

China's Defence White Paper and the message for India

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WHEN the People's Daily announced the release of China's seventh Defence White Paper at the end of March, it began by stating that one of the aims was to "boost the world's trust in [China's] commitment to peaceful development." Besides indicating how increasingly important the world's opinion is to China, this was also a clear acknowledgement by Beijing that the world and its neighbours in particular, continue to view its military modernisation as threatening.

For India in particular, the Chinese document holds several implications.

First, while the White Paper suggests that the "prevailing trend is towards reform in international systems" and even talks of "reform of the UN", it is clear that the focus is on "mechanisms for management of the global economy and finance". This suggests that China's real aim is to increase its influence in relation to the United States. It is this reality that New Delhi must keep in mind, therefore, in the context of the recent summit meeting of the BRICS nations in China.

Second, notwithstanding references to the 1993 and 1996 treaties and to the 2005 protocol on implementing CBMs with India and a rather bland declaration that China "works to advance the Sino-Indian

military relationship", the real concern with India is expressed indirectly.

In the section on the "Security Situation", the Paper notes "Some developing countries maintain the push towards strengthening their armed forces, and press on with military modernisation".

Also, while there is explicit talk of "mutual respect for core interests" this is no guarantee that India's 'core interest' of Kashmir will be respected.

Third, there is specific mention of Afghanistan as a "regional pressure point". This is significant and indicates that China's relations with key players in the region including India, Pakistan and the United States are now increasingly viewed also through the prism of developments in the AfPak theatre.

Fourth, there seems little correlation as usual between China's two-decade long rapid growth in its defence budget and the explanations furnished in the White Paper. Of particular interest to the Indian Navy should be the fact that there is no mention of China's advanced anti-ship ballistic missile capability operationalised late last year. And while international attention has

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been focused on China's recent official announcement of its aircraft carrier programme, the reality is that Indian naval assets will be increasingly vulnerable to the Chinese and there is perhaps a greater need to focus on building India's submarine capabilities.

A fifth and related implication, is the increased Chinese focus on Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW) with the PLA Navy (PLAN) at the forefront. More than any 'string of pearls', the long-term naval challenge for India is one of managing China's increasing presence in the Indian Ocean region for anti-piracy operations, disaster relief and so on, which both raises its diplomatic and military profile and cuts into India's dominance.

Sixth, the importance attached to arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation in the White Paper would seem for Indians quite at odds with the Chinese support for a civilian nuclear programme in an unstable Pakistan. It is perhaps, to address such concerns that the White Paper notes that China "attaches great importance to non-proliferation export control... to the issue of nuclear security... [and] opposes nuclear terrorism".

Two final implications relate to the role of the PLA in the Chinese political system. While the PLA and its various affiliates have always been engaged in internal security duties, this is now showing an upward trend and more importantly, are being carried out under increasing international scrutiny. As experience from India shows such duties affects the morale and capacities of a professional army as also the national image.

Also complicating the process of the PLA's professionalisation is the fact that it remains the army of the Chinese Communist Party rather than that of the Chinese state--a fact stressed also in the White Paper. This institutionalised and overt political role of the PLA too appears on the ascendant. In the external realm, this has meant that the PLA has a decisive voice on matters related to Taiwan and China's relationships with the United States, Japan and India.

While studying the military aspects of the Chinese Defence White Paper, Indian policymakers must remember that it is also a political document. Understanding China's military capabilities alone is not enough, India must also understand its intentions and for this a better grasp of the intersections of the political and military in China is essential.

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Kan Naoto's political skills under test

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JAPAN'S Prime Minister Kan Naoto has come under intense pressure to resign for his poor handling of the mega-disaster and the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant crisis. This is unfortunate for no prime minister could have escaped criticism in handling a crisis of such proportions, and Kan is no exception. At this critical time, Kan needs support and not criticism. Unfortunately, politics in a democracy is a different ball game. The Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) heavyweight, Ozawa Ichiro, has issued a document, which indicates that many members of the ruling DPJ are still loyal to him and that they have joined the Ozawa bogey to criticise Kan and thus appease the frustrated voters.

Where did Kan err? Kan is being criticised for his government's slow response to the crisis, which made the disaster worse. The statement issued by Ozawa said: "No signs of Prime Minister Kan's leadership are seen in the measures that the irresponsible administration is taking, and the damage from the disaster may further spread."

Kan's leadership qualities have come under fire. He is accused of surrounding himself with newly-appointed aides and advisors and sidelined bureaucrats, thereby creating confusion in the administration. His top-down leadership style came under criticism when Kan flew by helicopter to the Fukushima complex on March 12 to personally assess the growing crisis. For this, he was accused of interfering with recovery efforts. Some suggested that Kan's arrival in a helicopter, delayed the crucial venting work at the plant.

Regarding the Fukushima nuclear plant imbroglio, Kan allegedly made controversial remarks that evacuees from around the Fukushima No.1 plant "will not be able to return for 10 to 20 years." Such a claim was actually made by Matsumoto Kenichi, an advisor to the Kan administration, who cited Kan as saying that he [Kan] was considering developing an envi-

ronmentally friendly town in an inland area for about 50,000 to 100,000 people "in case residents need to leave their homes" near the Fukushima No.1 nuclear complex. Kan denied the claim, clarifying that he only said that his government is resolved to achieve the "earliest possible solution" to the question of evacuations. Complicating the matter for Kan, Michio Furukawa, the Mayor of Kawamatamachi, a town within the expanded evacuation zone, remained unconvinced by Kan's denial and said Kan's statement was "outrageous". Close aides of Kan actively defended him and said Matsumoto should bear the blame for misquoting the prime minister.

