

India's perilous obsession with Pakistan

The hyper-nationalistic frenzy to 'defeat' Pakistan comes with huge human and material costs



NISSIM MANNATHUKKAREN

Come Indian elections, the bogey of Pakistan has overwhelmed the nationalist discourse in the shrillest manner, with the Prime Minister and other Ministers' relentless branding of the Congress/Opposition as 'anti-national' and as 'agents of Pakistan'. Further, the Prime Minister even made an unprecedented threat of using nuclear weapons against Pakistan.

As a country born of the two-nation theory based on religion, and then having to suffer dismemberment and the consequent damage to the very same religious identity, it is obvious why Islamic Pakistan must have a hostile Other in the form of a 'Hindu India'. But what is not obvious is why India, a (much larger) secular nation, must have a hostile antagonist in the form of Pakistan.

Self-defeating goal

It is widely recognised that the fulcrum of the Pakistani state and establishment is an anti-India ideology and an obsession with India. But what has scarcely received notice is that India's post-Independence nationalism has been equally driven by an obsession with Pakistan. Of course, this obsession acquires a pathological dimension under regimes, like the present one, which thrive on hyper-nationalism and a 'Hindu India' identity.

But, this hyper-nationalistic urge to 'defeat' Pakistan and to gloat over every victory, both real and claimed, is ultimately self-defeating, and comes with huge human and material costs. Much of these costs are hidden by jingoism masquerading as nationalism.

Words often used regarding the Pakistani state's actions, even by critical Pakistani voices, are 'delusional' and 'suicidal', and rightly so. For, no level-headed state would seek to attain military parity with a country that is six and half times larger in population, and eight and a half times bigger economically. Hussain Haqqani, the Pakistani diplomat and



FILE PHOTO/PTI

scholar, compared it to "Belgium rivalling France or Germany". Pakistan's vastly disproportionate spending on the military has been self-destructive for a poor nation.

In 1990, Pakistan was ahead of India by three places in the Human Development Index. In 2017, Pakistan was behind India by 20 ranks, a sad reflection of its ruinous policies.

More critically, the Pakistani state's sponsorship of Islamist terror groups has been nothing less than catastrophic. What the world, including India, does not recognise is that Pakistan, ironically, is also one of the worst victims of Islamist terrorism. In the period 2000-2019, 22,577 civilians and 7,080 security personnel were killed in terrorism-related violence in Pakistan (the number of civilian/security personnel deaths from Islamist terrorism in India, excluding Jammu and Kashmir, was 926 in during 2000-2018).

Muscular policy

The fact that Pakistan has suffered much more than India in their mutual obsession cannot hide the equally serious losses that India has undergone and is willing to undergo in its supposedly muscular pursuit of a 'no dialogue' policy with Pakistan.

Wars and military competition produce madness. Nothing exemplifies this more than India-Pakistan attempts to secure the Siachen Glacier, the inhospitable and highest battle terrain in the world. India alone lost nearly 800 soldiers (until 2016) to weather-related causes only. Besides, it spends around ₹6 crore every day in Siachen. Operation Parakram (2001-02), in which India mobilised for war with Pakistan, saw

798 soldier deaths and a cost of \$3 billion. This is without fighting a war. Add to this the human and economic costs of fighting four wars.

Granted, the proponents of India's muscular nationalism who want only a military solution in Kashmir might close their eyes to the killings of some 50,000 Kashmiri civilians and the unending suffering of Kashmiris, but can they, as nationalists, ignore, the deaths of around 6,500 security personnel in Kashmir and the gargantuan and un-estimated costs of stationing nearly 5 lakh military/para-military/police personnel in Kashmir for 30 years?

Ten years ago, Stephen P. Cohen, the prominent American scholar of South Asia, called the India-Pakistan relationship "toxic" and notably termed both, and not just Pakistan, as suffering from a "minority" or "small power" complex in which one is feeling constantly "threatened" and "encircled". Tellingly, he argues that it is the disastrous conflict with Pakistan that has been one of the main reasons why India has been confined to South Asia, and prevented from becoming a global power.

Here, one should ask the most pertinent question: why does India compete with Pakistan in every sphere, from military to sport, rather than with, say, China, which is comparable in size and population, and which in 1980 had the same GDP as India? (China's GDP is almost five times that of India's now.)

Of course, emulating China need not mean emulating its internal authoritarianism or its almost colonial, external economic expansionism. On the contrary, it is to learn from China's early success in universalis-

ing health care and education, providing basic income, and advancing human development, which as Amartya Sen has argued, is the basis of its economic miracle. It is precisely here that India has failed, and is continuing to fail.

