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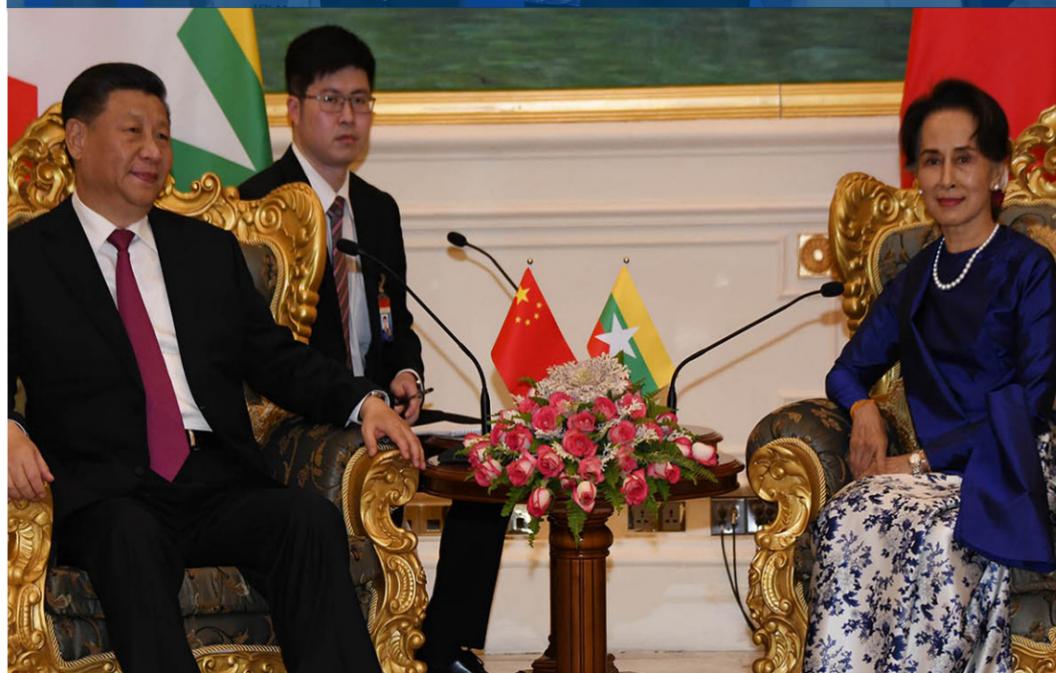
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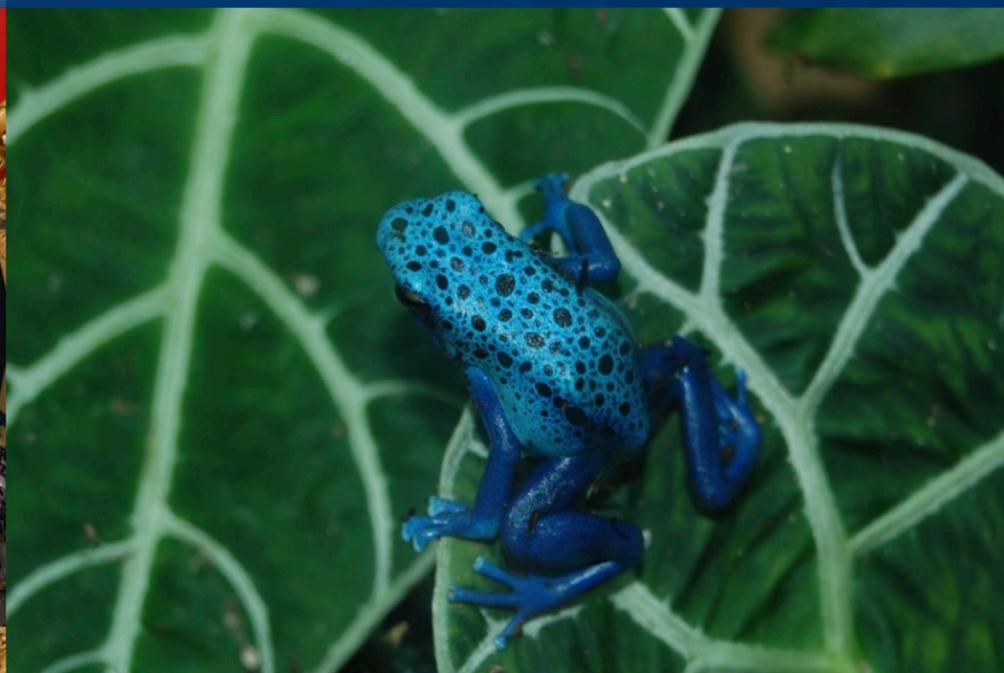
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Reimagining Intelligence



HORMIS THARAKAN, Former Chief of R&AW. M.K. NARAYANAN, Former National Security Advisor to Govt of India & Governor of West Bengal. UZI ARAD, Former NSA, Govt of Israel. RAJIV JAIN, Former Director IB.

The new era brings with it new technologies that help in intelligence gathering but also ushers new uncertainties. During the Synergia Conclave-2019, M K Narayanan, Former National Security Advisor to GOI & Governor of West Bengal, Uzi Arad, Former NSA, Gov of Israel, Hormis Tharakan, Former Chief of R&AW, and Rajiv Jain, Former Director IB carried out detailed deliberations on “Reimagining Intelligence”.

