



Terrible Thursday

As investigations into the Pulwama attack begin, Pakistan must act against the Jaish

As India mourns the death of 40 CRPF personnel in Thursday's terrorist strike in Jammu and Kashmir's Pulwama district, it is clear that the attack was meant to provoke. The Jaish-e-Mohammed, the Pakistan-based terrorist organisation which has orchestrated numerous strikes in the Kashmir Valley, has taken responsibility for what is now the highest toll of security forces in any attack in the State. Investigations should yield a better picture, but it is a matter of extreme concern that a suicide bomber could time his attack to hit a security convoy. There is no question that Pakistan bears the onus to explain why Masood Azhar, the leader of the Jaish-e-Mohammed, enjoys such freedoms on its territory, if not outright support from the establishment. Certainly, diplomatic backing by Pakistan and China has been crucial in defeating efforts at the United Nations to put Azhar on the list of banned terrorists. Early details indicate that a sports utility vehicle laden with a huge quantity of explosives targeted the convoy of 78 buses carrying about 2,500 soldiers from Jammu to Kashmir. The video of the presumed suicide bomber too hints at an altered standard operating procedure meant to provoke and escalate tensions. Forensics teams have already begun work and answers to the disturbing questions the attack has raised on intelligence gathering, dissemination and coordination in the Valley must be pieced together.

However, if the terrorists have acted from an updated playbook, New Delhi's response must not play into their plans with reflexive and precipitate official action. India has withdrawn the Most Favoured Nation status to Pakistan in a signal that it will not wait for preliminaries in the effort to isolate Pakistan. Coercive diplomacy is likely to continue, but to be effective the effort needs a wider net, especially at a time when the U.S. is seeking Pakistan's help in firming up a deal with the Afghan Taliban. Beijing too must not, and cannot, evade questions about its previous blocking of action at the UN, specifically against Azhar. Post-Uri, after terrorist attacks the air is always thick with calls for retributive cross-border strikes. The past history of limited, if any, returns from such precipitate action must serve as a cautionary check. Instead, the effort must be to isolate Pakistan for its support to the Jaish and seek substantive action, to effectively upgrade intelligence and plug security gaps, and to win the confidence of the local population in the Valley. Thursday's attack was meant to provoke and polarise the country. New Delhi's response must, instead, be to isolate the perpetrators and keep the peace on Indian territory.

Forever president

Sisi stands to extend his reign if Egypt's draft constitutional changes go through

Egypt's proposed constitutional changes to extend presidential terms are a huge setback to the country's democratic progress. Re-elected last year, President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, the military leader who seized power in 2013, would be allowed to begin afresh a six-year term in 2022 under the new amendments. Another provision envisages a political role for the military as a guardian of the Constitution. Thursday's parliamentary vote initiating these changes will have to be ratified in a popular referendum, but few doubt the establishment's capacity to secure it. The 2018 general elections were held without a serious challenger to Mr. Sisi, whose rival was in effect handpicked by the regime after other contenders were forced to quit the race. The economy has returned to a growth trajectory following an International Monetary Fund loan in 2016, in exchange for cuts in public subsidies. But soaring prices and double-digit unemployment have dimmed the government's overall appeal. In the past five years, the popular upsurge that began with the overthrow of the three-decade-long autocratic rule of Hosni Mubarak in 2011 has subsided. The military crackdown has vengefully targeted Islamists from the Muslim Brotherhood government of former President Mohamed Morsi, who has since been convicted. The media and political activists anxious to consolidate the gains from the 2011 Tahrir Square mass protests have not been spared the authorities' wrath either.