Therefore, despite India being one of the fastest growing major economies in the world since 1991 (yet, only ranked 147 in per capita income in 2017), its social indicators in many areas, including health, education, child and women welfare, are abysmal in comparison with China's. Worryingly, in the focus on one-upmanship with Pakistan, India's pace in social indicator improvement has been less than some poorer economies too. The phenomenal strides made by Bangladesh in the social sector are an example.

Skewed defence spends

Here, a look at the military expenditures is revealing: while India spent \$63.9 billion (2017) and Pakistan \$9.6 billion (2018-19), Bangladesh spent only \$3.45 billion (2018-19). Only a muscular and masculine nationalism can take pride in things such as becoming the fifth largest military spender in the world, or being the world's second largest arms importer. The bitter truth hidden in these details is that India, ranked 130 in the HDI (and Pakistan, 150), simply cannot afford to spend scarce resources on nuclear arsenals, maintaining huge armies or developing space weapons. Besides, in an increasingly globalised world, military resolution between a nuclear India and Pakistan is almost impossible.

The more India, the largest democracy in the world, defines itself as the Other of Pakistan, a nation practically governed by the military, the more it will become its mirror. Any nation that thrives by constructing a mythical external enemy must also construct mythical internal enemies. That is why the number of people labelled 'anti-national' is increasing in India. India has to rise to take its place in the world. That place is not being a global superpower, but being the greatest and most diverse democracy in the world. That can only happen if it can get rid of its obsession with Pakistan.

Nissim Mannathukkaren is Chair, International Development Studies, Dalhousie University, Canada.

A natural next step

The deepening India-Australia security relationship must be seen against the backdrop of expanding bilateral ties



HARINDER SIDHU

This month was a historic moment in the India-Australia bilateral relationship. Under our joint naval exercise known as AUSINDEX, we saw the largest ever peacetime deployment of Australian defence assets and personnel to India.

The third iteration of our bilateral naval exercise, AUSINDEX, which has just concluded (April 2-16), builds on a fourfold increase in our defence engagement – from 11 defence exercises, meetings and activities in 2014 to 38 in 2018. The Indian Navy's Eastern Naval Command hosted an impressive array of high-end Australian military hardware, including the Royal Australian Navy's flagship, HMAS Canberra and the submarine, HMAS Collins. The Canberra is the size of a small aircraft carrier. She can carry over 1,000 troops and 16 helicopters. These vessels were joined by frigates, aircraft and around 1,200 sailors, soldiers and airmen and women.

As well as being Australia's largest defence deployment to India, the exercise was the most complex ever carried out between our defence forces. For the first time, our navies undertook anti-submarine warfare exercises. And in a similar show of trust and cooperation, Indian and Australian maritime patrol P-8 aircraft flew coordinated missions over the Bay of Bengal.

Mark of greater alignment

The strategic trust on display during AUSINDEX is representative of a deepening strategic alignment between our countries. When Australia's Foreign Minister, Marise Payne, visited India earlier this year, in January, she emphasised our shared outlook as free, open and independent democracies, as champions of international law, as supporters of an open and inclusive Indo-Pacific and as firm believers that 'might is not right'. These shared values underline our deepening cooperation.

A key element of Australia's Indo-Pacific strategy is partnering with India in the vibrant Indian Ocean Region. India is a leader in this region and Australia is a natural partner for addressing shared challenges. We must continue to work together to combat transnational crime, terrorism, people

smuggling, and illegal fishing, in order that we may all enjoy a peaceful and prosperous Indian Ocean Region.

As the nation with one of the longest Indian Ocean coastlines and with more than half of our goods trade departing Indian Ocean ports, Australia is committed to addressing humanitarian and environmental challenges in our Indian Ocean neighbourhood.

Australia is playing its part in the Indo-Pacific region through major new initiatives in Southeast Asia and the Pacific. We are undertaking a substantial step up in our support for Pacific Island countries. In November 2018 we announced the Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific. This AU\$2 billion initiative will boost Australia's support for infrastructure development in Pacific countries.

Our security relationships with Pacific Island countries have also been enhanced. We will establish a Pacific Fusion Centre to provide real-time surveillance data for countries across the region as well as enhancing policing and military training both bilaterally and through regional centres.

