

The Resurgent India

A Monthly National Review

October 2023



“Let us all work for the Greatness of India.”

– The Mother

Year 14

Issue 7

The Resurgent India English monthly published and printed by Smt. Suman Sharma on behalf of The Resurgent India Trust Published at C/o J. N. Socketed Cement Pipes Pvt. Ltd., Village Bhamraula Post Bagwara, Kichha Road, Rudrapur (U.S Nagar)
email: sadlecjnn@gmail.com, info@resurgentindia.org, URL :
www.resurgentindia.org

Printed at : Priyanka Printing Press, Hotel Krish Building, Janta Inter College Road, Udham Nagar, Rudrapur, Uttarakhand

THE RESURGENT INDIA

A Monthly National Review

October 2023



SUCCESSFUL FUTURE

(Full of Promise and Joyful Surprises)

Botanical name: Gaillardia Pulchella

Common name: Indian blanket, Blanket flower, Fire-wheels

Year 14

Issue 7

CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Israel-Palestine Conflict and Its Wider Implications | 6 |
| Israel-Palestine Conflict: | |
| A Perpetual Deadlock..... | 6 |
| First phase: The Exile of Jews..... | 7 |
| Second Phase: Disestablishment of Ottoman Rule and Jewish Migrations.. | 8 |
| Third Phase: The Failure of Two-State Solution, Rise of Hamas and the Contemporary Crisis | 10 |
| The Present War..... | 14 |
| Issues and Dilemmas in the Conflict ... | 19 |
| India in a Delicate Position | 23 |
| Internal Implications..... | 25 |
| Conclusion: Unity and Strength as Way Forward..... | 26 |
| HIGHLIGHTS | 31 |
| Developments in Russia and Ukraine | 31 |
| Developments in Science and Technology..... | 32 |
| Supreme Court Judgement on Same Sex Marriages..... | 33 |
| Bihar Caste Survey | 35 |

A Declaration

We do not fight against any creed, any religion.

We do not fight against any form of government.

We do not fight against any social class.

We do not fight against any nation or civilisation.

We are fighting division, unconsciousness, ignorance, inertia and falsehood.

We are endeavouring to establish upon earth union, knowledge, consciousness, Truth, and we fight whatever opposes the advent of this new creation of Light, Peace, Truth and Love.

– The Mother

(Collected works of the Mother, Vol. 13, pp. 124-25)

ISRAEL-PALESTINE CONFLICT AND ITS WIDER IMPLICATIONS

The start of an unexpected war between Israel and Palestine portends the deteriorating state of international affairs and reveals the dilution of domestic political authority as well. The brutality of Hamas attack in southern Israel in early October and the predicted long-drawn Israeli retaliation is underpinned by the implications of massive intelligence failure on the part of the Israeli state in anticipating the terrorist attack. While there are attempts by Gulf countries, USA as well as other European countries to ensure that the conflict remains localized to the Israel-Palestine theatre and does not spill-over into a regional war, the larger implications of this event for the world are likely to resonate and bear impact in the times to come. For, the conflict does not simply have political dimensions, but, more importantly, technological aspects and a religious subtext which no political solution is likely to resolve. The religious and cultural polarization unleashed by this conflict is already visible among people in western societies, amplified further by use of technology.

ISRAEL-PALESTINE CONFLICT: A PERPETUAL DEADLOCK

The present conflict between Israel and Palestine has a long religious history, underpinned by competing claims to a common sacred place between the Jews and the Arab Muslims. Jews consider Jerusalem and areas around it as their holy land and ancestral home. It is also claimed by Arab Muslims. The city has at its center, Islam's third holiest site (the al-Aqsa

mosque compound) located physically on top of the much older, Temple Mount, the Western Wall of which is Judaism's holiest site. That means both Israelis and Palestinians want access to the same area for religious reasons. There is a similar, smaller dispute over the West Bank city of Hebron. The history of Israel-Palestine conflict can be described in three phases:

First phase: The Exile of Jews

Historically, according to the Hebrew Bible (known as the Old Testament by the Christians), 'Israel' was the name God gave to Jacob, the grandson of Abraham, who is considered the patriarch of all three 'Abrahamic' religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The descendants of Abraham settled in Canaan, which approximates the territory of modern Israel. King David and eventually his son, Solomon, started the functioning of Jerusalem as a fully functional capital from the 10th century B.C. onwards. David also built a Temple at the center of Jerusalem. It suffered destruction during the Roman invasions and the Crusades – it was Romans who designated the term *Palestine* (from the term Philistine, often meaning barbarian) to replace Judea – which sent Jews into exile. Thus, the term Palestine was first used as early as 135 A.D. when, following a failed Jewish revolt, Roman Emperor Hadrian expelled the Jews from Jerusalem and decreed that the city and surrounding territory be part of a larger entity called "Syria-Palestina."

After the beginning of Islam and the Islamic conquest of the Middle East in the seventh century AD, Arab peoples began to settle in the former "Palestina." Thus, the land fell under Muslim control for just under 1,200 years. Although Jewish habitation never ceased, the population was

overwhelmingly Arab. Even while in minority, Jews have consistently maintained a presence in the region.

The Arab Muslims who eventually formed a part of the region rarely regarded themselves as a separate Palestinian nationality. The region came under Ottoman rule after the collapse of the Roman empire. Palestine was, in fact, just one of the many territories ruled by the Ottoman empire and was largely considered an extension of Syria. Thus, Palestinian nationalism, as is commonly understood today, is a relatively contemporary phenomenon. Moreover, the significance of Jerusalem for Arabs continues to be contested even today. While it does house the third holiest place in Islam, yet Jerusalem was never the capital city of any of its Muslim rulers, spanning early dynasties like Umayyad, Abbasid or Fatamid caliphates and later ones like Mamluks (1260-1516), Ottomans (1516-1917) or the Jordanians who ruled East Jerusalem. Interestingly, even the Palestinian Liberation Organisation's (PLO's) founding document, the Palestinian National Covenant of 1964, does not mention Jerusalem even once.

