



## International Relations- May, June, July, Aug 2011

*15 Very Important Themes for UPSC Mains 2011*

### **THEME 1: China's expanding presence in Myanmar:**

The China Railways Engineering Corporation and the Myanmar Union Ministry of Rail Transportation had signed a memorandum of understanding to complete the 126-km first phase of the railway line by 2014.

The line will run from Kyaukphyu to the border town of Muse which will help securing access to both energy resources and a strategically-significant Indian Ocean port in that country.

The project would be implemented in line with the gas pipeline China was building from Kyaukphyu to Ruili in Yunnan province, which bordered Myanmar.

China is also planning to invest in setting up a special industrial zone at Kyaukphyu, which the Chinese government hopes will emerge as an important centre of energy imports, amid an ongoing effort to reduce its dependence on the Malacca Straits as a route for its oil imports.

### **Burma rail- A Special Report**

Myanmar's railway minister, Aung Min, told that work will begin on an 850 km railway line from the border between Yunnan and northern Myanmar to the Kyauk Phyu port off the Arakan coast in the Bay of Bengal.

"The whole project will take five years and cost about \$20 billion. China will bear the cost and the agreement will be based on BOT (build, operate and transfer) for 50 years," Aung Min said. Work is expected to start by December.

"China will use this railroad to transport goods from Kyauk Phyu port to its capital Beijing and other cities via Ruli and Kunming," Aung Min said. "Their ships will no longer need to sail through the Malacca Strait," he added. The rail line is expected to follow the alignment of the natural gas pipeline that China is already building between Kyauk Phyu and Kunming, the capital of Yunnan.

### **Onto Chittagong**

Beijing also wants to link its rail network in Yunnan to Bangladesh via Myanmar. An understanding to this effect was reached when Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina travelled to Kunming last year, and the governor of Yunnan province, Qin Guangrong, paid a return visit six months later.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh has begun work on a \$250 million project to extend the railway line from Chittagong to the border with Myanmar. The initial surveys for this project were also made more than a century ago by the British Raj.

Chinese companies are actively participating in the modernisation of the Bangla railway system and have shown interest in the development of the Chittagong port.

## India's options

China's rail links to Myanmar and Bangladesh come amidst Beijing's plans to extend its South Xinjiang rail line across the Karakorams into Pakistan and bring the Tibet rail into Nepal.

Sitting in Delhi, it is easy to cry wolf and talk about China's "encirclement" of India. That will not stop Beijing, which is determined to expand its national rail network into the subcontinent.

China is doing much the same on all its borderlands in the Northeast, Southeast and Central Asia; it is part of a wider plan to deepen China's overland connectivity.

Railways have been at the very centre of modern China's vision for nation-building. Sun Yat-Sen, the first provisional president of the Republic of China, had written in the early 20th century about political integration and economic development of China through massive rail-road development.

Sun Yat-Sen also dreamt of connecting the Chinese networks to those in India and Europe. He visualised the Chinese rail network extending all the way to Cape Town in South Africa.

While India has failed to take full advantage of the rail network that the Raj had built, China has dramatically expanded railway construction, much along the pattern that Sun Yat-Sen had visualised.

Instead of objecting to China's rail links to South Asia, India must modernise its own frontier railway system and connect it to the rail lines that Beijing is bringing to our borders in South Asia.

There is no rail line which runs only one way; if Beijing's new railways give China improved access to markets across its borders in South Asia, they also let India and her South Asian neighbours partake in south-western China's massive economic boom.

The Chinese rail lines also provide India a shorter route into China's industrial heartland in the east. After all those were the very reasons why British Raj wanted to build a rail line connecting the subcontinent to Yunnan through Myanmar.

In Dhaka, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh is expected to unveil an agreement for rail transit through Bangladesh. He must also use the moment to join hands with Sheikh Hasina to outline a bold vision to link the South Asian rail networks with those Beijing is building in Myanmar and south-western China.

## **THEME 2 : London riots:**

Between 6 and 10 August 2011, several London boroughs and districts of cities and towns across England suffered widespread rioting, looting and arson.

Following a peaceful march on 6 August 2011 in relation to the police response to the fatal shooting of Mark Duggan by Metropolitan Police Service firearms officers on 4 August 2011, a riot began in Tottenham, North London. In the following days, rioting spread to several London boroughs and districts and eventually to some other areas of England, with the most severe disturbances outside London occurring in Bristol and cities in the Midlands and North West of England. Related localised outbreaks also occurred in many smaller towns and cities in England.

The riots were characterised by rampant looting and arson attacks of unprecedented levels. As a result, British Prime Minister David Cameron returned early from his holiday in Italy and

other government and opposition leaders also ended their holidays to attend to the matter. All police leave was cancelled and Parliament was recalled on 11 August to debate the situation.

As of 15 August, about 3,100 people had been arrested, of whom more than 1,000 had been charged.[12] Arrests, charges and court proceedings continue, with courts working extended hours. There were a total 3,443 crimes across London linked to the disorder.

Five people died and at least 16 others were injured as a direct result of related violent acts. An estimated £200 million worth of property damage was incurred, and local economic activity was significantly compromised.

Police action was blamed for the initial riot, and the subsequent police reaction was criticised as being neither appropriate nor sufficiently effective. The riots have generated significant ongoing debate among political, social and academic figures about the causes and context in which they happened.

### **THEME 3: Palestinian factions sign unity pact:**

Rival Palestinian factions Fatah and Hamas proclaimed a landmark, Egyptian-mediated reconciliation pact aimed at ending their bitter four-year rift.

The declaration was made at a ceremony at the Egyptian intelligence headquarters in Cairo.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas said this ended “four black years” that hurt national Palestinian interests. He also said he would “soon” visit Hamas-held Gaza Strip.

The pact provides for the creation of a joint caretaker Palestinian government ahead of national elections next year, but leaves key issues unresolved and makes no mention of peace talks with Israel.

Israel has denounced the pact in advance, because of the militant Hamas’ long history of deadly attacks against Israeli targets. It has equated the deal with a renunciation of peacemaking.

