

# THE CIRCLE

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## WAS IT GENOCIDE?

An evaluation of whether the Rohingya crisis was a genocide.

## BONAPARTE "THE HEROIC"

A tale of the relationship between Ludwig van Beethoven and Napoleon Bonaparte.

## A POLITICAL GAME OF SORTS

A debate on whether rape should be politicised.

# THE BATTLE UNFOLDS

*Will the Bharatiya Janta Party's  
Achhe Din continue after 2019?*

**2019**  
ELECTIONS



# Editorial

Over the past few years, The Circle has held the exciting record of being compiled, designed, and printed on the eve of its date of publishing. Much to the amusement of other Editors-in-Chief and the dismay of our own Master-in-Charge, the nature of the publication is such that it is brought out after relatively long intervals. For fear of turning this editorial into a letter of justification, we will not waste much space providing a reason for The Circle being so. Nevertheless, it would be folly not to acknowledge the key belief of the Editorial Board that gives rise to this kind of intermittent publishing, which is that a voice must be raised when it is needed. We think therefore, it would be equally foolish and even vain to come out with an issue when there is little to be addressed.

Coming out with an issue of The Circle is a unique and satisfying experience. The range of editorial boards that the two of us are a part of allows us an insight into the process of bringing out each publication. With this insight we tell you that The Circle is perhaps the most mercurial. It goes through the most changes, scraps the most articles, redesigns itself at least twice. But to paraphrase an old maxim, international and political affairs wait for no man. The beauty of bringing out such a publication is perhaps this fact itself. This term's issue contains a variegated array of articles covering Indian and international current affairs, accompanied by several that are historically themed. With a segment focusing on sexual harassment and rape and a close look at the current and future political milieu of India, we hope this term's issue is as relevant as you desire it to be.

Kanishkh Kanodia and Armaan Verma  
Editors-in-Chief

## The Inner Circle

*"It has to be a Congress-spearheaded coalition with multiple regional parties including all the leaders who came for H. D. Kumaraswamy's swearing in."*

**-Karan Sampath**

**Who will give Modi a formidable opposition in the 2019 General elections?**

*"I think it'll be Sonia Gandhi who will float a UPA-3, and the prime ministerial candidate will be Rahul Gandhi."*

**-Ranvijay Singh**

*"A coalition -- maybe, else I do not see a strong opposition."*

**-Mr. Manu Mehrotra**

*"Definitely, a united opposition. Dalit/Bahujan forces will throw their might behind the Congress too."*

**-Ms. Priyanka Bhattacharya**

*"My hope and dream is a grand coalition of SP, BSP, RJD, and the left parties. Let's leave Congress out of this one."*

**-Ms. Purnima Dutta**



## A Saffron Sweep?

**Ranvijay Singh** writes on the results of numerous state elections and their ramifications for the BJP government.

At the time of writing this piece - 72 hours after the results of the recently-concluded Karnataka Assembly elections were announced - the dust is yet to settle on the fractured verdict where the BJP has emerged as a single largest party, but well below the half way mark, while the Congress, though its tally reduced, has improved upon its vote share in the state. The run-up to the elections was lowbrow and acrimonious, a norm in recent times. As multiple commentators have noted with some dismay, issues of livelihood, agrarian distress and indiscriminate mining got shafted for empty rhetoric around religious identity of Lingayats and communally-charged brow beating, along with irrelevant references to ability of individuals to speak in Hindi in the non-Hindi speaking state. The BJP's desperation was evident in its exhortation that Karnataka would be its gateway to the South. It is tempting to see the results as a validation of BJP's efforts in the state and the undiminished popularity of PM Narendra Modi. The election "victory" comes close on the heels of recent victories in the Northeast, which took the tally of BJP-ruled states to 21. Congress too was no less desperate. Karnataka, after all, was the only electorally significant state that it held in the country and its incumbent Chief Minister, Siddaramaiah was given a free reign to run the election preparation, almost uncharacteristic of the Congress.

Ever since the 2014 General Elections, BJP, under the leadership of Modi and its national president, Amit Shah, have been working on a self-fulfilling prophecy of "Congress-mukt Bharat". Its parent organization, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) too has been increasing its shakha footprint across the country, especially in the five Southern states. BJP

suffers from a lasting stereotype about being a Hindi belt, bania-brahmin party, epithets it is keen on shedding. With a tremendous machinery that backs their ambitions, BJP has resorted to all the tricks in town to win state elections and often used its considerable resources to cobble up post-poll alliances in direct subversion of the popular mandate, witnessed in Goa, Meghalaya or Manipur. In the linear and simple narratives that assail us in mainstream and social media platforms, the results of 2019 general elections seem to be a foregone conclusion. The holding of these elections seems a mere formality.

Yet, a closer look at these elections have a different story to tell. Take for instance BJP's much-celebrated victories in the Northeast. Northeastern states have often voted for the political party in power in Delhi, with the notable exception of Tripura. It must be said at the outset that besides the BJP victory in Tripura, not much is remarkable about its performance in the region. Available data from the Election Commission and CSDS-Lokniti show that even there, BJP's margin of victory over the CPI(M)-led Left Front was wafer thin. A general sense of ennui or electoral fatigue may explain the electoral outcome in Tripura; the BJP fared discernibly worse than the Congress in the adjoining states. Simultaneously, the party had to suffer embarrassing losses in BJP-ruled by-elections in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. The losses in Gorakhpur and Phulpur (in UP) stung further because these were Parliamentary seats vacated by the incumbent UP CM, Yogi Adityanath and Deputy CM not so long back. The assembly seats in Mungaoli and Kolaras (the parliamentary seat in Western MP, held by Jyotiraditya Scindia) was made into a prestige issue by the MP

CM, Shivraj Singh Chauhan. He camped in the two assembly seats along with his top ministers, yet the seats could not be wrested from the Congress.

In Karnataka too, the BJP's supposed victory leaves much to be desired. An incumbent Congress managed to do better in the vote share and in the unlikely scenario that Congress and JD(S) would have struck a pre-poll alliance, they would have won over 150 seats in the 225 assembly seats. The Karnataka Governor, who was formerly the Finance Minister in the Narendra Modi-Gujarat government, invited Yeddyurappa to swear in as the Chief Minister despite having signed assurances from 115 elected legislators of Congress- JD(S) alliance. These are ominous signs for a democracy where constitutional institutions are continuously being undermined in favor of the ruling dispensation at the Centre. It is remarkable how in the past four years, the BJP has doggedly reduced the judiciary, the defense forces and the university campus in its pursuit for a one-party democracy.

