.

Why the regional parties lost their edge is an important question. They would find the answer themselves if they were to introspect a little. One obvious reason of their downfall is their ego. They came to exaggerate their role. At times they even regarded themselves as indispensable.

They wanted the state to be their preserve and, at the same time, they tried to drive the centre from the back seat. The degree of pressure they exerted on different occasions varied but

equally opportunistic. They too want a winning combination, whatever it may cost them in terms of norms.

Never before have political parties, regional or all-India, compromised so much for so little. They have forsaken the high road of morality. Winning is all that matters. The confusion has been more confounded because important persons are leaving the Congress and joining the BJP and vice-versa, as if the two parties are two sides of the same coin. Probably, they are. Since what is at stake is power, none bothers the methods it employs.

The Janata Dal, a child of value-based politics, thrown up after the emergency, is the worst example. There was a time when its predecessor, the Janata Party, had kicked out the BJP's predecessor, the Jan Sangh, because it had refused to break its links with the RSS. Today one part of the Janata Dal stands outside the door of the BJP to seek permission to join the NDA. The other part leans towards the Congress, which had let it down twice, when the party withdrew its support first from the Deve Gowda government and then the Gujral government.

Strange as it may seem, the communists, who were the architect of the third front and who espoused the philosophy of equidistance from the BJP and the Congress, are now wholeheartedly supporting the Congress. They appear to support a two-party system, and therefore want the political system in India to become bipolar.

You choose your side first and then find arguments for having chosen it. This is dialectical materialism. The communists suddenly see all the virtues in the Congress. However dynastic its bearings and however pro-globalisation its economic policies, the Congress is considered the best party to rule the country. Although Sonia Gandhi foiled the move to make Jyoti Basu the Prime Minister, the communists consider her the best leader. The communists' attitude does not mean that they too are moving towards strong central parties. But they are dead against the BJP and the third front. They feel they have no alternative.

## BETWEEN THE LINES

Kuldip Nayar writes from New Delhi

several criminal cases canceled with the Rs 900-crore fodder scam. The important lesson is that whatever the image of Jayalalitha and Laloo, Sonia Gandhi has been forced to join hands with them.

The BJP is at least realistic. The National Democratic Alliance (NDA), which it leads, is nothing except a conglomerate of state parties. The BJP has realised that it cannot afford to go it alone if it wants to return to power. In fact, the party which was against any adjustment in 1994 entered into more and more alliances after every election. The result is that its strength in the last Lok Sabha was 181 against some 20 a decade and a half earlier.

The Congress, on the other hand, has been shrinking in strength. The party may not admit it but there is no way whereby it can get a majority in the Lok Sabha. If Jayalalitha and Laloo Yadav are good enough to be the party's allies during the polls, then why not later?

The Congress or, for that matter, every political party in

there was no doubting the importance they had. Past experience shows that they aligned themselves with a party, not because of ideology but because of power they would come to wield.

The government's of Deve Gowda and Inder Gujral had to make compromises because they could not say 'no' to the regional parties which supported them. Their own Lok Dal did not have more than 40 members in the Lok Sabha. The BJP-led coalition too danced to the tune of Jayalalitha till it was defeated on the floor of the house.

Now that some regional parties have been marginalised more than others, they are coming out in their true colours. They say that the BJP is no more communal or corrupt. Nor is the Congress dishonest or authoritarian. What they want is support and they have to swallow their pride. They are not choosy about the party to which they will hitch their wagon. It can be the BJP or the Congress. The criterion is: which of the two will get them the extra vote? The all-India parties are

# The Wages of Truth

*Could the PM have dual personality, a Dr Jekyll that seeks peace publicly and a Mr Hyde that secretly seeks to destroy it? Somehow this logic is difficult to comprehend. In such circumstances what is the sin of asking for a clarification by enquiry by qualified persons?*

AS the Najam Sethi and Hussain Haqqanis of this world discovered to their discomfort, there is a price to be paid for writing the truth. Pakistan and other third world countries notwithstanding, this is intermittently true even in US of the bastion of freedom of expression and of speech, there being always elements who will militate against facts being presented as they are instead of being what they would like it to be. The moment you talk about accountability a personal smear operation goes into full swing. Others are now coming on the firing line, they include Khushnood of Sahafat, one of the really brave, outstanding newspapermen of Pakistan. That a "dirty tricks" campaign would be sanctioned by those who are holding high office and are supposed to be mature and responsible, is reprehensible.