Like the US and the EU, Israel considers Hamas a terrorist organisation and says it will not negotiate with a future Palestinian government that includes the Iranian- and Syrian-backed group.

Abbas rejected Israel’s opposition to the pact, saying the reconciliation with the militant Islamic group was an internal Palestinian affair. “They are our brothers and family. We may differ, we often do, but we still arrive at a minimum level of understanding,” Abbas said of Hamas. And in a message to Israel, Abbas added: “We reject blackmail and it is no longer possible for us to accept the occupation of Palestinian land.”

Hamas leader Khaled Mashaal also addressed the ceremony, saying his group was prepared to do anything to “translate the text of the pact to facts on the ground. Our battle is with the Israeli enemy and not with Palestinian factions.”

It’s not clear if Western powers would deal with the new government due to emerge from the deal.

The reconciliation deal is designed to unify the dueling governments that emerged after Hamas violently wrested control of Gaza from security forces loyal to Abbas in June 2007 and left his Fatah controlling only the West Bank.

Three separate committees are to be formed, which will plan for the upcoming polls, and recommend internal reforms within the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) — the umbrella group of the Palestinian factions. One of the committees would also study new security arrangements between Gaza and the occupied West Bank.

#### **THEME 4: U.K. referendum faces defeat:**

British voters rejected the controversial referendum, proposing a switch from the current first-past-the-post voting system to Alternative Vote (AV) in which voters rank candidates in order of preference. It is practised only in three countries — Australia, Fiji and Papua New Guinea.

Britain's first nationwide referendum in more than 30 years was called at the initiative of Liberal Democrats, junior partners in the Tory-led coalition government at Westminster, as part of their demand for broader electoral reforms and a condition for joining the coalition.

##### **Alternative vote**

Instant-runoff voting (IRV), also known as the alternative vote (AV) and ranked choice voting, is a voting system used to elect one winner from a pool of candidates using preferential voting. Voters rank candidates in order of preference, and their ballots are counted as one vote for their first choice candidate. If a candidate secures a majority of votes cast, that candidate wins. Otherwise, the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated. A new round of counting takes place, with each ballot counted as one vote for the advancing candidate who is ranked highest on that ballot. This process continues until the winning candidate receives a majority of the vote against the remaining candidates.

##### **First-past-the-post voting**

First-past-the-post voting refers to an election won by the candidate(s) with the most votes. The winning candidate does not necessarily receive an absolute majority of all votes cast. The system is also known as the 'winner-take-all' system, in which the candidate with the most votes gets elected.

#### **THEME 5: TURKEY: Elections and Internal Politics:**

Turkey's ruling Justice and Development party led by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan won parliamentary election by a wide margin but fell short of a "super majority" that would have allowed it to rewrite the Constitution.

Known by its Turkish initials as the AK Party, it secured 50 per cent of the vote — the highest since it began contesting elections in 2002. But despite its strong showing, the AKP got only 326 seats in the 550-member Parliament. In the 2007 elections, it had won 341 seats despite fewer people voting for it.

The AKP is short of the "super majority" of 367, which would have allowed the new administration to go ahead with constitutional changes on its own.

The AKP also narrowly missed achieving the 330 mark, which would have enabled the government to directly put its proposals to vote in a national referendum.

Current Turkish Politics:

In his long running battle with Turkey's military, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan has gained the decisive upper hand. The resignation of the chief of staff, General Isik Kosaner, along with the three service chiefs was a momentous event in a country that has seen four military coups and periods of civilian rule dominated by the

military. The resignations came in the wake of the arrests of as many as 40 generals suspected to have been involved in an attempt to topple the first Erdogan government in 2003. In a previous era, the military would have hit back with another coup. But over the last two years, its wings have been steadily clipped by Mr. Erdogan, whose political standing has soared with his repeated success at elections; on the back of solid achievement, his Justice and Development Party (AKP) won a third term two months ago. With him at the helm, Turkey has seen rapid economic growth. Its confidence has extended to the framing of a foreign policy that seeks to be independent of that of its western allies. Although joining the European Union remains a goal, it now favours more engagement with its West Asian neighbours. It has sought to reshape ties with Israel in keeping with its new friendships in the Arab world, where its democratic credentials are held in admiration. Following the shock resignations of the military brass, the government moved to prevent any instability by quickly appointing a non-ambitious general as acting chief of staff. It has also made clear that when the Supreme Military Council appoints a new command for the three services it will be with the government's approval.

At the heart of the government's tensions with the military is the perception that Prime Minister Erdogan wants to take the country away from Kemalist secularism that has defined modern Turkey. The military has traditionally seen itself as the guardian of this secular vision, while the AKP has its roots in political Islam. In recent years, the debate on the issue has polarised Turkey, centring on official moves to ease the ban on the headscarf. As the government sets its sights next on changing the 1982 Constitution framed by the military after it took power in a coup in 1980, its main challenge will be to heal rather than exacerbate the divisions in the interests of retaining the civilian upper hand. The Prime Minister has promised a consensual and "inclusive" Constitution that will be "democratic and liberal." Turkey is in reset mode. It is to be hoped that Mr. Erdogan, who has emerged as a leader with the most influence after founding father Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, will use it wisely.

#### **THEME 6: News of the World fiasco and Social Media:**

Popular public consensus can be easily swung. If you're caught doing something you shouldn't, your reputation can be irrevocably destroyed in a matter of moments. Social networking has provided the catalyst for many such campaigns, informing the wider world of scandals and tragedies in an instant.

Whilst traditional media sources unleash revelations, millions of users pass it on from one to another in instant relay. The opposite is also becoming increasingly true, with newspapers feeding off of eyewitness reports and viral campaigns online. However, it is the immediacy and the influence that both sides have on one another that has become the big story.