And yet, for all those who cherish democracy, there is hope. Following the Governor's invitation to Yeddyurappa to form the government, the Cong-JDS took the case to the Supreme Court. Following a series of dramatic developments, and the SC's order that the newly-formed government would have to face a floor test on May 18th, the ministry resigned hours before the vote. The Governor had no option but to invite the Cong-JDS alliance to form the government, where JDS leader HD Kumaraswamy staked the claim to form the government in alliance with the Congress. So there is now reason to believe that a joint opposition can stop BJP's juggernaut in its track although the task is an uphill one.

# The Battle for Bihar

Kanav Agarwal analyses the implications of the changing political situation of Bihar on the 2019 General Elections.

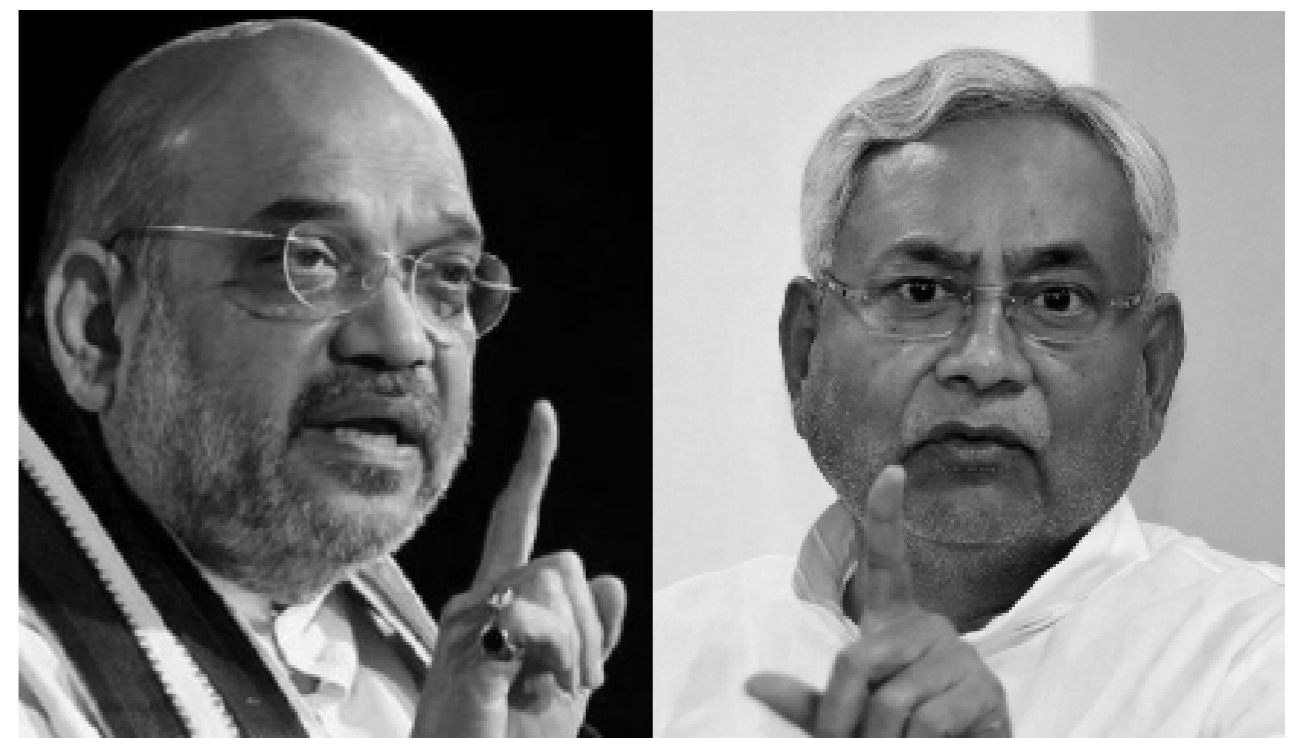
Bihar holds a special place in Indian political history. From the times of its 'janapadas' to the 'Total Revolution' of Jayprakash Narayan, Bihar has exerted a political influence on national politics disproportionate to its size. Hence, when Nitish Kumar walked out of the Mahagathbandhan (Grand Alliance) in 2017, media airwaves covered it for days and its implications on General Elections 2019 is still awaited. Kumar's public reason for walking away from the alliance was to free himself from the increasing corruption charges against his Deputy Chief Minister, Tejaswi Yadav.

Signs of Kumar's eventual exit could be discerned from a few months before the actual event took place. In November 2016, he lent support to Narendra Modi's demonetization plan when the joint opposition called the policy out for its lack of thought and implementation. Subsequently, Janata Dal (United) voted for the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) candidate for the Presidential Election, Ram Nath Kovind. Many commentators suspected that these were not-so-subtle ways in which Kumar signaled to his

allies, his growing unease with the charges of corruption against the family of Lalu Prasad Yadav. There was also a whisper campaign around the possibility of Lalu Yadav considering breaking ranks which rattled Nitish further. Kumar held meetings with Yadav and others and apparently asked them to resign from their cabinet positions till they cleared their name. When Tejaswi refused to capitulate, Kumar resigned as the Chief Minister of Bihar on 26th July 2017. Sensing an opportunity to break the growing assertion of a joint opposition, BJP extended an unconditional support to Kumar and he was saddled into the CM's position promptly. The thaw in JD-U and BJP relations was celebrated as Kumar's 'ghar wapas' in the NDA parivar. As a result of the bonhomie, BJP gained crucial numbers in the Rajya Sabha where it was in minority. The exit of JD-U from the Grand Alliance came as a shot in the arm for BJP-led NDA, which prepares for the General Elections of 2019 against an increasingly united opposition. The turn of events in post-poll Karnataka and the upcoming state assembly elections in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chattisgarh

must call for a rethink of strategy for the NDA. Additionally, Kumar seemed like the only credible face that the joint opposition could project to stop the Modi juggernaut. With Kumar comfortably on his side, Modi could expect to sail through the 2019 elections quite easily. Kumar seems to be content by asserting his hegemony in Bihar politics and thanks to the charisma of Modi-Amit Shah, could be assured of returning back as the CM when the next assembly election comes knocking.