Second Phase: Disestablishment of Ottoman Rule and Jewish Migrations

The modern, present-day genesis of this conflict lies in the developments after the 19th century. During the 19th century, the land of Canaan was a part of the Ottoman Sultanate. The followers of Judaism, or Jews, were living in many countries – often as prosperous minorities, but vulnerable to persecution, especially in Europe. Across European countries – such as France, Russia, Germany, and others – anti-Semitism had long roots. In these countries, very often, the Jews were persecuted, false charges were brought against them, and they faced

discrimination. This rampant anti-Semitism gave rise to the Jewish feeling that Jews will continue to face suffering, discrimination, and persecution till they have a separate homeland where they were in a majority. This movement – of trying to establish a Jewish homeland – came, politically, to be known as Zionism. The natural psychological choice for such a homeland was Palestine, where the historical and biblical home of the Jews had once stood, and where many of their holy sites were still located.

Thus, prefaced by the rising tide of anti-Jewish pogroms across Europe, the Jews began to migrate to Palestine in several waves. The first wave of arrivals, from 1881 to 1903, is known as the First Aliyah, in which the Jewish immigrants began to buy large tracts of land and set to farming it. They also developed the region with advanced technology and support of wealthy Jews abroad. In 1917, the land came under British sphere of rule. The 1917 Balfour Declaration, pioneered by the British, legitimately recognized the need to create in Palestine a national home for the Jewish people, if rights of non-Jewish people were not compromised. This assured the British of the Jewish support during the First World War. With the defeat of the Ottoman empire and the end of the First World War, the erstwhile domains of the empire were divided among the Allied countries, with Palestine falling under the British mandate. In 1923, “Mandatory Palestine,” which also included the current state of Jordan, was created. Its Arab inhabitants saw themselves primarily not as “Palestinians” in the sense of a nation, but instead as Arabs living in Palestine or Greater Syria.

However, as Jews became stronger and more consolidated in Palestine, Arab acrimony and violence also grew in

proportion. The years 1936 to 1938 saw immense bloodshed, with Palestinians attacking Jews and the British, and reverse retaliations. The Palestinians call this period ‘al-thawra al-kubra’, or great rebellion. In 1939, Britain, in a U-turn, strictly limited Jewish migration to Palestine. Subsequently, the Second World War and the Holocaust brought much international sympathy to the Jewish cause.

In view of the insurmountable hostilities between Arabs and Jews, the Peel Commission, set up by the British, proposed partition as the only solution to the problem in July 1937. The Palestinian side boycotted the suggestions. In 1939, a White Paper released by the British was much more favourable to the Palestinian side. However, the divided Palestinian leadership did not capitalize on the chance. Eventually, with Palestinian side not agreeing to a partition and with no other solution being acceptable to either side, and with distrust and hostility at an all-time high, the British announced that they were exiting Palestine, and the question would be settled by the United Nations (UN).

Third Phase: The Failure of Two-State Solution, Rise of Hamas and the Contemporary Crisis

With the Israel-Palestine conflict in the domain of the UN, in November 1947, the UN General Assembly voted to divide Palestine into independent Jewish and Arab states, with Jerusalem under UN control. The proposed Jewish state was to consist of 55 percent of the country, including the largely unpopulated Negev desert. Its population would comprise some 500,000 Jews and 400,000 Arabs. On the other hand, the

Arab state was to have 44 per cent of the land and a minority of 10,000 Jews. The Arab areas would include the West Bank and Gaza. The outraged Arab side rejected the resolution immediately, with Palestinian militias attacking Jewish settlements. Israel, on the other hand, while accepting the two-state solution, also declared independence on May 14, 1948.

Immediately after Israel's declaration of independence, it was invaded by Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon. However, the determined Israeli side, bolstered by arms and funds from the US, managed to beat them back. By the time the fighting ended, the Palestinians had lost almost four fifths of their United Nations allotment. For Jewish Israelis, it's known as the "War of Independence." For Palestinians, it was al-Nakba – "the Catastrophe."

This was followed by more Arab-Israeli wars, with Israel capturing large territories. In the Six-Day War of 1967, Israel repelled the existential threat of a heavy Arab military force amassed at its borders. Israel's seizure of East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza during the war left Palestinians under various forms of Israeli occupation. During the 1967 war, Israel seized Golan Heights from Syria and Sinai Peninsula from Egypt. This was followed by the Yom Kippur War or the Fourth Arab-Israel War of 1973, fought between Israel on one side, and Egypt and Syria on the other. It was significant as, much like the Hamas attack recently, the coordinated attack by Egypt and Syria was unexpected, as it had occurred during the holy Islamic month of Ramadan. During this war, the failure of Israeli intelligence to anticipate the attack was noted, and even the troop mobilization took some time, resulting in heavy Israeli casualties initially. Ultimately, Israel managed to beat back the adversaries through counterstrikes.

Eventually, a ceasefire was brokered between the warring parties and a peace process was set into motion, exemplified through the Camp David Accords in 1978. According to the Accords, Israel returned the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt, resulting in the 1979 Egypt-Israel peace treaty, which was the first instance of an Arab state giving formal recognition to Israel as a state. With Syria, the result was opposite. There was neither any peace treaty with Syria and nor did Israel return Golan Heights to Syria. Indeed, it ended up occupying more of the latter, which it holds to the present day.