Many claimed that the uprising in Egypt was triggered by Facebook. This was disputed in some quarters, however there can be little doubt that it provided an effective platform for protesters to converge and converse. There have been pockets of outrage and talks of boycotts from Twitter users (more often than not aimed at the Daily Mail), many of which have had a major impact. But as yet, there hasn't been a major populist movement that has had genuine far-reaching consequences, certainly in the UK.

However, the latest News of the World allegations might well prove a tipping point in the maturation of social networking and its relationship with the media.

Whilst the story about the alleged hacking of Milly Dowler's mobile phone emerged in the newspapers, with attribution going to The Guardian, it was already dominating the trends across Twitter – after the story was published online. Indignant users were already plotting the downfall of Rebekah Brooks, The News of the World and even News International.

This indignation hasn't died down like so many other protests though. Instead it has built; the BBC and ITN giving the story prime billing, the protagonists are splashed across the front pages of every newspaper and new, even worse, revelations are drip fed each day. There was even an emergency parliamentary debate concerning a public inquiry on the issue.

Essentially it is a story that can't simply be swept under the carpet. Regardless of any one company's supposed dominance of traditional media, other outlets and social networking sites are ensuring that it remains in the public consciousness. This is symbolic of the power that the Internet, and online community in general, has to make or break a reputation or a business – despite its size.

### **THEME 7: India's campaign for membership of multilateral export control regimes:**

THE joint statement issued during President Obama's visit to India last November mentioned that "...the United States intends to support India's full membership in the four multilateral export control regimes (Nuclear Suppliers Group, Missile Technology Control Regime, Australia Group and Wassenaar Arrangement) in a phased manner..." The US committed itself without any reservations. In fact, it has recently lifted its ban on exports to several "entities" in the Atomic Energy Commission and the Defence Research and Development Organisation that were on its prohibited list for decades.

Clearly, the US is following through on the inner logic of the Indo-US nuclear deal, which the Bush administration had hammered through the U.S. Congress, the International Atomic Energy Agency and, finally, the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) in 2008. This agreement allows India to import nuclear technology, materials and equipment from abroad, despite its not joining the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) or placing its entire nuclear programme under safeguards, which is a pre-requisite for all such transfers by proficient and capable countries. Consequently, India has been accorded a truly extraordinary concession.

The question now is: can the US deliver on President Obama's promise? Can it hammer through again India's admission into these four export control regimes despite the reservations of various countries due to their domestic or foreign policy compulsions?

Not unexpectedly, Pakistan has denounced the American pledge by arguing that it would upset the "strategic balance" between the two nuclear armed adversaries. It alleges that after India gains entry into these regimes, it would be enabled to import sensitive technology, materials and equipment relating to nuclear, missile, conventional, chemical and biological weapons, and enlarge its existing arsenals. Its main grievance, however, is that a similar dispensation is not available to Pakistan. It is also most unlikely that it would ever be similarly favoured, given its horrendous proliferation record. Pakistan's fulminations are entirely in character since it really has no foreign policy, but only an India policy.

However, Australia recently refused to sell uranium to India on the grounds that it has not signed the NPT. New Delhi has been arguing that it needs to enlarge its atomic energy programme to generate clean energy, and that it can be trusted with Australian uranium. While respecting India's strong non-proliferation credentials, Australia remains adamant despite its having joined the decision taken by the NSG members in 2008 to countenance the Indo-US nuclear deal, which entailed India's being made an exception to the prohibitions of the NPT. This logic could prompt Australia to oppose India's entry into the NSG and other export control regimes.

Then there is the parallel case of Japan. The intense negotiations on an India-Japan civilian nuclear trade pact are completely bogged down at present on the issue whether India can recycle spent reactor fuel from nuclear facilities using Japanese equipment and materials. Japan emphasises that reprocessing can produce nuclear fuel but also weapons-usable material. But India believes that nuclear fuel reprocessing is imperative to pursue its

fast breeder programme. Japan is also leery of the fact that India is adamant on not joining the NPT, and has also refused to sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. New Delhi is not agreeable to even a reference being made that it will continue to abide by its self-imposed ban on nuclear tests, which it had promised the Nuclear Suppliers Group when the Indo-US nuclear deal was being negotiated. On the other hand, India has sought to clarify that a nuclear trade deal with Japan will not inhibit its military nuclear programme, which is anathema to Japan. These differences remain unresolved. Will Japan support India's entry into the export control regimes in these circumstances?

No doubt, nations like France, Russia and the United States are eager to take advantage of the trade opportunities inherent in the Indo-US nuclear deal and would be quite willing to support India's entry into these export control regimes. But there are several other countries that have reservations, and it could be reasonably expected that they would oppose India's admittance into these export control regimes. This would not matter if decisions in these bodies were to be taken on the basis of majority voting, but this is not the case. All decisions in these bodies are mandated to be reached by consensus, which it would be very hard to achieve.

So, what should India be doing to reverse this situation? It could request the US to bulldoze the members of these various regimes to accept India's membership. It might be recollected that several NSG members like Norway, New Zealand, Austria, Switzerland, Ireland and the Netherlands had opposed the Indo-US nuclear deal. China's role was very dubious. While assuring India and the US that it would not oppose the deal, it encouraged the dissenting voices in the NSG to oppose it. Ultimately, it was American pressure, lacing threats with inducements that got the Indo-US nuclear deal through the NSG. India could request the US to turn its broadside again on the countries opposing its entry into the export control regimes. But President Obama in 2011 is not President Bush in 2008. China's position has also changed; hence American pressure, though important, may not be decisive.

How can India help its candidature of these export control regimes? Clearly, it can harmonise its domestic export control laws with that in the export control regimes; clarify that India will continue its moratorium on nuclear testing unless specified events occur; declare that it will cease fissile materials production for military purposes to facilitate the passage of the Fissile Materials Control Treaty; and enter the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) to highlight its responsibility towards stopping the clandestine export of sensitive technologies.

Hopefully, a concerted effort by the US and India would enable New Delhi's entry into the four export control regimes visualised by President Obama. Currently, however, delivering on this promise has become quite uncertain.