All that remains for us to see is that how the Congress and the RJD will learn from this incident and the biggest question that remains to be answered is that will they make a comeback in the 2019 elections or in Bihar in 2020. With the 'Chanakya of modern politics' besides Modi, it would take them a lot of effort to even come close to the magical number 272 to form a government in the upcoming elections. It would take a leader, a miracle and some charisma to win the support of the people when the odds are stacked up against them.



## God Save the Queen

Shourya Agarwal talks about the relevance of Britain's Constitutional Monarchy in today's day and age.

Despite fuelling democratic changes in many countries across the world, the UK continues to be a 'constitutional monarchy' since the Glorious Revolution in 1688. While this seems to be anachronistic to many in the 21st century, the fascination around the royal family seems to be far from being irrelevant. Spike in memorabilia sales following announcement of Prince Harry's marriage makes this evident. According to predictions by the Centre for Retail Research, an estimated £30m would have been spent on memorabilia in the run-up to the royal wedding in late May this year. This makes it seem that the adulation for the British monarchy continues unabated, even as the disillusionment with government grows with decisions like Brexit or the massive cut-back in National Health Service.

The truth, however is not exactly as it seems. For all its apparent popularity, there are enough critics of the monarchy. Both camps - the 'Royalists' and the 'Republicans' - have enough arguments up their sleeves to prove their points and refute the opponents'.

While the critics argue that monarchy is an expensive institution and that in Britain the Queen is being paid 61 million

pounds annually, which is about 95 pence from every person in the United Kingdom a year. Furthermore, the monarchy restricts the usage of the Crown estate to only few months in a year. This amounts to a loss in tourism which the kingdom has to bear, leading to an enormous drain on state resources. All this for a titular and therefore powerless head!

Besides, a disproportionately high salary to the head of state does not set a good precedent for the rest of the nation. The monarch is also above law, implying that a monarch cannot technically be punished for an offence because all judgments are

**“Having someone above the law is against the principles of democracy...”**

taken in his/ her name. Having someone above the law is against the principles of democracy, apart from the fact that the monarch's judicial immunity is a poor reflection of the nation's legal set up.

The supporters of monarchy, on the other hand, claim that over the course of time, monarchy has become an integral part of the people's life and an important link to

the history of the nation and its identity. Such people assert that Britain would be very hard to imagine without the family at Windsor leading the nation.

Probably that's the reason the present monarch enjoys such a high approval rating even after over 65 years of reign. These ratings are very different from ratings that some of the modern day Republicans have after a year or so of governance. The Queen has become a representative of England's culture to many people. This image will not easily be tainted but the torrential tide of Republicanism is powerful. Especially when supported by logical reasoning.

A section of the people in Britain have started a movement asking for a referendum after Queen Elizabeth's death. The plebiscite will take the poll on the relevance of the monarchy. Taking into account the Queen's popularity with the Britons this may seem a small step but it does possess the potential to cause major changes in the polity of UK. Considering that in recent times, plebiscite outcomes tend to be contrary to expectations and predictions, this one, if it does take place, would be interesting to look out for.

# A Political Game of Sorts

A debate on whether rape should be politicized.

To facilitate a better understanding of the issue at hand, it is vital to recognize the exact definition of the 'politicization' of rape. The politicization of rape is fundamentally the act of making a political issue out of an incident of rape and holding the government answerable for failing to prevent the incident, and/or failing to deliver justice to the victim. This is, and should be, the role of opposition parties - to keep a check on the government and ensure that it functions to serve the people.

However, political parties - whether they are in the opposition or the government - will politicize issues only when the public raise their voices against those issues. But talking about rape seems to make people uncomfortable, out of a certain sense of misplaced prudishness. We tend to behave like ostriches - as if such violations could be wished away by not talking about them. This is clearly not the case, going by the increasing number of rapes reported everyday. Our silence on these reports only serves to desensitize the public to the shameful act, and normalize rape. It is therefore imperative that there is widespread public protest in order to get the political parties to exert pressure on the government. To politicize rape, in other words.

As for the political parties, rape should not just be an opportunity for political parties to indulge in mutual mud-slinging in order to score political brownie points. Political parties MUST raise a hue and cry over incidences of violation of a citizen's physical and emotional space, by demanding

that the perpetrators be brought to justice, and the victim be protected, shielded and helped - clinically and socially.

What does this mean? This can only happen when such crimes are politicized: when society is made to understand that there is a greater culprit than just the perpetrator. The incumbent party needs to be brought to task for its lack of action towards addressing the problem, which makes it complicit. This complicity means that the government is also in part responsible for the crime because it did not do anything to prevent it. Politicizing rape should happen and needs to happen, for any true change to be brought about. This will be possible only when there is enough oppositional pressure. It is only when citizens are made aware of the government's complicity in the crime - deliberate or due to apathy - will there be public pressure. When there is public pressure, governments are forced to institute change, to ensure they remain in power.

The opposition to this argument would say that politicization changes the direction of anger away from the perpetrator. However, when the fault is of the government's as well, politicization ensures justice is properly served, with anger directed at all guilty actors, not only the perpetrator. Furthermore, this anger is now put to far better use, where it can lead to long-lasting, systemic change. Politicization, therefore, directs anger where it needs to go: not only at the perpetrator but also at the government.

- Karan Sampath

When considering the way rape is talked about in society, we often ignore the socio-political context in which the rape survivor is framed. Media gives disproportionate time to the "kangaroo court" that spring up on the streets of different cities. Our senses are assaulted by images of mass indignation and the rape survivor and their individual or familial struggles to re-adjust to the society is almost always ignored. What is worse, the political class of our country seeks to (electoral) benefit from the tragedy of rape incidents. Rape not only bruises the body physically, but has a devastating impact on the societal and economic position of the survivor.

There is a tendency in our times to understand rape merely as a display of masculinity or an evidence of male physical dominance. The problem with popular discourse around sexual crime is that it makes the crime far more potent and stigmatized than how we ought to treat it. Its occurrences are shown- on a loop- as yet another illustration of primitive ideas around gender, prevalent in the society.

Nevertheless, pertaining to the interdependence of the power systems mentioned above, rape is simply not confined to gender, sexuality or physicality. It has assumed the role of a platform where caste, communal or electoral relations are settled. Take for instance, the Kathua rape case in Jammu and Kashmir which was used to instil fear in the minds of tribal and minority population of the state. What is worse, in that instance the barbarity of the crime took a backseat to the

political implications of the episode.

Politicising rape in such cases practically gives a platform for leaders to justify rape in terms of the context they provide. It gives them the opportunity to not project rape as it should be- within the prospect of gender inequality and the imposition of patriarchy. Rape, in its political version, is utilized to foment trouble, mobilize communities, and garner short-term gains.