Background

The degree of interconnectedness between nations, people and the communications systems today, the ubiquitous nature of information, and the exponential pace of technological change are making the world dramatically more complicated.

The intelligence community too has to grapple with a new complex world of geopolitics. New technologies that help in intelligence gathering also usher new uncertainties. Big data analytics and Artificial Intelligence (AI) will increasingly sift through the data clutter and pinpoint actionable intelligence in real-time. However, whatever the degree of sophistication applied, seldom is intelligence able to provide decision-makers complete certainty of its predictions.

Analysis

As a veteran intelligence professional, MK Narayanan said that intelligence often referred to as the last five per cent, is always difficult to obtain and getting accurate intelligence is extremely difficult. That rule has not changed despite technological advances. “It is easy to fault intelligence agencies, but no two situations are the same as there is no real parallel to that can be followed. Intelligence agencies have to constantly come up with a range of new options to deal with the current threats,” said Narayanan. It is not merely developing a sixth sense, but to keep pace with the advances in technology, in thought and behaviour—take the example of social media and modes of social behaviour that have come up.

It is important, therefore, for intelligence professionals from the lowest level to the highest to keep pace with what is happening. “Today we have discussed the changes in fieldcraft that have occurred in the digital age, how noise and signal have become one and how metadata, sometimes more than the content, becomes a critical aspect of intelligence,” added Narayanan.

Rajiv Jain, former Director IB explained the intricacies of the intelligence collection process. The most significant change has been in the process of collection of data—in fact massive amount of data is now available. It is therefore very important to ascertain the veracity of the input or information. It is important to feed the right kind of information that is verifiable to have reliable analysis. In the stages of collation and analysis, while AI, Big Data Analytics and Machine Learning have, in a way eased the task of the analyst, but these technologies could produce stereotypes of outputs. The human analyst with prior knowledge of the field, awareness of the adversary’s intent and clarity of the objective, remains vital and relevant. However,

it would immensely help if the analyst has some amount of technical knowledge to be able to use such tools to help his analysis.

Information gathering has also changed. In the past, intelligence agencies were adept at HUMINT, or human intelligence. Now there are organisations in India, including purely technical ones like the National Technical Research Organization (NTRO), which generate technical intelligence in huge quantity. But there is a need for coordination and collaboration between various intel agencies in order to exploit these raw inputs. “An intelligent mix of technologically assisted data analysis, use of metadata, international cooperation combined with traditional fieldcraft can result in success in a very short time to crack even the toughest of cases”.

Hormis Tharakan, former chief of R&AW stressed on four aspects that need regular monitoring: capacity-building, coordination, legislation and oversight.

At the functional level, coordination is done through Multi-Agency Centres. At the apex level, it is done through the institution of the NSA. He then outlined how the intelligence coordination system evolved in India from the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) to the present structure with the National Security Council (NSC) and the NSA.

At the very apex, the level is the NSC consisting of the PM, and five key cabinet ministers. Then there is the Strategic Policy Group headed by the Cabinet Secretary, which works out policy options for the NSC’s consideration. The coordination at this level is done by the NSA who is the member secretary of the NSC. This system combines several features of the American and British system.

Uzi Arad, former NSA, Israel, explained the role of intelligence agencies at the higher policy management in Israel. Arad has vast experience in the area having worked for nearly 25 years with Mossad. He worked both in the classical areas of intelligence as also on the operational side. More importantly, he crossed the divide between intelligence and policy having served twice in the policy capacity as foreign affairs and foreign relations adviser to the Israeli PM and then years later as the NSA and the head of the NSC.

The activities of intelligence agencies today go beyond the collection of information and analysis. “Intelligence organisations are also actors, and they play the game of nations. They are the ones who have to be able, to tell the truth, to sift the truth from the lies but at the same time they are very active in misinformation, disinformation, and usage of modern technologies and processes and networks to accomplish that objective,” said Arad.

He also highlighted the issue of foreign intelligence agencies meddling in the electoral processes of friendly and not so friendly countries. This causes material damage because if it disrupts the performance of the government, it incurs the cost.

During the discussion phase, MK Narayanan, the moderator raised the issue of whether the current system with the NSA at the Apex, which had placed several layers between the intelligence agencies and the political leadership, was the best system for the country.

According to Uzi Arad, the NSA integrates intelligence with policy, but it is his duty to make sure that the voice of the intelligence is heard by the political leadership. Rajiv Jain said that with the several agencies now involved with intelligence collection, the nation benefits with inputs from various sources including technical inputs. With the NSA at the top, it helps to coordinate the efforts of the different agencies as also facilitate a large amount of cooperation with foreign intelligence agencies. Hormis Tharakan felt that we need to revert back to the earlier system of director of IB acting as the coordinator given that the NSA is involved in too many things.