### **Brief-up of the 4 Control Regimes (Important for 12 Markers):**

#### **Nuclear Suppliers Group**

Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) is a multinational body concerned with reducing nuclear proliferation by controlling the export and re-transfer of materials that may be applicable to nuclear weapon development and by improving safeguards and protection on existing materials.

It was founded in 1974 in response to the Indian nuclear test earlier in that year. The test demonstrated that certain non-weapons specific nuclear technology could be readily turned to weapons development. Nations already signatories of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) saw the need to further limit the export of nuclear equipment, materials or technology. Another benefit was that non-NPT and non-Zangger Committee nations, then specifically France, could be brought in.

Initially the NSG had seven members: Canada, West Germany, France, Japan, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, and the United States. In 1976-77, membership was expanded to fifteen with the admittance of Belgium, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, and Switzerland. Germany was reunited in 1990 while Czechoslovakia broke up into the Czech Republic and Slovakia in 1993. Twelve more nations joined up to 1990. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union a number of former republics have been given observer status as a stage towards future membership. China became a member in 2004. The European Commission participates as an observer. The 2009/2010 NSG Chair is Hungary.

### **The Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR)**

The Missile Technology Control Regime is an informal and voluntary association of countries which share the goals of non-proliferation of unmanned delivery systems capable of delivering weapons of mass destruction, and which seek to coordinate national export licensing efforts aimed at preventing their proliferation. The MTCR was originally established in 1987 by Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States. Since that time, the number of MTCR partners has increased to a total of thirty-four countries, all of which have equal standing within the Regime.

The MTCR was initiated partly in response to the increasing proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), i.e., nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. The risk of proliferation of WMD is well recognized as a threat to international peace and security, including by the UN Security Council in its Summit Meeting Declaration of January 31, 1992. While concern has traditionally focussed on state proliferators, after the tragic events of 11 September 2001, it became evident that more also has to be done to decrease the risk of WMD delivery systems falling into the hands of terrorist groups and individuals. One way to counter this threat is to maintain vigilance over the transfer of missile equipment, material, and related technologies usable for systems capable of delivering WMD.

### **Wassenaar Arrangement:**

The Wassenaar Arrangement (full name: "The Wassenaar Arrangement on Export Controls for Conventional Arms and Dual-Use Goods and Technologies") is a multilateral export control regime (MECR) with 40 participating states.

It is the successor to the Cold war-era Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Export Controls (COCOM), and was established on July 12, 1996, in the Dutch town of Wassenaar, near The Hague. The Wassenaar Arrangement is considerably less strict than COCOM, focusing primarily on the transparency of national export control regimes and not granting veto power to individual members over organizational decisions. A Secretariat for administrating the agreement is located in Vienna, Austria. Every six months member countries exchange information on deliveries of conventional arms to non Wassenaar members that fall under eight broad weapons categories: battle tanks, armored combat vehicles (ACVs), large-caliber artillery, military aircraft/unmanned aerial vehicles, military and attack helicopters, warships, missiles or missile systems, and small arms and light weapons.

### **Australia Group**

The Australia Group is an informal group of countries (now joined by the European Commission) established in 1985 (after the use of chemical weapons by Iraq in 1984) to help member countries to identify those of their exports which need to be controlled so as not to contribute to the spread of chemical and biological weapons .

The group, initially consisting of 15 members, held its first meeting in Brussels in September 1989. It now has 41 members, including all Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) members except Mexico, the European Commission, all 27 Member States of the European Union, Croatia, Ukraine and Argentina. The name comes from Australia's initiative to create the group. Australia manages the secretariat.

The initial members of the group had different assessments of which chemical precursors should be subject to export control. Later adherents initially had no such controls. Today, members of the group maintain export controls on a uniform list of 54 compounds, including several that are not prohibited for export under the Chemical Weapons Convention, but can be used in the manufacture of chemical weapons. Delegations representing the members meet every year in Paris.

### **THEME 8: Arab Spring – Current State of Affairs in 3 major countries:**

Tunisia: While 23 of ousted President Ben-Ali's family members and friends have since been put on trial, real power remains with the Army. Already, plans for elections have been postponed once — from July 14 to October 23. The unkindest cut, perhaps, was a New York Times report from the town of Sidi Bouzid, home of iconic protestor Mohammad Bouazizi who set himself ablaze and sparked off the revolutions. That report claimed that his townsmen are so disillusioned by the lack of real change in their lives that they have torn down all posters showing him.

Egypt: Here was a revolution that played out day in and day out for 18 days on TV screens across the world as young protesters came out to fight in Tahrir Square for an end to military rule and the tight control of intelligence forces, and for a complete set of political reforms.

Despite several strong statements, the international community has been unable to guarantee much to them. While Hosni Mubarak and his sons are on trial, many of his loyalists in the military continue to hold key positions. The army or the SCAF (Supreme Council of the Armed Forces) has maintained a tight grip over the country. Men in uniform are still present in all key Ministries, including the Telecommunications Ministry that has full surveillance powers.

The voices of Tahrir have also been subdued; some prosecuted and silenced, others just ignored. A case in point was that of technocrat Hazem Abdel Azem, who was due to be sworn in as the first revolutionary leader to be included in the Egyptian Cabinet of interim Prime Minister Essam Sharaf in July. Hours before the swearing-in ceremony, the SCAF withdrew Dr. Hazem's name, citing trumped-up charges that he was an Israeli agent.

Perhaps the greatest blow to the pro-democracy protesters has been dealt from within the Tahrir Square movement — the liberals now pushed aside by the religiously conservative Salafists. Last month, a massive rally called for the 'Day of Unity' ended without much unity, as Salafists and Islamists overran everyone with a massive show of strength, making a call not for reform, but for the Sharia to be implemented in Egypt. Many now fear that these extreme right-wingers, who effectively won the vote on a constitutional referendum in March (with a 77 per cent majority), could overtake even the Muslim Brotherhood in the elections (now postponed beyond November 2011). The international community has had little say in Egypt, or in other countries that saw massive demonstrations: Yemen, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia have also seen sparks of revolt dying with little or no pressure in their favour from the West.