However, these military and diplomatic breakthroughs did not do much to change the ground situation in Gaza and West Bank and made it only worse. Protracted conflict between Israelis and Palestinians soon led to the emergence of the first Intifada against Israel, waged by Palestinian organizations, resulting in widespread violence and mobilization against Israel. The first Intifada lasted from around 1987 to 1993. It was during this time that the Hamas, in 1987, came into existence, although, being a new outfit, its role in the first Intifada was somewhat limited. Unlike the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), which was modelled more around Leftist guerilla warfare, Hamas was based exclusively on radical Islamism. The Hamas Charter, first issued in 1988, made declarations such as, “there is no solution to the Palestine problem except jihad.”

During this time, in 1988, the Palestinian National Council issued a declaration of independence, recognized a month later by the UN General Assembly. Approximately three-quarters of the UN’s membership now accepts the statehood of Palestine, which has non-member observer status.

The culmination of the first Intifada saw the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993. The Accords laid the foundation for

the formation of a provisional authority, the Palestinian Authority, with limited powers and also laid the foundation and recognition of Palestinian statehood in West Bank and Gaza. However, this did not hold, as, soon Israel accused the Palestinians of reneging on the deal. Hamas had opposed the Oslo process from the very beginning and continued to carry out attacks against Israel. Thus, since the 1990s, several attempts to negotiate a two-state solution have failed. Discontent and persistent conflict, as well as the failure of Oslo Accords, led to the rise of a much more violent second Intifada against Israel from 2001 to 2005, which was marked by new forms of violence including suicide bombings. It is also known as the Al-Aqsa Intifada, and unlike the much milder first Intifada, the second one was led primarily by Hamas.

It was this uprising that led to the victory of Hamas in Palestine in the 2006 elections, after defeating Fatah. Notably, Hamas refuses to accept the two-state solution. In other words, this means that it refuses to accept the existence of Israel. For such an outfit to win popular elections – on the basis of a regressive Islamic charter aimed at annihilation of Israel – shows the massive backing of Palestinians for the agenda of Hamas. This is important to note, as during the course of the present war, there has been a widespread tendency to make a distinction between Hamas and Palestinians. The impression being sought to be reinforced is that Hamas is an alien terrorist entity that does not represent the Palestinians. While this may be partially true, the popularity of Hamas – witnessed through elections and other forms of propaganda – among Palestinians cannot be denied. Views which seek to create a forced dichotomy between Hamas and Palestinians also disregard the fact that Hamas is very much a home-grown terrorist movement.

Even before Hamas won popular elections in Gaza, in 2005 itself, Israel had formally and unilaterally withdrawn its troops and settlers from Gaza. After the 2006 elections, the Islamist Hamas and the relatively secularist Fatah decided to form a unity government in all Palestinian territories. However, this government rapidly fell apart, as the Western countries refused to recognize it or provide funds or aid, as they regarded Hamas as a terrorist organization. The break in the government led to a brief period of civil war between Fatah and Hamas. This finally resulted in Fatah ruling West Bank and Hamas exclusively ruling over Gaza, since 2007.

Despite the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza in 2005, Hamas refused to end its conflict with Israel. Israel also viewed occupation of Gaza by Hamas as a security challenge, leading it to impose land, air and naval blockade of Gaza from 2007 onwards. The blockade has allowed Israel to control the movement of people and goods out of and into Gaza. The security model of Israel has enabled it to keep organized resistance by Gazans under check, through the use of force, money, barriers etc. The situation has, for years, been marked by constant tensions, violence and break-out of conflicts.

Presently, under Israel's longest-serving prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, Jewish settlement in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, viewed as illegal by much of the world, accelerated – making any future talks even more difficult.

THE PRESENT WAR

The present war has its immediate trigger in the brutal attack by Hamas on Israeli civilian settlements and villages in southern Israel at a time when many Israelis were preparing to observe the Simchat Torah, which marks the end of annual cycle of

public Torah – with Torah constituting the first five books of the Hebrew Bible – readings and the beginning of a new one. Hamas has termed this terrorist attack as Toofan Al-Aqsa or the Al-Aqsa Flood.

This is widely being regarded as the worst security crisis faced by Israel since its formation, with even the 1973 Yom Kippur War not coming close. The immediate eruption took place on October 7th, when Hamas terrorists – using motorcycles, pickup trucks, boats, paragliders and mid-range rockets – launched a highly lethal and well-coordinated attack on Israel. Simultaneously with around 5000 rocket launches as claimed by Hamas – Israel said there were 2500 rockets fired initially – there was ground invasion into Israeli cities, hitting of Israeli military bases and killing and taking hostage civilians and soldiers. Even some top military and intelligence commanders were taken hostage and a mayor was killed. Reports reveal how Hamas terrorists went from house-to-house systematically killing people. Several Israeli military vehicles were also captured and paraded. In particular, the Israeli border town of Sderot was heavily raided and plundered by the terrorists.

The attack was novel in its scale and method due to several reasons:

First, the attack was the first of its kind ground invasion of Israel since the latter's formation in 1948. It was a brutal and explicit violation of Israeli sovereignty, on a scale not experienced by the country since its formation.

Second, it was unprecedented in the amount of planning that had gone into it, and which went unnoticed by Israeli intelligence services. The attack required large-scale

mobilization and transfer of materials and weapons through elaborate underground tunnels, which, according to estimates, must have taken several long months to build. For such large-scale mobilization to go unnoticed was squarely an Israeli intelligence failure at a big level. Subsequent investigations have revealed how Hamas possessed a huge trove of material underlining its strategy of killing and raping Israeli military personnel – the level of planning was such that each terrorist was assigned location-wise. For such a level of planning and mobilization of terrorists and resources to go unnoticed is a big failure on the part of Israel.