Consider the mirror image of the same process; the perpetrators of the crime are exalted as heroes of their community, and the action itself is glorified. It becomes a mean for a group to achieve its ends in the society. True, such moments of celebration are countered by other civil society initiatives, such as "Not in My Name" protest. But in a more localized context, the crime has already had its desired impact; desired by the perpetrators who, again, thanks to the socio-political context of the episode get away with for their transgressions.

In the end, what remains imperative for us to deliberate, is not why a concept such as rape even exists in the status-quo we live in, but if rape should actually be taken in terms more than just those of sexual disparity and exploitation? Is a practice as immoral and deplorable as rape worthy enough to sway the public against each other or lead to mass hysteria? Should rape, simply be left as rape, or does it deserve to control the political helm of a nation such as ours?

- Vikram Jain

## Was It Genocide?

Advaita Sood evaluates whether the Rohingya Crisis was a genocide.

The Holocaust, the Bosnian Genocide and the Rwandan genocide are all examples of the worst crime that can be committed against humanity. Genocide is the mass termination of a certain type of people. The term is a combination of the Greek term "Genos" (race) and the Latin suffix "-cide" (kill). From Alexander the Great to the Mughals, genocide has been in existence long before the term was coined in nineteen forty-three. However, it isn't only the past, it is the present and will even, possibly, inevitably, occur in the future, and there is unfortunately little that we can do about it.

The reasons due to which genocide takes place are particular to the places where it happens. However, there is one common factor that drives people to commit genocide: power. May it be the Nazis or the Hutu and the Tutsi tribes of Rwanda - each ethnicity or military group wanted to prevail over the other. Genocide often occurs when a certain country is in a state of turmoil, and a person or a group of people blame a race for their problems, in order to gain control over the country. For example, in the case of the Bosnian genocide, The Army of Republika Srpska, a military group, blamed the Bosnian Muslims and Serbs for the crimes that were taking place, and began to lead the execution of thousands of them.

The most recent case of genocide has been that of the Rohingya, an ethnic people of the Indian sub-continent. The Rohingya are Muslim, and crossed borders into Myanmar a few decades ago, and used to live there in small villages. However,

they began to face severe persecution by the Myanmar army and police on account of them not being ethnic Burmese. The Myanmar government even rejects the term 'Rohingya' and says instead that they should be called 'Bengalis' since they illegally crossed borders. Their villages were burned down, mass executions took place and they were sexually assaulted. The persecution has been described as an "ethnic cleansing" which is not an offence under international law; however, it has been speculated about whether or not it is genocide.

For something to be classified as 'genocide', it has to meet the definition of crime in Article II of the UN's Genocide Convention. It states that genocide is any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group:

- (A) Killing members of the group;
- (B) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (C) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (D) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (E) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group

The crisis in Myanmar meets at least conditions A-C of the criteria above. Then why, has the Myanmar government repeatedly mentioned that the crisis in Myanmar is not genocide, even after the mass killings and forced deportations?

The answer lies in Article 1 of the same

convention.

It states: "The contracting parties confirm that genocide, whether committed in time of peace or in time of war, is a crime under international law which they undertake to prevent and to punish."

This essentially means that, if something is to be classified as 'genocide', then the 147 nations that are part of the convention need to agree that they will stop it, even by force if necessary. The problem is, these countries simply haven't the appetite to invade Myanmar. Moreover, people often think of genocide as one huge act of violence, like the genocide in Rwanda or the gas chambers of Nazi Germany. Therefore, the crisis in Myanmar has not been termed as 'genocide'.

However, although the crisis in Myanmar cannot be classified as official genocide, it follows the pattern of a modern genocide. Years of concerted de-humanization campaigns carried out by an oppressive government, eventually builds up to mass murders in the end. This was the pattern in Bosnia and Rwanda, and now so it is with Myanmar.

On February first, the UN special envoy on human rights, based in Myanmar stated that the situation in Myanmar bears "the hallmarks of genocide", but she couldn't officially declare it as such until the evidence had been weighed and official word had been sent out. If a situation is defined by the council as genocide, then the UN will intervene. This can only happen if the conditions of the Genocide Convention are met. However, an answer is yet to be issued, and the situation in Myanmar continues to worsen.



# Secrets of Secret Societies

Advaita Sood reveals the truth about Cult organisations.

On November 18, 1978, over nine hundred people died in the country of Guyana, in a place informally known as Jonestown, actually a remote settlement called the Peoples Temple Agricultural Project, which was headed by the reverend Jim Jones, by consuming poisoned Kool-Aid. What is interesting, and perhaps also quite frightening about this is that all of them drank the poisoned Kool-Aid voluntarily, knowing it was poisoned. Jones had called it “revolutionary suicide.” Though this is one of many examples, it is perhaps the best one to show the power that cults can wield.

The modern definition of a cult says that it is a group or movement with a shared commitment to an ideology embodied by a charismatic leader. The word ‘cultus’ originally refers to people who cultivated the worship of certain gods by performing certain rites and rituals. Such an organization often starts off as a small group of people or a single individual who claims to have the ability to change lives. Cults expect their members to maintain a high level of commitment

to their core ideologies, and use various systems of coercion to influence members and to ensure compliance. They have little tolerance for disagreement among their members, or for public scrutiny. Many of the religions that exist today began as cults and evolved to become accepted by society at large.

Many modern-day cults function by isolating members, and separating them from external contact, sometimes even brainwashing them for personal gain. They are often motivated by money and power. Although the attributes of individual cults vary, there are a few common characteristics that can help us identify them.

Among modern cults, there exists a system of recruitment that is common to all; there are certain kinds of people that cults target. When a cult is founded, the leader uses personal charisma to recruit a set of initial members. These members then start to spread the word about their cult by constructing a superlative aura around it, and even sensationalizing it. Members try to recruit people by targeting those who have recently undergone some sort of

personal or professional loss, or people who are new to an area. People who agree to join do so for they are promised that they will be ‘healed,’ or that they will find answers to their questions. However, these are often empty promises used simply to deceive people into joining. Nevertheless, this is not the only form of deception cults use.

Imagine if a member of Heaven’s Gate (a cult in which more than thirty people drank poison in a mass suicide) came up to you and said “Join us! We get beaten up, sterilized and then we drink poison!” Would you join them? No, of course you wouldn’t. That’s why cults give themselves a superlative aura.

