

The Balochistan Tactic



(Source- <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/asia/2013/08/20138653438348183.html>)

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Lead Essay

The Balochistan Tactic

The ongoing Kashmir conflict featured prominently in the speech of Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, when he dedicated his country's 70th Independence Day to the "freedom of Kashmir" from the Indian rule. The Indian Prime Minister seems to have countered him in his Independence Day Speech, where he reminded the Pakistani government about their own atrocities committed in the Balochistan province and the Gilgit-Baltistan region.

Just like India blames Pakistan for supporting the insurgency in the Kashmir region, similarly, Pakistani officials claim the involvement of the Indian intelligence agency, Research and Analysis Wing in aiding the Baloch separatists.ⁱ The comments of PM Modi brought a ray of hope for the Baloch people. Khalil Baloch, chairman of the Baloch National Movement said, "Baloch nation hopes that the United States and Europe will join Prime Minister Modi and hold Pakistan accountable for the crimes against humanity and the war crimes it has committed against the Baloch nation in 68 years of its occupation of Balochistan".ⁱⁱ

Some experts too have been advocating the idea that Balochistan can be used as a "pressure point" against the exertions and claims of Pakistan over the issues of Kashmir in India. However, there can be no real similarity between Kashmir and Balochistan because the Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) and Gilgit-Baltistan are claimed by India, but there is no Indian claim on Balochistan. In fact, raising concerns on Balochistan would be equivalent to Pakistan raising concerns on the Maoist areas or in Nagaland or Manipur.ⁱⁱⁱ Therefore, this move by the government needs to be reconsidered as it will have deeper geo-political ramifications for India.

Conflict in Balochistan

Balochistan is a vast yet sparsely populated province in the south-western Pakistan, which has been a source of conflict and instability for decades. The Baloch people are poverty-stricken despite living in areas rich in natural resources. The bone of contention between the government of Pakistan and local leaders of Balochistan has been over autonomy, wealth distribution, and the sheltering of insurgents, which have increased dramatically in intensity in the last year, with implications for regional stability and the war against Islamic militancy.^{iv}

Between the periods 2003 to 2012, it has been estimated that around 8000 people were abducted by the Pakistani security forces in Balochistan. In 2008 alone, an estimated 1102 Baloch people disappeared. There are also reports of torture, with an increasing number of bodies "with burn marks, broken limbs, nails pulled out, and sometimes with holes drilled in their heads" which have been found on roadsides as the result of a "kill and dump" campaign conducted by Pakistani security forces, particularly Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and the Frontier Corps (FC). Until the 9/11/01 World Trade Centre attacks, these security forces had sided with the Afghan Taliban and Al-Qaeda against the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan. In July 2011, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan issued a report on illegal disappearances in Balochistan and identified ISI and Frontier Corps as the culprits for the atrocities. However, no one has been held responsible for the above crimes.^v

Should India Talk About Intervention?

In July, 2009, Pakistan's Prime Minister Gilani and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh signed a joint statement at Sharm el-Sheikh in Egypt during the NAM summit. According to the agreement, "Both the prime ministers recognised that dialogue is the only way forward. Action on terrorism should not be linked to the Composite Dialogue process and these should not be bracketed." The above agreement infuriated some sections of foreign policy experts and political parties, including the BJP, who viewed this as a softening of India's stand towards Pakistan because it meant that the future peace dialogues with Pakistan would not be interrupted, even if another Mumbai-type attack were to occur.^{vi}