Third, a significant part of this intelligence failure is being attributed to overreliance on hi-tech missile defence and artificial intelligence systems, which is minimizing the role of human intervention in intelligence gathering and analysis.

Fourth, the technique of terrorist attack used by Hamas was both new and barbaric in the extent of its brutality. This shock & awe technique has delivered a significant initial psychological blow to Israel. More dangerously, it might resonate with other terrorist groups across the region and boost their standing, such as Islamic Jihad, Hezbollah, al-Houthis, ISIS, al-Qaeda, Al-Shabab and others.

Fifth, a big question is whether and, to what extent, Hamas will be able to garner larger regional support in its reckless terrorist gamble. For now, Israel faces four main rivals – Hamas and Islamic Jihad in Gaza, Hezbollah in Lebanon, and Iran. Hamas – aided by Islamic Jihad – undertook this brutal attack despite being fully aware that Israeli retaliation will be severe. At the regional level, the sailing may not be smooth for Hamas. While Palestinian Authority in West Bank, Hezbollah in Lebanon and Iran have supported the Hamas attack as

representing Palestinian people, none of them have wished to get directly involved in the conflict. Despite threats by Hezbollah and rocket launches from Lebanon, no actor has, as yet, got directly and actively involved. Other terrorist organizations in the region have also refrained from involvement.

Other countries in the Gulf region – while making formal pro-Palestinian statements – have also refrained from involvement. Egypt, which is the only Arab neighbour of Gaza, has not been forthcoming in allowing a passage to Palestinians, fearing immigration influx. Egypt, UAE, Bahrain and others are also largely pro-West. Egypt, in particular, has had a deep enmity with the Muslim Brotherhood which Egyptian generals overthrew in 2013. Many Gulf countries have also banned Muslim Brotherhood, but Hamas has considered it as an ally. This had greatly soured the relations between Egypt and pro-West Gulf countries on one hand, and Hamas on the other hand. Even Syria – which is an anti-West Shia dictatorship supported by Iran – does not traditionally support Hamas, as Hamas had supported the anti-Assad Arab Spring a decade ago.

Over the years, this has diluted the Palestinian cause, except in a formal sense. Indeed, since long, Gulf countries – except Qatar – have disapproved of Hamas. Outside of the Gulf, Turkey has traditionally supported Hamas. More recently, Russia and China – while attempting to avoid explicitly supporting Hamas – have shown inclination towards Hamas. However, the qualified and tentative support from these countries may not amount to much, as the conflict – despite concerns that it might spread – has continued to remain localized to the Israel-Palestine issue.

This lack of support for Hamas stands in contrast to the unflinching support garnered by Israel after the October 7th attack. The US and other European countries – and even the Indian PMO – came out with statements supporting Israel and upholding the Israeli right to defend itself. US even sent its naval fleet and advanced militarily equipped warships near the Mediterranean, in case of any eventuality. Top US and UK government officials – including US President Biden, US Secretary Blinken and British PM Rishi Sunak – were also prompt in visiting Israel and the US issued a clear warning saying that no other country should even think about getting involved in the conflict. This posture by the US in particular and Western countries, in general, has itself acted as a deterrent to other Muslim countries from getting involved in the conflict, with even Iran taking a backseat.

Finally, a key question in the ongoing war is when it will cease and at what cost will the ceasefire come. After the initial two to three days, when Hamas terrorists appeared to have an upper hand, the course of the conflict has significantly changed. Israel was quick to mobilize its forces and launch a series of airstrikes on Gaza, with the objective of eliminating Hamas. Israel has managed to destroy considerable amount of Hamas' infrastructure and kill many of its top terrorist commanders.

However, this has also been accompanied by a significant number of civilian casualties in Gaza. There are now calls – from across the world and many European countries – to arrive at a ceasefire. This has been refused by Israel – supported by the US and UK – on the grounds that any kind of ceasefire will allow Hamas to recuperate and reorganize itself. Therefore, till it is eliminated, a ceasefire will not be an option. Increasingly, the US and other western countries are putting pressure on

Israel to cease the indiscriminate bombing and strikes on Gaza. However, Israel has refused to yield, even to the US pressure. The US pressure has also been, for the most part, moderate and accommodative of Israel.

Yet, despite Israeli refusal to yield, it is not clear what strategic objectives Israel hopes to achieve through the Gaza bombing. It says that its aim is to completely destroy Hamas, but it is well known that such a thing is not even realistically possible through military means. Even if Israel destroys all the commanders of Hamas, it is probable that new, disgruntled generations of Palestinians will take their place. At the most, Israel can hope to damage the terrorist group.

ISSUES AND DILEMMAS IN THE CONFLICT

The history of the Arab-Israel conflict reveals a level of complexity to which there appears to be no easy solution in sight. The contested Palestinian territories include West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza strip, which were captured by Israel from Jordan and Egypt in 1967. Israel has been settling Jewish settlers in these territories since 1970s. Throughout the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, many more Palestinians than Jewish Israelis have been killed and wounded, in part due to Israel's advanced military capability but also to the well-documented Hamas strategy of situating command centers within civilian areas. The same is true in this war as well.

Some of the key issues, with bearing on recent events, involved are as follows:

First, in recent years, relations between Israel and Palestine have steadily deteriorated, as Israel has been consistently carrying out military raids in occupied West Bank on a regular

basis. Few months back, Israeli forces raided Jerusalem's Al Aqsa Mosque compound – the third holiest place of worship in Islam – thereby provoking great outrage among Palestinians.