If people knew the whole truth about cults, without any embellishments, there would never be any members. Cults only highlight things like how they help the racially discriminated or the poor, or how they provide free healthcare. If someone were to visit a cult, their members would all seem overly joyous, not because they really are, but because they have been told to appear that way.

Once people join a cult, they begin to

get controlled through what is commonly known as ‘mind control’. Cults alienate their members from their surroundings and brainwash them. They do this in different ways.

A quintessential example of such brainwashing is practiced by the Branch Davidians, a cult led by David Koresh who claimed to be the Son of God himself. He also claimed he could protect his members. When he initially recruited members, he would constantly hold meetings at unearthly hours such as 3:00 AM, and chant verses from the Bible to his followers. He would manipulate them into recognising resemblances between him and Christ. Scarily, he was able to do this so convincingly that whenever he asked any of his female followers, of any age, to engage in sexual intercourse with him, they would gladly comply, offering themselves to him just as the Virgins of the Sun would offer themselves to their chosen husbands. They did this because he convinced them that bearing his children was a privilege (him being the son of god), and that this was all for their own good.

What happened here was that Koresh successfully broke down the members’ sense of self, and their identities, replacing them with identities that best suited and benefitted him. He was able to do this so successfully because he systematically ensured that his victims were just too tired and too detached to fight back. They were increasingly sleep-deprived, and completely isolated from friends and family. Soon, these new recruits would begin to think

**“Cults also engage in something known as ‘character assassination’.”**

about nothing else but the cult.

Cults frequently use deception to brainwash, too. In an interview for a documentary, a former member of The People’s Temple recalled a peculiar incident. During one of Jim Jones’ addresses, he called out to an old woman in a wheelchair, and said that she could be ‘healed’. He told her repeatedly, in an affectionate manner, to stand up. The interviewee recalls that she struggled but miraculously stood up. Then he told her to walk towards him. She stood there for a while, but then, as if by magic, started to walk towards him, later breaking into a run! The interviewee discovered

later that the lady was one of Jim Jones’ secretaries, who had been told to play the part of a crippled woman. Of course, she could walk just fine, showing how members have complete faith in the leader, and how they do not question his authenticity.

Cults also engage in something known as ‘character assassination.’ When you are in a cult, the leaders always know what is best. Members are never correct, while leaders are the wise ones. However insensible, stupid or ludicrous the leader’s ideas are, they are always right. For example, imagine a conversation between a new member and one of the leaders of a cult: the leader might say that smoking is good for health. The member may disagree, and say that smoking is not good for health because smoking affects the lungs. Hearing this, the leader, overwhelmed with a feeling of rage at being questioned, will invariably scold the member and may declare that the member’s soul to be sinful and impure. This creates fear within the member, since the leader, who is looked upon with reverence, has said that the member is sinful. The member begins to believe that such a disagreement might lead to excommunication from the community. Having been isolated from all other support systems, she will now believe that any disagreements with a senior member will lead to isolation. This leads members to stop thinking for themselves, and just follow whatever their leaders say.

Often, members who have been subject to such tyranny realize that they should not be a part of the cult much longer and attempt to leave. However, the leaders prevent them from leaving, making such a departure seem like a ‘betrayal’ to the cult and to their ‘friends’. They also threaten members, saying that there will be consequences if they do leave. Now, controlled by guilt and fear, members are forced to stay.

Numerous modern cults employ such techniques to recruit and control members. The reason for this is that megalomaniacs who have been outcasts all their lives usually run these. The most recent example of such a cult was that of Baba Ram Rahim’s Dera Sacha Sauda, a religious cult. He has been imprisoned for rape recently. It is frightening to think that such cults exist even today. We must know how to evade them.

There are some cults whose roots are deeply entrenched in history. Cults like these have intricate structures. They practice rituals that seem eerily eccentric to us but have meanings of their own. Many of these cults were created with not only

a doctrine, like modern cults, but with an ulterior purpose. For example, the Priory of Sion was created to protect secrets that have great importance. Or, the famed Illuminati was one that was created to expunge all religious influence over humanity. Unlike modern cults that openly exhibit their existence, these are secret societies. It is not that the existence of the societies is secret, but that the identity of their members, and what they do is secret. The history of many of these cults is intertwined; they may even be different branches that share the same ultimate goal. For example, although this is not known for sure, the Knights Templar, it is believed, is responsible for the creation of both the Freemasons and the Priory of Sion. Even the Skull and Bones Society (a society run by senior undergraduates at Yale College, Connecticut) is supposedly named after members of the Knights Templar who were forced to run off to sea, planting treasures on various islands. Their symbol was a skull with two bones. This also why pirates are associated with that symbol today.

Cults like these are also very inclusive. They do not discriminate on grounds of caste, creed, or race. As long as a person truly shares their commitment and believes in what they do, they will include him or her. However, once you enter there are a lot of exclusivities. There are complex hierarchies—the higher your position is in the inner circle, the more information you have access to, which in turn leads to more power. However, all positions and information are secret to people outside the cult. If someone lets out any information, they face grave consequences. It is said that Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, for instance, had ended up angering the Freemasons, for his famous opera, *The Magic Flute*, contained several references to secret Masonic rituals. However, such indiscretions are rare since members are extremely loyal and devoted to their cults. Many famous people held high positions in such groups. Benjamin Franklin and George Washington were both Master Masons. Galileo Galilei was part of the Illuminati. Their membership, however, of these groups was revealed only after they had died, or when they were near their death.

Cults are complicated, and often misunderstood. They may be good, or bad. But even today, cults manage to fascinate and frighten us in equal measure with their ancient roots, mysterious ways, and eerie eccentricities.

# Bonaparte “The Eroica”

Pranav Goel describes composer Ludwig van Beethoven’s relationship with the French conqueror Napoleon Bonaparte.

“Napoleon understood the spirit of the times, he fought the feudal system and was the protector of laws and rights” ---Ludwig Van Beethoven

Composers of the Classical Era often had to live under chafing penury. Many had to fight their way up from the lowest rungs of society to establish themselves. The arrogant and ambitious Ludwig van Beethoven looked down upon such social barriers, and thought of them as an impediment in achieving true greatness and democracy. He aspired for a high social status himself, wanting to marry into the aristocracy. So, it is hardly a surprise that Napoleon Bonaparte, the then-First Consul, who had spread his democratic ideals over much of Europe, winning the hearts of the common European, had also won the heart of Beethoven. Napoleon’s commitment to the ideals of the Enlightenment, his anti-monarchy stance, and especially his ascent from a humble background, greatly appealed to Beethoven, for he, too, desired freedom from an oppressively rigid social structure.

