



## A massive victory

Nepal's Left Alliance has the strength to deliver on governance

Given Nepal's mix of the first-past-the-post system and proportional representation, the final picture of its new Parliament may take some time to be clear. But it is already evident that the Left Alliance is on course to win more than 70% of the 165 parliamentary seats being decided by the FPTP system. In the 110 seats allocated based on proportional representation, the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) is leading, with its ally, the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist-Centre), not far behind. This is a decisive victory for the Left Alliance, the first such win for the leftists since Nepal turned democratic in 1990. The UML had also emerged as the single largest party in the local elections held earlier this year; with the Maoists joining them in the run-up to the parliamentary polls, the resulting alliance has proved to be ideologically coherent. The UML expanded its support base beyond the hill-towns and the Terai into the far-west and the upper-hills, while the Maoists, who had floundered in elections since the formation of the Constituent Assembly in 2008, got second place and staged off decline. For the Nepali Congress, the third-place finish is a severe blow, limiting it to its weakest parliamentary presence. Others in the "democratic alliance" led by the NC, the plains-based Madhesi parties and the former royalist parties that tried using the Hindu card, have also received a setback.

It is quite clear that the Left Alliance's win draws from a yearning for a stable and lasting government after years of political instability. This is reflected in the fact that 13 leaders have held the post of Prime Minister since 1990. The Left Alliance has been seen as a natural coming together of like-minded forces which had both given up on radicalism and were willing to work within the parliamentary system. With such a big mandate, it is incumbent upon the alliance to finally focus on governance. Such transformative moments have been visible in the past too – during the initial sitting of the Constituent Assembly almost a decade ago when nearly the entire polity voted for Nepal to become a republic, or when the peace process between the Nepali state and the Maoists was completed, or after the earthquake in 2015 when political parties decided to quickly narrow down their differences on the Constitution in order to work together. But they all lapsed into more political wrangling. The Left Alliance now has both the opportunity and the strength to deliver on governance and development. As for the NC, the grand old party of Nepal has much to introspect on. It was blindsided by the formation of the Left Alliance and its own ragtag alliance was found to be wanting. It will now have to step up to play its role in opposition.

## In an elite club

Wassenaar Arrangement strengthens India's credentials as a responsible nuclear power

India's admittance into the Wassenaar Arrangement, a multilateral export control regime, as its 42nd participating member is a big step forward in its quest for formal acceptance as a responsible nuclear power. This has come a year after India made the request for membership. As a non-signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), New Delhi has been at pains to convey to the international community that it adheres to, and is invested in, a rules-based order. The Wassenaar Arrangement was founded in 1996, and is clubbed with mechanisms such as the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) and the Australia Group. Its stated aim is "to contribute to regional and international security and stability, by promoting transparency and greater responsibility in transfers of conventional arms and dual-use goods and technologies, thus preventing destabilising accumulations." India's Wassenaar success at the Vienna plenary meeting last week presumes a broad acceptance among its members of the country's credentials as a fastidious adherent to export controls. It comes on the heels of membership last year of the MTCR. Ever since India signed the I23 Agreement in 2005, the underlying assumption was that the United States would help chaperone New Delhi into global nuclear acceptability after it separated its civil and military nuclear programmes and plugged the loopholes to prevent diffusion of nuclear materials and technology in a way that is demonstrably in line with best practices followed by the members of the NSG.

However, over the past couple of years it has become evident that Delhi has to do most of the heavy lifting to gain a seat at various global high tables. The Wassenaar Arrangement membership is also a lesson on the need for quiet diplomacy in sensitive nuclear issues, compared to the botched attempt to gain entry to the NSG last year. While India's efforts at the NSG were stopped by China, which is not a member of the Wassenaar Arrangement, raising the pitch publicly at the time came with costs. It made the task of forging a consensus on membership to the NSG more difficult. And when that attempt failed, it gave the setback the appearance of being significantly more insurmountable. Nonetheless, now that more and more countries are signing on to India's steadily strengthening credentials in the nuclear area, there is hope that a fresh momentum will be imparted to a future bid for the NSG. It will not be easy. The Australia Group, which focusses on biological and chemical weapons, may be easier to crack given that China is not a member. But meanwhile, the Wassenaar Arrangement will embed India deeper in the global non-proliferation architecture and enable access to critical technologies in the defence and space sectors.

# A working class act in America

Donald Trump's critics have overlooked the tremendous impact workers and unions had on his election



DIPANKAR GUPTA

The upcoming elections for the Governor of Alabama are being closely watched because it is a test of President Donald Trump too. Some argue that it is his unconditional support of the controversial Roy Moore that has actually filled, if not billowed, Republican sails. After all, current surveys conclude that Mr. Trump still has the faithful solidly by him. Almost 62% of them believe he has done nothing wrong since his election. All things considered, this is not that much worse than the 66% rating Mr. Barack Obama's supporters had given him earlier.