Second, this outrage among Palestinians is directed not only towards Israel, but also towards the Palestinian Authority – which rules over the West Bank – led by the Fatah party of Mohammad Abbas. The Palestinian National Authority in the West Bank has been contemptuously viewed as an Israeli stooge by many Gazans. This impression has helped to strengthen the legitimacy of Hamas in Palestinian eyes and the blame partly lies at the doors of Israel, which had facilitated and allowed the weakening of Palestinian Authority at the expense of Hamas, which is not only supported by Iran, but also Qatar. Both the latter countries have been notorious in their explicit role in funding terrorists. Such a dangerous game can only have unpleasant outcomes.

Third, Israeli challenges on the domestic front have made the situation worse. The extreme right-government led by Benjamin Netanyahu – who himself has been discredited for corruption allegations against him – has attempted to control and overhaul all structures of power, such as the judiciary. In the process, he has faced massive internal protests from the people, particularly over the issue of judicial reform. The extremely divided house presented by Israel was a fertile opportunity for Hamas to launch its surprise terrorist offensive.

Fourth, in terms of international scenario, the Hamas offensive came at a time when Israel was in the process of normalizing relations with other Gulf countries. Few years back, Israel had already participated in the Abraham Accords, alongside countries like United Arab Emirates (UAE) and

Bahrain. Presently, US had almost reached a compromise formula to normalize relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia – the last and most powerful holdout country in the Arab world. Additionally, the India Middle East Economic Corridor (IMEC), offering connective between India and Europe via the Gulf countries and Israel, was already inaugurated at G-20. All these geopolitical developments would have certainly delivered a death blow to the Palestinian cause. The Hamas attack on October 7th essentially revived the Palestinian question – which had almost been effectively sidelined – in a big way.

Fifth, the issue has brought to fore the level of polarization and mobilization of the public to an extent rarely seen before. Public mobilization and radicalization are becoming an increasingly common and easy phenomenon in the age of social media and digitization. In this conflict, it is no different. This was especially seen among western publics. The amount of support that poured in for Hamas and the anti-Semitic hatred and vile propaganda against Jews and Israel was on full display on the streets of developed countries like the UK, USA, France, and others, much before the Israeli retaliation had even started. Universities in the USA – including top and reputed ones – became infamous for their student organizations and intellectuals supporting Hamas explicitly immediately after the heinous October 7th terrorist attack.

Sixth, a fundamental question which has not been debated much is how legitimate and effective the idea of a two-state solution is, flagged originally by the UN. It is interesting that Israel, over the last few decades, seems to have reversed its position on the two-state solution, especially in the aftermath of the Second Intifada and the rise of Hamas. ***The thinking in Israel – even among the people – has been that the creation of a***

sovereign Palestinian state at its borders with its own military apparatus and one which will be a proxy state for Iran and Qatar, will likely enable the Palestinians and the enemies of Israel to attack it even more effectively than before. For, fundamentally, the Palestinians have never believed in a two-state solution. Indeed, Hamas – which represents the popular will of Palestinians – does not accept the right of Israel to exist in any shape whatsoever at all. That is why the Hamas attack was directed at the very existence of Israel as a Jewish state. It cannot simply be explained away as a retribution for Israeli military excesses in West Bank. That the so-called moderate Palestinian Authority in West Bank has supported Hamas further reinforces this fundamental reality. It is indeed difficult, given the history and present circumstances, that the end of a two-state solution will be a Palestinian and Jewish state co-existing side-by-side. The Palestinians have always intended for it to be a single Palestinian state.

Thus, the main obstruction to a two-state solution may not so much be the Israeli occupation of West Bank and Gaza since 1967, but rather the inability of Palestinian militants to convince the common Israeli citizen that the creation of a Palestinian state on some portion of territory will not present a constant threat to the sovereignty of Israel. And the Hamas attack – and the support it received in various Palestinian and Arab quarters – merely reinforces how the two-solution may not be so viable after all.

Finally, Israel is facing a deep conundrum about the achievement of its objectives in Gaza. The main options available with Israel are, broadly, two-fold. First, it can either conduct a limited operation in Gaza – aimed at eliminating Hamas – and then leave. Israel has, after all, not occupied

Gaza since nearly the last two decades. This option, however, does not at all mean the end of Hamas. The outfit enjoys wide support among Palestinians and will reorganize itself. Second, Israel will, perhaps, have to think about a prolonged occupation of Gaza and be ready to fight a prolonged war of attrition in a hostile territory, to ensure that Hamas never raises its head again. The second option is also fraught with risks and disadvantages since occupation and continuous war will come at an undesirable economic and military cost to Israel. Also, it may not succeed, as it had tried to do the same thing in Lebanon in 1982 but was effectively resisted by Hezbollah and had to concede a ceasefire. The second option can only be moderately successful if Hamas fails to procure the amount of military hardware and resources as Hezbollah had access to.

INDIA IN A DELICATE POSITION

The October 7th attack by Hamas on Israel and the counterstrikes by Israel have created a foreign policy dilemma for India, as well as brought home potential internal implications.

Foreign policy changes and dilemmas

India has traditionally had complicated relationships in the Gulf region and many diplomatic balancing acts and maneuvers to perform. Initially, immediately after Independence, India, under Jawaharlal Nehru and Gandhi, quite firmly supported the Palestinian cause, as – having suffered the Partition – they rejected the idea of two nations based on religion. This stand was taken also because of India's participation in Non-Aligned movement and solidarity with Arab states. Thus, when the UN-led Partition plan for Palestine was put to vote – for a two-state solution – India, along with other Arab countries, voted

against it. India also voted against Israeli application to join the UN and refused to recognize Israel. It only recognized Israel in 1950 after two Muslim countries – Turkey and Iran – did so, and even then, India did not cultivate diplomatic relations with Israel.