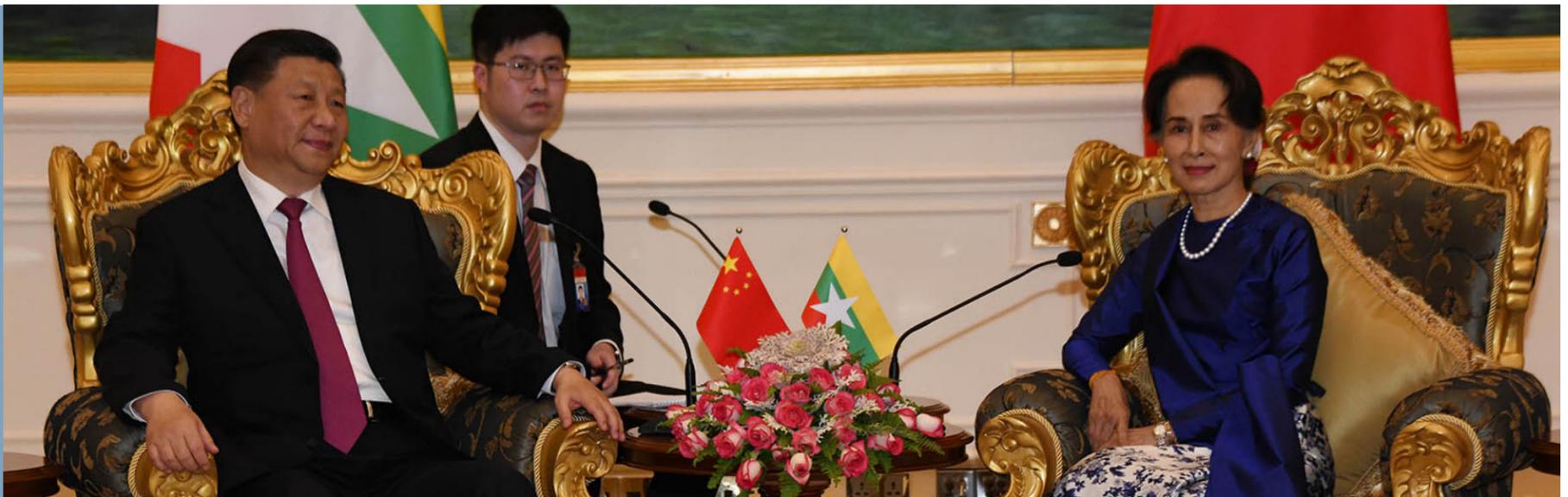
While summarising, MK Narayanan opined that in the present system, the Principal Secretary to the PM had been integrated into the NSA. While the integration gives the NSA a tremendous role but from the intel point of view, it reduces the interaction the political leadership directly had with the head of IB, R&AW and some of the other agencies. It is inevitable that at the level of the NSA, you tend to take your views sometimes overriding the views of the head of intelligence while communicating to the PM. Ergo, the separation of intelligence from the policy may lead to better outcomes.

Assessment

- A resilient intelligence organisation of the future will be built around a combination of brilliant, diverse minds, well- curated data sets, cloud processing, and cutting-edge data science. Predictions made by AI will remain inconclusive whenever a wider context is essential for understanding a problem, or where the past may not necessarily predict the future. We need to place controls on permitting AI to learn independently as autonomous 'black boxes', however analytically powerful it may be.
- In a world of asymmetric threats, it is extremely critical to know more than just what an adversary is doing. Intel agencies must be able to take steps to alter their behaviour.

- New techniques like hyperspectral imaging which comprises light from hundreds of colours across the electromagnetic spectrum, will give any object a unique signature. An analyst can study individual pixels of an image to identify specific objects or material.
- Technology has allowed humans to connect, interact and share information which has opened channels where misinformation, blurred lies, and ambiguity reigns supreme. This has also eroded the boundaries between the virtual and the real, the domestic and the international, between states and non- states actors and between war and peace.
- We need to place controls on permitting AI to learn independently as autonomous 'black boxes', however analytically powerful it may be.

China as Myanmar's best friend in need



On the eve of the International Court of Justice's (ICJ) provisional verdict on the Rohingya genocide case, the visit of the Chinese President to Myanmar is a significant sign of support. Will there be some quid-pro-quo between Myanmar and the People's Republic of China?

Background

President Xi Jinping completed a two-day official visit to Myanmar, on 17 and 18 January, 2020. This was the first state visit by a Chinese President, in 19 years; though in 2009, Xi Jinping as Vice President had visited Myanmar. The geo-political significance of the visit is three-fold. PRC support to Myanmar in the Rohingya crisis; assertion of Myanmar control in the Northern states, particularly Kachin and Shan; and revival of the stalled Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) projects in Myanmar.

The Rohingya Muslims have been living in the Arakan (now called Rakhine), in Western Myanmar, since British colonization (1824 – 1948). At that time, both Myanmar and what is today Bangladesh were provinces of British India. Thus, internal movement of labour within the British Empire, was considered normal; though, perhaps the local population resented the influx of outsiders. After Myanmar gained Independence in 1948 this migration was declared illegal and the Rohingya people were denied citizenship. From the late 1970s, the Myanmar Army has been deployed in the Rakhine state and several Rohingya villages have been vacated, with the population seeking refuge in neighboring countries. Many refugees attempt to cross the Straits of Malacca and the Andaman Sea on rickety boats earning them the status of 'Boat People'. From 2015 onwards, the plight of the Rohingya people has received widespread international attention. In 2019, the West African state of Gambia filed a lawsuit, at the ICJ at The Hague, against Myanmar. Gambia estimates that because of the brutal crackdown by the Myanmar Army some 700,000 refugees, have been forced to re-locate to Bangladesh and an estimated 10,000 have lost

their lives. India also have an estimated 40,000 Rohingya refugees.