### Trump's appeal

Regardless of what most journalists may say of him, Mr. Trump's appeal is not in imminent danger. In fact, it tends to flourish under fire. According to Reuters, when Donald Trump Jr. was accused of asking for Russian support, the President's popularity in swing states, like Ohio, actually got stronger.

Mr. Trump won in 30 states with a clear majority, but as Gary Abernathy reported in *The Washington Post*, in most of these places not a single newspaper supported him. No wonder, people in the U.S. are still puzzling over Mr. Trump's victory. Some say it's a fluke, others put their finger on gender bias, finally, there are those who believe that a freshly minted nationalism explains it all.

But all of them, invariably, shut out the tremendous impact workers and their unions have had on this presidential election. It is another matter what Mr. Trump might do during his term for the rich, but a large part of his cam-



paign pitch was directed straight at the blue-collar class. It needed that little bit to tip the scales in traditional unions-soaked Democratic states like Pennsylvania, Michigan and Wisconsin, and that is what happened. Enough workers deserted Hillary Clinton, ignored the call of unions, and voted Trump.

### Why were workers upset?

Appearances can be deceptive for Mr. Trump's campaign was not all bluster and boast. In fact, he may have well used his head and carefully held a match to pent up past grievances among workers. These were waiting to explode for over 20 years and Mr. Trump blew the lid off, to perfection, with his incendiary attacks on Mexico and immigrants.

That he pulled this off so remarkably is because the current working class resentment began in 1993 when Bill Clinton signed the North American Free Trade Agreement (or, NAFTA) Implementation Act into law. This was a monumental show of bipartisanship, yet NAFTA was causing anger to many. As it allowed a freer movement of capital, and sometimes labour, between the U.S., Canada and Mexico, organised workers, then and now, opposed it. They feared job cuts would take place and that industries would move out -- both happened.

When Mr. Obama became President, expectations were kindled, especially among Black unionists (who are in a majority), that some changes would happen on the NAFTA front, but nothing did. Indeed, animus against NAFTA was so intense that many workers denied Oreos to their children because the company had moved to Mexico.

Yet, big unions formally hung on to the Democratic Party even as it dithered over NAFTA. This is where Mr. Trump made all the difference. He broke rank and opposed NAFTA like no other leader, Republican or Democrat, before him.

What also helped Mr. Trump look the authentic underdog champ was Ms Clinton's iffy reputation in this department. She was not just vague on NAFTA but also seemed like damaged goods to many because of her long, uncomplaining stint on Wal-Mart's Board. Unfortunately for her, this was at a time when that enterprise was being accused, right or wrong, of unethical practices.

Black Americans did not warm up to Ms Clinton either. Black icon, Louis Farrakhan, clearly voiced his unhappiness with her, and he was not alone. To complicate matters for Democrats, its solid ally, the working class unions, were losing members fast, from 21% in 1981 to a mere 11% in 2015. In fact, the

number falls to a low 4% if we just take those who are below 25 years old. But Mr. Trump did not start this fire. Unions were emptying out long before he began his campaign to be President.

For example, between 2003-2008, in the automobile sector alone, once known for its powerful organised working class, as many as 1,71,066 jobs were lost and union membership dropped by 1,38,653. New industries, such as construction, did not help either. Even here union membership fell from 86% in the 1940s to 13% today. Consequently, unions were left with hardly any left. In 1937 they had organised 4,740 strikes, but in 2014, they managed to pull off just 11.

Fifty years ago as many as 28% of voters were from union households, but today less than 13% are. This left the large majority of them to vote as they wished. The legal obligation to belong to an union has also now been lifted.

Workers might have felt compelled to back Democrats in the past because the alternative did not exist. The Republicans, if anything, were even worse for they supported NAFTA with a straighter face and a wider grin. Now, at long last, comes Mr. Trump, freely accusing NAFTA, and years of stamped down sullenness suddenly broke free.

### Downturn of unions

The best decades for unions were in the 1930s and 1940s. Most memorable of all was the 1936 General Motors strike in Flint in which spies, blacklegs, guns and clubs were in full display. Over a dozen lives were lost, but the union eventually got what it wanted. The workers in the assembly line and shop floor won a 5% wage hike and the right to talk to each other at lunch.

The subsequent downturn of unions not only hobbled the Democrats, but robbed workers of a listening post and a wailing wall as

well. This is because unions also contributed to family welfare and counsel. Even children of unionised workers were better educated than the rest. In addition, as the famous Black scholar, W. E. B. Du Bois, noted, autoworkers' unions helped tremendously in harmonising race relations, particularly in the 1940s.