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The BJP view and therefore that of the current NDA government's view on the issue stems from the views articulated by the current NSA. Before Ajit Doval became the National Security Adviser, he famously warned Pakistan that a repeat of the Mumbai 26/11 attack could lead to Pakistan losing Balochistan. The Doval Doctrine, as it is now known, involves what he calls a "defensive-offensive" strategy where India's security establishment acquires a sub-conventional second strike capability, to be wielded as and when needed.^{vii} After the comments of PM Modi, the Former High Commissioner to Pakistan G. Parthasarathy said it was a "long overdue" and a "necessary step for inducing Pakistan to fall in line". In addition he said, "India has been more restrained than necessary despite Pakistan constantly carrying out propaganda on Kashmir, calling it the legacy of Partition. If that's the case, Balochistan also is a legacy of Partition". Parthasarathy also recalled how Jinnah recognised Balochistan's independent status before Pakistan obtained its accession.^{viii} The above views immediately found external support from Bangladesh, who too came out in support of Prime Minister Modi's stand on the Balochistan issue, saying Dhaka would soon make a policy declaration on Pakistan's human rights abuses in Balochistan.^{ix}

If India were to follow these views then essentially its stand would mean that, "if Pakistan can use internal Indian vulnerabilities (read Kashmir), India can use Pakistani internal vulnerabilities too. If Pakistan can internationalise what India considers its problem, India can internationalise what Pakistan thinks falls solely within its remit. If Pakistan can build a domestic political opinion on human rights excesses in Kashmir, India can build a domestic political opinion on human rights excesses in Balochistan. If Pakistan can cultivate a Kashmiri separatist constituency within India, India can cultivate a separatist Baloch constituency in Pakistan".^x The policy of 'eye for an eye' would definitely turn disastrous and plunge the sub-continent into a war.

While a number of Baloch activists invoke Mrs. Indira Gandhi's liberation of Bangladesh and draw a comparison between Balochistan and Bangladesh movement, there really is no comparison between the two. Balochistan does not have a political direction or an ideological structure to form a separate nation, or even to harness the popular sentiments into a mass movement. In addition, the Baloch tribal chiefs continue to be the biggest obstacle for the emergence of the national movement due to their personal aspirations and ego.^{xi}

On the other hand, Indian intervention in Balochistan would also bring it in direct conflict with China, which forms the part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). China sees the Balochistan port of Gwadar as an integral part of its One Belt, One Road (OBOR) initiative. Therefore, China would not sit idle if the separatists, allegedly backed by India, would prevent them from operating at the Gwadar port, which represents \$46 billion in Chinese investment. Hence, there can be a possibility of China initiating or supporting unrest in the Indian northeast states, or even worse, by supporting Pakistan's proxy militants. Therefore, to avoid the above developments, the challenge for India actually is to ensure that Balochistan does not disrupt the Sino-Indian relationship.^{xii}

The Core Issues

A number of voices have opined that by drawing Balochistan to the already-volatile geopolitical mix, India runs the risk of sacrificing its grand strategy of regional stability in the region of Kashmir against Pakistan. It has also been alleged that the Modi government, by taking up the issue of Balochistan, is trying to divert the attention from the ongoing unrest in Kashmir.^{xiii} The Valley of Kashmir is under the imposition of curfew since 42 days, the immediate cause for which was the killing of Burhan Wani, a militant.^{xiv} This led to clashes between the central security forces and the people of Kashmir. The central as well as the Jammu and Kashmir government have failed to restore peace in Kashmir.

In the wake of the violent unrest, many innocent Kashmiris as well as some security personnel have been killed in the past two months. During the hearing by the Jammu and Kashmir High Court, it was reported that between July 8 and August 11, the force used 8,650 tear-smoke shells and 3,000 pellet cartridges, besides 14 types of "less lethal and nonlethal" munitions, such as oleoresin grenades, pepper balls, stun grenades and electron shells.^{xv} By mentioning the three — PoK, Gilgit-Baltistan and Balochistan — in the same breath, "the Prime Minister also does a disservice to

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India's own case for Kashmir, a case made stronger by the fact that India has preserved Kashmir's demographics and landholding through Article 370. In contrast, Pakistan has not only repopulated many parts of PoK, it hived off Gilgit-Baltistan by giving it quasi-provincial and self-governance powers with an executive order in 2009".^{xvi}

PM Modi's comments have also been criticised by the former External Affairs Minister, Mr. Salman Khursid who said, "Balochistan is a different thing from PoK. We have every right to speak about PoK because it is our matter. Balochistan is not; rather it is Pakistan's "internal matter."^{xvii}