Egypt had begun nominal attempts at ushering in a multi-party system in 2005, when Mr. Mubarak got himself elected for a fifth term. But within a few months, he declared himself President for life. Attempts to switch to popular representative government in the latter part of his tenure were merely cosmetic. Within years, in 2011, followed the mass protests that demanded the overthrow of the Mubarak regime and formed the epicentre of the 'Arab Spring'. Today, events have turned a full circle under Mr. Sisi's firm grip on the levers of power. The military has been never so powerful since the rule of Gamal Abdel Nasser. As with several autocrats today, the Egyptian leader has leveraged the American and the Russian governments effectively, while they seem indifferent to the military's excesses. Egypt similarly benefits from the strategic partnership it signed with China, bringing trade flows and investment. But above all, China's politically hands-off approach is a win-win for both regimes. While such diversification may be smart diplomacy, it begs the question about Cairo's long-standing position as the leader of the Arab world. There is a simmering anger among sections of the youth contending with unemployment and the absence of avenues for dissent. The Arab Spring is nearly a decade behind, but the conditions that brought the multitudes to Tahrir Square still prevail.

Hindutva 2.0 is in crisis

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's winning formula of 2014 is under severe stress; can he refresh it?



VARGHESE K. GEORGE

A month ago, on January 18, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) general secretary Bhaiyyaji Joshi said in Nagpur: "When the temple will get constructed on Ram Janmabhoomi in 2025, this progress (of India) will gather further momentum... Once the Ayodhya temple is built, the country will gain the capital required for the next 150 years."

The idea that the construction of a controversial temple at the site of a demolished mosque can lead to the formation of capital in the country could be intriguing for the uninitiated. For the proponents of Hindutva, however, this notion is integral to their idea of development and progress. The proposition is that an aggressive assertion of the collective Hindu identity is an essential precondition for India's development. This is a point that pro-market supporters of Prime Minister Narendra Modi self-deceptively overlooked ahead of the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, though he himself had made his position clear. Asked whether he was "pro-business" or a "Hindu nationalist," he said in 2013: "There's no contradiction between the two. It's one and the same image."

Three contradictions

While this has been a core component of Hindutva thought for decades, it was Mr. Modi's reign in Gujarat that made it acceptable, and popular. If enough people still thought Mr. Modi's 2014 campaign was jettisoning Hindutva for deve-

lopment, it was convenient for him.

Hindutva politics over the years had suffered from three inherent contradictions that stunted its growth: friction between pro-market segments and Hindu traditionalists in the Indian right wing; contradictory requirements of the centralised, disciplinarian, ideologically rigid core of the RSS and building a mass mobilisation through a political wing; and consolidating a Hindu vote bank among a people hierarchically and oppressively divided by the caste system.

Mr. Modi's innovation to Hindutva politics since 2002 has been in reconciling these three contradictions in a sufficient measure, initially in Gujarat and then in other parts of the country to win a Lok Sabha majority in 2014. That is Hindutva 2.0 — where material progress is married to a religious social agenda; disciplined organisation and mass mobilisation are balanced; and the lower rungs in the caste hierarchy are enlisted as part of an omnibus Hindu identity in which they are offered social acceptance and political representation. All these factors that worked in Mr. Modi's favour are now unravelling, and Hindutva 2.0 is in crisis.

The circle that admirably described Mr. Modi as pro-market has shrunk very fast, and most of those who still call him so do it deviously, often accusing him of having promoted crony capitalism, and failing to deliver on job creation. Those who spoke of his managerial skills, many as a cover to mask their own bigotry, are now disappointed over the government's handling of the economy, especially demonetisation and poor implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST). They may



not be cheering for anyone else, but they are no longer saying Mr. Modi is the saviour.

On the other hand, the religious right is happy. They have pushed the temple agenda to the back-burner with a new deadline of 2025, giving Mr. Modi breathing space, and have begun to rally forces behind his 2019 campaign. Yet, the marriage of material prosperity and religious nationalism is not exactly made in heaven, and is teetering.