At Heiligenstadt, a country retreat, Beethoven became increasingly frustrated with his growing deafness, expressed in a letter to his brothers. But, despite failing ears, he decided to fulfill his life’s purpose—to write music. On the recommendation of General Bernadotte, the then-French ambassador to Austria, Beethoven decided to express his admiration for Napoleon through a grand symphony. In the early 19th century, huge orchestral works were usually performed as background music at royal gatherings, as pure entertainment for the aristocracy. However, the idea of a symphony celebrating the embodiment of the anti-monarchist revolution marked an obvious departure from this role of music. This symphony for Napoleon was also to be a medium that would express the inner roiling of Beethoven’s tormented mind, and his fight against overwhelming odds as a hero.

In 1805, however, Beethoven’s Third Symphony, originally dedicated to Bonaparte was renamed the “Sinfonia Eroica” (meaning ‘heroic symphony’), after Napoleon declared himself the Emperor

of the French, in 1804. According to Ferdinand Ries, his secretary, Beethoven was devastated at the thought that the infallible Napoleon had given in to his ambitions and had gone back on the very ideals that had defined his life till then. He had, like a ‘common mortal’, become corrupted by power—he had become just another “tyrant”. In a burst of anger, the disillusioned Beethoven violently scratched out ‘Bonaparte’ from the cover page of his score.

In Napoleon’s invasion of Vienna in 1805 and 1809, Beethoven experienced firsthand the tyranny of Napoleon’s Grand Army. He, too, suffered inflation, shortage of food, and exploitative military rule. Rumor goes that he hid in his brother’s basement to protect his failing ears from the earsplitting sounds of heavy bombardment and intense shelling, which greatly disturbed his career. Most significantly, the 1805 Siege of Vienna, interrupted the première of his only opera and what is probably his most challenging creation, *Fidelio* (Opus 72), thwarting the opera’s success.

At this point, one might think that a relationship of respect had been broken forever. The truth, however, is far more complicated. It is very probable that Beethoven held himself equal to Napoleon. Both came from non-aristocratic backgrounds, determined to join the nobility, were of the same age and had similar democratic ideals, at least till 1804. Historians have, through his letters, noticed his volatile moods, which explain his over-reaction and violent anger in Ries’ account. In later years, according to the accounts of Karl Czerny, Beethoven expressed his admiration for Napoleon. His music too was influenced by Napoleon’s actions, for example, the famous *Missa Solemnis* sees Beethoven insert a sudden “war interruption” in the fifth movement of the mass. This interruption, characterized by drums and trumpets, which play a relentless march, has been interpreted by many as being related to the wars instigated

by Napoleon, which had clearly cast a long shadow on Beethoven, and his career.

If Beethoven still admired Napoleon, why couldn’t he publicly acknowledge his greatness, you ask. In the Classical Era, musicians were entirely dependent on patronage, their only source of income. This often encumbered free expression of ideas and ideals. The *Eroica* Symphony, was premiered under the patronage of Prince Lobkowitz, an ardent patriot who would readily destroy the French if given a chance. It would have been economically and politically unwise for Beethoven, then, to publicly acknowledge his admiration for Napoleon, enemy of the Austrians.



Ironically, Beethoven’s greatest commercial success was his *Battle Symphony* celebrating Duke Wellington’s conquest of Napoleon’s troops, in the *Battle of Vitoria* in Spain, in 1813.

Upon Napoleon’s final defeat in *Waterloo*, Beethoven remarked cynically that he preferred the “Empire of the Mind” rather than that of monarchs and monarchies. What had started as an association of respect and admiration had ultimately descended into one of misgivings, and disillusionment. It gave to the world of music, however, some of its most memorable pieces.



## A Royal Purge

Karthik Subbiah analyses the ongoing Saudi Arabian powerplay.

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has consolidated power and scuttled many of his many rivals for the throne with his anti-corruption purge, last year in November. Hours after the Prince was made the head of a new anti-corruption committee, formed on his advice, he authorised the arrest of at least eleven crown princes and several billionaire businessmen, among them the then-Crown Prince Mohammed bin Nayef, oldest son of King Salman. With the arrest of his half-brother, the only real obstacle to his ascension of the throne was removed. Also among the arrested was Prince Alwaleed bin Talal, who appears on a list of the fifty richest people on the planet (with a net worth of \$18 billion). This purge, that affected the sprawling Saudi Arabian royal family, with its 15,000 members, has been a controversial move, with an array of political analysts taking one of multiple views on the subject.

There are a few ways of looking at the matter. The most obvious one is that the entire crackdown is an effort at removing any obstructions to the throne. Indeed, the crackdown has been remarkably effective at doing so, since Prince Salman is now Crown Prince Salman, also the de facto ruler of Saudi Arabia. Another important effect of the crackdown was that the defence forces, the National Guard and Interior Ministry are now completely under his control. His 81 year-old father’s death, or eventual abdication is considered imminent by most, making the timing of this crackdown strikingly convenient for the Prince.

Many also see the move as the Prince’s

attempt at consolidating his political position. It would seem that he has been successful in this, too. The move has won the young Prince many supporters; among them an Arab analyst who sees the purge as “shock therapy” for a sclerotic system.

Another view is one that is the Prince’s own explanation of the purge—that the crackdown is just the foundation of a slew of forthcoming economic reforms he calls ‘Vision 2030’. As with any other economic reform, millions of Saudis will have to deal with hardship as the Prince begins his push from Saudi Arabia’s “doomed oil-based economy” to one that is less oil-reliant and more diverse. Among his reforms is a \$500 billion plan for a seemingly dreamlike 26,500 sq. km industrial zone that will harbour a wide range of industries. Interestingly, these industries, it has been proposed, will be powered completely by renewable energy.

The Prince’s popularity among the youth stems from his promises of social reform, his lifting of the 35 year-long ban on cinema, promising the ‘return’ of moderate Islam, and letting women drive in the face of intense conservative opposition. These reforms are effective because they keep the people happy without promising any actual reforms in the fields of human rights or political representation.