Therefore, while the PM's references to Balochistan may have gladdened some hearts, it is likely to achieve little. No matter how they look at it, no country in the world has questioned Balochistan's accession to Pakistan.^{xviii}

India can, of course, stir up trouble in Pakistan, as they have numerous fault-lines – religious, sectarian, ethnic differences among its people – which can be made wider. But at the end of the day, we need an answer to the big question: "Is it in India's interest to deepen Pakistan's turmoil and possibly help break it up? Does India have the time or the money to afford this policy? Certainly not". India needs to focus on the opportunities to achieve its primary goal of eliminating poverty and disparity through sustained, and inclusive economic growth. For this we need regional peace, not tit-for-tat wars.^{xix}

Most importantly, the government must adopt a different policy by raising the issues of human rights violations and the atrocities committed in Balochistan at the United Nations, instead of intervening in the internal affairs of Pakistan.^{xx} Therefore, India needs to secure its own position and deal with its internal problems and not upset this hard fought 'de-hyphenation' from Pakistan. Moreover, overcoming the failure in Srinagar must remain at the heart of the Modi government's Kashmir strategy.

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ⁱⁱ <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/balochistan-leaders-welcome-pm-narendra-modis-speech-2978410/> Date Accessed: 17.8.2016

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^{iv} <http://www.usip.org/events/the-crisis-in-balochistan> Date Accessed: 17.8.2016

^v https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Balochistan_conflict Date Accessed: 17.8.2016

^{vi} http://www.idsa.in/strategiccomments/IndoPakJointStatement_AGupta_200709 Date Accessed: 17.8.2016

^{vii} <http://www.orfonline.org/research/engage-the-dragon-on-balochistan/> Date Accessed: 17.8.2016

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^{xv} <http://scroll.in/latest/814396/we-used-1-3-million-pellets-in-32-days-in-kashmir-crpf-informs-high-court> Date Accessed: 19.9.2016

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^{xviii} <http://www.orfonline.org/research/pms-baloch-reference-was-it-to-please-hardcore-supporters/> Date Accessed: 17.8.2016

^{xix} <http://scroll.in/article/814227/is-it-in-indias-interest-to-deepen-pakistans-turmoil-and-possibly-help-break-it-up> Date Accessed: 19.8.2016

^{xx} <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/columns/avoiding-the-copycat-trap-on-balochistan-writes-suhasini-haidar/article8999602.ece> Date Accessed: 19.8.2016

Headlines

Education policy: it's right to consult India's larger mind

(J.S. Rajput, *The New Indian Express*, August 20, 2016)

The HRD ministry has invited suggestions and comments on a 43-page document, 'Some Inputs for Draft National Education Policy 2016'. The ministry, subsequently, also put on its website the 217-page report submitted in May 2016 by the committee appointed to evolve National Education Policy (NEP). Obviously, a final draft policy would emerge in due course and undergo the process of formal acceptance and approval at appropriate levels. It is encouraging to observe that since the past two years, every section of society is being given an opportunity to participate in the consultation on NEP formulation.

ReadMore:<http://www.newindianexpress.com/magazine/voices/Education-policy-its-right-to-consult-Indias-larger-mind/2016/08/13/article3585926.ece>

Date Accessed: 22.8.2016

Why Gujarat appears to have fallen off the news map over the last two years

(Sandeep Bhushab, *Scroll*, August 23, 2016)

Even as Prime Minister Narendra Modi held forth on Balochistan from the ramparts of the Red Fort on August 15, hundreds of Dalits and their supporters were marching to Una to protest mounting atrocities on them by caste Hindus in the state of Gujarat. While echoes of Modi's statement on Balochistan continue to reverberate across sundry media platforms, the 500-kms-long march from Ahmedabad to Una – aptly termed "Azadi Kooch" ("march to freedom") spread out over 10 days – is already a distant memory.