Unfortunately more loyal than the king, underlings particularly those striving for stars, have often a way of convincing powers-that-be that their best interests are served by concealing the truth. It can be backfire to the detriment of the perpetrator. Two can play the same game and what has emanated from one source and gone unsolicited to various newspapers and magazines will not be as sensational if the muck-raking is entered in to earnest. After all this is an Islamic country and there are laws against rank un-Islamic behaviour, particularly in public. However there are two reasons to hold one's fire, viz (1) if others are stooping in the gutter one should not react the same way and (2) there is always the chance that a third party has got into the act to stoke the fire for their own motivation.

The reaction to McCarthyism soon exploded that myth in the 50s in the US that in the context of national issues individuals do not matter. In the face of vicious personal smears emanating from people occupying jobs paid out of government estimates, they matter even more. Senator McCarthy was feared for destroying an individual's life by the simple accusation of being a "communist", yet today the power of democracy has ensured that almost all those hounded by him have been cleared and he in turn has become a symbol in US history of being the perpetrator of false persecution. Truth will always

prevail even though those who expose the truth will suffer. When pitted against logistics paid for by the exchequer it certainly becomes a difficult proposition but in the face of the power of "the great silent majority" that stands for justice, evil will crumble as surely as a castle of sand on which the reputation of some have been built upon.

Those trying to prevent the seeking of accountability about Kargil are missing the point. Nothing will be served by trying to persecute any single individual. Learning from our mistakes and apportioning blame where it is due is the objective. In the pure military sense we have inflicted a tremendous defeat on the Indians, yet in the overall context why did we lose out in a big way as a nation? There is a general feeling of despondency all over the country and no amount of roadshows will change that.

Pakistan would have been in a real predicament. The question is one of judgement and propriety thereof, of ensuring maturity in both the evolving of and the sanctity of national security. That is no reflection on the Army but to stop conjectures necessary to stop conjectures. One notes that when the COAS states particularly that the PM was "on board", the Minister of Information Syed Mushahid Hussain, does not deny it. That clearly goes in the COAS' favour or maybe the Honourable Minister finds it more expedient to keep his personal future options open. It could well be that explicit permission with full briefing as to the possible political fallout was sought by GHQ from the PM in order to redeem the honour of the COAS and some of his closest aides, this should be clearly stated if it was given. Why should the COAS take the blame for exercising poor judgement if the ball is firmly in the PM's court, being "on board"? And since Mushahid has not made any move to defend the PM's position, it would well be that the COAS is correct about his contention but being a good soldier he is taking the heat for the PM. For the sake of the Army and the COAS, one hopes such conclusions are right. What is confusing is that the "bus diplomacy" which was much still fresh when Kargil started and while there is enough evidence to suggest that the Indians had been asking for it, the PM is clearly a man of peace.

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Could the PM have dual personality, a Dr Jekyll that seeks peace publicly and a Mr Hyde that secretly seeks to destroy it? Somehow this logic is difficult to comprehend. In such circumstances what is the sin of asking for a clarification by enquiry by qualified persons? If that is indeed a sin, and the price one pays for it is to be smeared by muck and face persecution, then one must cile oneself to the fact that the price one must pay for the truth. Throw whatever muck you want to throw at me, gentlemen, by now you should know I can take it and you will not be able to silence the truth. God has ordained my fate, whatever it is, no mortal can change it.