In addition to his agenda of liberalisation, Prince Salman is also intent on removing the old guard, the only people who actually have any power to obstruct his path to the throne. In a slew of recent orders, senior members of the military were ‘retired’ or ‘promoted’ to newly created roles. The

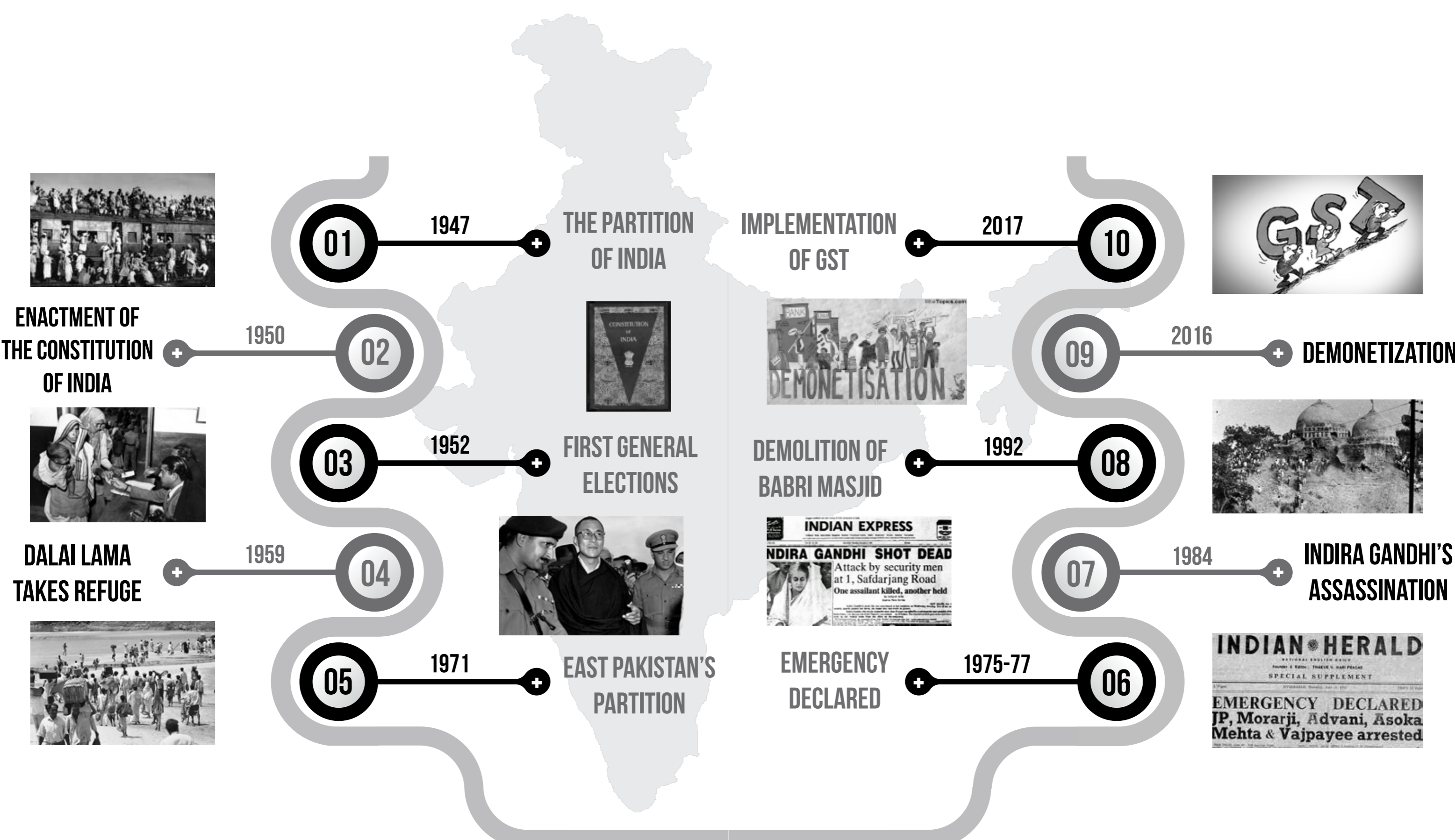
commanders of the Army and Air Force were replaced with younger leaders. This move could indicate a potential shift in the Yemen policy. These younger leaders, including a rare woman appointment, will be loyal to Prince Salman and support his ‘Vision 2030’ policy, unquestioningly.

Many spot hypocrisy in the Prince’s behaviour, as he himself makes extravagant buys. Among them are the \$500 million Pegasus Yacht, a \$450 million Da Vinci painting ‘*Salvator Mundi*’, and the \$300 million Chateau Louis XIV – the world’s most expensive residence. Some say that these are legitimate purchases, not any different from what the normal Crown Prince would buy. Members of the royal family who have supposedly made their money from legitimate sources are overjoyed by this crackdown on corrupt individuals.

Prince Salman is sending a mixed message, inconsistent with his agenda of social and economic reforms. With Middle East political analysts watching his every move, he has to be more self-aware. There is no doubt that there is urgent need for reforms in the country’s all too oil dependent economy. Only time will tell whether the Prince intends to make good on his numerous promises; it may also take years for the full outcome of the Prince’s anti-corruption purge to be fully known.

For now, the stage is set for Prince Salman to take the Saudi throne.

# 10 TURNING POINTS FOR MODERN INDIA



01

1947

THE PARTITION OF INDIA



ENACTMENT OF THE CONSTITUTION OF INDIA

1950

02



DALAI LAMA TAKES REFUGE

1959

04



05

1971

EAST PAKISTAN'S PARTITION



IMPLEMENTATION OF GST

2017

10



09

2016

DEMONETIZATION



03

1952

FIRST GENERAL ELECTIONS

DEMOLITION OF BABRI MASJID

1992

08



07

1984

INDIRA GANDHI'S ASSASSINATION



06

1975-77

EMERGENCY DECLARED



# Failure of the United Nations in Myanmar

Aarsh Ashdir's prize-winning Historical Circle Essay, 2017, on the UN's failure in preventing atrocities on the Rohingyas.

1994-U.N. Peacekeepers in Rwanda watched as Hutu slaughtered more than 800,000 Tutsi. 2010- total death count of Sudanese civilians rises to 300,000 due to UN apathy and inaction. 2016-a fourteen-year-old orphaned girl from Congo seeking refuge in the United Nations gets raped by her protectors.

The custodian of global peace is fighting a desperate battle to protect its utility, and from where I stand - it is losing.

Formed with the prodigious hope of maintaining global order, today the UN has become nothing more than an instrument of soft power and hegemony. This can be conclusively proven through four lines of analysis.