<http://scroll.in/article/814661/why-gujarat-appears-to-have-fallen-off-the-news-map-over-the-last-two-years>

Date Accessed: 23.8.2016

Economy

After Modi's Civil Aviation Policy the systematic clearing of India's Runways need to continue

(Gaurav Daga, *thewire*, August 23, 2016)

Contrary to many assumptions, India is no longer a country of promise. The promise in India has arrived and is taking shape in an unprecedented way. Not long ago, India was a country governed by a strict Nehruvian model of socialism. While various sectors are governed under Nehruvian nostalgia, the reforms of 1991 fundamentally transformed the institutional and governance structure of the state. As the disposable income of the aspirational class grows and India integrates itself into the global economy, it will require significant investment in its infrastructure capacity. Investments in infrastructure will prove an important ingredient to steer economic development and equity. For many analysts, there exists a strong correlation between GDP and the aviation sector. They argue that, as the country grows, the ability to travel will penetrate across different classes and thus will create demand for global businesses. In the last few years (2009-2011), the total domestic airline passenger traffic of India, has seen a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of over 17%, with 81 million passengers flying in 2015-16. If this trend continues, it is forecast that it will reach over 140 million passengers by 2020. Boeing estimates that air traffic within South Asia is alone expected to grow at 9.9% annually—marking it the highest growth rates in the world. If these estimates are to be taken seriously, South Asia will require around \$120 billion investments and India covers almost 80% of this aviation market.

Read More: <http://thewire.in/60777/between-regulation-and-private-players-challenges-in-the-civil-aviation-sector-in-india/>

Date Accessed: 23.8.2016

Soaring prices and stagnated wages plague Russia - held Crimea

(Maria Tsvetkova, *thewire*, August 22, 2016)

Armyansk, Crimea: More than two years after Russia annexed Crimea and promised its 2 million people a better life, residents say prices have soared, wages and pensions have stagnated and tourists have fled.

The sunny and mountainous Black Sea peninsula is back in the news, with Russian President Vladimir Putin accusing Kiev of sending infiltrators across the border to wreck its industry. But locals say the damage has already been done by Moscow's neglect. "We joined Russia and they stopped giving a damn about us," Yevgeny, a worker at a titanium plant in the town of Armyansk told Reuters.

"People are naive. They thought that if we were part of Russia, everything would be Russian. Prices have now jumped to the Russian level, but wages have stayed the same. That's the main problem."

Read More: <http://thewire.in/60749/soaring-prices-and-stagnated-wages-plague-russia-held-crimea/>

Date Accessed: 23.8.2016

China's Setbacks with UK, Australia Present India with Strategic Opportunities

(Arun Mohan Sukumar, *thewire*, August 17, 2016)

Two of the most powerful trading nations in the world appear set to cancel their critical infrastructure projects with China, raising questions about the economic future of the Asian giant.

Australia's federal treasury has blocked the sale of state-owned power distributor Ausgrid to companies based in China and Hong Kong, while the British government has been hauled over the coals — no pun intended — for agreeing to let China build its nuclear power station at Hinkley Point in Somerset. The developments present a serious blow to Beijing's economic diplomacy, and at the same time, an opportunity for India. If Ausgrid's sale has been explicitly blocked on "national security" concerns, the Hinkley Point project has been delayed to allow Prime Minister Theresa May to "study" its feasibility. The high costs of the nuclear station are being touted as an obstacle, but the Tories are on record citing the project as the "selling [of] our national security to China".

Read More: <http://thewire.in/59722/chinas-setbacks-with-the-uk-and-australia-present-india-with-strategic-opportunities/>

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Governance & Development

DEVELOPMENT

Sikkim High Court issues notice to state government on landslide dam

(Anupam Chakravartty, *Down to Earth*, August 22, 2016)

The petition states: “The Judiciary is under an obligation to extend social justice to the people of the area and as such, we are of the considered opinion that the issue in respect of Dzongu Avalanche and consequential damage and loss to the people living therein be taken up by way of Suo Moto Writ Petition for consideration.” The Division Bench issued notices to the Chief Secretary and District Magistrate (North) directing them to submit a status report “indicating the steps taken by them for relief and rehabilitation, extending necessary help to such people of that area (Upper Dzongu)”.