## AS I SEE IT

Ikram Sehgal writes from Karachi

"Our credibility has been shot to smithereens, the tragedy will keep on unfolding as the perpetrators escape censure. The entire media has been mobilised to muddy the truth and save some jobs. One may pay a high price for speaking the truth individually, the price this nation may pay for covering up the truth may be one which no country can afford to pay."

Muslims have ultimate faith in God and have no fear from human beings, particularly such cowards who put guns on other's shoulders and are not prepared to put their names to the text of what they send surreptitiously. One does have apprehension for one's life, reputation, possessions, etc. but all these pale before one's faith in God to keep doing what is a must out of the knowledge that all the vitriol is far less than what others have borne since the very dawn of Islam. That is the consequence one must face in persevering with the truth, as Muslims we must learn to bear it with far more fortitude, endurance for such things. Why is so important to hide the

was shown up as never before, suffering grievous casualties with severe losses also in material and morale.

Their Chief, Gen Prakash Malik, was shown up to be a blunderer, a second and even panicked and threw in at his reserves. He denuded his strike forces and made a hash of the command and control structure in the vicinity of Kargil. He even dismounted some armour units in the rush to get troops to Kargil. And to beat it all, he had the effrontery to appear in a NEWSWEEK interview as if the battle had been won by him! Had it not been for such blunders, the Indians could well have opened a second and even a third front, whether to our detriment is debatable. All this is true and yet we had to walk away from a magnificent victory because the endgame and the consequences thereof had not been thought out. In a recent article General Jehangir Karamat, the previous COAS, made a telling comment in quoting from "Alice in Wonderland" as to whether we really knew where we were going. If the Indian COAS had not been so ineffective and inept, we in

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# TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER Combating Problems of Management of Physical Production

by ABMS Zahur

*To overcome the monopolistic advantage of brand name products, the host country may develop and promote products performing the same function as those of brand-name items by consumer education.*

IN view of the problems commonly encountered in transfer of technology and the existence of various national and regional institutions involved in science and technology, one of the most feasible and basic forms of cooperation between developing and developed countries is information exchange via a network of linkages among science and technology institutes in the region.

The most acceptable definition of technology appears to be that of J Baranson. To him, it is the breach of knowledge that deals with "product design, production techniques and managerial systems and carrying out production plans." There are four aspects of technology transfer. A transfer takes place when (i) The new technology is employed efficiently; (ii) the local work force is able to operate on the imported technology; (iii) the new know-how diffuses to other local productive units; and (iv) the local work force is able to adapt and further develop the imported technology. Technology can be transferred in a "packaged" (in direct foreign investment) or "unpackaged" (through turnkey or licensing arrangements and other channels) form.

There has been much debate so far on the appropriations of transferred technology. An appropriate technology is not necessarily the "optimum" technology. Radically different technologies could be appropriate in the same industry in some economies. Generally speaking, inappropriate technology is the capital-intensive technology of a developed country employed in a labour-abundant country where one of the national objectives is a reduction in the level of unemployment.

Around twenty-five years back, Ernst Schumacher for the first time suggested "intermediate technology" for developing countries in a conference on Guidelines for a Global Science Policy, at the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, Santa Barbara, California, USA. The term means a technology at a higher level than traditional technology, yet simple and sufficiently cheap for wide adoption for developing countries. Though achievements through employment of this technology is

not yet impressive, its relevance to a least developed country may be examined. Another type of technology drawing attention these days is "soft technology". It is subject to many interpretations and reflects a mixture of various concerns over the physical environment, ecology, utilization of natural resources, human-social relations, regional self-sufficiency and self-help.

The acute shortage of scientific and technological resources and the limited capacity to absorb science and technology in developing countries pose a serious barrier to the transfer of technology and restrict the choice of available technologies. Manpower shortages exist both in quantitative and qualitative terms and include not only engineers and technicians but also managers. Indeed, the transfer of managerial technology is perceived to be more difficult than that of physical production technology since it involves more social and mental elements. Assessment of training programmes reveals that experience and on-the-job training are the main mechanisms of skill transfer. Thus, the absorbability and trainability of the local work force represent an important determinant of successful technology transfer.

