

A nation is a society united by delusions about its ancestry and by common hatred of its neighbors
William Ralph Inge

Indo-Iran ties

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani's visit to India and the joint statement issued by the two sides are of great diplomatic significance. India had stood by Iran when the US had imposed sanctions on her because of her independent nuclear policy. Despite pressures, India did not stop importing oil from Iran during those days, though the quantity of import had to be reduced. Then came another important development: the decision to develop the Chabahar port jointly by Iran and India. This neutralized to a great extent the advantage that China sought to derive by taking over the Gwadar port from Pakistan in the Arabian Sea. Rouhani himself referred to the Chabahar project in his speech and underlined its importance in opening up an alternative route for India to Afghanistan and the countries in Central Asia to which Afghanistan is the gateway.

Indeed, the strategic significance of the joint development of the Chabahar port is so much that an unprovoked China lost no time in setting up a naval base in Djibouti to offset partly the advantage India derives from the development of the Chabahar port. Iran's willingness to share its vast oil and natural gas reserves with India is an important step for further cementing the relationship between the two countries. President Rouhani's observation that the current century belongs to Asia where New Delhi and Tehran have a very important role to play has to be seen in the context of US-Iran and Sino-Indian relations.

It is in India's interest to forge closer ties with all her Asian neighbours when an assertive China is trying to weaken India militarily and economically and Pakistan is coming out of the sphere of influence of the US and forming an anti-India axis with China. India has to ensure that it is not seen as giving up its independent foreign policy and making it subservient to any other country. India cannot alienate the Arab world in its war against Pakistan-sponsored terrorism. Thousands of Indians work in the Arab countries earning valuable foreign exchange for India. At a time when Chinese influence is growing in our neighbourhood (the recent developments in the Maldives are an instance), India has to cultivate and deepen its economic, strategic and cultural relations with all the nations of Asia. To fight the Pakistan-sponsored terrorism also, cooperation of the Arab world is a must. India-Iran ties will be an important element in the coming days for stabilising peace in Asia.

Opposition to Trump's military parade plan

REFLEX ACTION

Mark Gruenberg

There are a lot of folks – including veterans – railing on Donald Trump's triumphal military parade plan. And possibly the sharpest statement came from someone who should know: Tammy Duckworth, the Iraq War veteran who had both legs blown off while piloting her helicopter there – and who's now a Democratic U.S. senator from Illinois.

"We don't need to hold parades like some Third World dictator," she told National Public Radio. The Republican president plans to demand a monster parade, complete with tanks and weapons and reminiscent of pageants tyrants stage, marching down Pennsylvania Avenue from the Capitol to the White House. Trump originally told media about it on the way back from France after attending last Bastille Day's parade, but they didn't report it. He repeated it in September to the New York Times. And at a Feb. 6 Pentagon meeting, Trump told military brass he wanted the parade. The next day, Trump Defense Secretary James Mattis, a retired general, told reporters the military is drafting plans. Trump, after all, is the armed forces' Commander in Chief. Trump camp followers among congressional Republicans threw hosannas. U.S. peace groups, the Union Veterans Council, and veteran-heavy unions – such as the Fire Fighters and the Letter Carriers – are silent so far. The reaction from everyone else has been, for lack of a better term, derisive.

"He wants to hold a parade? For what?" Duckworth told Sun-Times Washington bureau chief Lynn Sweet.

"Let's take that money and spend it on our troops or their families, not order them to participate in some sort of a show and parade for his ego."

"American taxpayers should not pay millions of dollars to throw Trump a parade," Rep. Anthony Brown, D-Md., also an Iraq war veteran, tweeted. "Our men and women in uniform work tirelessly to accomplish the mission every day. They don't have any

time to feed Trump's ego."
"A military parade of this kind would be a departure from the values of our constitutional democracy," said Rep. Adam Smith, D-Wash., the top House Armed Services Committee Democrat. "We are a nation of laws, not of one person." Smith noted the U.S. held military parades to celebrate the end of wars – the last one in D.C. was for the end of the Gulf War in 1991 – and to thank stateside contributors, such as war plant workers, too.

"A military parade like this – one that is unduly focused on a single person – is what authoritarian regimes do, not democracies," Smith said. That 1991 parade, by the way, cost \$12 million and had 8,000 troops. Its 67-ton tanks and 30-ton Bradley Fighting Vehicles, in 85-degree heat in mid-summer, chewed up Pennsylvania Avenue, leaving its pavement a tarry mess, and D.C. footing the bill. That resulted D.C. City Councilman Charles Allen (D), whose ward includes the first half of the Pennsylvania Avenue parade route, to say "If Trump really wanted to honor the men and women serving, how about pushing for full voting representation for the nearly 10,000 D.C. residents in active military duty and thousands more veterans, rather than a throwing a parade just to feed his own ego."