We are also building on our significant diplomatic and economic relationships with Southeast Asia to build resilience and prosperity in our region. Our recently announced Southeast Asia Economic Governance and Infrastructure Initiative, worth AU\$121 million, will help unlock Southeast Asia's next wave of economic growth.

Growing links

All this activity is happening against the backdrop of a rapidly expanding India-Australia relationship. Our people-to-people and economic links are on the rise. The Indian diaspora in Australia is both strong and growing. One in 50 Australians today was born in India; almost 90,000 Indian students studied in Australia last year; and over 350,000 tourists visited Australia from India in 2018. We are working together to see India become a top three trading partner for Australia by 2035.

So, on the one hand, we should welcome the successful AUSINDEX exercise as a step up in our strategic partnership. At the same time, we should recognise it also as the natural next step in a friendship between Australia and India that is marked by growing trust, understanding and camaraderie. That is really something to celebrate.

Harinder Sidhu is the Australian High Commissioner to India

SINGLE FILE

Outer space lessons

In furthering its outer space ambitions, India must study the experiences of other space powers

MARTAND JHA



As scientists at the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) work toward 'Mission Gaganyaan', to send three Indian astronauts into space, one can't but make comparisons with the U.S.'s lunar mission in the 1960s. At the time, U.S. President John F. Kennedy made a public statement about his administration's determination to place an American on the moon by the end of that decade. His speech was against the backdrop of the Soviet Union's progress as the foremost power in space, and after cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin's feat of becoming the first human being in space (April 1961).

The U.S.'s objective, therefore, was to have a definite public-relations edge over the U.S.S.R. in the space race, which was marked then by intense rivalry between two Cold War powers. A breakthrough in space was thus a matter of prestige. In the context of ISRO's plan, the prestige value of 'Mission Gaganyaan' is sky-high, possibly in the same league as the American National Aeronautics and Space Administration's Apollo Mission to the moon.

A key lesson for India from NASA's lunar mission is that a programme of that scale and magnitude often comes at a steep cost, monetary and non-monetary. More than the monetary loss, it is the non-monetary loss that matters more, as it can lend currency to the idea that such a failure indicates a waste of time and resources. A failed mission deeply hurts the image of the country in the eyes of the outside world. It raises doubts about the capability of the nation-state in question. No nation-state ever wants to such face such a dilemma. This is because such a development would play to the advantage of adversaries, politically and diplomatically. Politically, a failed mission of such magnitude could give voices in the opposition an opportunity to level criticism, perhaps weakening the incumbent domestically. The diplomatic costs arise from the fact that losses in space missions can seriously impact the future of cooperation between space powers.

For instance, during the Cold War, both the U.S. and the then U.S.S.R. exaggerated each other's failures in space missions considerably in order to influence the overall mood among and inclinations of other nations in their favour. This was most easily achieved by making the rival look as weak as possible. Historically, the media played an active role in participating in such an agenda-driven propaganda.

Outer space is often referred to as the 'final frontier' by major world powers, with the prize for conquering it being even more greatness on the world stage. While India's credentials were bolstered after the successful anti-satellite mission recently, significant success in 'Mission Gaganyaan' might provide India with that stamp of authority in outer space that it so keenly desires. For that to happen, the lessons from the experiences of other space powers must be heeded.

The writer is a Senior Research Fellow at School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University



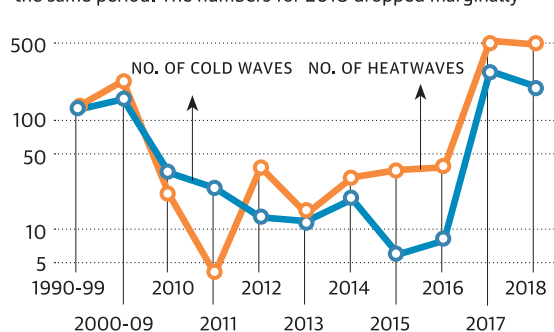
DATA POINT

Climate change

Heat waves and cold waves in the country have increased manifold in the past two years. While the number of reported casualties declined in the case of heat waves, they have increased in the case of cold waves. Rajasthan experienced the highest number of heat and cold waves from 1970 to 2018. By Varun B. Krishnan

