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TIBET, TAIWAN CARDS

By Ashok Mahapatra

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Despite having many dysfunctional bureaucratic institutions, no one has questioned the legitimacy of the Election Commission of India in holding free and fair elections across the country thereby making it the world's largest functional democracy. The Preamble of the Indian Constitution ensures that all its citizens have liberty of expression. Furthermore, freedom of the press has been included as part of freedom of speech and expression under Article 19 of the Constitution. It has also been established that the press plays a significant role in the democratic machinery. These are the basic elements of a functional democracy.

In contrast, while the constitution of the People's Republic of China (PRC) declares that citizens enjoy freedom of speech and freedom of the press, these freedoms are tightly restricted by specific laws and regulations. The only people in China, who can publish criticisms or opinions contrary to those of the Communist Party of China (CPC), are senior members of the CPC. What of China's billion-plus citizens who are not CPC members? For the average Chinese citizen, freedom of publication is nothing more than the freedom to submit to the diktats of the CPC.

Therefore, the recent open letter issued to the Indian media not to recognise Taiwan by celebrating or marking “National Day of Taiwan” is not surprising. The same letter asks India to honour its commitment to the “One China” policy. In response, the Ministry of External Affairs responded by saying “There is a free media in India that reports on issues as it sees fit”.

It is indeed commendable that the Indian media has by and large ignored the open letter. In this context, the CPC should be reminded that commitments and agreement is a two-way process and of the “One India” policy. The response the Foreign Minister of Taiwan tweeted was “#India is the largest democracy on Earth with a vibrant press & freedom-loving people. But it looks like communist #China is hoping to march into the subcontinent by imposing censorship. #Taiwan's Indian friends will have one reply: GET LOST! JW”. As far as Taiwan is concerned, the statement “Taiwan is an inalienable part of China's territory” in the letter just demonstrates the deep sense of insecurity of the CPC.

Following its defeat in the Sino-Japanese War and pursuant to the Treaty of Shimonoseki, the Qing Empire ceded the islands of Taiwan and Penghu to Japan. The loss of Taiwan then became the rallying point for the Chinese nationalist movement in the years that followed.

After the end of World War II, Taiwan was awarded to the Republic of China (ROC) in 1945. Thereafter, the Chinese Civil War resumed between the Chinese Nationalists (Kuomintang (KMT)), led by Chiang Kai-shek, and the CPC, led by Mao Zedong. Subsequent defeat of the KMT on the mainland, the CPC founded the PRC. Following their defeat, the KMT then fled in 1949 to Taiwan with the aim to retake mainland China.

From 1949 until his death in 1975, Chiang Kai-shek ruled Taiwan with an iron hand with the sole aim of retaking mainland China. Following his death, Taiwan began a process of reforms to the political system. Despite its diplomatic isolation, Taiwan is industrialized and technologically advanced. To add to this, the people are much disciplined which has been the key to their successful handling of the present pandemic. Taiwan has its own constitution for democratic governance and directly elects its President and the legislature and maintains its national Defence as well foreign affairs.

All this proves is that for all practical purposes Taiwan is a sovereign and independent Nation State. The truth is that the PRC rules only Mainland China and has no control of but claims Taiwan as part of its territory under the “One China” policy.

Taiwan could do well by making a diplomatic statement lying to rest the misnomer that Taiwan is a part of China. This could be done with subtlety by dropping the word “China” from its official name. This should be followed by strengthening informal diplomatic by recognising *sou-moto* maps of all countries who have territorial disputes with the PRC and increasing economic activity as well as people to people contact.

Recently President Xi, visualising the worst-case scenarios, ordered the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) to scale up their battle preparedness and asked them to resolutely defend the country's sovereignty. The Chinese Foreign Ministry went on record to state that it does not recognise the creation of the Union Territory of Ladakh, and furthermore the building of infrastructure in the border roads was the main reason for the recent border clashes.

