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CHINESE INTELLIGENCE OPERATIONS AGAINST INDIA AND BREAKING INTELLIGENCE ENCIRCLEMENT

By Brig Hemant Mahajan

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Chinese intelligence operations during the British Rule

Chinese intelligence services established a foothold in India during British rule. While the Nationalist Chinese were the wartime allies of the West, it was Chinese intelligence services, which managed British accomplices in both the intelligence and propaganda war against the Japanese. Chinese intelligence services network in India was built upon by the intelligence assets created in war time. Chinese intelligence service used ideologues and journalists, especially those with a Marxist bent of mind for their operations in India.

Operation in India in the 1950s and 1960s

As a prelude to China's military occupation of Tibet, Chinese intelligence service operatives in hundreds fanned out into Tibet and Sinkiang. They also located themselves on both sides of the Indo-Tibetan border from Ladakh to NEFA. The cultivation of spies, agents, informers and sympathizers within India commenced.

In the 1960s, Chinese intelligence service's focus shifted to sponsoring insurgencies in the North Eastern states.

The Indian intelligence, had physical confrontation with the Chinese, when on November 21, 1959, Karam Singh, a Deputy Central Intelligence Officer (DCIO) of the Intelligence Bureau was killed at Kongka La (Hot Springs) in Ladakh. The years that followed saw intensified Chinese intelligence activities mainly undertaken by the PLA and party apparatus in Tibet.

Following the exodus of over 80,000 Tibetans, led by the Dalai Lama, in 1959 to India, coverage of Dalai Lama and Tibetan refugees in India became a high priority item for Chinese intelligence. Ethnic Tibetans are regularly recruited and infiltrated into India, mostly through Nepal, to cover the activities of the Dalai Lama. Pema Tsering, a former PLA combatant, was arrested. He infiltrated into India a few years back, acquired an Indian voter ID card and was masquerading as a Tibetan refugee.

Intelligence coverage through diplomatic staff has remained in vogue all through. Use of legal cover for intelligence operations in India remained unabated. In some instances, Chinese nationals from mainland China with illegal cover are sent to India for coverage of political intelligence, establishing contact with the insurgent and extremist groups and collecting defence related intelligence. Wang Qing, a Chinese lady visited Nagaland where she held a four hour long secret meeting with Naga insurgent leader T Muivah. She was deported and a protest note was sent by the Indian government to the Chinese embassy.

Supporting North-Eastern Insurgent Groups

Chinese intelligence have been active in supporting North-eastern insurgent groups and providing them with weapons, training and financial support. Coinciding with the Cultural Revolution at home, the first group of Naga insurgents, comprising 300 strong Naga rebels, led by Muivah and Isak Swu were imparted military and ideological training in Yunan in 1966 and sent to India with a consignment of arms. This trend continues till today with Chinese assisting the Assamese, Manipuri and other rebels besides Left-Wing extremists.

Close Relationship with Pakistan's ISI

One of the marked features of China's intelligence activity in India is its close relationship with Pakistan's ISI. Besides, their close strategic relationship, the advantages enjoyed by Pakistanis in respect of language, appearance, well entrenched local networks account for the special relationship. This cooperation started way back in mid sixties with Dhaka as the operational hub where Chinese and Pakistani intelligence officers first established contacts with the North Eastern insurgents together. With the deepening of this relationship, it got extended to other areas of common interest.

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Privatization in the Indian Context

By Dr P Bala Bhaskaran

Author, a graduate of IIT Madras and IIM Ahmedabad, is senior visiting faculty with 'Entrepreneur Development Institute of India', Ahmedabad. He evolved the Entrepreneurship Development Programme (EDP) model, which is widely being implemented as EDI-EPP model at national and international level. His area of specialisation is "Finance and Strategy"

What is Privatization?

An enterprise will perform optimally when its Input-Factors on the supply-side and Output-Factors on the demand-side are competitively aligned with the external markets/environment of the enterprise. Many of the public enterprises, for historical reasons, are found to be deficient in such competitive alignments. Privatization is the process of bestowing/restoring these competitive alignments.

The Raison d'taire

In order to usher in economic progress and development, the state (government) had initiated many enterprises of business. The reasons for initiatives could have been many. Possibly there was shortage of entrepreneurs to venture into those businesses; possibly the private entrepreneurs were not sure of the profitability of those businesses while the state felt the necessity to have them; possibly the state did not want private entrepreneurs to enter certain areas of business for strategic reasons; there could have been many such reasons.

With passage of time, maturing of the economy and maturing of the governance processes, the government is reaching a stage of comfort to let private entrepreneurs into these hitherto-prohibited areas.