In many cases the manpower shortages are aggravated by the "brain drain". Another aspect is the supply of the required mix of manpower resources. Furthermore, indigenous engineering consulting firms need to be fostered for effective technology transfer. The availability of technical capabilities also determines the level and type of imports of input materials. The higher the portion of local inputs, the more avenues there are for learning-by-doing and the diffusion of foreign technology.

Few developing countries have an effective mechanism for technology transfer. In recent years many developing countries have begun to formulate a National Science and Technology Policy (Bangladesh is reported to be contemplating a similar policy) and have recognized the need for a parallel policy to cover the public sector. This linkage between research institutes and industry is often weak. This has resulted in many commercially irrelevant

innovations due to lack of recognition of market realities. There is also little communication between scientists and decision-makers. Two-way flows of information connect the vertices and various circulatory flows link all the elements. Each group has responsibility in taking initiatives in the demand and supply of technology. In this way the research may be tailored to the needs of producers, innovations commercially made viable, social and economic research properly evaluated and appropriate policy measures instituted.

Small domestic markets in developing countries often restrict technological choice and the development of subcontracting linkage. The social system inhibits the adoption of modern management techniques based on individual merits and work performance. In traditional enterprise, top posts are retained for members of the family. Thus outsiders have little opportunity of reaching the higher hierarchical positions. In a status conscious system, a superior is not expected to socialise freely with subordinates nor delegate or share responsibilities without this being perceived as a degradation of his status. In many Asian societies, learnt skill is regarded as a private asset. The international transfer of know-how thus halts at the first stage and there is little diffusion to other local workers. A bias towards foreign products and technology also inhibits local innovative efforts. The innovations of a developing country are less accepted than those of foreign ones.

Employment policies dictating minimum wages, severance pay and other fringe benefits could deter enterprises from providing training or utilising technology more suited to the host country. Government policies aimed at rapid development of a particular industrial sector could impede the development of indigenous technology and subcontracting enterprises. Where policies favour large firms, the development of low-cost ancillaries and indigenous specialist firms is impeded.

In controlling the cost of technology transfer, government restrictions on licence fees could prevent the intro-

duction of superior technology. Premature requirements on the localisation of employees in foreign firms could stagnate the transfer of technology. It has been observed that government-initiated research projects have generally failed at the implementation stage, while research initiated by the private sector has a higher degree of successful implementation.

In a country where there are localised traditional markets with small and medium-sized firms, technology diffusion appears to be a more complicated and slower process than in the case of larger oligopolistic firms with modern imported technology. Research activities by foreign companies in developing countries are typically restricted to quality control and product testing. Where adaptation and technological development exist, the most common is process adaptation followed by product development.

To overcome the monopolistic advantage of brand name products, the host country may develop and promote products performing the same function as those of brand-name items by consumer education.

In view of the problems commonly encountered in transfer of technology and the existence of various national and regional institutions involved in science and technology, one of the most feasible and basic forms of cooperation between developing and developed countries is information exchange via a network of linkages among science and technology institutes in the region. Another acceptable option for such cooperation may be through (i) training of information personnel in classification, processing and storage of information, (ii) training in specific industrial skills to promote technology transfer, (iii) translation of scientific and technological documents into easily comprehensible terms for industrialists, (iv) preparation of industrial profiles, (v) identification of transferees and initiation of technology transfer, (vi) research in technological adaptation and innovation.

The author is a retired Joint Secretary of the Government of Bangladesh.

# From Ghost Town to Boom Town as Independence Vote Looms

Hugh Williamson writes from Dili, East Timor

THE waiter at Totonito's Portuguese restaurant is obviously new to the job. A middle-aged Timorese man, he is not quite sure how to manage an armful of seafood dishes, or how often to refill customer's beer glasses.

He is not a waiter by training. His friend Eddie Orga, the restaurant manager, asked him to help out because, with all the newcomers in town, business was getting hectic. Earlier in the evening he had set up extra tables in front of the restaurant, Dili's most popular eating place. These were already full, and more hungry guests were arriving.

