

The Resurgent India

A Monthly National Review

December 2024



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

– The Mother

Year 15

Issue 9

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)
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www.resurgentindia.org

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

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SUCCESSFUL FUTURE

(Full of Promise and Joyful Surprises)

Botanical name: Gaillardia Pulchella

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

Year 15

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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)

HIGHLIGHTS

DEVELOPMENTS IN RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

Even as the Russia-Ukraine war continues unabated, prospects of a peaceful settlement are now beginning to appear more concrete, especially after Donald Trump's victory in the US elections. Trump's vow to end the war has propelled Europe to actively come up with solutions. There are two main reasons for this:

First, once Trump comes to power, he will seek to end the war on terms most favourable to American interests. Given Trump's skepticism of American dollars being funneled to fund wars abroad, this might entail a drawdown of military aid to Ukraine. Further, ever since his first term in office, Trump has accorded greater priority to dealing with the multi-faceted challenge from China, rather than Russia. This has been the focus of US administration, regardless of which party was in power, as successive US national security outlook documents have given greater priority to China. Under Trump, efforts to settle the front with Russia quickly to focus on China will gain ascendance. Therefore, negotiating an end to the war will be an important priority for Trump.

Second, Trump's legendary skepticism of NATO is also a significant factor affecting whether Ukraine will be allowed to join the organization. Under Biden administration, the US had formally withdrawn support to Ukrainian membership of NATO in 2021. Under Trump, an added

factor is the American pressure on European countries to increase their defence contributions to the NATO to at least 5% of their GDP. Presently, for nearly all European countries this figure is less than 2%. Under such circumstances, US will continue to oppose Ukraine's NATO membership.

Thanks to this American outlook, European countries are now actively considering what kind of security guarantees may be provided to Ukraine in the event of a negotiated settlement with Russia, which looks increasingly likely in 2025. For, both sides are aware that any kind of peaceful settlement will not mean peace. Under the guise of peaceful settlement, both parties will inevitably seek to revamp their military capabilities anticipating another war or conflict. Ukraine – short of amassing nuclear weapons – will build up its military base, while Russia will seek to recover from its losses, and will also take advantage of a China-focused US to expand its imperialist influence across Eurasia in the former Soviet space.

Given these realities and given the unlikelihood of NATO being a solution, European countries are now considering providing post-war security guarantees to Ukraine outside of the NATO framework. The process was initiated over the past few months by France, with the Biden administration largely snubbing it. With Trump's re-election, the urgency to give shape to a new framework has gained further ground, with Britain, France, Germany, and Poland being the most active participants, followed by Italy and Nordic countries who have signalled their agreeability

to contribute to the new framework. Apart from security guarantees, continued military assistance and defence industry cooperation with Ukraine are also being considered by European countries. Some of the suggestions include:

- A “coalition of the resolute” to deploy forces to Ukraine.
- Non-combat boots on the ground, far from the frontlines, performing logistical assistance tasks to free up the Ukrainian personnel for frontline combat.
- Air defences in allied territory (Poland in this case) to target Russian missiles and drones in certain parts of Ukraine’s air space.

However, even as these guarantees are being considered outside the NATO framework, European countries also realize that, for them to be effective, they would need the NATO deterrent.

DEVELOPMENTS IN ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR

The temporary ceasefire between Israel and Hamas ended in early December, bringing with it no significant improvement in outlook towards peace and entailing a resumption of hostilities. While during the ceasefire phase, Hamas released about a hundred Israeli hostages out of the nearly two hundred people it had taken hostage in its last year’s terrorist attack, Israel freed nearly two hundred Hamas terrorists. With the resumption of hostilities, and with the withdrawal of Hezbollah from the war due to the ceasefire across the Lebanese border, Israel has been able to focus more effectively on eliminating Hamas.

The re-election of Donald Trump in the American Presidential elections has come as a major boost to Israel. Trump's commitment to ending the war and his warnings to Hamas and Houthis has created a significant psychological impact, with Houthis diluting their attacks across Red Sea in recent times. Hamas, while continuing to fight Israel, has – due to the rising odds – signaled its openness to a permanent peace process.

In recent times, despite some losses faced by the Israeli Defence Forces, Israel has been able to make significant headway in southern Gaza and has already consolidated its complete control over northern Gaza. This was visible in Israel's discovery of Hamas's biggest underground tunnel so far in Gaza, near Kerem Shalom. The tunnel was located close to a crossing which was used by Gazans daily to enter Israel for their work and medical appointments. The discovery yet again underscores the extent of militarization of everyday Gazan life by Hamas, and the blurring lines between civilians and terrorists in Gaza.