The primary task of the state is governance and hence the state is expected to be good at governance; it need not be good at setting up and managing businesses.

So, it would be appropriate to let each business be managed by agencies and people who are most competent to do so. This has given rise to the dictum, "Minimum Government, Maximum Governance." The questions of when, what, where, how and how much of privatization are matters of judgement to be made by the macro-economic system and the comfort-level of the state.

When competitive markets are absent and when an enterprise is not aligned competitively either on the input side or on the output side or on both sides, we have a situation of "Satisfactory Underperformance1." The enterprise may be showing positive results in the limited context of its existence. These results may not be tenable once the protections are removed.

Public Enterprises in the Indian Context

With the chequered history of economic development that we have, our governments in the Centre and States have promoted many business enterprises.

- Many are corporatized – they have the company format for constitution. All the public sector banks and most of the public sector undertakings (PSUs) come under this category. There are many more like the Konkan Railway Corporation, the bullet-train project etc. which also are corporate entities. Whenever we talk of privatization, we tend to visualize these entities.
- There is a vast category of business enterprises established and managed by the state (Central and state governments), involving massive investments, which are not yet corporatized. All the Ordnance factories under the Dept of Defense, the Railways (barring few recent entities that have been corporatized), the Electricity Boards (barring few State Elec. Boards which have been unbundled into power-generation companies, transmission companies and distribution companies), the State Road Transport Systems, the LIC, the Port Trusts, Urban Water Supply Systems, the Urban Sewerage Systems etc. We have not been perceiving many of these as business enterprises; but in reality, each of them is a business entity.

All these are business entities; they are the state's arms of business. It will be appropriate to manage every business entity like any other business. From this point of view, it is essential that all business entities should be corporatized. Which of these should be privatized, to what extent, when, how etc. are matters of choice to be exercised by the government, from time to time, with consensus of stakeholders.

There is an increasing realization that government/state should not indulge in business; it should be involved in regulating business for the overall benefit of the society. This can be presented in another way: "Maximum Governance, Minimum Government."

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A Tankful of Promise

Why MBT Arjun should be embraced whole-heartedly by the army

By Maj. Gen. Rambir Mann, VSM

He was commissioned in Mech Infantry in 1982, has commanded an Armoured Brigade and An Infantry Division. He is keen mountaineer and polo player. He has submitted his doctoral thesis on 'Leveraging Defence Offsets to Develop the Indian Defence Industrial Base', at IIT Delhi and holds MSc & M Phil in Defence & Strategic Studies. His MPhil dissertation from Mumbai University was on the 'Indian Defence Industrial Base'.

During archery practice the class was asked to shoot at a bird perched on the branch of a tree. Before starting, Dronacharya asked the class what they could see. All except Arjuna described the bird and the tree, while Arjuna saw only the eye of the bird.

— Mahabharata

Nothing can better symbolise the challenges of developing domestic defence industrial capabilities than the development trajectory of our Main Battle Tank (MBT) Arjun. Ironically named after the warrior prince Arjuna, the story of the MBT, which was developed by the Indian defence industrial base, is a violation of Arjuna's fundamental percept.

Instead of extreme focus towards a clear end-goal within defined timelines, the Indian defence industrial edifice failed as a whole with key elements pulling in different directions. Developed under a multi-laboratory programme of Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) mainly at the Combat Vehicles Research & Development Establishment (CVRDE) facility. The development of Arjun Mark (Mk) 1 was followed by the improved variant Mk1A, and the under-development Mk II. Arjun Mk1A, which features 75 improvements including firepower and transmission systems, were trial-evaluated in 2014 and 2015. They completed the final integration tests in 2019 and was cleared for production with orders for 118 MBTs Mk IA placed.

The Arjun Mk II variant is a futuristic main battle tank (FMBT) with lighter net weight, an anti-tank missile, electro-optical sensors and high-power lasers. It is being developed by DRDO with a total of 93 upgrades, as per the requirements of the army and is seen as a potential replacement for the army's ageing Russian T-72 fleet of 2,400 tanks. The Indian Army placed initial orders for 124 Mk I tanks in March 2000 with deliveries from August 2004 to May 2009. The army received all 124 tanks by 2011. In March and April 2010, comparative trials of a squadron each of the Arjun MBT Mk IA and the Russian T 90 Tank in Rajasthan deserts reportedly saw the Arjuns perform at par or better. The Indian Army subsequently ordered another 124Mk IA with 72 improvements and 14 major upgrades over the MK I, resulting in an increase in weight to 68 tons.