And presidential historian Michael Beschloss noted President Dwight Eisenhower, the victorious European commander in World War II, vetoed military parades in his White House years. Beschloss did not say so, but Ike also denounced the "military-industrial complex" in his 1961 farewell address.

"It is impossible for me to understand how,

knowing he (Trump) is a five-time draft dodger, he could still convince so many that HE is America's patriot." Illinois resident Gary Pierce responded to an anti-parade tweet from Senate Minority Whip Dick Durbin, D-Ill. "What in world can be done that would open their eyes to the fact that he (Trump) is masquerading as a patriot for his own purposes which are not the same as those of true patriots?" Pierce asked. Trump's plan also pissed off other rank-and-file vets.

"It's just a publicity stunt that I'll be over before you know it, and we'll all move on to the next trending outrage," Alex Hollings, a retired Marine and special forces vet wrote in a blog for their group.

"The real issue I see with all the angry debate... has nothing to do with the cost of organizing the parade, or how it might affect the perception other nations have about our country. It's that everyone seems to have passionate feelings about a damn parade, while the men and women actually tasked with defending our nation have been operating without a functional budget for months, and no one on the right or left seems the least bit concerned about that."

"Do I find the idea of forcing service members to perform a parade that will cost a lot of time, money, and resources, and ultimately do nothing to make our country stronger or more safe, repulsive? Yes, I do," said former Afghanistan and Iraq War combat medic Adam Linehan in another blog.

"But lest we forget, we've been treating them (service members) that way since 2001. We've sent them into battle after battle in a growing list of countries without a logical explanation for why they're killing people, and why their buddies are dying, and why they're getting their legs blown off."

And the director of the top Iraq and Afghanistan veterans' group told Politico the parade "is definitely unpopular" among his members because it could politicize the military (IPA)



School children celebrating Holi on the last day of their classes before the festival in Lucknow on Monday

New Delhi's gain: Goodwill with GCC, Iran

UAE foreign minister Dr Anwar Mohammad Gargash declared at the recent 4th Abu Dhabi Strategic Debate that the country cannot live under the shadow of "Iran's threat". India needs to be equally concerned about the violent developments in the backyard of the GCC.

As the UAE is the second most important country for India's export-import as well as expatriate services programmes, after the USA, India needs to take the UAE apprehensions seriously as the Gulf nations are in India's extended neighbourhood of West Asia. India's 'Look West Policy' since 2015 with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit of that country indeed has made India vigorously implement the 'Act West' programmes, just as it is pursuing the 'Act East' policy. The twin need to be harnessed with great care through investments and compliance on mutual agreements.

Just talking about traditional linkage would not carry much beneficial results, because it is the economy that sustains the traditional bondings for ever. India's relations with the GCC are solidly founded as the bloc source points of over 60 per cent of India's energy requirement, but also because the region promises India scope for investment in science and technology, agriculture,

horticulture, water management, information and communication technologies, ship-building and shipping, Information Technology Enabled Services (ITES), and, Electronics System Design and Manufacturing (ESDM). In the latter two areas, India's support to the GCC countries can be of far-reaching benefit to both the regions. For all these the first priority is peace and stability in the region. India has an advantage over many other competing nations because of close cultural and religious affinities.

Iran, on the other hand, is equally important for India's security and stability in energy economics. The current problem about Iran is, as most observers in the GCC countries feel, that Tehran is supporting the Houthis with arms and supplies that sustain the rebel groups. Iran has always refuted this allegation, and insists that it is the despotism of a manipulative political long rule first by the former President Ali Abdullah Saleh and then his successor President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi upon the Northern Yemenis that has instigated the rebellion. Both Iran and the GCC have constructive leadership in the helm of respective countries, yet sadly, negotiations to stop Yemen's destruction have not succeeded. Non-violent negotiations had enough scope to solve the issues already

between the ruler and the ruled in pre-turmoil Yemen, which has largely been ignored too. Looking back, the GCC itself was created in 1981 out of a fear syndrome about Iran's anti-monarchical posturing. Therefore, the UAE is within its natural rights to explicate a nationalist resolve, as was expressed by the minister. This apart, militancy at the doors of West Asia indeed is of great existential concern for countries, especially India and China, with which the UAE enjoys the best commercial trade relations. The UAE needs the sea lanes of communication (SLOC) in the Bab-el-Mandeb and the Gulf of Aden trouble-free for the smooth movements of its cargo ships. With a Hezbollah-type militant outfit (Houthis) in control of Aden, the UAE could fall victim to possible blackmailing with blockades time to time.