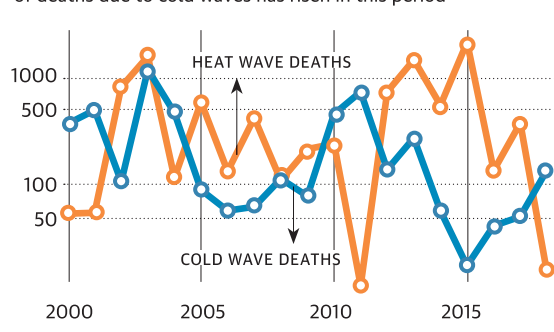
Extremes of temperature

While the no. of heat waves increased 14 times in 2017 compared to 2016, the no. of cold waves spiked 34 times in the same period. The numbers for 2018 dropped marginally



Punishing heat and cold

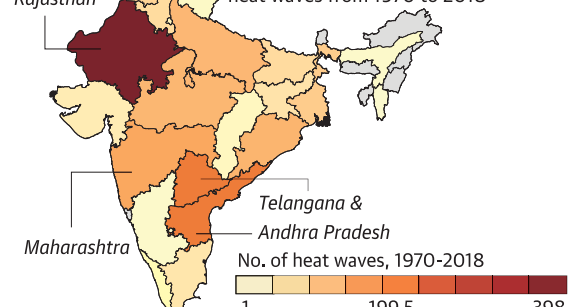
The number of heat-related deaths has come down despite the increase in heat waves since 2015. However, the number of deaths due to cold waves has risen in this period



Source: EnviStats 2019, Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation

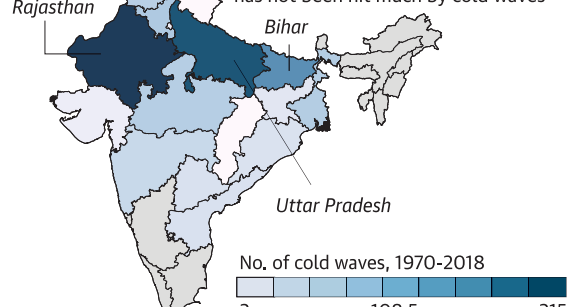
Mapping hotspots

Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana (considered as a single entity) have been hit by the most number of heat waves from 1970 to 2018



Cold pockets

Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar have had the highest number of cold waves from 1970 to 2018. South India has not been hit much by cold waves



FROM The Hindu. ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO APRIL 24, 1969

World's first total eye transplant

The world's first total eye transplant has been carried out at the Methodist Hospital in Houston. A 54-year-old photographer, John Madden, received the total transplant of the right eye yesterday [April 22] in a one-hour operation, the hospital announced late last night [April 22]. The donor, O.B. Hickman, 55, of Houston, died on Monday [April 21] of a brain tumour at the hospital. It will be about three weeks before it is known whether the surgery was successful, officials said. Madden was suffering from corneal dystrophy, in both eyes. He had undergone a regular cornea transplant in the right eye which was unsuccessful. The surgery was performed by a team headed by doctors Conrad D. Moore and Daniel Sigband. The eye transplant requires the difficult task of connecting donor with the nerve endings of the recipient in order that vision is possible. The upper and lower eye lids of Madden's right eye were sewn shut after the operation to prevent light, debris or any foreign matter from entering the eye. Madden is not in any special transplant unit as is the practice with transplant patients nor is there any concern about a rejection of the new eye as there is in heart, kidney and other organ transplants, officials said.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO APRIL 24, 1919.

Fodder Substitute.

The use of cactus as a substitute for grass fodder in famine areas has proved a remarkable success by the experiments carried on by the Government of Bombay in the district of Ahmednagar. In the Government experimental camps the agriculturists' cattle were fed on cactus for one month at the Government's expense and after being accustomed to the diet were returned to the owners, who were encouraged to continue using cactus fodder. The villagers have been taught to prepare the cactus fodder by removing the thorns by burning them, which after experiments have been found to serve the purpose. The best cactus is becoming a popular fodder. The working animals subsisting on it are keeping excellent condition.

POLL CALL

Tendered vote

According to Section 49P of the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961, if a voter realises that someone has already voted in her name, she can approach the presiding officer at the polling booth and flag the issue. Upon answering the presiding officer's questions about her identity satisfactorily, the voter will be allowed to cast a tender vote. Tender votes are cast on ballot papers and sealed and locked away. These votes are useful when the margin between the winning candidate and the runner-up is slim. However, if the difference is large, tender votes are not counted. In the Rajasthan Assembly Elections in 2008, when the Congress's C.P. Joshi lost to the BJP's Kalyan Singh Chouhan by one vote, he moved the Rajasthan High Court in 2009 claiming that some of the votes cast were tendered. The court ordered a recount and found a tie. After a draw, Mr. Chouhan was declared the winner.

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