Read More: <http://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/sikkim-high-court-issues-notice-to-state-government-on-landslide-dam-55354>

Date Accessed: 22.8.2016

SECURITY

Islamic commune that came under the radar after 21 Kerala youth went missing wants to turn secular

(TA Ameerudheen, *Scroll*, August 22, 2016)

Till a few months ago, Athikkad was a nondescript village in the Mallapuram district of Kerala, unknown to most living outside the state. Since June, however, an Islamic commune there has been in the glare of the media and under the radar of the police and intelligence agencies, ever since a group of youngsters went missing from Kerala. The village is roughly 400 km north of Thiruvananthapuram, the state capital.

Read More: <http://scroll.in/article/814177/islamic-commune-that-came-under-the-radar-after-21-kerala-youth-went-missing-wants-to-turn-secular>

Date Accessed: 22.8.2016

BJP's MVA Amendment Bill Goes Soft on Road Safety After Eager Start

(T.V.Padma, *The Wire*, August 16, 2016)

The introduction of the Motor Vehicles Act Amendment, 2016 Bill by Nitin Gadkari, the union minister for road transport, highways and shipping, in the Lok Sabha last week left some questions unanswered even as road accidents and fatalities due to them continue to rise in India. Principal among them is the fate of the parallel Road Transport & Safety Bill.

Read More: <http://thewire.in/59267/mva-road-safety-pedestrian/>

Date Accessed: 22.8.2016

EDUCATION

Kerala Allots Rs 10,000 cr for Government Schools

(Times of India, August 18, 2016)

Kerala Finance Minister Thomas Issac has earmarked Rs 10,000 crore (\$1.5 billion) for state-run and aided schools for the five year term of the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) led Left Democratic Front government. The IT@School project has been entrusted the responsibility of forming a special purpose vehicle (SPV) to oversee the programme. IT@School project was launched in 2001 in Kerala to foster information technology education in schools and on a longer term facilitate Information and Communication Technology (ICT) enabled education.

Read More: http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/education/Kerala-allots-Rs-10000-cr-for-government-schools/articleshow/53753537.cms?utm_source=toimobile&utm_medium=Facebook&utm_campaign=referral&from=mdr

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Governance & Development

Affiliation Systems Must be Abolished

(S.B. Nimse, *The Deccan Herald*, August 22, 2016)

With around 800 universities and over 40,000 colleges, India tops the world in terms of the number of higher education institutions but the overall quality remains poor. The basic problem with the higher education in the country is that there is more stress on compliance rather than on innovation. There is an urgent need to promote technology-enabled learning in a big way to achieve the goal of 30% gross enrolment ratio by 2020.

Read More: <http://www.deccanherald.com/content/566155/affiliation-system-must-abolished.html>

Date of Access: 22.8.2016

HEALTH

India lacks accurate data to tackle Hepatitis cases

(Kundan Pandey and Jyotsna Singh, *Down to Earth*, July 27, 2016)

At a time when millions in India are suffering from Hepatitis C, the country has neither accurate data regarding its prevalence nor policies to support patients. While the world is observing Hepatitis Day to increase awareness about the disease, millions are dying every year in India as the government has no programme to support patients. The United Nations adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 with an aim to combat Hepatitis by 2030. The World Health Organization has adopted the Draft Global Health Sector Strategies for viral Hepatitis(2016-2021), identifying areas and strategies for action.

ReadMore: <http://www.downtoearth.org.in/coverage/hepatitis-c-is-india-faltering-to-deal-with-the-disease--55078#1>

Date Accessed: 22.8.2016

Indian Scientists Have a New Hypothesis of Why Zika is So Deadly to Brains

(Nandita Jayaraj, *The Wire*, August 19, 2016)

Amid a global flurry of research into Zika, a team of Indian scientists have quietly emerged with a plausible theory that explains how Zika infected mothers are giving birth to babies with malformed brains.