China conveniently forgets that they were the first to build border infrastructure right up to Ladakh as well as the road from Tibet to Xinjiang through Aksai Chin. It is obvious that China has been unnerved by India’s slow but steady improvement in border infrastructure allowing for faster movement of troops and weapon systems in the forward areas. No doubt India has a long way to go before it can correct the asymmetry. But it has now started to challenge the dragon’s dominance in the entire border from Ladakh to Arunachal Pradesh.

In this context, India needs to recognize that history tells us that the Chinese have never honoured any agreement in the past and they are unlikely to do so in the future. This should be borne in mind when negotiating with them. It is also time that India starts playing its Tibet and Taiwan cards openly to rattle China.

While it may not be appropriate to establish direct diplomatic relations with Taiwan, this is the appropriate time to upgrade India's representative offices in Taiwan to enhance trade and economic activity. This can easily be done, and China will have no grounds to officially object. India should also provide moral support to the Tibetans fighting for independence like that provided by China and Pakistan to various insurgent groups in India.

Furthermore, South China Morning Post has cited Defence observers stating that there has been an increased deployment of resources by the PLA on the South East coast of China. This poses a threat not only to Taiwan but also India and other neighbouring ASEAN countries. In this context, while inviting Australia to participate in trilateral Malabar naval exercise of Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QSD or QUAD) is commendable, it is the appropriate time to extend the same invitation to other ASEAN countries with whom China has territorial disputes. It would even be better to officially invite these ASEAN countries to be a part of QUAD. Furthermore, as a form of reassurance Taiwan should be invited as an observer.

While Xi Jinping has usurped absolute control of the CPC, he is nowhere near being the cult figure like Mao Zedong or Deng Xiaoping was. He has many aspiring Politburo members snapping at his heels hoping that he will make mistakes. Hence, it will not be unreasonable to assume that he would take some decisions without really evaluating the consequences that may arise thereof. Hence, the civilised Nation States (which should also include Taiwan) need to stand together and be prepared that the dragon does not take the world back to medieval times.

POLITICAL PARTIES CONUNDRUM

By Sanjay Sahay

Author belongs to the 1989 batch of the IPS, of Karnataka cadre. He has accomplished high degree of professionalism in wide and varied professional assignments. He took voluntary retirement from service in March 2020. He is an avid public speaker on information technology, cyber security and management issues.

Democracy in this country with every passing day is becoming of the political parties, for the political parties and by the political parties. It would be the eighth wonder in the world, the day they start talking of anything without referring a reference to the enemical political parties. When they find anything unrelated but still a fury in the public domain, which they are forced to face, they would ascribe it to some political party. **The biggest code of conduct for political parties which will elevate Indian democracy to a totally different level is to talk, work and deliver independent of the political galaxy, for the people.** Every single debate on the TV is a battle between which party did what?

The Indian political history and might be the government history too has become war of quoting manifesto points, statements / proceedings of various committees; legislature or executive, pronouncement made by leaders and any governmental official comment / commitment / delivery or otherwise. It seems as if the country is sitting up to watch this soap opera endlessly. The political class is convinced of the fact that the Indian masses deserve only this and the they can continue with their endless journey. **This provides a nature of unaccountability to the political parties, the political class and by extrapolation the governments, which is beyond anybody's imagination.**

The campaigning preceding an election or for that matter all throughout the year, because there is an election somewhere or the other; small or big, is **not measured in what you have delivered to the people but how much you have been able to denigrate the other.** Demonising is the name of the game. Any incident even created and a narrative made on it, has to be sold in a manner that it is lapped by the electorate. Which leader is visiting where and what he speaks and how he is rebutted by the opponents is the fun and frolic of elections. **It has for long lost its utility, significance and need but for the political parties.**

Given this scenario government, as a non-political entity and the bifurcation of power, de facto, between legislature and the executive gets more and more blurred. The common denominator, that is the political party, becomes one engine propelling both. Whether a parliamentarian or a legislator is ready to accept himself only as a law maker is not a catch 22 question! **Whether the electorate elects him mainly as a law maker or a government functionary above all others, is not a difficult question to answer.** What happens is what happens; even endless reading of the constitution will not unravel the mystery for them.