"Business is very good, and I want to expand," explains Orga, a big smiling man, as he writes out our bill. "But I need to improve more food and buy more tables and chairs, and that is difficult with little capital."

Yet Orga does not mind such problems: they are a lot easier than those he and other business people faced until a few months ago.

Dili, nestling between the mountains and the beach on East Timor's north coast, used to be a ghost town. Few visitors were granted permission to travel to the territory, and fear of violence kept many locals off the streets, especially after dark. Business was dominated by companies with close military ties.

Conditions remain far from perfect. Intimidation by pro-Jakarta militias, especially

outside Dili, means security is still a major concern for Unamet, the United Nations agency organising the forthcoming ballot, in which the East Timorese will choose between independence and autonomy within Indonesia. The militias have also forced up to 60,000 villagers to leave their homes.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan says security conditions must improve before he can give the final go-ahead for the ballot, which has been postponed for a second time and is currently scheduled for 30 August.

Unamet's presence has led to an economic boom in Dili. The city is bursting at the seams, and UN officials wonder if local facilities can cope with the extra visitors, especially with the further ballot delay.

Dili has less than 200 hotel rooms for the 900 UN staff and hundreds of ballot observers, journalists, visiting diplomats and Timorese returnees. Dili's six small restaurants are overflowing, and food is in short supply. Flights to and from Dili are fully booked until September. Telephone, fax and Internet facilities are completely overwhelmed. There is little entertainment on offer. Demand for services, ranging from cooking to clothes washing, far outstrips supply.

Gino Favaro is one of those trying to correct the balance. A burly Australian, he owns and runs Hotel Dili, the city's oldest

guesthouse. Standing in one of his sea-front bungalows, he says: "The economy needed a boost, but I'm sorry it came this way — peace and tourism would have been better."

With his rooms full of UN staff, he is helping dozens of local East Timorese refurbish and rent out their houses to the visitors for around \$15 a night. "This is very new, it's unheard of here to take in unknown guests."

Johannes Wortel appreciates all the help he can get. Unamet's chief administrative officer says most UN staff are used to a bit of hardship. "We're relying on the local economy to react in a natural way to the new demand; enterprising people could certainly make a quick buck," he says, sitting in his Unamet office in a converted Dili school.

"We expect prices to rise around 30 per cent," he adds. Locals say costs have already gone higher. John Martinikus, an Australian journalist living in Dili since mid-1998, says his hotel recently pushed up prices by almost 50 per cent. "Renting a car, getting a translator — everything is more expensive."

Market forces are certainly working. Building merchants are operating flat-out. Aircraft now touch down in Dili five times a week rather than three. And the first regular disco in Dili since Indonesia invaded 24 years ago has just opened its doors.

"Things are more expensive, but the pace of economic life has picked up too," confirms Basilio Dias Araujo, head of East Timor's business investment agency and a key pro-autonomy leader.

Yet long-standing economic relations are still at play, leaving few locals to enjoy real benefits from the boom. East Timor was traditionally dependent on financial handouts from Jakarta, few Timorese had enough capital to start a company, and a military-linked business group, PT Batara Indra, dominated the economy.

This group has been scaling back operations, ready to withdraw if the ballot goes in favour of independence. Martinikus says. Yet many of the new wave of businesses are run by well-financed investors from neighboring Bali, and many Balinese workers — such as cooks and cleaners — have also moved in.

"It ought to be the little people who are benefitting from the money flowing in," says local hotelier Gino Favaro. "We need to organise business training for Timorese entrepreneurs," he adds.

In addition, with price-rises hitting local people hardest, the UN's counter-claim of plans to create over 3,000 jobs for local drivers, translators and others have also yet to materialise. The UN admits having problems recruiting qualified local staff and only around 500 local people have been hired so far.

— GEMINI NEWS

## TOM & JERRY



## James Bond



## James Bond



## James Bond



By Hanna-Barbera