Read More: <http://thewire.in/60147/is-this-how-zika-is-affecting-babies-brains-ask-indian-scientists/>

Date Accessed: 22.8.2016

Patient's Privacy

(*The Daily News and Analysis*, August 18, 2016)

It can be argued that the decision of the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) that no prior permission is required to import or export human biological samples for commercial purposes will help in many ways. Doctors and patients can now access facilities for testing — including tissue culture — abroad. There is also complication that when the human biological samples that are being carted across the borders the question of medical confidentiality assumes great importance. Patients would want the information to remain strictly private. There should be a legal framework, a policy, which will help the patient to protect her privacy, and which he or she can use to defend the right if there is a violation.

Read More: http://www.huffingtonpost.in/siddharth-chatterjee/how-law-enforcement-fails-indias-women/?utm_hp_ref=homepage

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Governance & Development

TECHNOLOGY

Are You a Criminal Now? Users May Get 3 years in Jail for Viewing Torrent Site, Blocked URL in India

(Javed Anwer, India Today, August 22, 2016)

Call it the new Digital India. The Indian government, with the help of internet service providers, and presumably under directives of court, has banned thousands of websites and URLs in the last five odd years. But until now if you somehow visited these "blocked URLs" all was fine. However, now if you try to visit such URLs and view the information, you may get three-year jail sentence as well as invite a fine of Rs 3 lakh. This is just for viewing a torrent file, or downloading a file from a host that may have been banned in India, or even for viewing an image on a file host like Imagebam. You don't have to download a torrent file, and then the actual videos or other files, which might have copyright. Just accessing information under a blocked URL will land you in jail and leave your bank account poorer by Rs 3 lakh.

Read More: <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/technology/story/are-you-a-criminal-now-users-may-get-3-yr-in-jail-for-viewing-torrent-site-blocked-url-in-india/1/745181.html>

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AGRICULTURE

Why Maharashtra's farmers are upbeat about the state's new weekly vegetable markets

(Mridula Chari, Scroll, August 20, 2016)

The previous government had also experimented with farmers' weekly markets. There are around 20 such thriving in Pune right now, all established as projects under the Maharashtra State Agriculture Marketing Board. Even Thane had two, opened in 2012, but both lasted only two or three months. With the present government's notification, however, farmers anywhere can now set up stalls for marketing.

Read More: <http://scroll.in/article/814281/why-maharashtras-farmers-are-upbeat-about-the-states-new-weekly-vegetable-markets>

Date Accessed: 22.8.2016

Society

CASTEISM

How Ola and Uber are Helping Chip at the Caste and Class Barriers in India

(Nikhil Inamdar, Scroll, August 22, 2016)

Ola's competitor Uber has been readying a batch of some 200 former safai karamcharis (sanitation workers, often referred to as manual scavengers in India) for a new life as cab drivers. "They are likely to receive commercial licences by October this year," said an Uber spokesperson. Their induction into this new job is a momentous occasion for a people who till recently faced a historical indignity that was officially proscribed years ago. As part of the same initiative by app-based aggregators like Uber and Meru with the National Safai Karamcharis Finance and Development Corporation, some 250 young women, all daughters of the safai karamcharis, are being given training as drivers. Nine hundred more likely to come on board soon.

Read More: <http://scroll.in/article/813743/how-ola-and-uber-are-helping-chip-at-the-caste-and-class-barriers-in-india>

Date of Access: 22.8.2016

GENDER

When women become the family's breadwinner

(Priya Sunder, Live Mint, August 22, 2016)

Women earning more than men are a radical change not just in India but across the world. It would be an anomaly in my mother's generation and unthinkable in my grandmother's era. But are women enjoying their new alpha role in the family? How have husbands adjusted to this new equilibrium?