In Tibet, China preaches the material over the spiritual



Tibetan rural resident Sonam Tenpa attends a government organised interview about their life after they were relocated from a high-altitude village to government housing in Boma village, during a government-organised tour of the Tibet Autonomous Region, China, on 16 October 2020. Reuters/Thomas Peter

Dzekyid, a 54-year-old barley farmer, presents himself as a role model for his neighbours and for the success of China's efforts to tie economic development to social control in Tibet.

Dzekyid's well-built house in Jangdam village has a hall filled with Buddhist scriptures and Thangka paintings, and a row of prayer wheels for his religious 76-year-old father, Tenzin, to spin twice a day. As a member of China's ruling Communist Party, Dzekyid is an atheist.

"This house is possible because of good government policies. My heart is wholly with the party, not even one bit with religion," said Dzekyid, whose family was showcased to a group of reporters on a government-organised tour of Tibet, an area where access to foreign journalists is normally barred.

Government officials in both Beijing and Tibet vetted the reporters from media organisations who were invited to join the trip. On the closely supervised tour, there was little opportunity to interact with ordinary Tibetans without government officials in attendance.

China is pushing to transform the mindsets and values of Tibetans to bring them into the country's modern mainstream, which includes urging the region's devout Buddhists to focus less on religion and more on material prosperity.

"Tibet has some bad old habits, mainly due to the negative influence of religion that emphasises the afterlife and weakens the urge to pursue happiness in the current life," said Che Dhala, chairman of the Tibet Autonomous Region.

On the trip to Tibet, officials showcased poverty-relief programmes that include relocation of families to better homes, schooling, vocational training, and business development efforts such as a climate-controlled mushroom farm. The efforts are part of China's push to eradicate rural poverty nationwide by the end of this year.

Officials also described efforts to "manage the minds" of Tibetans, who for centuries lived in a deeply religious society with a belief in reincarnation and a devotion to their spiritual leader.

The head of Caiqutang village, Dekyi Paldron, described how poor households who receive free new government housing "should not" set up a family room for worshipping Buddha, a common feature in traditional Tibetan houses, because they "shouldn't be two-faced" after benefiting from the atheist Communist Party.

"If space is taken up by the Buddha room, the boy and girl may have to squeeze into one bedroom – this is not ideal for the healthy development of either child," another official told the visiting journalists.

China seized Tibet after troops entered the region in 1950, in what Beijing calls a "peaceful liberation."

In 1959, spiritual leader the Dalai Lama fled China after a failed uprising, and the long-impooverished region has been one of the most politically sensitive and restricted parts of China.

Pray less, work more

Recipients of poverty relief are told to curb their spending on religion and to instead invest in increasing their earning power and in their children.

At a vocational school in Nyingchi, a signboard stated that the school uses ideological and political education to fight against "separatism", denounces the Dalai Lama and to prevent religion from making people "passive".

"Ten years ago, villagers competed among themselves to see who donates more to temples. Now they compete to see whose son or daughter has a stable government job, or who owns a car," Karma Tenpa, deputy propaganda minister for the Tibet Autonomous Region, told Reuters.

Pictures of the Dalai Lama, once commonly displayed in Tibetans' houses, are banned, but framed posters of President Xi Jinping were visible inside all the homes the journalists were shown.

Propaganda slogans urging allegiance to China and the Communist Party are conspicuous along roadsides and billboards in Tibet.

Critics say China's efforts linking poverty eradication to an embrace of a secular life and the Communist Party infringe on human rights.

"The Chinese government's efforts to force Tibetans to change their way of life to the one the government approves is a violation of their fundamental human rights, including their freedoms of thought and religion," Maya Wang of Human Rights Watch told Reuters.