The MBT Arjun Mark I Journey

The progress made in the design and development of Main Battle Tank (MBT) Arjun was examined by the Public Accounts Committee (1988-89) and their findings were reported in the fifth Report (8th Lok Sabha) presented to Parliament on 28 April 1989. Subsequently, the 57th Report on the 'Action Taken' on the Fifth Report was adopted on 8 December 2003 by the Lok Sabha. Both these documents give a good account of the development trajectory of MBT Arjun.

Based on the General Staff Qualitative Requirement (GSQR) prepared by the army in August 1972 for MBT Arjun, the government sanctioned the Project for design and development of MBT Arjun by DRDO at a total cost of Rs 15.50 crores involving a foreign exchange component of Rs 3.70 crore in May 1974. The laudable objective was eliminating of foreign exchange outgo, dependence on foreign countries for design and manufacture of Armoured Fighting Vehicles, and to place the country on par with super powers in tank technology.



DRDO-developed Arjun Main Battle Tank

But it was only in 1983, that the DRDO laboratory (lab) Combat Vehicles Research & Development Establishment (CVRDE) entered into a consultancy agreement with M/s Krauss Maffei, Germany to provide total cover in the field of design, development, evaluation and establishment of testing facilities at a cost of Rs 89.50 lakh. This consultancy enabled CVRDE to generate documents on integration and evaluation of the Arjun concept and in the design and development of the MBT. Other connected labs of the DRDO and Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSUs) such as Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) and Heavy Vehicles Factory (HVF), were to support CRVDE in this multi-lab programme.

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General's Outreach

By Lt Gen VA Bhat

Gen Bhat served as the Director-General of Quality Assurance (DGQA) at the Department of Defence Production (Ministry of Defence)

Last few months have been very significant as far as India is concerned and its likely impact on our Western border and on our North Western, North Eastern Border along side Pakistan and China.

The government of India (GOI) and China announced a pull back from the Pangangso lake. On Thursday (Feb 12, 2021) Defence Minister Rajnath Singh announced in Parliament that 'India and China have reached an agreement on disengagement in the North and South banks of Pangong Tso lake in eastern Ladakh that mandates both sides to cease forward deployment of troops in a "phased, coordinated and verifiable" manner'.

The Nation heaved a collective sigh of relief on this development as the two armies commenced the verifiable and synchronised withdrawal of troops on the Western Ladakh. There are further talks in the offing to reduce the troops in the Hot Springs area Despang and Gogra areas. These will be much more difficult to achieve than the Pangong Tso side. This may have been a result of the swift response by the Indian Army fully backed by GOI.

India has had to pay a huge economic cost for this eyeball to eyeball face-off with the Chinese in the Ladakh area. Deployment of additional 50000 troops, tanks, Armoured Troop Carriers (ICVs), Artillery. Dumping of Fuel Oils Rations in addition to the Extreme Cold Clothing required for keeping the troops in a state of alertness. The Wear and tear of the Equipment of the Indian Army deployed on the Border and also increased use of Air Force Airlift Capabilities including the use of Helicopters is huge. This will further increase the already Stressed Defence Budget would be an understatement. We will need to look at enhancing or earlier replacement of our capabilities to sustain another confrontation with our adversary as China just cannot be trusted.

Ceasefire was declared by GOI and Pakistan in the last week of February 2021. A joint statement issued by the two armies said the move followed a discussion between India's Director General of Military Operations (DGMO), Lt Gen Paramjit Singh Sangha, and his Pakistani counterpart, Maj Gen Nauman Zakaria, over their established telephone hotline. This was on 25 February 2021.

The Indian and Pakistani armies announced on Thursday that they had begun strictly adhering to a ceasefire along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir from the midnight of February 24 – the apparent outcome of behind-the-scenes contacts between senior security officials of the two countries. In March a conference called Pakistan Security Dialogue was held in Pakistan. The statements by the PM of Pakistan Imran Khan and his Army Chief are also very significant.

The Pakistan Army Chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa said “resolution of the Kashmir dispute in a ‘peaceful’ manner is necessary to tap the potential of Asian connectivity”. Delivering a speech at the first-ever Islamabad Security Dialogue, the Pakistani army chief said “it is time for both India and Pakistan to bury past differences and move forward. Stable Indo-Pak relation is a key to unlock the untapped potential of South and Central Asia by ensuring connectivity between East and West Asia. This potential, however, has forever remained hostage to disputes and issues between two nuclear neighbours. Kashmir dispute is obviously at the head of this problem”.

The comment adds to the momentum generated by recent indications that there has been some back channel communication among certain top officials on both sides. Thursday's comments are of particular importance as they come a day after Prime Minister Imran Khan called for greater trade with India saying India can use regional peace to access Central Asia.