Read More: <http://www.livemint.com/Money/qJSQk88ObbLzMe0PVrCwiI/When-women-become-the-familys-breadwinner.html>

Date Accessed: 22.8.2016

How Law Enforcement Fails India's Women

(Siddhartha Chatterjee, The Huffington Post, August 14, 2016)

Despite societal outrage and widespread media spotlight on the crimes, law-enforcement institutions have been slow to act, and at times lethargic. When will the state machinery wake up? What more needs to happen before the police react to crimes against women promptly? From a Trotsky perspective, the police is after all "a copy of society and suffers from all its diseases." The patriarchal, misogynistic Indian culture invariably condones, covertly or explicitly, violent acts like rape. Then there is the legacy question of class -- law and society favour the wealthy over the poor. Victims from lower castes and poor backgrounds are routinely threatened by families and allies of the accused from higher castes.

Read More: http://www.huffingtonpost.in/siddharth-chatterjee/how-law-enforcement-fails-indias-women/?utm_hp_ref=homepage

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India and World

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

China Aligns With Russia in Syria, Creating a Headache for the US

(Rob Garver, *The Fiscal Times*, August 18, 2016)

As if the multi-party war in Syria weren't complicated enough, it now appears that the People's Republic of China has decided to take a more active role in the conflict, providing increased humanitarian assistance and possibly military training to Syrian forces, according to China's state-run media outlet Xinhua. China's announcement that it is increasing its commitment to the Assad regime comes just a day after Russia announced that it had launched strikes against ISIS from an airbase inside the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Read More: <http://www.thefiscaltimes.com/2016/08/18/China-Aligns-Russia-Syria-Creating-Headache-US>

Date of Access: 22.8.2016

EUROPE

Climate change: Netherlands on Brink of Banning Sale of Petrol-Fuelled Cars

(Jess Staufenberg, *Independent*, 18 August, 2016)

Europe appears poised to continue its move towards cutting fossil fuel use as the Netherlands joins a host of nations looking to pass innovative green energy laws. The Dutch government has set a date for parliament to host a roundtable discussion that could see the sale of petrol- and diesel-fuelled cars banned by 2025. If the measures proposed by the Labour Party in March are finally passed, it would join Norway and Denmark in making a concerted move to develop its electric car industry.

Read More: <http://www.independent.co.uk/environment/climate-change/netherlands-petrol-car-ban-law-bill-to-be-passed-reduce-climate-change-emissions-a7197136.html?cmpid=facebook-post>

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AMERICAS

War to 'stop' war: Libya's 'Operation Odyssey Lightning'

(Ramzy Baroud, *Foreign Policy Journal*, August 20, 2016)

Days are long gone when the US labored to establish coalitions to wage war, as it did in Kuwait and Iraq in 1990-91 and, to a lesser extent, again, in Iraq in 2003. Now, wars are carried out as a matter of course. Many Americans seem to be unaware, or oblivious to the fact, that their country is actually fighting wars on several fronts, and is circuitously involved in others.

Read More: <http://www.foreignpolicyjournal.com/2016/08/20/war-to-stop-war-libyas-operation-odyssey-lightning/>

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Opinions/ Books

OPINIONS

'This is Not the India that Our Founding Fathers had Envisioned'

(Scroll, August 22, 2016)

The first thing that people in the country are concerned about is the blatant misuse of public office by politicians and the rampant corruption in the country. Even 69 years after independence, if a political party uses caste as a factor to gain power in a state, this speaks volumes of the country's development. Poor people remain poor, the rich grow richer, millions do not have regular access to power and water and have to fight for food – this is not the picture of India that our so-called founding fathers had in mind.

Read More: <http://scroll.in/article/814507/this-is-not-the-india-that-our-founding-fathers-had-envisioned>

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Did the Soviet Union Really End?

(Masha Gessen, *The New York Times*, August 17, 2016)

But these institutions have turned out to be stronger than the men who had set out to reform them. They resisted change for nearly a decade, and once Vladimir V. Putin became president, they fell into place, easing Russia's regression. Today, life in Russia – where everything is political, where the population is mobilized around leader and nation, where censorship and one-party rule have effectively been restored – is more similar to life in the Soviet Union than at any point in the last 25 years.

Read More: http://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/17/opinion/did-the-soviet-union-really-end.html?_r=0

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Opinions/ Books

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