Aung San Suu Kyi, a former human rights activist and Nobel laureate, is currently Myanmar's de-facto leader and the State Councilor. In December 2019, Suu Kyi was forced to appear before the ICJ, to defend Myanmar's military actions against accusations of genocide and other crimes against humanity.

Analysis

China is one of the only world powers to have backed Myanmar despite confirmation of human rights violations by UN investigations. Xi's visit should provide much-needed show of support, for the Aung San Suu Kyi's beleaguered global image over the treatment meted out to the Rohingya Muslim minorities. Suu Kyi's personal reputation as a human-rights activist and campaigner for democratic rights, has suffered, after the testimony at the ICJ, in which she supported the Myanmar armed forces.

Kachin is the northernmost state of Myanmar and bordered by the PRC to the North (Tibet) and to the East (Yunnan). Since the mid-1960s, Kachin has been virtually independent, with the assistance of the Kachin Independent Army (KIA) and an economy based on agriculture and trade. Kachin carries out active trade with PRC to the north. Timber, gold, rare earth metals and jade are the main commodities of trade. Since independence in 1948, the Myanmar army has been periodically engaged in operations with the KIA.

The Shan state lies to the East of Kachin and also borders China (Yunnan), with Laos to the East and Thailand to the South. Shan is Myanmar's largest state but also remains in the control of several ethnic militias. Since Myanmar's independence, the ethnic movements and their armed wings have resisted domination by the central government. The Myanmar army has been engaged in operations with these militias, but the difficult mountainous terrain and the underdeveloped state

of communications, have undermined efforts. The ethnic militias, particularly those East of the Salween River, still remain firmly outside Central Government rule. In recent years, the state has come under increasing Han-Chinese economic and political influence, from Yunnan.

Both Kachin and Shan States were part of the notorious 'Golden Triangle' which produced most of the global supply of opium till it was surpassed by Afghanistan early this century. However, as per UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNDOC), 'Shan and Kachin (States) are experiencing a protracted state of conflict, high concentrations of poppy cultivation have continued – a clear correlation between conflict and opium production'.

Since Independence in 1948, the Myanmar Army has been involved in a series of ethnic conflicts covering the states of Rakhine, Kachin and Shan. Myanmar's internal conflicts have been called the world's longest civil war. During these decades of conflict, several ceasefires and peace settlements were negotiated, which have largely fallen apart. The latest such agreement is the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA), signed between the Government and 10 insurgent groups, on 15 Oct, 2015. China with its military and economic power can play a key role in controlling the ethnic militias, which are dependent for support from Yunnan province in China.

Of late, China's BRI, the sprawling infrastructure and investment scheme, which spans Asia, Africa, Europe and beyond, is being dubbed as a 'debt trap'. The accusation gained credence because in 2017, Sri Lanka defaulted on repayments for the Hambantota Port project and was forced to hand over the port to China, on 99-year lease. Consequently, in 2018, Malaysian PM Mahathir Mohamed cancelled

several China-funded projects in Malaysia, accusing China of practicing a new form of colonialism. India also, has consistently opposed the US\$ 62 billion China – Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), over concerns of territorial integrity and sovereignty. China's BRI has also come under intense criticism from US, Japan and other powers in Asia Pacific.

Similar to the CPEC in Pakistan, the BRI plan for Myanmar is called the China – Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC). This infrastructure development plan calls for building rail, road and pipelines from Yunnan Province (China) through Muse (Shan State) and Mandalay to Kyaukpku (Rakhine State). Kyaukpku is also to be developed as a SEZ (Special Economic Zone) and deep-sea port. Initially planned with an outlay of US\$ 7.3 billion, in the light of debit-trap fears, Myanmar has scaled down the project to US\$ 1.3 billion.

Another China-funded program is the Myitsone Dam & Hydro-electric Project, to be constructed at the confluence of the Irrawaddy River, in Kachin State. Construction of the 6000 MW project has been suspended since 2017, over public concerns over inundation and environmental impacts.

Analysis: For the PRC, the visit of the President Xi Jinping, was an opportunity to revive the BRI and other China-funded projects, in Myanmar. While on the one hand, Myanmar would like to revive the stalled infrastructure projects, on the other hand, they are also wary of Chinese business interests and the dangers of debit-trap. Also, of concern is Chinese unpopularity with ethnic tribals, who have over decades witnessed the exploitation of their natural resources, by Chinese private companies. This is an immediate consideration, because the ruling National League for Democracy (NLD) will be seeking re-election, later this year.

Assessment

- It may still be idealistic to hope that mankind, the predominant species on the planet, should be free to travel and live, wherever they choose. However, it is contemptible that any community is displaced, on grounds of ethnic cleansing. The Burmese are a proud people and it must have been difficult for Aung San Suu Kyi, a Noble laureate for peace, to defend the actions of the Myanmar Army, at the ICJ tribunal.