This trend became stronger with the merger of the two largest unions in 1955. Yet, over the decades, unions kept losing out, primarily because of the advance of disaggregated service industries and the closing down, or migration, of large scale manufacture, such as of automobile production. Nor should we overlook the fact that, with time, fewer workers are needed to produce more. Far back as 1930, workers made about 10 cars in a year, but today it is in the range of 17-20, indicating a rise in skilled labour which may have hurt membership in organisations such as UAW.

According to Marquita Walker of Purdue University, a large number of those who were retrenched in the financial crisis of 2007-08 stayed unemployed, or underemployed. When NAFTA piled on to all of this, it gave the Democrats a hill too high to climb. As a result, Ms Clinton lost in traditional union stronghold states such as Ohio, Iowa, Pennsylvania, Michigan and Wisconsin, and it is this slide that finally brought about her downfall.

Mr. Trump's victory was not a fluke, or a crazy outcome of unpredictable events, or pure jingoism. Fortune reports that non-college graduates, who dominate the working class, continue to support Mr. Trump even today. Workers clearly saw in Mr. Trump somebody who can lead, and not just tweet, from the front.

Dipankar Gupta, an eminent sociologist, was a professor at the School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University

# The power play in peacekeeping

Though Indian troops have led the way, the returns in UN power play have been low. The contrast with China is stark



MANMOHAN BAHADUR

Media coverage of peacekeeping operations is an area with many gaps. Consider for example, an incident last week, where at least 15 peacekeepers and five soldiers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) were killed and numerous peacekeepers wounded by armed militants in one of the worst attacks on United Nations personnel. A local Islamist extremist group overran the remote base. Most of the dead and wounded are from Tanzania. Was there any media coverage in India? It would have been a different story had they been troops from the West. In the midst of this, one must focus on China as its grip on UN affairs tightens and it starts deciding policy, to the detriment of India.

### China rising

Amid the buzz around Beijing taking centre stage in world affairs, the import of China's deployment of its first peacekeeping helicopter unit in the peacekeeping mission

in Darfur has been lost sight of. Having made a reluctant entry in peacekeeping, when it sent a small cadre of soldiers to Cambodia in 1992, Beijing has become the largest troop contributor among the permanent members of the UN Security Council (UNSC). More importantly, China is now the third-largest contributor to the UN's regular budget and the second-largest contributor to the peacekeeping budget. News of any country supporting peacekeeping is good, but what does this portend in Beijing's quest for great power status? In a September 2017 report, the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) says: "China's participation in UN operations offers... a low-cost means of demonstrating their commitment to global stability... and allay(s) fears about its military and economic strength." But is the picture that simple for India in geopolitical power play?

The UN, especially the UNSC, is a blue-blooded political body, notwithstanding its charter of considering all countries as equals. In practice, a nation's voice is in proportion to what it contributes towards the UN, especially funds – India's contribution is only 0.737% when compared to China's 7.92% and the U.S.'s 22%. Troop contributions to peacekeeping do not get their due in UN power politics.



Having led a peacekeeping contingent, in 2005, I have seen first hand how pivotal posts in UN missions have always been with major fund contributors. China is indeed a part of the picture.

### Veto power

The CSIS report states that China has used its veto only 12 times, but two were cast where its economic interests were involved, like in Myanmar and Zimbabwe despite these being low on human rights records. What is more worrisome, however, is that two vetoes were also cast "over concerns over territorial integrity pertaining to Taiwan". China was against sending UN peacekeepers to Guatemala and Macedonia because they had established diplomatic ties with Taiwan. When this self-serving act is linked with Beijing's other re-

cent coercive actions such as against Mongolia due to a Dalai Lama visit, and against Japan when it is said to have halted exports of rare minerals following the arrest of a Chinese trawler captain, the increasing front-lining of China in international affairs via the UN has an ominous ring.

In 2015, China committed a standby force of 8,000 peacekeepers and a permanent police squad for UN operations. In addition, there is a 10-year \$1 billion China-U.N. peace and development fund and \$100 million in military assistance to the African Union. It is no coincidence that Africa is where China has large economic interests. Peacekeeping is said to be a cover for China to test its strengths in overseas deployments. The deployment of a People's Liberation Army Navy submarine off the Africa coast for anti-piracy patrolling is to train its seamen in long-distance operations.

### Impacting India

Chinese involvement in peacekeeping, along with its higher funding contributions will put Beijing in the driver's seat in formulating peacekeeping mandates, thereby affecting India in more ways than one.