The story, however, has gone deeper into complexities than anticipated. The UAE has openly supported the militia of the Southern Transitional Council (STC) under the leadership of President Hadi's former Prime Minister Aidarous al-Zubaidi, by

building his militia with the Emirati troops and pitched them against the successor President Hadi, with the demand for separation from the embattled country. The STC demanded dropping of the incumbent Prime Minister Ahmed bin Daghar for corruption and betrayal, or, separation from Yemen. With the North Yemen including the country's official capital Sana'a under control of the Houthis rebels, the al-Zubaidi faction of the Saudi-led alliance fighting the Houthis had broken away from the alliance and pushed President Hadi's government to his palace, by capturing all important buildings and army-base in Aden. It demanded (i) removal of incumbent Prime Minister Ahmed bin Daghar, and, (ii) cutting away from Yemen, with a view to making the Southern Yemen an independent state. The main intention, however, seems to have been to protect and preserve the SLOCs near Aden free from all future troubles.

The STC's move has been a case of infighting within the Saudi-led coalition alliance fighting the Houthis. According to a recent report, at

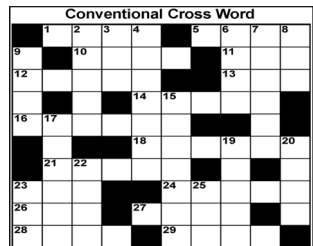
a press conference, both "envoys" of the UAE-led STC and the Saudi-led Alliance agreed to stop the infighting and compelled President Hadi to drop Prime Minister Ahmed bin Daghar, against whom the STC has been principally agitating.

The separation demand also seems to be the desperate call of the UAE to stay clear off all Houthi-style influences. As a welfare state, the UAE government reigns supreme among the GCC states enjoying very high support from its people and expatriates. Historically the country chose to remain protective in strategies in the Arabian Gulf region. The UAE maintains a balanced worldview of peaceful cohabitation and negotiations for resolving issues. As a corollary to this concept, it lodged protests at the UNO on the issue of Iran's annexation of its three islands on 30 November 1971, while maintaining good trade relations with Iran.

The UAE sticks to its policy of peaceful solution of the issue through negotiations, and always avoids hostile countering with Iran in this case. Peaceful negotiations and outreach for economic development have been the hallmarks of the UAE's foreign policy, which India appreciated. Hence peace in the backyard of the GCC is of paramount interest to India's projects for growth. (IPA)

FOCUS

Surajit Mahalanobis



- ACROSS**
1 Gas
5 Bridge
10 Love god
11 Flightless bird
12 Precise
13 Lieble
14 Concise
16 Bank employee
18 Utterly gratifying
21 Remain
23 Owning to
24 Combine
26 Wrath
27 Dry
28 Precious stones
29 Fencing sword
- DOWN**
2 Concretion of nares
3 Curve
4 Game of chance
6 Vegetables
7 Electrical unit
8 Fastener
9 Raw hide
15 Clutteration
17 Make certain
18 Company of lions
20 Exploit
22 Swaine
23 Excavate
25 Pinch

SUDOKU: 2126

7	9	3	8	5	
9	5				
		4	9		
	1	7			6
6	8	1	4	2	
		8	5		
			9		
	6	2	4	7	9

Yesterday's Solution 2125

9	4	7	2	6	3	8	1	5
1	8	3	9	7	5	2	6	4
2	5	6	8	1	4	7	9	3
7	1	9	3	4	6	5	8	2
5	6	4	7	8	2	1	3	9
3	2	8	1	5	9	4	7	6
4	9	1	6	2	7	3	5	8
8	3	5	4	9	1	6	2	7
6	7	2	5	3	8	9	4	1

Yesterday's Cross Word Solution 134

C	H	A	S	E	S	D	I	M
O	M	R	I	V	E	R		
P	L	R	A	L	W	E	B	
E	L	A	S	T			A	
	E	V	E	T	E	X	T	
F	E	T	E	S	I	N		
O	L	A	P	E	S	S		
E	L	M	G	A	R	I	S	H
E	A	G	E	R	I	S	H	O
F	E	D	S	E	A	N	C	E

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