Libya: Nowhere have the questions been more uncomfortable for the world to answer than in Libya. It was here that the U.K., France and the U.S. focussed their intervention — but despite five months of relentless bombing, they have achieved little by way of peace, or the ouster of Muammar Qadhafi. They have succeeded only in pushing the country towards civil war.

Since March 19, when those U.N.-sanctioned strikes began, rebel forces have made many gains by gaining control of Tripoli and fighting still continues for Qadhafi's home turf of Sirte.

NATO continues to bombard Libyans in Qadhafi-controlled areas and has killed hundreds of people. Last month, its forces even targeted Libyan TV in Al-Jamahiriya for what NATO called "terror broadcasts." That strike killed three journalists, and was condemned by the chief of UNESCO. Meanwhile, news that the rebel military chief, Abdel Fattah Younes, was killed by one of his own men created new worries for the rebel leadership of the Transitional National Council (TNC), and cast doubts on its ability to control tribal rivalries if Mr. Qadhafi were to go.

Perhaps the real problem is that the world identified each of these uprisings as purely democratic, unifying movements. In fact, they have exposed more fault lines inside the Arab world than they have bridged — Shia-Sunni tensions, tribal rivalries, long-simmering separatist movements, and the economic divide between the haves and the have-nots.

Another problem is that according to statistics, shows of massive public strength as we have seen do not always translate into positive change for the people. Author Omar Ashour points out how all studies on 'nations in transition' point to quite the opposite: according to one published in the Journal of Democracy, of 100 countries in stages of upheaval between 1970 and 2000, only 20 became full-fledged democracies. Five relapsed into dictatorships (like Algeria, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan), and the rest were stuck somewhere in transition. Another study by Columbia University finds that about 43 per cent of countries that have defeated a dictator through an armed popular uprising, have subsequently fallen into civil war.

#### **THEME 9: Palestine statehood bid:**

The President of Palestine, Mahmoud Abbas, will address the United Nations General Assembly on September 23. Mr. Abbas, who is loath to invite or incite controversy or confrontation, especially with the United States, is reported to be anxious, even at this stage, to find a face-saving formula which will permit him to call off the approach to the U.N. It might be too late already for him to do that.

He was widely criticised by his people when he decided, last year, not to pursue the Goldstone report in the Human Rights Council under pressure from the Americans; he had to relent and allow the item to proceed in the Council. He cannot afford to repeat the blunder and appear to give in once again to Israeli, Western and American exhortations. Nonetheless, conscious of the political risks involved, he seems to continue to look for a way out of the impasse.

Going by media reports, he might be willing to give up the U.N. route if Israel commits itself, even at this late stage, to a complete freeze on settlement building in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and reopening negotiations on the basis of the 1967 borders which, incidentally, was proposed by U.S. President Barack Obama himself. Mr. Netanyahu, Prime Minister of Israel, rejects both these conditions, insisting instead on an unconditional resumption of talks. This is unacceptable to Palestine. Thus, despite his strong aversion to confrontation, President Abbas seems to have no choice but to go ahead with the U.N. initiative. After all, even the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank have declared Palestine to be ready to exercise the functions of a state.

Since the admission of a new member cannot be approved by the General Assembly without the prior recommendation to that effect by the Security Council, the Palestinians will have to pitch their expectations in the Assembly to a more modest goal. It is likely that they will propose a non-voting non-member state status for Palestine, such as the one enjoyed by the Vatican. This would enable them to obtain membership in the

specialised agencies of the U.N., which would be a huge political gain. In December 1988, the General Assembly approved Res. 43/177, whereby it decided that henceforth, the designation "Palestine" should be used in place of the designation "Palestine Liberation Movement" in the U.N. system. Thus, the General Assembly is within its rights to accede to Palestine's request. As mentioned earlier, this need not cause too much consternation to Israel or its supporters. The Palestinians believe that they have the support of about 125-member states for this proposal so far and that they will easily reach the figure of 128 which represents two-thirds of the membership of the organisation. Israel and the U.S. are opposed to this idea also.

Israel has threatened explicit, and some hitherto undeclared, retaliatory measures in the event of the Palestinians going ahead with their plans. For one thing, Israel will terminate the Oslo agreement, which has been the basis of whatever negotiations have taken place so far. It is because of Oslo that Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat was able to return to Palestine and the Palestinians have acquired a foothold on Palestinian territory in Gaza and the West Bank. Equally, it is because of Oslo that Israel was able to conclude the peace treaty with Jordan and has gained diplomatic recognition, including establishment of diplomatic relations, with many countries including India and China. What will be the practical consequences of denouncing Oslo? Will Israel reoccupy the Gaza strip and the West Bank?

Will the Palestinians be asked to go back to where they came from, Tunisia for example? Will the gains achieved by both sides be rolled back? The only practical implication is that there will be an official end to negotiations. The Palestinian response is that negotiations have been dead for a long time and that whatever were held have not helped in any way in furthering the Palestinian cause.

Israel has announced that it will not release the revenue earned by way of customs duty on goods received by Palestine from abroad. This can be a very substantial amount for the Palestinians and can cause severe hardship to the Palestinian people and seriously impact the administration of the Palestinian territories. It will also further fan anti-Israel and anti-U.S. sentiment in the region. A direct consequence of the Arab Spring has been the strengthening of support for the Palestinians, as witnessed by Egypt's decision to reopen the Rafah border with Gaza as well as by the violent anti-Israel protests in Cairo on September 9.

It is difficult to understand Israel's hostility to the Palestinian proposal, particularly the one that might be tabled in the General Assembly. After all, even Mr. Netanyahu has accepted the principle of a Palestinian state; he was widely applauded for that "concession." Mr. Abbas says he would still wish to return to negotiations after the U.N. action. It bears emphasising that neither Israel nor the U.S. will find any one as reasonable as Mr. Abbas, who may feel obliged to take some drastic step in case his initiative fails, such as resigning his post, thereby leaving the field to extremist elements among his people.