HINDU GENOCIDE IN BANGLADESH

Even as former ISKCON member, Chinmoy Das, keeps languishing in prison, attacks against Hindus continue to take place, and the Bangladesh government continues to abet these attacks by officially denying them. These attacks also continue to have resonance across India and the rest of the world. In recent times, apart from other Hindu organizations which have been organizing protests across India on this issue, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), along with the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) also organized

a protest to condemn these attacks and appeal for some kind of intervention by the Indian government. Members of the ruling BJP also joined in.

There were other big protests too in the national capital, with hundreds of people rallying outside the Bangladesh High Commission and calling on the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) to intervene. In US too, members of the Indian American community have held widespread protests against the ongoing genocide of Hindus in Bangladesh in cities like New York, Washington and Chicago.

It is significant that many of these protests were held after the first high-level meeting between representatives from India and Bangladesh, with Indian Foreign Secretary visiting Bangladesh to discuss bilateral relations. While both sides stressed the usual importance of the relationship in various areas, it is significant that there was visible acrimony in the talks, as the Indian representative pointedly raised the issue of attacks against Hindus and other minorities not just with his Bangladeshi counterpart, but also with Mohammad Yunus. Bangladesh also raised concerns with India.

The meeting did not lead to any improvement in the situation, with India continuing to suspend visa services for Bangladesh. Further, after the meeting, Bangladesh government also declared its intention to open an inquiry into excesses and executions by Sheikh Hasina over the years, with Bangladesh government officials asserting that India colluded with Hasina in the excesses against

Bangladeshi people and that many of them are still being held in Indian prisons. This is hardly surprising, given the Yunus's clear penchant for elevating and legitimizing Islamic terrorists.

TECHNOLOGICAL HORIZON: CHINA'S STRIDES IN NEW TECHNOLOGIES

Political Will to Assert Dominance:

Despite the economic and political challenges faced by China in recent times, if there is one front where the country continues to make consistent strides, it is the front of racing towards technological consolidation and dominance. It is also significant that China is undertaking its technological transformations, as much through the active involvement of the state as through private sector innovation. A recent trend in this is visible through several offshore innovation bases set up by the country in a bid to acquire technologies in support of its ambitions for technological dominance.

These 'offshore innovation bases' – with a few trial bases that were setup in 2015 – are strategically located in special high-tech development zones, which are usually free trade zones and high-tech industrial development zones. Their development entails collaboration with leading US universities, research and development centres, and organizations to attract overseas talents to contribute to the country's innovation and development. The stated aim is to use international collaborations to foster indigenous innovation "by exceeding the performance and cost-effectiveness of its competitors and breaking the United

States's monopoly" in targeted fields. Presently, there are 30 such bases for attracting overseas skilled technical talent. They were created as part of the 'Haizhi Plan' (launched in 2004), which targets overseas experts in technical fields to help achieve national strategic objectives. Interestingly, these offshore innovation hubs are the locus of technology transfers occurring from the US to China outside the official ambit of the American government and have operated subtly without much scrutiny.

The Rise of 'New Productive Forces'

China, in its Third Plenum and in its five-year plan, has repeatedly stressed a change in its policy approach. The country's policy, in typical Marxist vocabulary, is now acknowledging the inevitable rise of new productive forces which will change the existing patterns of social relationships. China has acknowledged these new forces to be massive technological changes and has geared its policies towards acquiring dominance in critical sectors where these will play a pivotal role. In a move towards this, China is now building "3D Real-Scene China," a real-time model of the physical world enabled by advanced telecoms and digital sensing technologies. This model will keep getting updated in real time. It is a low-altitude economy, which is projected to exceed \$140 billion by 2026. The government aims for widespread reliance on the "3D Real Scene China" with over 50% administrative decisions relying on this model by 2025 and over 80 percent of administrative decisions to be guided by this technology by 2035.

The project will map the entire country in three dimensions by 2035. If successful, it will end up creating an entirely technology-driven state. It will offer little distinction between state and citizens, with micro-management of everyday lives reaching its pinnacle. The model relies on technologies like the Integrated Sensing and Communication (ISAC), a key to the project. It will serve as the backbone of the low-altitude economy's network infrastructure. It is based on the convergence of sensing and communication technologies within a single system and has the potential to be used to detect unmanned aerial vehicles, enable smart transportation, and support automated vehicles and robots. It can also be used for immersive sensing, which involves creating digital twins that build precise models of the physical world, thereby closely aligning it with the requirements for building "3D Real-Scene China."