- The PRC aspires for global leadership and have the resources to meet that aspiration. In concept, there can be little dispute that the BRI, is a laudable initiative to share economic surpluses with a larger global community. However, in South Asia, by investing first in Pakistan (CPEC) and then with Myanmar (CMEC), the PRC appears to be supporting regimes that nurture terrorism and ethnic cleansing. We should hope that with greater power, the PRC also demonstrates greater responsibility.

AFRS: The hawk eye



India is closer to installing the Automated Facial Recognition Systems (AFRS) to aid law enforcement agencies to track and nab criminals. While it will strengthen the fight against crime, stringent regulations are essential to prevent its misuse.

Background

AFRS uses a network of cameras, digitally linked to a large central database containing photos and videos where AI, also referred to as 'neural networks', compares and finds a match to fix identity.

In June 2019, The Indian National Crime Report Bureau (NCRB) floated a tender to procure one of the largest AFRS.

Analysis

While AFRS will strengthen the fight against crime, there are concerns that in case stringent regulations are not put in place, the system may be misused.

Currently, the leaders in AFRS technology are Amazon; Face recognition Lambda labs, Microsoft, Google and IBM. There is no Indian company in this field while China with a host of of start-ups like Megvii and AI unicorns like CloudWalk, SenseTime, and Yitu, has made AFRS commonplace in China.

In India, AFRS will be integrated with existing digital systems like the NCRB-managed Crime and Criminal Tracking Network & Systems (CCTNS), Integrated Criminal Justice System (ICJS), the Immigration, Visa and Foreigners Registration & Tracking (IVFRT) System and the 'Khoaya Paya portal' for missing children and other systems being used at state and central level.

It will be available as a mobile and web application hosted in NCRB's Data Centre in Delhi.

The AFRS will be used at the national level down to the police station level. It is

being claimed that it will greatly improve identification and verification in criminal investigations by facilitating easy recording, analysis, retrieval and sharing of Information between different organisations.

Counter View

AFRS is still far from perfect and users have reported many flaws in the technology itself. Experts say that it can be deceived by wearing dark and shiny sunglasses. In fact, Japan's National Institute of Informatics has come up with glowing glasses having infra-red LEDs that foil facial recognition. Such like deceptions can either lead to mistaken identity or provide a loophole for terrorists and criminals to exploit.

The system used in Delhi to identify missing children itself has an accuracy below one percent and was grossly inefficient in distinguishing between boys and girls. The report by Metropolitan police in UK also stated that the inaccuracy rate as 98%.

Accuracy of these systems is said to be only two percent particularly in the case of minorities, women and children.

The outcome of machine learning comes from the way the machine is trained. With AFRS, the accuracy and strength of the database requires recording, classifying

Assessment

- While modernisation of Indian law enforcement agencies is a crying need of the times, we must be circumspect with the kind of technology we entrust them with. With all its present shortcomings, AFRS can at best be a deterrent against crime.
- Caution is advised so that we do not run the risk of becoming a surveillance state like China which uses it ruthlessly over a wide spectrum to keep a sharp eye on its restive population.

and querying every individual and most times, in situations where the individual themselves will not be aware of such identification. For example, each time a person walks in front of a CCTV camera, fresh data is collected and recorded.

These systems make some people more vulnerable than others, and are subject to aspects such as ethnicity, characteristics, gender. The MIT media lab stated that the accuracy rates of these systems are extremely high if the person is a white male and extremely low if you are a coloured person.

As being reported in the media, police in many countries have not been very satisfied with the AFRS. The London police is under pressure to end its use due to discrimination in its usage and inherent inefficiencies of the system. Similarly, San Francisco, Oakland California and Sommerville Massachusetts have banned its use by its police department.

Human Rights activists and legal experts in India have voiced their concerns. Pawan Duggal, a top cyber law expert, has been quoted as saying that "The first casualty of the absence of regulatory framework for facial recognition technology is people's right to privacy," Vidushi Marda, a human rights campaigner, has gone on record stating that real-time facial recognition, if combined with the world's largest biometric database like Aadhaar, could create the "perfect Orwellian state".

- The JAM trinity (Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile combination) has created the largest data bank of citizens in the world in India, AFRS will be adding its own flood of data to this. All this data is extremely vulnerable in our weak digital infrastructure and would require the most stringent protocols and systems to secure.
- The Supreme court of India has upheld the 'right to privacy' as a fundamental right. Legal experts need to study AFRS to determine its legality.

Biodiversity crisis: vanishing species



The web of life between organisms on earth, binding each into an interdependent eco system is under threat of the Holocene or the Sixth Mass Extinction. Can humanity reverse this to save itself?

Background

Biodiversity loss can be defined as the extinction of species worldwide and the loss of species in a certain habitat. There have been five such major mass extinction and we are living through what is being termed as the Sixth or the Holocene extinction.

The first such extinction took place about 444 million years ago caused by a severe ice age. The second one was 375 million years ago as a result of algal blooms which sucked oxygen out of sea water suffocating bottom dwellers. The third, the worst one as it nearly extinguished life on earth, was 250 million years ago caused by a deadly combination of carbon dioxide and methane, another green-house gas, poisoning the air and acidifying the oceans. The fourth mass extinction took place about 200 million years ago but we still do not know what triggered it. The fifth and the last one was 66 million years ago and was caused by a combination of volcanoes eruptions, climate change and the final nail on the coffin which wiped out the dinosaurs was the catastrophic asteroid impact.