Is India losing out despite having provided almost 200,000

troops in nearly 50 of the 71 UN peacekeeping missions over the past six decades? We have also sent scarce aviation assets including Canberra bombers to a UN Mission in Congo in the 1960s and helicopters to Somalia, Sierra Leone and Sudan. The truth is that though our troops have been on the front line of facing danger (168 soldiers lost in UN operations, till May 2017), the returns in UN power play have been low. It was perhaps not a troublesome issue until now considering India's good relations with the other four permanent UNSC members, but will this continue with China rise in the UN, especially with U.S. President Donald Trump's preoccupation elsewhere? Chinese opposition to India's candidature for a UNSC seat and its repeated vetoes on the Masood Azhar issue are unwelcome indicators.

Peacekeeping missions are the raison d'être of the UN and India's generous contributions as far as peacekeeping troops are concerned should be key in its argument to have a greater say in the affairs of the UN. India must demand its pound of flesh.

Manmohan Bahadur, a retired Air Vice Marshal, is a Distinguished Fellow at the Centre for Air Power Studies, New Delhi

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

### Invoking Pakistan

In the fight for Gujarat, the vitriol-filled campaign has hit a low with the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, bringing in the Pakistan angle ("Islamabad is trying to fix Gujarat polls", December 11). His insinuation that the authorities in Pakistan are in favour of certain political candidates is bewildering. Mr. Modi should be conscious of the fact that although he is campaigning for his party's electoral victory, he is the Prime Minister of India and must be more responsible in his comments. During the Bihar Assembly election in 2015, Bharatiya Janata Party president Amit Shah claimed during the campaign that the BJP's defeat would lead to crackers being burst in

Pakistan. India's relations with the neighbouring country are based on strategy in foreign policy and it is unfortunate that the Prime Minister seems to suggest that the principal Opposition party is in tandem with Pakistan.

K.B. DESSAI, Fatorda, Goa

■ Anyone who is sensible is bound to ask why the Prime Minister has mysteriously brought in the Pakistan angle. And, will it work? Is this a dangerous way to polarise Gujarat and remind the electorate about a certain minority community? Is such rhetoric a result of sensing that political change is in the air?

It is unfortunate, and shameful, that this minority community has to be brought into the limelight in

a negative way, and as representing a threat to India.

JENNIFER DURAISINGAM, London

■ If memory serves right, it was Mr. Modi who cleared a visit by Pakistan to the Pathankot airbase and exhibited bonhomie with the Pakistani establishment for whatever the reason. Mr. Modi raising the Pakistani bogey gives rise to the perception that he is resorting to such rhetoric out of sheer desperation over his home turf slipping away from his hands. In any case, he should appreciate that "wins and losses" are a part of the political game.

G. DAVID MILTON, Maruthancode, Tamil Nadu

■ The events in the run-up to the Gujarat election and after

have been the most dismal election campaign in living memory, giving a section of the media ammunition to sensationalise trivia. Bizarre narratives are being promoted by the Indian National Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party. If one party has donned a mask to pander to religious sentiments by using its leader to temple hop, the other has now gone to the extent of dragging in "external forces". Voters in Gujarat should not be carried away by these theatrics and choose candidates who will work for their betterment and progress.

S. VASUDEVAN, Secunderabad

### Word and concept

Isn't polyamory (Magazine - "One life, many partners", December 10) similar, as a

concept, to dating? Labelling is useful. Polyamory also sounds like a fancy synonym for the word "dating". With social media making voicing opinions child's play, labelling also attracts negative vibes. For instance, in a discussion on feminism, it is unfortunate that the word 'equality' has become a euphemism for the term 'feminism'.

SAHITHI ANDOJU, Hyderabad

### Bronze in the bag

India has done well to bag a bronze in hockey at the expense of Germany in the World League Final at Bhubaneswar. The narrow

2-1 win over the doughty Germans is sweet revenge for the loss that the hosts suffered in the group stage. Senior striker S.V. Sunil and drag-flicker Harmanpreet Singh must be complimented for shaping the star turn for India. Goalkeeper Suraj Karkera also came up with a stout-hearted display, bringing off many extraordinary saves. One must spare a thought for the Germans who went down with all guns blazing despite dropping some of their key players due to illness.

N.J. RAVI CHANDER, Bengaluru

MORE LETTERS ONLINE: www.hindu.com/opinion/letters/

### CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:

The answer to question no. 7 of "Easy like Sunday morning" (The Hindu Magazine, Dec. 10, 2017) should have been *Abul Kalam Azad* – not *Abdul Kalam Azad*.

The Readers' Editor's office can be contacted by Telephone: +91-44-28418297/28576300; E-mail: readerseditor@thehindu.co.in