New Data Spaces:

As early as 2013, Xi Jinping had declared data to be the 'new oil', as crucial to present-day economies, as oil has been to the growth of modern capitalism in 20th century. In 2020, data was officially designated as a 'factor of production', intended to serve as a new driving force for Chinese economic development. Presently, with the overarching dominance of social media and other interactive internet technologies, data sharing has become a universal concern for all countries. Concerns that big technology companies from America steal consumer data for third-party use and for other purposes have propelled

jurisdictions like Europe to formulate stringent data protection laws. India, over the past year, has also struggled with its data protection and management regime and has finally formulated its own law. India has defensively sought to insulate itself from data sharing with big foreign technology companies by formulating data localization requirements.

China, however, is taking a different approach to the whole issue. In recent times, the country has initiated plans to create over 100 “trusted data spaces” by 2028 as part of a strategy to dominate data governance internationally. As part of its plan, on one hand, it aims to achieve the establishment of a unified national data market. This would enable seamless communication and data sharing between corporations and supply chain actors subject to Chinese government oversight. On the other hand, the country also aims to foster international data standards through forums like BRICS, G20, Belt and Road Initiative etc. The dual strategy will allow China complete control over data within its own borders while potentially allowing it to access sensitive information from foreign businesses. The plan coheres with China’s ambitions to create a digital economy while insulating itself from foreign interference.

REGIME CHANGE IN SYRIA

Syria witnessed a tumultuous militant revolution which, in a matter of few days, has resulted in the fall of the six decade old Ba’athist regime of Bashar al-Assad. The revolution against Assad was led by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham

(HTS) under the direction of its chief, Abu Mohammad al-Jolani, and in coordination with its ally, the Syrian National Army (SNA). SNA is widely regarded as a pro-Turkish proxy in Syria. HTS was formerly called the al-Nusra Front and was the Syrian branch of terrorist group, al-Qaeda. Its main base of operations – throughout the years – has been in northwestern Syria, concentrated around Idlib.

The present offensive has been in making for many months, and the planning took place in active coordination with Turkey's government. The HTS sought to strike at an opportune time when Assad was at his weakest. For many years, Assad had relied for security and continuation of his regime – despite crippling western sanctions – not so much on his poorly-paid national army and military, but on Iran, Hezbollah and Russia. However, geopolitical factors had weakened all of Assad's patrons, making him an easy target. Iran and Hezbollah were significantly weakened due to their confrontation with Israel, while Russia has engaged nearly all its military capacity in the war with Ukraine. That is why when Assad requested help from Iran and Russia, they rejected it and advised him to flee the country.

The initial victory of HTS in Aleppo further activated all other militant groups across Syria. In south, local militias backed by Jordan rebelled against government forces, while in the northeast, the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) also began to advance further east. With the fall of Assad, there is now no effective force controlling the entire country, which is divided between four major rebel coalitions.

First is Jolani's HTS which has been the face of the revolution and the official governmental successor of Assad. It had already sent reconciliatory messages to all other factions in the country as well as to the international community. The western countries are now deliberating removing the bounty on Jolani. Second, there are local militias from the south, who are not allied with Jolani, and control their own territory. Third, another significant player is the Kurdish-led SDF in the northeast who enjoy a great degree of autonomy and have successfully fought back against Turkish incursions and attacks, which have intensified freely in the wake of Assad's fall. Fourth, there are Alawites – the sect to which Assad belonged – who control the mountainous coastal areas of Latakia and Tartus. Belonging to a Shia sub-sect, they are at odds with Jolani's hardline Salafist Sunni leaning.

All these groups are patronized by external actors. Presently, Turkey is the most powerful force in Syria, being a patron of HTS and its ally, SNA. Its influence has brought it into increasing confrontation with Israel, as immediately after the fall of Assad, Israel started bombing parts of Syria with massive airstrikes to prevent the HTS from acquiring Assad's military arsenal and to prevent the pro-Palestine Sunni Islamists from advancing towards Israeli border and has also re-captured the Golan Heights. Jordan patronizes the southern militias. Other Gulf Arab countries would likely take the Jordanian position, as they are wary of both Turkey and the Islamists. Russia and Iran have lost control over Syria, but Russia would seek to protect its naval base in the Alawite region of Tartus and its Khmeimim air base.

WHY ARE WE MISERABLE

“Whether you will it or not, you have to give. The moment you say, “I will not”, the blow comes; you are hurt. None is there but will be compelled, in the long run, to give up everything. And the more one struggles against this law, the more miserable one feels. It is because we dare not give, because we are not resigned enough to accede to this grand demand of nature, that we are miserable.”

— Swami Vivekananda
(Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda - 2: 5)