We are presently undergoing the Holocene or the Sixth mass extinction which as we all know is caused by human activity. With extensive degradation of biodiverse natural spaces such as coral reefs, rainforests, it is estimated that the current rate of extinction is 100 to 1000 times higher than what happened in earlier cycles due entirely to natural causes. Estimates put animal species on the planet between 5 to 9 million and reportedly, we are likely losing 11,000- 58,000 species annually.

Analysis

In all, the UN's Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services estimate that as many as 1 million species are now at risk if we don't act to save them; that number includes 40 percent of all amphibian species, 33 percent of corals, and around 10 percent of insects. In terms of the global human population (currently around 7.6 billion), it would be like losing the populations of the United States, Mexico, Canada, United Kingdom, Ireland, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Poland combined.

University of Sydney Professor Dieter Hochuli said that while wildfires are traditionally a normal part of Australia's ecosystem, the increased frequency and intensity has enormous consequences for the future of plants and animals. "It's not just the charismatic well known species that are at risk either. The insects that so many of our ecosystems are reliant on for services like pollination and nutrient

cycling are very sensitive to fire,” he said.

The root causes of biodiversity crisis includes changes in land and sea use as also direct exploitation of organisms through hunting, climate change and pollution. UN’s leading research body on nature has compiled over the last three years a draft of the global assessment report which the authors hope will push the crisis into global spotlight in the same way as climate breakdown.

Biologist Paul Ehrlich, Senior Fellow, Emeritus, Stanford University has warned

Assessment

- The rapid growth of the human population may seem like a sign of the human race’s success — and it is. We depend on the earth’s natural resources to survive which is the major and growing driver of sixth mass extinction.
- As extinctions loom, biodiversity warnings fail to resonate with governments. Collaborative efforts by countries are necessary to counter extinction as forest natures have no defined boundaries. This calls for a biodiversity accord as it was done for climate change at the Paris climate agreement.
- More worrying is the fact that Defaunation (the global, local or functional extinction of animal populations or species from ecological communities) has its impact on disease transmission in human and animals in different ways, mainly by changing the abundance, behaviour, and competence of hosts as also causing food supply shortages.
- To cite the Amazon fires of 2019, it is on record that over 906 thousand hectares (2.24×106acres; 9,060 km²; 3,500 sq mi) of rain forest within the Amazon biosphere was burnt down in massive uncontrolled fires deliberately triggered by land-hungry contractors wishing to create vast cattle ranches. The Amazon rain forest is home to one in 10 species on Earth and so the loss of fauna would be incalculable.

that civilisational collapse is a “near certainty” in the next few decades due to the destruction of the natural world.

Counter View

There is another school of thought amongst scientist who counter that Earth’s diversity has not been dramatically threatened. As per them, it is slowly entering an episode of biodiversity loss at a pace which gives us sufficient time to address the issue or develop measures to counter it.

- Similarly, in the ongoing Australian bush fires caused by rising global temperatures, biologists fear over 2.3 million animals may have perished.
- Despite the debate on the speed of extinction, there is no doubting the scale of destruction. Human activity has significantly altered three-quarters of the Earth’s land and around two-thirds of the marine environment. We are staring at a man-made disaster of gargantuan dimensions.
- People who rely most directly on ecosystem services, such as subsistence farmers, the rural poor, and traditional societies, face the most serious and immediate risks from biodiversity loss.
- In order to assist policy decisions and negotiation among different local, national, and international stakeholders, considerable advance is needed in the evaluation and accounting of ecosystem services. The challenge here is to find ways to identify and monitor services that are as concrete as possible.
- Most of the concrete actions to slow down biodiversity loss fall under the domain of policy making by governments and the civil society. However, the scientific community still needs to fill crucial knowledge gaps.
- Biodiversity losses can potentially cause flood of migrations leading to instability and conflicts.

Carlos Ghosn's great escape



Scripted like a Hollywood movie, the escape of former Nissan CEO Carlos Ghosn from Japanese law has captivated the world. Is he a plain fugitive or does the Japanese legal system warrant closer international scrutiny?

Scripted like a Hollywood movie, the escape of former Nissan CEO Carlos Ghosn from Japanese law has captivated the world. Is he a plain fugitive or does the Japanese legal system warrant closer international scrutiny?

At 4 AM on 30 Dec 2019, Carlos Ghosn landed in a private jet in Beirut, Lebanon and

made a short public statement, "I have escaped injustice and political persecution (from Japan)."

Carlos Ghosn, the Chairman and CEO of Nissan-Renault – Mitsubishi strategic alliance was arrested in Nov 2018 by the Japanese Public Prosecutor, on multiple charges of financial impropriety and was on bail, awaiting trial. The Prosecutor had raised four charges against him, including under-reporting his Nissan salary and transferring personal losses to the company's books. However, Carlos had denied all charges.

How was the Escape Organized?