Caste break-up

Enrolment of a critical mass of Dalits and backward caste populations into the Hindutva politics that is widely perceived as a project for the nourishment of upper caste dominance was Hindutva 2.0's second success. Mr. Modi presented himself as a lower caste leader and sought to appropriate Dalit and backward caste figures ranging from B.R. Ambedkar, Sree Narayana Guru to Ayyankali and even Mata Amritanandamayi into his politics. The idea of Hindutva is based on the premise that there is a collective interest for the community common to all caste groups. Given the social, economic, linguistic, cultural diversities within Hindus, a common thread that could unite them all is the image of a common enemy. Cow protection has been the convenient

Heralding a new dawn

India and Saudi Arabia are poised to dramatically deepen the bilateral relationship



SAUD AL-SATI

In April 2016, under the leadership of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia gave itself a goal and a promise in the form of Vision 2030. The Saudi citizen has become the focal point for sustainable development with massive projects directed towards building a vibrant society, a thriving economy and an ambitious nation. The entire foundation of our Kingdom's economy is being transformed towards a post-oil age with the aim of attracting \$427 billion in private investments over the next decade to diversify the economy and create 1.6 million new jobs through the National Industrial Development and Logistics Programme.

Powered by reforms

According to World Bank's 'Doing Business 2018' report, Saudi Arabia has instituted the largest number of business reforms among countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region as of July 2017. With its platform Meras, starting a business in the Kingdom now requires only one step and one day! The single-window platform Fasah has also been

launched for customs clearance and import and export procedures. The 'Doing Business 2019' report has ranked Saudi Arabia as the fourth-largest reformer within the G20. In 2018, Saudi Arabia saw foreign direct investment rise by 127% year-on-year. Global confidence in Saudi Arabia's ascent has further solidified with the International Monetary Fund forecasting increased growth for Saudi Arabia in July 2018.

The Kingdom's construction market is set to touch \$96.52 billion in 2025, up from \$45.33 billion in 2016. There are three mega-projects underway — smart city project Neom, Qiddiya entertainment city and the Red Sea Tourism Project. In 2018, we also launched FekraTech, a national initiative for digital ideas, aimed at making Saudi Arabia a global innovation hub. The Saudi Intellectual Property Authority is also working towards transforming Saudi Arabia into an advanced knowledge-based economy built on innovation and entrepreneurship.

A \$100 billion planned investment in transport projects will also occur over the next decade as we expand the railway system and introduce new light rail mass transit projects in Riyadh, Jeddah, Makkah and Madinah. The grand expansions of the Holy Mosque in Makkah and the Prophet's Mosque in Madinah have increased their capacity for accommodating millions of worshippers. One of the most important goals of the Vision 2030 is to increase our capacity to welcome 30 million Umrah per-



formers every year by 2030, improve their experience and enrich it further.

Since a majority of the Kingdom's population is below the age of 30, education is a key component of Vision 2030. Over the decades, Saudi Arabia's education system has gone through an astonishing transformation. Due to generous scholarships from the Kingdom, a large number of Saudi students study overseas. By 2030, the Kingdom intends to have at least five Saudi universities among the top 200 in international rankings. Education reforms have also led to an increase in women's literacy and participation in the workforce.

With the Kingdom at the heart of the Arab and Islamic world, the changes taking place on the Saudi soil are creating positive influences for the entire Arab region. Saudi Arabia remains committed to the social, economic and political stability of the region and will continue playing a leading role in countering terrorism and establishing peace as demonstrated by the Kingdom's contribution towards

tool here. In the 2015 Bihar elections, Mr. Modi urged Yadavs to not vote for Lalu Prasad, who he said was insulting the cow-worshipping community by supporting beef eating. In his home State of Gujarat it was 'white revolution', and cow protection, while in Bihar it was pink revolution, or a proliferation of slaughter houses, he said.

But the same cow protection that helped Hindu unity soon enough fractured it as Dalits became targets of vigilantes. "If you want to attack, attack me, not the Dalits. If you want to shoot, shoot me, not the Dalits," Mr. Modi said in August 2016, as instances of cow vigilante attacks on Dalits increased. Moreover, the gravest impact of the collapse of livestock economy is in States where the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) did well in 2014, and within them, on backward castes and Dalits.