Despite the clarifications issued, the perception that Kan had made

Kan administration." The feuds within the country's political system, even at this critical time, demonstrates that the foundations of the government have remained shaky for the 20 months since the DPJ swept into power in August 2009.

Kan was already in political trouble before the earthquake and tsunami. He had been accused of accepting political donations from a foreigner in violation of local laws. Consequently, the Diet had experienced a gridlock with important budget bills blocked because of these accusations. Kan had claimed his innocence, saying that he did not know that the donor in question was a foreigner. At a time when the opposition lawmakers were grilling Kan over the donation allegations, the earthquake struck,

Ishihara, also a LDP member, expressed his doubts over Kan's ability to handle a national crisis.

However, the passing a no-confidence motion against Kan, either by the dissident DPJ faction led by Ozawa or by the opposition LDP, is unlikely. Though, it would be a wake-up call for Kan, Ozawa, himself is under indictment for alleged funds misreporting and has lost much of his political clout. Moreover, the DPJ-led coalition has 311 seats in the Lower House, far more than the majority of 239. If a no-confidence motion were to be passed, as many as 70 to 80 DPJ members of the Lower House must support the Opposition. This is not likely to happen. The Chief Cabinet Secretary, Yukio Edano, seems unnerved and is determined to handle the crisis while listening to the voices of the party's critics.

If the political infighting continues, Japan will be left rudderless and the gigantic task of reconstruction will get complicated. It is unfortunate that Japan is undergoing a prolonged period of political paralysis with five prime ministers ruling Japan in the past five years. The nation needs at this difficult time a strong leader. If the govern-

ment ignores the lessons learnt from past major disasters like the Great Hanshin Earthquake of 1995, it could end up with an unworkable plan. On the other hand, if it relies too much on past experience, it would not be able to respond to the present unprecedented disaster.

The triple disaster has badly shaken the foundation of Japan's political culture. The DPJ, with support from the opposition, needs to shape a new vision for Japan's future along with the post-quake rebuilding plans for eastern Japan. What Japan needs is a strong political leader who can craft an imaginative and powerful plan for the country's rebirth. Kan has an historic opportunity in front of him, provided by the natural disaster. Will he rise to the occasion?

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Tibet in exile elects new political head

NEW DELHI: Lobsang Sangay, a Harvard-educated academic, has been elected prime minister of Tibet's government in exile, according to results released Wednesday. Mr. Sangay is the first prime minister, or Kalon Tripa, to be elected by Tibet's exiled community since the Dalai Lama announced last month he would retire from politics. The Dalai Lama's political responsibilities will largely shift to the prime minister, giving Mr. Sangay an unprecedented role in Tibetan exile politics.

"It's humbling and also an honor and a privilege that Tibetans have entrusted their hope and aspirations in me, and I will do the best in my capacity to live up to the expectations of Tibetans," Mr. Sangay said in an interview.

Mr. Sangay, who was widely expected to win the elections, was elected with 55% of the vote. The other two candidates, Tenzin Namgyal Tethong and Tashi Wangdi, got 37% and 8% of the vote, respectively.

About 50,000 Tibetans in exile, or 59% of eligible voters, cast their votes at the last round of elections, which took place March 20. The youngest of the three candidates, Mr. Sangay attracted wide support from Tibetan youth living in exile.

Mr. Sangay, who was born in a Tibetan refugee settlement in India's hill station of Darjeeling in 1968, is a senior fellow at Harvard Law School, where he focused his studies on Tibet's exiled government and international law.

In line with the broader policy framework of the Tibetan government-in-exile, Mr. Sangay said his top priority as prime minister will be to "end the suffering of Tibetans inside Tibet, to have the Chinese government recognize the identity and dignity of Tibetans and to find a peaceful way to address the issue of Tibet."

Mr. Sangay, who during his time at Harvard has engaged regularly with Chinese scholars, says he hopes to promote greater exchange with Chinese academia. "I would like to continue the dialogue at the people level and if the Chinese government is willing, also at the government level," he said.

Mr. Sangay, who has been living in the U.S. for the past 16 years, is expected to move to Dharamsala, where the Tibetan government-in-exile is based, before he officially takes office in August.

Source: Margherita Stancati, Wall Street Journal.



Lobsang Sangay, the newly elected Tibetan prime minister, caught up on the news during his election campaign.

The tunnel that allowed 488 Taliban prisoners to crawl 1,000ft to freedom

A huge manhunt was under way yesterday after 488 Taliban prisoners broke out of a high-security jail in southern Afghanistan, via a 1,000ft tunnel that snaked under checkpoints, razor-wire-tipped walls and a major highway before

emerging in a house outside the perimeter. Described by the Afghan government as a "disaster that should not have happened", the escape has made a mockery of the national security forces barely three months before Nato troops are due to hand over control of several parts of the country. Inside help is almost certainly to blame. According to a triumphant Taliban spokesman, insurgents on the outside spent five months excavating the tunnel before finally breaking into one of the cells late on Sunday night, using car-jacks to crack through the final layer of concrete.

Source: The Independent, Asia.



A policeman by the entrance to the escape tunnel in Sarpoza jail.