

Afternoon

DESPATCH & COURIER

Ponder awhile...

"The political arena leaves one no alternative, one must either be a dunce or a rogue."

— Emma Goldman

United front of Nawaz, Kayani and Hafiz Saeed

FOR the first time in Pakistan, the Army seems to have decided to work in close cooperation with the civilian establishment. They appear to have stopped proving who is the boss. The army is content to be in charge of operations against 'hostile' countries like India. For instance, when Zardari was the President, the army acted on its own. It carried out Mumbai operation without letting the government know. And then, Al-Qaeda terrorist Osama bin Laden was in Pakistan for nine years without the knowledge of the civilian government. The army conducted several operations in Kashmir through the ISI — Pakistan's spy agency.

A latest development in Pakistan seems to be that the government, the national assembly and the army are all working together. PM Nawaz Sharif seems to have won over the army. It is to be seen whether Nawaz Sharif will be able to rein in the army and slow down its aggressive posture against India.

Terrorist groups in Pakistan seems to have become totally acceptable to the government now. The army had okayed co-operation from terrorists like Hafiz Saeed for quite a while, but now they are likely to be associated with the army and the government in all the campaigns against India. It is now clear that the killing of five Indian soldiers at the LoC had the approval of the government, the army and the terrorists.

Afternoon

DESPATCH & COURIER

CAROL ANDRADE
Editor

A.R. KANANGI
Associate Editor

KAMAL MORARKA
Chairman of the
Board of Directors

Afternoon Despatch & Courier office is located at:
Jannabhoomi Bhavan, 3rd Floor, Jannabhoomi Marg,
Fort, Mumbai-400 001. Phone: 40768999.

Fax: 40768916. E-mail: afternoonnews@gmail.com

Printed by Shashikant Jadhav for Courier Publications
Pvt. Ltd., at Journal Press, Free Press House, Free Press
Journal Marg, 215, Nariman Point, Mumbai-400 021 and
published by him from Jannabhoomi Bhavan,
3rd Floor, Jannabhoomi Marg, Fort, Mumbai-400 001.

Registered Office at: 98 Mittal Chambers,
Nariman Point, Mumbai-400 021.
Vol. XXIX No. 124

Modi's Independence Day Fireworks

Roman Emperor and stoic philosopher Marcus Aurelius, regarded as one of the 'Five Good Emperors' of the Nerva-Antonine dynasty, is attributed to stating: "Everything we hear is an opinion, not a fact. Everything we see is a perspective, not the truth". With our Prime Minister and the Chief Minister of Gujarat coming to a face-off on Independence Day one needs to look at the implications of this speech in a larger context.

Is Independence Day the apt forum?

While the Congress Party and some within Mr. Modi's own party have contested that the Independence Day and the Republic Day should be days to show unity and unanimity across party lines, the Bharatiya Janata Party spokespersons countered this stating that other countries have a tradition where the opposition rebuts the speech of the head of the state. The BJP argument is fair and has credence as this is prevalent in countries such as the United States where the State of the Union (SOTU) address is rebutted by a member of the opposition. In fact, in 2009, Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal responded to Barack Obama's address. Some independent analysts felt that only the leaders of the opposition — Sushma Swaraj or Arun Jaitley had the right to respond to our Prime Minister. In the United States, this would have meant either Mitch McConnell as Minority leader in the Senate or John Boehner as the Speaker of the House of Representatives would have responded. The fact that Bobby Jindal as the executive head of a state and a potential presidential candidate responded is a direct parallel to Modi's own positioning of his response. However, the flaw in the BJP argument is that the State of the Union address is delivered by the President of the United States between January and February every year and not on Independence Day of July 4th. Independence Day is typically a day of reconciliatory messages in the United States.

Having said that, the election for the 16th Lok Sabha in India is likely to redraw the way elections are contested forever in India — voter demography, usage of social media, presidential style campaigns and also a much earlier start to our once in a five year experiment at building a more perfect union. Mr. Modi capitalised on his oratorical skills and having the advantage of the last word was able to position this as a Presidential style election allowing people to compare, contrast and ultimately choose between two different leaders. While Modi's positioning of his speech as a rebuttal has had no precedence in the past, it does raise the larger need for the parties to debate their policies and politics on a common platform. Modi has made the case for this once again and more forcefully than ever before. Hopefully, this should set a

precedent where such a platform is provided in the interest of the electorate that both the parties look to win over. The Congress Party will never allow for a one-on-one between Modi and their future leader. However, a compromise three-member-a-side debate would be ideal.