Continuing Mr Khan's argument, Mr Bajwa said, “It is important to understand that without the resolution of Kashmir dispute through peaceful means, the process of sub-continental rapprochement will always remain susceptible to derailment due to politically motivated bellicosity.”

Mr Bajwa said “Pakistan is located in an important region to ‘connect civilisations’ and it wants to use this ability to benefit regional and global interests. We intend to leverage our vital geostrategic location for our own, regional and global benefit. Our robust role in the current quest for peace in Afghanistan is proof of our goodwill and understanding of our global and moral obligations”. This statement by the Pakistan Authorities has caused ripples in the Indian think tanks and political observers and analysts. This is the first time that Islamabad has left its precondition of India to revert its reorganisation of Kashmir done in August 2019.

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Nation is Indebted to:

Prof Veer Bhadra Mishra “Mahant ji”

A rare combination of Academician-Environmentalist-Monk.

Jan 1939-March 2013



In 1999, Time (magazine) named seven people from across the globe as “Heroes of the Planet”. One of the seven was the former head-of-department of Civil Engineering and a renowned professor of Hydraulics Engineering, at IIT (BHU) Varanasi. Professor Veer Bhadra Mishra, Mahantji, as he was called, had also been on the UN’s Global Roll of Honour in 1992. He was conferred with these two titles and many awards through his life, for his singular efforts to clean up the Ganga.

He was a member of the National Ganga River Basin Authority (NGRBA) under Ministry of Environment, Govt. of India, which was set up in 2009, by the Government of India as an empowered planning, financing, monitoring and coordinating authority for the Ganges, in exercise of the powers conferred under the Environment (Protection) Act,1986.

Arguably, no other person has done as much for the cause of that great river as the late professor. Towards this end, he established the Sankat Mochan Foundation, which did unparalleled work for clearing the river of pollutants, especially in and around Varanasi. Under him, the foundation developed and implemented an effective mechanism for this purpose.

The process relied on natural processes and gravity, ensuring minimal usage of electricity. This one mechanism alone won him recognition and respect within India and also outside it. Needless to add, he applied his training and career in science to a most noble cause here.

The first in his family to make a living out of academics, Prof Mishra specialised in hydraulic engineering and water resource management. In all, his teaching career spanned almost 40 years.

When one looks at Prof Mishra’s great efforts for Ganga’s cause, and his indefatigable will behind it, one realises this was brought about by an integration of scientific training and his complete devotion to the Gangaji. In fact, even when in ’99 Time named him as a ‘hero of the planet’, he chose to celebrate the occasion as a milestone for the river rather than himself, saying “In honouring me, they reminded the world that cleaning the Ganga is a global concern”. It was only appropriate then that through the course of his life, he earned the title of Ganga Putra (Son of Ganga).

However, to those aware of the other aspect of Prof Mishra’s life, his devotion towards that river should not come as a surprise for this other facet was closely related to the feeling of devotion. Prof Mishra was the MAHANT, head of arguably one of the most important temples of north Indian Vaishnavism — Sankat Mochan in Varanasi. Hence, called MAHANTJI.

Prof Mishra inherited the position at a young age of 14 after the demise of his father. In his role as the mahant, he ensured the preservation and continuation of many centuries-old traditions associated with the temple. Under him, the annual temple festival, held in April every year, attracted the greatest artistes of the time. At a personal level, Prof Mishra devoted a couple of hours every day to reading of the works of Tulsidas till his last days.

In his life, Prof Mishra remained loyal to all three icons — the deity, the temple, and its progenitor.

That, however, does not imply that he was bound by, or slave to, traditions. When an electric crematorium was proposed in Varanasi, Prof Mishra gave his unequivocal and unqualified support for it. One of the problems for the Ganga there was that half-burnt corpses used to be discarded in the river. An electric crematorium was proposed as the solution to this. However, there was also the fear that it would be opposed by the orthodoxy of the city. Prof Mishra used his authority as the mahant to garner support for it. His argument was that Hinduism has always been open to new ideas and practices, and it will be as welcoming to this one.

Mishra was conferred the title "Gangaikkaavalan", meaning the 'Protector of Ganga' on 21 August 2006 by the DRBCCC Hindu College, Pattabiram, Chennai, Tamil Nadu. On the occasion he was also decorated with a coronet of golden lotus, as per the Sangam Tamil tradition.

Mishra was awarded the prestigious "SaMaPa Vitasta Award 2009" in Delhi by "Sopori Academy of Music And Performing Arts" for his lifetime contribution and service to Indian music and culture.

The professor-priest breathed his last on 13 March 2013 in Varanasi. At a time when cleaning of the Ganga has become a national agenda, we could do well to take inspiration from the man who did more for the cause than anybody else.

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