While Hindutva 2.0 offered a lot of rousing rhetoric for Dalits and backwards as quoted above, it also demonstrated an unprecedented hostility towards autonomous lower caste mobilisations. Brazenly partisan police action and the continuing police oppression of Dalit groups which organised protests, such as at Bhima Koregaon in January 2018, are signs of this intolerance of lower caste mobilisation against the Hindu right. The BJP governments in power also emboldened sections of the upper castes to seek to recapture the space lost to lower caste politics in earlier years.

The policy impact of the Modi government, ranging from the overall underperformance of welfare schemes for the Dalits, and the recently announced reservation for economically backward upper castes, is yet another source of friction. Pursuit of unity without

questioning caste hierarchy is vintage RSS, but is not very attractive to the majority among the Hindus. These contradictions are showing in regions where the BJP did well in 2014.

The iron grip of the RSS on the BJP, and the former's search for ideological purity have not only contributed to constant friction between the two, but historically also limited the electoral successes of Hindutva. For instance, while the RSS did not entirely trust Atal Bihari Vajpayee, who was often accused of being a closet Nehruvian, the more ideologically pure BJP leaders did not have any significant mass appeal. With Mr. Modi at the helm, Hindutva 2.0 overcame this dilemma, combining mass appeal and uncompromising Hindutva credentials in his persona. The synergy between the RSS and the BJP has never been stronger than its today. But this disciplined march towards the goal of a Hindu Rashtra under the command of a 'strong leader' has created a new friction within. BJP legislators, Ministers and leaders who feel suffocated and powerless, despite being technically part of the ruling dispensation, now have a limited stake in Mr. Modi's continuation in power. A large number of sitting members of the Lok Sabha are likely to be denied tickets in 2019, if Mr. Modi continues on the 'Gujarat model' for beating anti-incumbency.

None of this is hidden from Mr. Modi and his tactician, BJP president Amit Shah, and they are bound to seek measures to reverse these trends. The extent of their success remains an open question. What is, however, clear is that the three critical components of Hindutva 2.0 are under severe stress.

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the historic peace accord signed between Ethiopia and Eritrea in Riyadh in 2018. We continue to stand by our Yemeni brothers and support the Palestinian cause. Our dream is of a peaceful, progressive and a prosperous world.

In our common pursuit for development and stability, Saudi Arabia sees India as an important partner. Our ties trace their roots to the third millennium BC. Trade, science, arts, literature, languages — the exchanges between our civilisations have indeed been profound. India holds a special place for us. Nearly 3 million Indians form the largest expatriate community in the Kingdom. India has also seen its Haj quota of 1,36,020 increase consecutively during the last two years to a record 1,75,025.

India and Saudi Arabia have more opportunities today to tap into than ever before. The bilateral trade for 2017-18, in excess of \$27 billion, will accelerate as Saudi Arabia and India engage in a host of new areas such as information and communications technology (ICT), health care, defence, biotechnology, education and infrastructure among others. India is one of the top countries on the Kingdom's preferred list with great potential for investment in organic and food processing industries.

Expanding cooperation

The energy partnership between the two countries is also finding new grounds. As of October 2018, Saudi Aramco has nearly \$2 billion in material-service sourcing with Indian companies, and investing

in India's value chain from oil supply, marketing and refining to petrochemicals and lubricants is a key part of its global downstream strategy. The \$44 billion integrated refinery and petrochemicals complex at Ratnagiri in Maharashtra, being jointly developed by Saudi Aramco, Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) and a consortium of Indian public sector units (PSUs) consisting of Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL), is yet another milestone.

Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman met Prime Minister Narendra Modi in November 2018 on the sidelines of the G20 summit and both sides agreed to set up a high-level mechanism to boost concrete actions in terms of investment, technology and manufacturing across various sectors.