The extent to which India was inclined towards the Arab discourse on Palestine can be gauged from the fact that while India was one of the last non-Muslim states to recognize Israel, it became the first non-Arab state to recognize the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). Throughout the time of Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi governments, India strongly supported Palestine, issuing statements in its favour and supporting it during the First Intifada against Israel as well. There was much skepticism of such a pro-Arab position by India, as the Arab countries never reciprocated Indian sentiments. Arab world remained neutral during the 1962 India-China war, and supported Pakistan during the wars of 1965 and 1971. On the other hand, Israel helped India with weapons and defence supplies during these wars.

It was only after the weakening of Congress party at the centre – after the 1990s, which also saw the disintegration of USSR, dilution of Non-Aligned Movement and changes in Middle east – that the Indian position began to subtly change. With these changes, the ideological hostility towards Israel also dissipated. Thereafter, India established full diplomatic relations with Israel in 1992. During the 1999 Kargil war with Pakistan, Israel provided critical help to India by digging into their own emergency stockpiles. During the NDA government led by PM Vajpayee, for the first time, India sent its foreign minister and home minister to Israel. Finally, during the government of PM Modi, the India-Israel ties have become

much more than anytime before. Modi became the first Indian Prime Minister to visit Israel. And he did so by skipping the customary ministerial stop-over at Palestine. Under Modi, India has sent out the message that it does not hyphenate Israel with Palestine and that its ties with Israel are independent. When Modi visited Palestine, he similarly skipped Israel. Furthermore, despite not appeasing the other Arab countries in the way Congress-led governments did, Modi government has ensured that India cultivates deep strategic and defence partnerships with major pro-West Arab countries, such as UAE, Saudi Arabia and Egypt, among others.

At present, the carefully cultivated relationships – cultivated on practical and strategic and not ideological grounds – of India in the Gulf world are in a delicate position. In the immediate aftermath of the Hamas attack, Indian PMO – through a statement by PM Modi – gave unequivocal support to Israel, upholding the right of Israel to defend itself. In the following days after the attack, India has continued to support Israel, even as it has tried to do a balancing act, as the Ministry of External Affairs reiterated support for a two-state solution.

Internal Implications

The brutal attack by Hamas on Israel has brought home – especially to the Indian public – implications about the threat of Islamic fanaticism. India has already faced – and continues to face the persistent Islamic threat – be it the massacre and exodus of Kashmiri Pandits, heinous terrorist attacks across the country such as 26/11 or the present-day radicalization of Muslims in the country. India has also faced and survived the historic past of barbaric Muslim invasions during the medieval times. With such a historic and recent past, India is particularly

sensitive to the threat of Muslim radicalism. This explains the unqualified support of the majority Indian public, the ruling party and the Indian government to Israel.

The Hamas attack has also awakened India to the need of actively managing its own internal challenges of dealing with Islamic radicalism. India has already seen the ongoing conflicts in advanced western countries, as a result of Muslim immigration. Such conflicts have thoroughly compromised the social fabric of these countries. The question of approach towards Islam is, therefore, a persistent concern not only for India and Israel, but also for the rest of the world.

CONCLUSION: UNITY AND STRENGTH AS WAY FORWARD

David Ben-Gurion, the father of Israeli nation, had once said that *“the fate of Israel depends on two things – its strength and its righteousness.”* The Hamas attack on Israel has made it abundantly clear that Israel was struck and exposed at a time when it was at its most vulnerable. A key reason for its vulnerability was its extreme internal division and polarization, the rise of Leftist culture, psychological weakness among the masses and the ruling class, and preoccupation of the ruling elite with their own comfort and corrupt exploits instead of the nation. Indeed, preoccupation with comfort and selfish interests has afflicted masses and elites alike – not just in Israel, but across the world. We are living in a world where weakness, selfishness and mediocrity are accepted and glorified, while strength is devalued and perverted. This is visible in mass psychology across the US and other advanced countries. Israel is no exception. The vacuum created by these changes is rapidly being filled up by the spread of global Islam across the West,

since the Western Judeo-Christian civilization has neither any deeper material to work with nor any deeper foundation to fall back upon in the face of such onslaughts.

Perhaps the biggest misconception of this civilization is that its reliance on technology will be an insurance against such disasters. The reliance of Israel on technology for its security needs is second to none in the world, having deployed a vast network of advanced surveillance and sensory instruments along its borders, which help in real-time monitoring of any suspicious activity. Drones are also constantly deployed for aerial surveillance, while biometric methods equipped with AI-powered facial recognition are used for tracking movement of people entering and leaving the country. The country processes huge troves of data to identify and analyze security threats. It also conducts regular cyber security drills. And yet, all this technological prowess ultimately proved ineffective in the face of the Hamas attack. Even the famed Iron Dome missile defence system – while proving to be a saving grace in the present war – to intercept missiles, is not a hundred percent fool-proof. In the process of becoming a technological superpower and relying on artificial intelligence, somewhere along the way, Israel seems to have minimized the factor of human intelligence.

The present attack on Israel showed the limitations of reliance on technology, but the real message that should have gone through is that a perverted psychology can only produce perverted outcomes, made ten times worse by the application of technology. Thus, instead of simply questioning whether we can rely on technology, the time has now come to ponder how the flammable and toxic combination of psychological degradation and rising technology will produce a cocktail of

irredeemable disaster.

In the wake of the Russia-Ukraine war, Azerbaijan's brazen recent conquest and ethnic cleansing in Nagorno-Karabakh, Israel-Hamas conflict and the delicate military balances struck in different parts of the world, it is becoming abundantly clear that the world is moving in an unchartered direction. Countries are asserting their power and taking the opportunity to grab what they have laid claims to. Azerbaijan's ethnic cleansing of Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh took place without any intervention from the world community. Now Azerbaijan has full control of the territory, Armenia has accepted it, and the two countries are set to start a peace process of building relations. This shows the superfluous foundations on which the so-called rules-based and democratic international order is built. It appears that rules apply only to those who willingly accept them.