A recent Reuters report based on official documents described how growing numbers of rural Tibetans were being pushed into recently built training centres, where they are trained to be factory workers in a programme that some critics have called coercive – a characterisation China rejects.

“At first we have to go around explaining to the nomads and herders why they should go for skills training to earn higher wages. Now that they see the benefit of doing so, they come to us automatically,” Lin Bei, a poverty alleviation official, told Reuters.

Fame or shame

Families who practise good hygiene or have other desirable attributes receive credits for goods such as washing powder or towels, Lin said. The best are listed as “Five Star Families” on the village notice board.

Those deemed to show undesirable behaviour are named and shamed.

“If someone has been lazy, drunk alcohol, hung out at the teahouse or played games instead of taking care of his family, we will call him out at the village meeting,” said Lin, who is a member of China’s ethnic Han majority.

Dzekyid, who like many Tibetans uses only one name, encourages his neighbours to support the party and its programmes. His house was built with a government grant of nearly \$20,000.

“Praying to the gods and Buddha can’t get me this,” he told Reuters.

By Yew Lun Tian | Reuters

LHASA, China, 3 November 2020

A fine line – An Irishman’s Diary on Sir Henry McMahon, China and India



Sir Henry McMahon: His demarcation line between Tibet and British India has long been a source of dispute between China and India.

By Ronan McGreevy | The Irish Times ON THE WEB, 29 August 2020

The recent dispute between the world’s most populous countries, China and India, has its roots in an agreement drawn up by the son of an Irish general. The McMahon Line marks the disputed frontier between not only two great nations but two great civilisations. It is named after Sir Henry McMahon, the third generation of his family who acted as colonial administrators in India.

The family traced its ancestry back to the Mac Mathghamhnas who ruled the medieval Irish kingdom of Oriel which straddles another contentious border closer to home. Henry McMahon’s great-grandfather, the Rev Arthur McMahon, was a Presbyterian minister who was involved with the United Irishmen in the 1798 rebellion and later fled to the continent, where he joined Napoleon Bonaparte’s Irish legion.

Thereafter the McMahons turned from rebels into stalwarts of the British Empire. McMahon's father, Lieut Gen Charles Alexander McMahon, was born in Kilrea, Co Derry, in 1791 and gained prominence in the East India Company as an officer. His son followed him into the British-Indian army.

It was in his position as colonial administrator that Henry McMahon convened a conference at Simla, the summer capital of British India, in 1914 with a view to determining once and for all India's northern frontiers. Three countries were involved, British India, China, and Tibet. Tibet had become a de facto independent state following the overthrow of the Manchu dynasty in China in 1912. This was supported by the British, who wanted Tibet to act as a buffer state between China and India. The Chinese repudiated the agreement, as it did not recognise Tibetan independence, so McMahon turned a trilateral agreement into a secret bilateral one with Tibet.

The 860-km border covers the north-eastern extremity of the Indian-Chinese border between Bhutan and Myanmar. The line roughly follows the Himalayas ranges in the area.

The disputed area is Tawang in the northeast corner of the McMahon Line close to Bhutan. The town of Tawang is regarded as sacred by the Tibetan people as the sixth Dalai Lama was born there. It is also home to the second biggest Tibetan monastery. The Tibetans thought the line meant they controlled it. The British assumed it belonged to them. When a British botanist entered the town in 1935, he was arrested by the Tibetans and detained.

The British were furious but discovered the line was not an actual international border because nobody had defined it as other than a rough line on a map. The line was finally defined in the Survey of India in 1937 and it was only a year later before the Simla Accord, which McMahon had brokered, was published 24 years after it was first agreed.

The accord was immediately rejected by the Chinese, who rejected Tibet's right to sign international treaties.

When China annexed Tibet in 1950 the McMahon Line became the frontier between China and India.