While the exact details of Carlos Ghosn's escape have not been made public, social media have pieced together the likely escape plan. In April 2019 the car-maker was granted bail, on payment of surety of one billion Yen (US\$ 8.9 million). Under the terms of bail, Carlos was not permitted to leave Japan, his house was placed under 24-hour camera surveillance and his use of technology (use of internet and speaking to wife Carole) was severely restricted. However, surprisingly, he was not required to wear any surveillance tags. The escape plan was probably planned and executed by a group of security experts, comprising former military professionals. Then in Dec 2019, a group of musicians were invited to play at Carlos's home in Tokyo and the experts were disguised amongst the group. At the end of the musical performance, Carlos Ghosn made his escape with the band, hidden in a large musical instrument case. The band was transported to Tokyo Airport, from where they were flown in a Bombardier Challenger Private jet to Beirut; with a refuelling halt, at Istanbul. Carlos Ghosn holds French, Brazilian and Lebanese passports and he is reported to have cleared Lebanon's immigration, with his French passport and Lebanese ID. It is pertinent to note that Lebanon and Japan, have no extradition treaty.

With the escape of the suspect from Japanese custody, the conduct of the high-profile trial is now uncertain. The office of the Public Prosecutor should also be embarrassed that the celebrity-suspect escaped Japanese custody, with impunity. However, perhaps the more important consequence will be the revival of global criticism of the infamous Japanese 'hostage – justice' system.

What is 'Hostage Justice'?

In most developed countries, for non-violent crimes, suspects can be held for a maximum 24 hours, without being charged. However, the Japanese criminal procedure code permits detentions of up to 23 days! Further, bail is often refused and suspects subjected to interrogation, without the presence of a lawyer. In Japan, it is also common to extend the detention of suspects in custody, by adding new charges. Thus, in the case of Carlos Ghosn, he was detained for 108 days before he was released on bail, in March 2019; only to be re-arrested and then released again.

In another statement, made after his escape, Carlos Ghosn has said he would no longer be held hostage by a rigged Japanese justice system, where guilt is presumed, discrimination rampant and basic human rights denied.

Extended periods of pre-trial incarcerations, enable law enforcement officials to subject suspects to prolonged interrogations, without the presence of defence lawyers. In such circumstances, suspects feel coerced to confess; sometimes, even for crimes, they did not commit. According to Japanese Human Rights activists, an astonishing 99.9% of criminal defendants are convicted!

Is Japanese Nationalism Playing an Under-hand Role?

The Renault (French) – Nissan (Japanese) alliance was formed in 1999 when Renault rescued Nissan from the brink of bankruptcy. As a result, the French company acquired a 43% stake in Nissan, while the Japanese company got a 15% stake in Renault. In 2016, Mitsubishi was added to the mix, when Nissan acquired a 34% stake in the fellow Japanese concern. Since then, Mitsubishi has recovered from both scandal (faking emission data in 2016) and financial woes. During this entire period, Carlos Ghosn was the center stage; initially as Chairman and Chief Executive of Renault and later becoming Chairman of Nissan and then Mitsubishi, as well. After the three-company alliance was formed in September 2017, a separate board was formed and Carlos Ghosn was made Chairman and Chief Executive.

Though the three companies retain their own identities, they also act as a global

car grouping. The three companies develop and use common technologies and buy parts from the same global suppliers. Since his elevation in 1999, Carlos Ghosn applied bold and effective strategies, in turning around all three global automobile companies. He was ruthless in cutting jobs, closing down factories and transforming operating philosophies; earning him the French nick-name, 'Le-Cost Killer'. Though Carlos Ghosn reportedly does not like the moniker, under his dynamic leadership operating profits soared and remained high; until, global financial crisis, when like other manufacturers, profits began to plummet.

Ghosn has claimed that his arrest was part of a plot, to remove him from the automotive empire he built.

The Renault – Nissan – Mitsubishi Alliance, is not a merger; the alliance permits the constituting companies to retain individual identity. However, in forging the alliance, Carlos Ghosn created a competitive advantage that benefitted both individual companies and the alliance as a whole. Now that Nissan and Mitsubishi have returned to profitability there may be apprehension amongst nationalist elements that Japanese companies were being undermined by the French - Renault. It is possible that these elements would like to stymie any further attempts towards merger; and, for which Carlos Ghosn would be an irreplaceable key. Essentially, the idea of former Japanese automotive champions (Nissan and Mitsubishi) working under the French flag (Renault), is implacable to Japanese nationalist sentiment.



For two decades, Carlos Ghosn provided leadership to three global car manufacturing companies, making them individually profitable and wielding them into the largest light vehicle manufacturing alliance, in the world. Carlos Ghosn will remain an iconic global corporate leader and there is much the automobile industry can learn from his leadership, management style and strategic decision-making. In terms of individual achievement, Carlos Ghosn stands on the same mantle as Lee Iacocca, the iconic car-manufacturer whose singular achievements in Ford and Chrysler, between 1960 to 1980, remain a legend.

However, by jumping bail and escaping from Japanese law, Carlos Ghosn also remains a fugitive. By taking advantage of the complex international extradition system, he may also escape trial in Japan. However, if Carlos refuses to confront his accusers, he stands accused with other criminals, of escaping the arms of sovereign law, to avoid being held accountable. In India we have little respect for Vijay Malaya and Nirav Modi, who like Carlos Ghosn deliberately escaped sovereign jurisdiction, to avoid trial.