Under such conditions, the fanatic expansion of Islam is filling up the vacuum created by the dilution of the strength, culture and value-systems of advanced countries. The unmitigated materialist turn towards Science and Secularism and the inability to reconcile them with deeper foundations of life has created this vacuum, whose effects are increasingly being felt in a society that is fast moving towards perversion. This has created a fundamental weakness in societies – especially visible in western societies – leading to inability to respond to the present challenges. That alone can explain why western governments allowed mobs of pro-Palestinian and rabidly anti-Jewish protestors to riot on their streets in support of Hamas.

In contrast, despite having a sizeable Muslim population, India did not witness any such disruptions. The key reason lies

in approach. In recent years, it is visible how the majority Hindu community in India is strengthening itself through its nationalism without having to enter any major confrontations with the Muslim community. While initially this was a difficult process – opposed by concerted pro-Islamic campaigns by various lobbies – now the situation has become much more settled, as the country consolidates its strength. This means neither appeasing the minorities nor being unfair to them or persecuting them. While giving all the benefits of a fair system to the minorities, the majority does not expect anything in return, since it does not shy away from acknowledging the radical nature of the minority community. In contrast, in recent times, under Netanyahu, Israel has been engaging in systemic persecution of Palestinians in West Bank and Gaza without strengthening itself from within. The results are now visible.

In this context, the following words of Sri Aurobindo become very much suited to the present time:

“Of one thing we may be certain, that Hindu-Mahomedan unity cannot be effected by political adjustments or Congress flatteries. It must be sought deeper down, in the heart and in the mind, for where the causes of disunion are, there the remedies must be sought. We shall do well in trying to solve the problem to remember that misunderstanding is the most fruitful cause of our differences, that love compels love and that strength conciliates the strong. We must try to remove the causes of misunderstanding by a better mutual knowledge and sympathy; we must extend the unfaltering love of the patriot to our Musalman brother, remembering always that in him too Narayana dwells and to him too our Mother has given a permanent place in her bosom; but we must cease to approach him falsely or flatter out of a selfish weakness and cowardice. We believe this to be the only practical

way of dealing with the difficulty. As a political question the Hindu-Mahomedan problem does not interest us at all, as a national problem it is of supreme importance.” (SABCL, Vol. 2, p. 24)

HIGHLIGHTS

DEVELOPMENTS IN RUSSIA AND UKRAINE

The Russia-Ukraine war continues unabated, with changing balance of power from time-to-time. The key theatres of war remain limited to eastern and southern Ukraine, with frequent Ukrainian counteroffensive operations inside Moscow. The war has rapidly become a war of attrition for Russia. It has resulted in a situation where Russia is neither able to win the war nor clearly lose it or put an end to it. As a result, while Ukraine has had little to lose – with its capabilities being vastly bolstered by constant supply of Western military aid – Russia has systematically diluted its military superiority in this reckless gambit from which it is now unable to escape. This will get worse as the Israel-Hamas war also erupts simultaneously.

The initial Russian hopes to benefit from the Israel situation have now been belied. Russia had hoped for a diversion of international attention from Russia-Ukraine war, and festering of differences between US and Europe. However, these hopes were belied as the US announced new aid to Ukraine, and by Europe's stronger-than-expected support for Israel. The new developments also portend a worsening of Russia-Israel ties, as Russia undertakes a balancing act, largely in favour of Hamas (few months back, it had even hosted Hamas representatives), develops new military ties with Iran and outsources its influence across Syria and Middle-east to Iran thereby complicating the security dilemmas of Israel.

Diplomatically, besides Iran, its other rare ally, China, has also not lived up to its expectations. This was reflected in the fact that in Putin's visit to Beijing as the Guest of Honour in

mid-October for the Belt and Road Initiative summit, there were hardly any tangible outcomes in favour of Russia, besides the stale rhetoric. They also differ in their view on the Israel-Hamas conflict, even though both have not taken a pro-Israel stand, and largely favour Palestine. While China hopes for a cessation of hostility in order to keep global oil markets stable, Russia hopes for escalation of conflict so that shooting up of global oil prices can bring it more energy export revenues.

DEVELOPMENTS IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

With the rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI), governments have scrambled to find ways to regulate this technology. The most recent exemplification of this was the first of its kind, global AI Safety Summit hosted by the UK. The summit gave shape to the Bletchley Declaration, agreed to by 28 countries, including heavyweights like the US, UK, and China. The declaration lays out plans for greater transparency from AI developers regarding safety practices and more scientific collaboration on understanding AI's risks. At the summit, the UK government announced a major £225 million investment into a powerful new supercomputer called Isambard-AI, intended to achieve breakthroughs across healthcare, energy, climate modelling and other fields.

The summit also highlighted some of the other issues associated with AI, such as implications for governance and democracy, and, the existential risks posed by AI in the coming times. Simultaneously with the AI Safety Summit hosted by UK, the US also took a significant step towards AI regulation, as the White House issued an executive order requiring tech firms to submit test results for powerful AI systems to the

government before they are released to the public.

This regulatory spree has come up even as the space of AI witnesses rapid changes. The latest debate is on the multimodal dimensions of AI – systems that can possess full cognitive capabilities like human beings. Unlike the present AI systems that can efficiently perform intellectual work, multimodal systems can glean meaning from images, speech, sounds, videos etc., bringing AI a step closer to human likeness. Recently, ChatGPT-3.5 and ChatGPT-4 models have been upgraded in this direction, to be able to study and analyze images and perform speech synthesis, enabling users to have full-fledged conversations with them. ChatGPT parent company, OpenAI, is also working on a new full-fledged multimodal system called Gobi. Similarly, Google is also in the process of releasing a multimodal AI model, Gemini, which can perform all these cognitive tasks.