A more nuanced argument

It is incumbent on Modi to build a case for the BJP as the Congress Party has the structural advantage due to his party's minimal presence in the East Coast Corridor states of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa and West Bengal. In these 144 seats, the BJP represents only the Lok Sabha seat of Darjeeling. Mr. Modi's best bet in these states is to target the urban voters who can be looked upon as low-hanging fruits. This requires a lot more nuance in Mr. Modi's arguments on growth, welfare policies and Human Development. For example, The UPA's argument has been that average growth rate in the eight years of the UPA from 2004-05 to 2012-13 was 8.2 per cent per annum and this is much better than the 5.7 per cent reached in the previous eight

in comparison with China, the growth differential had further widened, from 2.58 per cent to 3.26 per cent and UPA-II brought this back to a differential of the NDA regime.

India is more shielded compared to China on weakened international demand faced as a result of weakened international demand and should have performed much better in comparison to China. Such nuance will need to acknowledge the fact that the UPA term did have some aspects which the BJP would look to emulate, continue or strengthen based on the context. This will help Modi recalibrate his image as a centrist and allow him to resonate more with the Urban Middle class without compromising his existing charisma and appeal. The fact that this debate did not have any of the distractions that drowned out his larger message as in previous instances and also was more moderate compared to previous speeches makes it clear that such a recalibration is indeed taking place.

The Outsider vs. the Delhi Cabal

Mr. Modi has successfully positioned himself as a rank outsider and this has been his unique selling proposition. His portrayal of the current dispensation based out of Delhi as out of touch with reality and corrupted by power has been another reason for his ability to connect with people. His ability to position the debate as one of meritocracy rather than an entitlement has made the contest between the son of a grocer and the son of a Prime Minister fascinating. In fact, Modi's team would be well served remembering Niccolò Machiavelli, the father of republicanism, when he termed the first five emperors of the Nerva-Antonine dynasty, which included Marcus Aurelius, as the 'Five Good Emperors'. In 1503, Machiavelli reasoned, "From the study of this history we may also learn how a good government is to be established; for while all the emperors who succeeded to the throne by birth, except Titus, were bad, all were good who succeeded by adoption, as in the case of the five from Nerva to Marcus. But as soon as the empire fell once more to the heirs by birth, its ruin recommenced".

(Venkat Goli is the Founder of Yudofud — a conservative public strategy think-tank and can be contacted at: vgoli@yudofud.com and @kanesh_goli on Twitter)



« PERSPECTIVE »

Venkat Goli

years. Rather than contest numbers, Mr. Modi should talk about loss of opportunities in such cases. The growth differential between China and India during the 1992-1997 time-frame was 5.91 per cent. In the years ranging from 1998-2004, under the NDA, the growth differential between China and India was brought down to 2.58 per cent. During this period, India was not only able to sustain growth but also bridge the growth differential gap substantially with its peers. Under UPA-I,

Country	Cong+ UPFront (1992-97)	Growth Differ- ence	NDA (1998- 2004)	Growth Differ- ence	UPA-I (2005- 2009)	Growth Differ- ence	UPA-II (2009- 2012)	Growth Differ- ence
India	6.01	—	6.18	—	8.14	—	6.70	—
China	11.92	-5.91	8.76	-2.58	11.40	-3.26	9.17	-2.46

Figures: Growth Comparison — China and India (Source: World Bank)

Your Bookmark...!

I looked at the bookmark, "What need for this singer's name? The people come to hear the speaker, not the singer, and here you've even put his photo and name?"

"He won't sing unless his picture is on the bookmark!" laughed my friend.

« BOB'S BANTER »

Robert Clements

I looked at all the other unnecessary images and names: Organizers, donors, names of irrelevant people: I could hardly see the name of the speaker, so crushed in was he with all the others trying to share his little space.

You don't need a bookmark to see this. Watch a political hoarding when a digni-

tary is coming to inaugurate something; all the people in the locality, from the corporator to the MLA, the social worker are all staring at you from the billboard. The main person is hardly seen.

All of us love having our names and pictures everywhere don't we?

But in the process are we forgetting the main event?

How often we are praised for something we have done. We forget so quickly it is a God above who has helped us do it well. That it is He who has given us the talent, but we nod and even give ourselves a pat. Many of us pray for something and when we get it, forget to whom we prayed to.

The name on your bookmark should be the real person getting the glory; it could be a God above, it could be your dad and mom, but what is the easiest thing to do? Squeeze them out and let everyone see you.

Whose picture do you have on your bookmark?

bobsbanter@gmail.com