As Tawang was regarded as part of ancient Tibet, the Chinese maintain that it is now part of China. India rejects this and Tawang is administered by the mountainous state of Arunachal Pradesh.

The conflict erupted in all-out war in 1962 when China invaded and temporarily annexed much of the state.

Previously, China had agreed to recognise the McMahon Line in return for Indian recognition of the area of Aksai Chin further east, but this was rejected by India.

India got much of the territory back in 1967 and 1975, but the two countries remain at loggerheads as to the actual line of control.

Tensions along the border further east led to the deaths of 20 Indian soldiers in June this year.

To the Chinese, McMahon is regarded as the personification of the foreign colonial functionary who humiliated the country in the days before the country reasserted itself after the communist revolution of 1949.

"In Beijing, McMahon's name is mud. In short they don't recognise lines that colonial cartographers draw on maps," Channel 4's foreign affairs correspondent Jonathan Miller recently stated.

After the Simla Accord, McMahon became British high commissioner in Egypt, in which he was an innocent party to another agreement which has caused disputes to this day. McMahon had negotiated in good faith with Hussein bin Ali, the de facto leader of the Arab world at the time and the emir of Mecca. In return for the support of the Arabs to overthrow the Ottoman Empire during the First World War, McMahon promised an independent Arab state after the war. Lawrence of Arabia led the Arabs in revolt. Behind McMahon's back, though, the British and French drew up the Sykes-Picot agreement in 1917, carving up the Middle East into zones of influence with no independent Arab state.

This was followed by the Balfour Declaration promising the Jews a homeland in Palestine. When the details were leaked by the Russian government, McMahon resigned.

The McMahon Line is not McMahon's only legacy. In a back-handed compliment, a species of snake was named after him. *Eristicophis macmahonii*, found in the deserts of Iran and Afghanistan, is known as McMahon's Viper.

Courtesy – The Irish Times, 29 Aug 2020

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Nation is Indebted to:

Savitri Bai Khanolkar

1913-1990



Maj Gen Vikram Khanolkar and Savitribai Khanolkar, at the time of their marriage at Lucknow in 1932



PVC

MVC

Vr C

Ashok Chakra

A Hungarian-Russian woman, named Yvonne Maday de Maros was born on 20 July 1913 at Neuchâtel, Switzerland.

In 1932, this 19-year-old Yvonne ran away to India to marry army officer Vikram Khanolkar, who she had met and fallen in love with while he was training in the UK. Being also in love with the spirituality of the country, Yvonne became an Indian, adopted the name Savitri Bai, immersed herself in Hindu scriptures and took a degree from the Nalanda University.

Soon after Independence, the army's Adjutant General, Major-General Hiralal Atal, asked her to design the Param Veer Chakra medal, PVC the highest gallantry award.

Savitribai Khanolkar took inspiration from Hindu mythology for design of the medal. She chose a simple purple ribbon and the motif of Rishi Dadhichi. A Vedic Rishi who made the ultimate sacrifice in the fight of good over evil. Imprinted on the medal face are four replicas of Indra's vajra, reflecting Dadhichi's sacrifice. The Ashok emblem is embossed between the Vajras. The medal is cast in bronze.

With the PVC, Savitri Khanolkar also designed the Mahavir Chakra, MVC, the Vir Chakra, Vr C and the Ashok Chakra, the highest peacetime gallantry award. In India's official order of precedence, the PVC is second only to the Bharat Ratna.

As of June 2018, the medal has been awarded 21 times, and Rifleman Sanjay Kumar, Subedar Yogendra Singh Yadav, Subedar Major Honorary, Captain Bana Singh are the only living personnel of the Indian defence establishment with a Param Vir Chakra Award.

After her husband's death in 1952, she found refuge in spirituality, and retired to the Ramkrishna Math. She wrote a 179-page book on the "Saints of Maharashtra" which was published in 1978 by Bhartiya Vidya Bhawan.

Savitribai Khanolkar breathed her last on 26 November 1990

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