Firstly, the structure of United Nations Security Council (UNSC) - the apex peacekeeping body of the world is becoming dangerously redundant. When this body was created there were five permanent members with veto powers at their disposal. This made sense at that time because all other countries were either colonies of the P5 or had just been defeated by the Allies in the Second World War. If the P5 resisted any resolution then the others didn't have the resources to push it through anyway. However, now after several decades of its formation, the military strength across the globe has dynamically shifted hands. Today emerging powers like Brazil, Germany, India and Japan have become forces to be reckoned with. Any military decision made by them sends ripples throughout the world. Hence it only makes sense to shift the scales of power in the Security Council also. Not just that hundreds of smaller states have emerged as self-sustained military units. Though they still can't match the strength of the big and mighty; collectively they play a decisive role in maintaining the balance of power. Hence, the ten elected non-permanent members are far too little to

fully represent the military interests of the world. Due to this often issues pertaining to a particular country are discussed in the absence of the concerned nation itself. Ironically the structure of the UNSC is the antithesis of the very democracy they try to propagate.

This very structure creates a base for the second problem which is the exploitation of power by the ruling nations. Today a lot of resolutions critical for the benefit of the world are dismissed for the selfish interests of the ones in power. We see this in the case of USA blocking resolutions critical of Israel. Since 1972, United States has cast its veto more than 79 times to shield Israel from the Security Council's resolutions.



► *The First United Nations Meeting*

Similarly, millions of Syrians are getting killed and displaced from their homeland due to the continued vetoes by the Russia and China. Even more concerning is the

rising dominance of the hidden veto in the United Nations. A hidden veto is a quiet threat of using a veto in closed-door informal sessions. These don't make the headlines and hence people believe that veto is a problem of the past. The United Nations could not act in time in the Rwandan Genocide in 1994 due to the use of the hidden veto by US and France. Even today issues like the South China Sea, etc. are constantly avoided in the UNSC in fear of invoking the wrath of the Asian supergiant. Similarly, when USA overstepped UN authority and attacked Iraq in 2003, they violated the UN charter, and the issue was sidestepped without any concrete action against the United States.



► *The Nowhere Child*

Another major indication of U.N. failure as a peacekeeping force is its increasing ineffectiveness of peacekeeping missions. In 1995 Srebrenica was declared a "safe zone" by the UN and was given its own protection force and yet soon afterwards 8000 Bosnians were slaughtered by the Serbian forces. In Sri Lanka, a bloody civil war lasted for 29 years and 40000 deaths occurred in last phase alone when UN

**“The 21st century brings with it a rising role of non-state actors in global warfare.”**

had declared the territory as a safe zone. In Darfur, the United Nations and African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) has repeatedly failed to protect the civilians and had concealed this information until very recently. These examples are just a few amongst the many. The fact is that UN has not managed to achieve the very thing it was created for – global peace. The 18 civil wars that are happening in the world right now are a testament to the same. Furthermore, the UN troops who are supposed to be

protecting the rights of the oppressed are seen violating them. Over the past twelve years, 103 allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse were reported in field missions, 53 percent of which occurred after 2016. Of these, about 300 victims are as young as twelve. And these are just those that have been reported. This rampant abuse of power challenges the integrity of the organization as a whole and questions its existence.

However, the most concrete and fundamental reason for its failure is the changing nature of peacekeeping itself. The UN was designed to deal with interstate conflicts. The 21st century brings with it a rising role of non-state actors in global warfare. Militant groups like ISIS, Al Qaeda, PKK and Hezbollah are greater threats to global peace than even the most armed and hostile nations. The United Nations which has 110,000 and 8 nuclear powers at its side, still finds itself inept in dealing with ISIS which roughly the size of a small scale American university and has no more than 30,000 people. The reason for this is that none of U.N.'s tactics seem to work with them: be it economic embargoes, political isolation or military threat. Unlike state-funded troops, these

non-state military wings are provided with extensive financial and technical assistance from offshore accounts and untraceable bogus organizations. Armed with their anonymity and lack of accountability, they destabilize countries from within and slowly spread fear across the nation. Very recently the Lebanese prime minister was made to resign under the threat of Hezbollah (Islamic terrorist group)\*. Incidents like these are increasing in number and scale. The perpetrators of war are changing and UN has no way of dealing with them.

Hence the UN is increasingly becoming a thing of the past. It has often failed in dealing with conflict involving states and has almost always failed in dealing with conflicts involving non-state entities. Furthermore, its poor structure has led to the abuse of power, lack of representation and delayed action.

The world needs a body which can adapt to the changing problems of 21st Century and one which is free from the clutches of the West. Evolution is necessary or what happened to the Rohingyas would be a mere beginning of the dystopia that would follow.



# Word Search

Demystify the Enigma!



1. Who was the last Tsar of Russia?
2. Which American President helped avert the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962?
3. Who was the first Supreme Leader of the DPRK?
4. What was the name of the group of rebels who defended Vietnam during the 1965 invasion by American forces?
5. The name of the corruption scandal that took place in Bihar, and saw the state's Chief Minister and Former Chief Minister convicted of embezzlement?
6. What is the name of Malaysia's newly elected Prime Minister who has set the record for the oldest Prime Minister ever?
7. Who was the Russian ex-spy who fell victim to an attempted murder using a nerve agent?
8. Where is the historic Kim-Trump summit due to be held?
9. What is the name of the USA's Secretary of State?
10. \_\_\_\_\_ Modi was behind the recently discovered fraud case, allegedly worth \$2 billion, which took place at the Punjab National Bank.
11. Who is the ex-President of Zimbabwe that was overthrown in a military coup?
12. What were the new tax laws in India, introduced by Arun Jaitley in June 2017?
13. Who is the youngest living President?
14. What is the name of Germany's Chancellor, thought to be the most powerful woman in the world?
15. Who is the current Prince of Saudi Arabia, who has recently been trying to introduce reforms to the country's laws regarding women's rights?

## Hints

- |                |            |                |             |            |
|----------------|------------|----------------|-------------|------------|
| 1. Nicholas II | 2. Kennedy | 3. Kim II-Sung | 4. Vietcong | 5. Fodder  |
| 6. Mahathir    | 7. Skripal | 8. Singapore   | 9. Pompeo   | 10. Nirav  |
| 11. Mugabe     | 12. GST    | 13. Macron     | 14. Merkel  | 15. Salman |

*“Man makes his own history, but he does not make it out of the whole cloth; he does not make it out of conditions chosen by himself, but out of such as he finds close at hand.”*

**- Karl Marx**



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