Japan is a proud nation and there is much the world can emulate from Japanese culture and values. However, the concept of 'hostage justice', is out of sync with criminal-justice systems, in the developed world. Detention and interrogation without oversight are shortcomings that deserve to be corrected, in the office of public prosecution. By incorporating these provisions in Japanese law, not only would the criminal justice system be improved, it would remove any moral justification for Carlos Ghosn, not returning to Japan and standing trial.

The curse of coronavirus



Despite the vast advances made in medical sciences, nature stays a step ahead of scientific advances. While we eradicate old diseases, new ones emerge

Background

While we have been successful in eradicating diseases like smallpox, plague and to a great extent polio, new emerging viruses continue to threaten a pandemic-Ebola virus, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and the avian flu to name just a few. The 2009 swine flu, a pandemic is reported to have killed over 40 million people worldwide since its emergence.

Newly emerging viruses are sometimes totally new and previously unknown- like HIV, Ebola and SARS, while some virus called 're-emerging viruses' are mutants of older known viruses-like the swine flu virus.

The latest in the series is a mystery pneumonia-like illness that is spreading in Wuhan, the capital of Hubei Province, in Central China. So far, 59 people have reported the symptoms, with seven of them assessed critical. Media is reporting the death of a 61-year-old male who is said to be affected by the virus.

The symptoms of the disease include body-ache, high-fever, breathing difficulty and lung lesions. The illness is suspected to be caused by a new strain of coronavirus. China's health-care capabilities with WHO assistance are being challenged, to deal with the unfamiliar and possibly infectious disease.

Analysis

Coronaviruses belong to a large family of viruses that infect both animals and humans. Wuhan is in proximity to Guangdong Province in South China, where in 2002, the SARS epidemic, broke out.

It may be recollected, in 2002 - 03, SARS infected more than 8,098 people worldwide and caused 774 deaths, before it was contained. In just eight months, SARS had spread to 37 countries in North America, South America, Europe and Asia. The coronavirus that caused SARS was traced to the civet cat, a wild animal considered

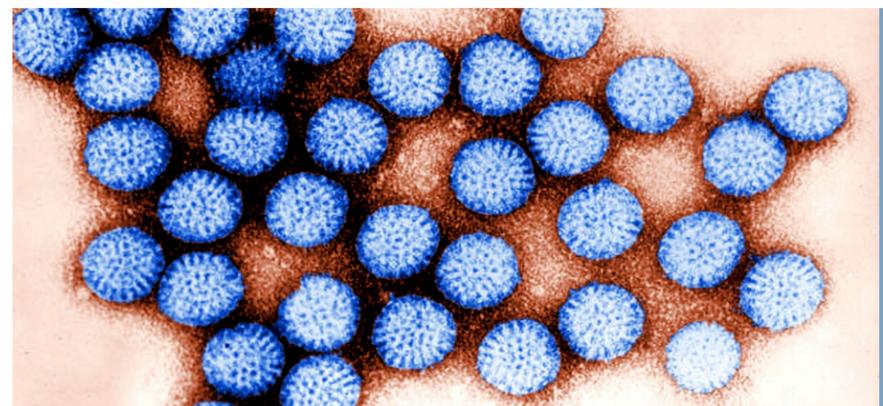
to be a delicacy in South China. Similarly, MERS, which was identified in Saudi Arabia in 2012 and is responsible for 851 deaths, has been attributed to a coronavirus that jumped to humans from the Dromedary camel.

Several of the 59 people, who suffered the ailment are believed to have worked at Wuhan's South China Seafood City. On 1 January, 2020, Chinese authorities shut the market, for carrying out extensive disinfection. The 1000-stall bazar not only sold seafood but marmots, spotted deer, venomous snakes and other exotic delicacies.

According to Chinese scientists, the new coronavirus, is different from SARS, MERS, the flu, bird flu, adenoviruses and other pathogens that cause pneumonia. However, it is from the same family as the deadly SARS; but, unlike the SARS coronavirus, the new pathogen has not exhibited human-to-human transmission, so far. Neither has any healthcare worker has been infected. China Central TV (CCTV) has reported that more scientific research was needed, for better understanding.

Health authorities in Asia, have stepped up screenings of passengers and begun isolating patients with flu-like symptom & who recently travelled to Wuhan. Officials at Hong Kong International Airport have installed thermal imaging systems to scan people with fevers. So far, 38 passengers have been detained and hospitalized in quarantine. Taiwan, South Korea Thailand, Philippines and Singapore have also begun placing passengers with symptoms, under isolated treatment. Thailand also has reported an infected traveller from China.

Leo Poon, an epidemiologist working with Hong Kong University, says there are three key questions that need to be answered? What is the cause of the diseases? Is it a brand-new virus? Is it transmissible between humans? Since the incubation period is at least 15 days for some viral infections, experts await in case the outbreak becomes a full-blown epidemic.



Assessment

- Both the coronaviruses that caused SARS in 2003 and MERS in 2012 are believed to have jumped from animals to humans before they became communicable. If the Wuhan Pneumonia is found to be contagious, it could pose a major public health challenge.
- In the instant case, China is fully cooperating with the WHO to combat this threat. It is vital that there is no delay in sharing all the vital details and allowing unrestricted access to experts, unlike what happened in 2002 during the SARS break out, to successfully combat the menace.
- In the meantime, Virologists need to urgently study the pathogen to determine countermeasures, like antiviral drugs and suitable respiratory machines.

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