What should be India's stance? Nabil Sha'ath, a high-ranking Palestinian negotiator, visited New Delhi in the last week of August. We owe his visit entirely to the fact that India is a member of the Security Council at present. He has gone back with the promise of our support. It is true that over the past few years, Israel has made inroads into the enthusiasm with which the Palestinian cause was supported in India. This is due in part to the growing relations with Israel, especially in the defence sector, as well as our private sector's increased involvement with Israel. Our relationship with Israel is important and is in the interests of both countries. At times, we seem to ignore or forget this mutuality of interest. Nevertheless, the Palestinian cause continues to enjoy the backing of all political parties. The NDA was no less vocal in declaring solidarity with the Palestinian people. India should not only vote in favour, it should co-sponsor the resolution in the U.N.; otherwise, the fact of our being the first non-Arab country to accord recognition to the Palestinian state in 1988 would not make sense. Israel will certainly get upset, but a democratically elected government in New Delhi would not risk inviting fierce criticism domestically and isolation internationally.

A question arises whether we can grant recognition to an entity which does not have defined borders. But this is really a non-question. After all, even Israel does not have defined or settled borders. In fact, the first Prime Minister of Israel, David Ben Gurion, took a conscious decision in 1948 not to specify the new state's borders. Afghanistan and Pakistan have a border which one side does not recognise. Similarly, when we gave recognition to SADR, the government of the Polisario front for Western Sahara, it had neither a functioning government nor defined borders. Recognition, thus, is essentially a political act.

#### **PALESTINE: FACT FILE**

Palestine will become the 194th member of the U.N. if its application for statehood goes ahead and succeeds. But what will be the territory of Palestine? Palestine is likely to consist of territory in the West Bank and Gaza, totalling around 6,200 sq km. At the moment the two areas are physically separate, although they could be linked by a sealed road in future. The Palestinians claim East Jerusalem as the capital of their new state. Israel, which annexed the east of the city after the 1967 war, rejects any division.

The borders have not been decided and will be a matter for negotiation with Israel, which wants to retain its big settlement blocs in the West Bank. Land swaps in compensation are expected to be agreed.

The Palestinian population is around 2.6 million in the West Bank, 1.6 million in Gaza and 270,000 in East Jerusalem.

Palestinians are overwhelmingly Muslim although there is a small Christian population.

There are also around 300,000 Jewish settlers in the West Bank and a further 200,000 in East Jerusalem. Israel evacuated settlers from Gaza in 2005.

Arabic is the language of Palestine.

What are the symbols of the new state? Flag: black, white and green stripes overlaid with a red triangle, adopted as the flag of the Palestinian people in 1964. It was banned by the Israeli government until 1993.

Passport: Palestinian Authority passports have been available to people born within its jurisdiction since 1995. However, many Palestinians hold Jordanian passports.

Military: Palestine has no army, air force or navy.

How is Palestine governed? There are two separate de facto governments in the West Bank and Gaza, under a president elected by all the Palestinian people. There is also an elected legislative council.

In the West Bank, the authority, dominated by the Fatah political faction, is the official administrative body. Established in 1994 under the Oslo accords, its jurisdiction runs only in the main cities of the West Bank.

Hamas is in charge of the Gaza Strip after fighting a bloody battle for control against Fatah in 2007, after winning elections 18 months before.

The Palestinian president is Mahmoud Abbas, and the prime minister in the West Bank is Salam Fayyad. In Gaza, Ismail Haniyeh is the de facto prime minister.

## **THEME 10: US Credit Rating Downgrade:**

Credit rating agency Standard & Poor's lowered the nation's AAA rating for the first time since granting it in 1917. The move came less than a week after a gridlocked Congress finally agreed to spending cuts that would reduce the debt by more than \$2 trillion -- a tumultuous process that contributed to convulsions in financial markets. The promised cuts were not enough to satisfy S&P.

The drop in the rating by one notch to AA—plus was telegraphed as a possibility back in April. The three main credit agencies, which also include Moody's Investor Service and Fitch, had warned during the budget fight that if Congress did not cut spending far enough, the country faced a downgrade. Moody's said it was keeping its AAA rating on the nation's debt, but that it might still lower it.

Before the downgrade, Republicans and Democrats in Congress reached agreement with President Barack Obama to raise the limit on U.S. borrowing and forestall an unprecedented American default.

### **Credit Ratings Definitions**

Credit ratings are forward-looking opinions about credit risk. Standard & Poor's credit ratings express the agency's opinion about the ability and willingness of an issuer, such as a corporation or state or city government, to meet its financial obligations in full and on time.

Credit ratings can also speak to the credit quality of an individual debt issue, such as a corporate note, a municipal bond or a mortgage-backed security, and the relative likelihood that the issue may default.

Ratings are provided by organizations such as Standard & Poor's, commonly called credit rating agencies, which specialize in evaluating credit risk.

Each agency applies its own methodology in measuring creditworthiness and uses a specific rating scale to publish its ratings opinions. Typically, ratings are expressed as letter grades that range, for example, from 'AAA' to 'D' to communicate the agency's opinion of relative level of credit risk.

## **THEME 11: Thailand Elections:**

Thailand's Prime Minister-elect, Yingluck Shinawatra, consolidated her potential hold on power by forming a coalition under the wings of her own Pheu Thai Party.

Speaking in Bangkok after launching the new coalition, Ms. Yingluck said the five constituent parties "share the same ideology". The grouping would have 299 seats, "an auspicious figure", in the 500-member new House, she added.

As her Pheu Thai Party bagged 265 seats in the final tally and stood in no compulsion to form a coalition, her action was hailed by observers as a smart move.

At the other end of the political spectrum, Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva resigned as leader of his Democrat Party, acknowledging personal responsibility for the defeat of the ruling coalition in election. Observers expressed surprise that he chose to quit the centre-stage within hours of pledging to strike a path of constructive opposition in the new situation.