As formidable economies of MENA and Asia, Saudi Arabia and India have a historic opportunity to collaborate in shaping the future of our regions, for a better tomorrow full of prosperity and promise. Combining our respective strengths will pave the way for endless possibilities and accomplishments for the benefit of our two peoples and the region. The forthcoming state visit of the Crown Prince to India presents another historic opportunity to expand collaboration between our two friendly nations.

Saud Al-Sati is Saudi Arabia's Ambassador to India

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.

Carnage in Kashmir

It is saddening that paramilitary personnel were caught unawares despite surveillance and close monitoring (Page 1, "37 CRPF men killed in J&K suicide attack", February 15). Neither Governor's rule nor President's rule appear to have resulted in any significant change in the State of Jammu and Kashmir as far as curbing terrorism is concerned. The people in the State seem to have no hope of peace. Eliminating terrorists is going to be difficult as terror elements appear to be working in isolation.

N. VISVESWARAN,
Chennai

P. ALARMELMANGAI,
Palani, Tamil Nadu

■ Evidence points to security and intelligence lapses. Where were the explosives

sourced from? It is time the international community came together and pledged to root out terror or act against terror centres.

SACHIN V.K. JADHAV,
Lakhala, Washim, Maharashtra

■ If there is incontrovertible proof of terror outfits being involved, India should step up its efforts to have in place a comprehensive convention on international terrorism. This must be at the level of the United Nations. Reports of Kashmiri youth now being a part of terror are deeply disturbing. Sincere efforts should be made to bring them back to the mainstream.

P. ALARMELMANGAI,
Palani, Tamil Nadu

■ It is unfortunate that even after being admonished

publicly and warned of surgical strikes for any form of outrageous aggression, the forces backing terror have not mended their ways. The incident has also brought to light the vulnerabilities in India's counter-terrorism defences against fidayeen attacks. Lawmakers must address the lack of an institutional arrangement for the management of India's counter-terrorism response. The country can ill-afford a loss of precious lives at the hands of a few extremist forces.

SHREYANS JAIN,
New Delhi

■ One is at a loss for words and one's heart goes to the families of all those who have lost their lives. Defence officials must now ensure a calibrated response so that

anti-India elements do not dare to touch Indian soil.

DEBASISH BARUAH,
Kohora, Kaziranga, Assam

■ One fears that people in the Valley will suffer for a terrible crime perpetrated by a few. Of course passions are high and cries of "blood for blood" are heard. Yet we still hope that even now there will be officials at the senior levels who will have their heads on their shoulders and proceed with patience and caution. Before furious retaliation is unleashed, there must be a dispassionate inquiry.

INDERJIT SINGH JAJEEE,
Chandigarh

Safe blood

It is unfortunate that there are some people donating their own blood for

pecuniary considerations, perhaps to make both ends meet. This practice, on the face of it, is morally and ethically incongruous, defeating the noble cause of blood donation (Editorial page, "Every drop matters", February 15). The panacea is to involve the community at large. If blood collection booths are accessible across the country, people may voluntarily opt for donation. There needs to be greater awareness of "blood donation day".

DEEPAK SINGHAL,
Noida

■ How can one forget the incident in Tamil Nadu, of a youngster who donated blood that transmitted infection to a mother. Blood banks and transfusion units need to be better monitored

and staff need to be enthused about their responsibility.

SACHIN V.K. JADHAV,
Lakhala, Washim, Maharashtra

Subtle message?

The well-caricatured depiction of Samajwadi Party patriarch Mulayam Singh Yadav prodding his son and SP leader, Akhilesh with a "nose push", in presence of the architects of the Opposition's mahagathbandan and the Prime Minister and BJP president, speaks a thousand words. One waits to see the political fallout after the unexpected "gesture of goodwill" in Parliament (OpEd page, February 15).

B. GURUMURTHY,
Madurai

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