SUPREME COURT JUDGEMENT ON SAME SEX MARRIAGES

In a recent ruling, the Supreme Court has finally delivered the judgement on same sex marriages. The court's five-judge Constitution Bench ruled in a 3:2 verdict against same sex marriages.

First, the key issue before the court was whether there is a right to marry under the Indian Constitution, and if there is, is the prevention of same-sex couples from being able to enjoy this right discriminatory. Both questions were answered firmly and unanimously in the negative by the Court, with the Court upholding that right to marry is not a fundamental constitutional right, but a legal right.

According to the reasoning of the Court, marriage is an institution set up under law – and same-sex couples do not have a right to participate in it unless the law permits them to do so. The fact that it does not permit them at this moment is not unconstitutional.

Further, the Special Marriage Act, 1954 – a legislation that was enacted to enable inter-faith marriages – was by the Court upheld in its current form, i.e., permitting marriages only between a ‘man’ and a ‘woman’.

Second, another issue before the Court was whether same sex couples have the right to enter a ‘civil union’ – a marriage-like setup where the couple enjoys a specific of legal rights and protections. Again, the Court answered in the negative. Here, the Court found that only an elected legislature is competent to make such interventions. This is because granting same-sex couples the right to marry or enter a union will involve changes to a vast range of “legislative architectures” and policies, such as those involving, among others, insurance, banking, adoption, succession, pension, healthcare, etc.

Third, a key issue before the Court was inability of same sex couples to adopt children – a benefit that flows only from marriage. Initially, since the Juvenile Justice Act 2015 permits a single person to adopt a child, same-sex couples were able to adopt children by designating one of the partners as the legal parent. In 2022, however, the Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA) ended this arrangement by issuing the Adoption Regulations, which require a couple to be in a two-year stable marital relationship to be eligible for adoption. Over and above this, a circular was also issued prohibiting a person from adopting a child if that person was in a live-in relationship.

Consequently, same sex couples became ineligible to adopt.

In its decision on this issue, the Court, in a majority, found the judiciary ill-equipped to consider the potential impact of extending the right to jointly adopt children to same-sex couples.

Thus, the overall judgement of the Court firmly puts the issue in the basket of the Union government and the Parliament, even as it made sympathetic observations for same-sex couples during the hearings.

BIHAR CASTE SURVEY

The political gimmick in the form of the Bihar caste census appears to be following the law of diminishing returns. The census was held in two phases. The first phase involved the counting of households and the second phase collected information on all castes, religions, and economic backgrounds. The survey results show that extremely backward classes (EBCs) and other backward classes (OBCs) together add up to nearly 63% of the 13-crore population, making it the largest caste group in the State. The “unreserved” category of so-called “forward” castes is about 15.5%.

The findings are being largely politicized. Interestingly, the survey only revealed the caste numbers and the Bihar government did not release the supplementary data on socio-economic position of these various castes. For, the release of such data might create internal divisions and prevent caste-based mobilization.

The Opposition seems to have united around this survey and is now demanding an all-India caste census. Even the Congress has reversed its prolonged opposition to such a

survey. The implication might be that the 50% ceiling on reservation put by the Supreme Court in the Indira Sawhney judgement of 1992 may be revised on the basis of the principle of reservation according to share in population. The Opposition is also hoping to revive the 1990s Mandal era politics through which it had undertaken backward class mobilization. This might be a misguided strategy for several reasons:

First, the Opposition has put all its eggs in this basket – at least at a major level. It is unable to focus on other issues and has gone back to the plank of identity politics. This hope of going back to a two-decade old past might grandly backfire, as caste identities are not as radical as they were in the past. While caste is still strong, constructing an umbrella of disparate caste groups – from powerful OBCs like Yadavs to downtrodden Dalits – may fail, as the main oppressor of Dalits are dominant OBCs themselves.

Second, the Opposition hopes to bring about a renewed confrontation between the Mandir focus of BJP (especially around Ram mandir) and Mandal focus of caste-based parties. This may again backfire as it does not take into account the recent phenomenon of nationalistic and religious revival among the majority Hindus at a national level. Politics has changed significantly since 2014 and its collective psychological impact cannot be underestimated.

Third, through the gambit of caste divisions, the Opposition – especially Congress – is likely to alienate the upper castes significantly and will not be able to curry any major favour with the lower castes either.

Finally, the caste survey, instead of resulting in a breach of 50% reservation limit, may end up in a subcategorization of

OBCs – quota within quota – as was recommended by Justice Rohini Commission set up by the government in 2017. Initially, this idea was pioneered by Karpoori Thakur in Bihar – to woo the Extremely Backward Castes (EBCs) – during the 1970s.

The Appearance of Supermind in Terrestrial Nature Is a Certainty

“The descent of the supramental is an inevitable necessity in the logic of things and is therefore sure. It is because people do not understand what the supermind is or realise the significance of the emergence of consciousness in a world of “inconscious” Matter that they are unable to realise this inevitability. I suppose a matter-of-fact observer if there had been one at the time of the unrelieved reign of inanimate Matter in the earth’s beginning would have criticised any promise of the emergence of life in a world of dead earth and rock and mineral as an absurdity and a chimaera; so too afterwards he would have repeated his mistake and regarded the emergence of thought and reason in an animal world as an absurdity and a chimaera. It is the same now with the appearance of supermind in the stumbling mentality of this world of human consciousness and its reasoning ignorance.”

– Sri Aurobindo
(CWSA 28: 287)