Fuelling speculation about the back-stage winners and losers in election, Thaksin Shinawatra, Ms. Yingluck's elder brother in voluntary exile, said he might return to Thailand now to play golf and not to re-enter politics.

With his youngest sister in their Thai-Chinese family winning, power was really passing into the hands of the younger generation, he quipped, seeking to douse speculation about his political intentions in the new circumstances.

There was also no immediate move by the Thai military elite to challenge the outcome. The military was widely seen to have been the back-stage loser in the latest election. There was considerable consensus in Southeast Asian circles that the Thai electoral verdict was a political slap on the face of the country's powerful military establishment.

### **Thai election commission withholds results**

Citing the need to investigate alleged electoral law violations, Thailand's Election Commission has postponed certifying the poll victory of Yingluck Shinawatra, the opposition leader who was poised to become the fractious nation's first female prime minister.

Ms. Yingluck is the youngest sister of former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, whose overthrow in a 2006 military coup triggered years of turmoil that many see as pitting long-marginalised rural Thais against an elite alliance comprising the army, the military and powerful businessmen and politicians.

Mr. Thaksin is barred from politics and lives in exile in Dubai to escape a two-year prison term on a graft conviction that he says is politically motivated.

Ms. Yingluck's Pheu Thai party won 265 of the parliament seats up for grabs, a victory that gave the opposition the crucial majority it needed to form a government.

### **THEME 12: Afghan Peace Process and assassination of Burhanuddin Rabbani:**

The assassination of the chairman of Afghanistan's High Peace Council, Burhanuddin Rabbani, by a Taliban suicide bomber, significantly reduces the prospect for political reconciliation within Afghanistan. Rabbani, who served as president of Afghanistan during 1992-96, was tasked with finding ways to engage the Taliban by the Afghan president, Hamid Karzai.

The assassination marks the Taliban's capacity to strike at will against the top figures of the current regime in Afghanistan. Last July, the Taliban had killed Ahmed Wali Karzai, the half-brother of the president. In both cases, the Taliban bombers successfully breached the security of the high-profile targets, thanks to the trust reposed in them by the victims. Wali Karzai was killed by a man who was part of the family's security detail; Rabbani was done in by a man who was trusted enough to be allowed up close. The assassin exploded the bomb hidden in his turban as Rabbani reached out to hug him. Deception has always been an important element in the Taliban's tactical armoury.

Throughout the history of human conflict, adversaries have generally abided by the rule that mediators and negotiators will not be killed. But the Taliban and their friends in Pakistan have had little respect for that norm in Afghanistan. The Taliban gained power during 1996-97, with the support of the ISI and the Pakistan army, not so much from victories on the battlefield, but by the deception and corruption of key opposition leaders.

The political purpose of the Taliban now is to highlight the weakness of the Karzai regime, and compel the supporters of the government across the nation to switch sides.

## Taliban talks

The killing of Rabbani follows the bold attack in the heavily-guarded diplomatic quarter of Kabul by militants who held out for 20 hours against Afghan and international forces. As the Taliban offensive gains momentum, the disarray in Kabul and Washington is likely to get worse.

Meeting Karzai on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly hours after the assassination of Rabbani, President Obama continued to emphasise the importance of national reconciliation. After all, winning over at least sections of the Taliban has been the key to Obama's strategy in Afghanistan.

But his commander on the ground, General John Allen, declared that the Taliban are not interested in peace, only in war. The US ambassador to Kabul, Ryan Crocker, underlined the importance of inflicting some pain on the Taliban in order to bring its leaders to the negotiating table.

The non-Pashtun minorities in Afghanistan were always sceptical of the strategy of engaging the Taliban. The killing of Rabbani, a leading Tajik leader, is likely to leave them angry and explore options of their own against the prospect of Taliban's return to power.

## Haqqani network

The war of words between Washington and Rawalpindi has escalated since the Kabul siege. At the centre of the rising tensions is the Haqqani network, which has long enjoyed sanctuaries in Pakistan.

While the US has been pressing the Pakistani army chief, General Ashfaq Pervez Kayani, to act against the Haqqani network, Rawalpindi wants the group to be included in any future political arrangement in Kabul. On the face of it, it is not clear how these competing positions on the Taliban can be squared.

As the siege ended, the US defence secretary fired the first shot. He warned Pakistan that the United States will do all it can to protect its troops in Afghanistan against the Haqqani network. Soon after, the US ambassador in Pakistan, David Munter, declared on Pakistan's state radio that there was evidence linking the Haqqani network to the Pakistani government.

The speculation is that the US might act unilaterally against the Haqqani network, if Rawalpindi does not.

In case the Pakistan army did not get the message, Admiral Mike Mullen, outgoing chairman of the US joint chiefs of staff, delivered it personally to Kayani, and the secretary of state, Hillary Clinton, reportedly conveyed an ultimatum to Foreign Minister Hina Rabbani Khar on the sidelines of the General Assembly.

Equally significant was the meeting that did not take place. According to reports in the Pakistani media, President Barack Obama had declined to meet Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani at the UN. This apparently led to the cancellation of Gilani's trip.

The general reaction in Pakistan, at least in the public domain, has been one of defiance rather than contrition. The Pakistan army might be betting that the US has no option but to retreat and accept Rawalpindi's terms for a reconciliation in Afghanistan that will include giving its proxy, the Haqqani network, the pride of place.

### **THEME 13: Greek Debt- Greece gets 109-billion-euro bailout:**

Greece, which received an EU-IMF bailout of 110 billion euros last year, needed a second loan agreement to meet its payments beyond 2012.

Credit rating agencies have warned that forcing losses on bond-holders — even with their agreement — would lead them to declare a selective default for Greece.

Ms. Merkel and Mr. Sarkozy agreed to the last-minute meeting for a second package, ahead of eurozone summit in Brussels — which is aimed at solving Greece's ongoing debt crisis and restoring market confidence.

In Brussels, European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso had urged leaders to put national interests aside and take concrete steps.

Eurozone leaders agreed that Greece should receive a new 109-billion-euro bailout, decided banks should add another 37 billion euros and took steps to prevent the euro debt crisis from spreading to Italy and Spain.

The new aid will come on top of the 110-billion-euro bailout that Greece secured last year from eurozone partners and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

New loans to Greece will have a maturity of 15 to 30 years — up from 7.5 years in last year's bailout — while the interest rate will fall from 5.5-6 per cent to about 3.5 per cent. The concessions are to be extended to fellow bailout recipients Ireland and Portugal.

A “debt buy-back programme” should reduce Greece's debt burden by 12.6 billion euros, the leaders said.

The ECB was concerned that letting investors take a loss on Greek loans would push credit rating agencies to declare a selective default. In that case, the ECB said it would stop giving credit to Greek private banks, which would trigger a banking crisis.

The “selective default” is now expected to take place, but to keep bank credit from drying up, leaders pledged to guarantee “continued access to euro-system liquidity operations by Greek banks” and to “provide adequate resources to recapitalize Greek banks if needed.” To reassure investors, the leaders stressed that Greece was an “exceptional” case, offered assurances that creditors would never be asked to take losses on other euro area bonds and spelled out the “inflexible determination” of all other euro countries “to honour fully” their debts.

Leaders in the eurozone were under pressure to restore confidence in the currency and allay market fears that the debt crisis could spread to Italy and Spain, whose sovereign debt has been seen as increasingly risky by investors.

Leaders avoided discussing a more radical solution: issuing joint eurobonds to eliminate risk differentials between Germany — the currency bloc's strongest economy — and cash-strapped members like Greece, granting them cheaper access to debt financing.

## **THEME 14: African Food Crisis:**

Prolonged drought in the Horn of Africa is the immediate cause of the severe food crisis already affecting around 10 million people in parts of Kenya, Ethiopia, Djibouti and Somalia. Rains have failed over two seasons, with a strong La Nina event having a dramatic impact across the east coast of Africa. Now this year's wet season has officially ended, there is little prospect of rain or relief before September.

How far the current conditions, classified by the U.N. as “pre-famine” — one step down from “catastrophe” — can be attributed to climate change is not clear. The last intergovernment panel on climate change report suggested that the Horn of Africa would get wetter with climate change, while more recent academic research has concluded that global warming will increase drought in the region. However, according to aid agencies, the weather has become more erratic and extreme in recent years.

The structural causes of the crisis go deeper. The Horn of Africa has long been one of the most conflict-riven areas of the world and a focus of geopolitical struggles from the days of the British empire, through the Cold War, to the “war on terror”.

Its strategic position at the opening to the Red Sea and its oil and mineral interests have attracted foreign powers for over 150 years, as Alex de Waal, programme director at the Social Science Research Council, points out.

Northern Kenya and southern Ethiopia have been home to ethnic Somalis for generations, but the populations are marginalised by central governments.

The protracted war in Somalia has driven more than 20,000 more Somalis into Kenya. Thousands have also fled drought and fighting in southern Somalia into the water-starved border areas of Ethiopia. The Kenyan government has periodically tried to close its border, although it is now open with 1,200-1,550 refugees a day crossing, according to some reports.

## **THEME 15: South Sudan emerges:**

On July 9, the Republic of South Sudan will join the community of nations. Foreign dignitaries will converge on its capital, Juba, to watch the new country raise its flag and inaugurate a first President, Salva Kiir Mayardit.

For the more than eight million citizens of South Sudan, it will be a momentous and emotional day. In January, they voted in an historic referendum to separate from the rest of Sudan. That they did so peacefully is a credit to both the North and South Sudanese leadership. Yet nationhood has come at steep cost: a staggering number of lives lost and people displaced in a **21-year civil war that ended only in 2005**. When the assembled presidents and prime ministers board their official planes to return home, the challenges that remain will be daunting indeed.

### **Reality**

On the day of its birth, South Sudan will rank near the bottom of all recognised human development indices. The statistics are truly humbling. It has the world's highest maternal mortality rate. Estimates of illiteracy among the female population exceed 80 per cent. More than half of its people must feed, clothe and shelter themselves on less than a dollar a day. Critical issues of poverty, insecurity and lack of infrastructure must all be addressed by a relatively new government with little experience and only embryonic institutions.

I came to appreciate the sheer scale of these challenges, for myself, when I first visited South Sudan in 2007 — an area of 6,20,000 square kilometres with less than 100 kilometres of paved road. Within this larger context, the risk of increased violence, harm to civilian populations and further humanitarian suffering is very real.

At the same time, South Sudan has remarkable potential. With substantial oil reserves, huge amounts of arable land and the Nile flowing through its centre, South Sudan could grow into a prosperous, self-sustaining nation capable of providing security, services and employment for its population.

### **North-South cooperation**

Alone, South Sudan cannot meet these challenges nor realise its potential. Doing so will require partnership — a full (and on-going) engagement with the international community and, most especially, South Sudan's neighbours.

First and foremost, the new leaders of South Sudan should reach out to their counterparts in Khartoum. Strong, peaceful relations with the North are essential. A priority for both countries is agreement on their common border, sustainable relations to ensure both states can benefit from the oil revenues in the region, and cross-border arrangements to continue their strong historical, economic and cultural ties. Recent instability in Southern Kordofan and Abyei have strained North-South relations and heightened political rhetoric. Now is the time for both the North and the South to think of the long-term benefits of working together, not short-term political gains at the other's expense.

South Sudan must also reach out to its other neighbours. Across the globe — and in Africa, especially — the trend is towards regional partnerships. South Sudan will be strengthened by becoming an active participant in the regional organisations of East Africa and developing durable trade and political ties throughout the continent.

Finally, South Sudan must reach out to its own people. It must find strength in diversity and build institutions that represent the full constellation of its broad geographic and ethnic communities. The basics of any modern, democratic state must be guaranteed: free expression, full political rights, inclusive institutions that extend benefits to citizens of rural areas as well as regions affected by conflict.

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