The Statesman
NEW DELHI, THURSDAY 07 JULY 2022

Researchers must not pay the price of war

ABHIROOP CHOWDHURY
AND ARMIN ROSENCRANZ

On 24 February, Vladimir Putin's Russia launched an all-out attack on its neighbour, Ukraine. It altered global geopolitics overnight. This is the first time since 1945, the end of WWII, when war erupted as part of Europe. Reactions from the world's nations were swift as was the start of propaganda warfare by both fronts – Russia and the West. Among of economic sanctions have been put on Russia, its aircraft banned from western air spaces and assets of Russian oligarchs in the Western nations are now confiscated. Russia replied by banning its airspace to western air traffic, started trading its hydrocarbons in rubles and intensifying its attack across the eastern Ukraine front and capturing the key city of Severodonetsk.

Caught between these political crossfires of the West and Russia are Russian researchers and academicians. They have nothing to do with Putin's war. Last year's estimates indicate different meetings were organised between BRICS nations – Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa – to further their collaborations in the fields of astronomy, climate, energy, health, and medicine. BRICS nations want to relax intellectual property rules to make Covid vaccines available to all and technology transferable. There were also plans to share data on biodiversity, climate, and food security to mutually achieve the targets of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030.

Fifty per cent of research articles published by Russian academicians in 2021 were collaborations with institutes across EU, while around 20 per cent were with US-based organisations.

Since the beginning of the Russia-Ukraine war, Ukrainian academicians have advocated for the denial of rights to publish research by Russian academicians in journals worldwide. Worldwide, journals need to comply with long-established publication ethics – they must not discriminate on the basis of national identity. This standard was adopted during the cold war to encourage Soviet blue notices to make their research globally available in peer-reviewed journals. During WW I, German publications were ostracized in the West. But this was soon withdrawn, recognizing the discrimination enshrined in such measures.

In view of Putin's brutal war machine, Western collaborators began to sever their research ties with Russia. The former editor of British Medical Journal (BMJ), voiced concern regarding chances of journals taking drastic and ostracizing measures such as banning publication of Russian research. Recently, the Journal of Molecular Structure banned publishing Russian research. The editor in chief of the journal mentioned that the ban is only in place for Russian government-funded research and not by academicians of Russian origin.

Similarly, in the journal 'Physical Review C', two out of ten editors on the board refused to allow any research of Russian origin to be reviewed by them. Russian academicians actively publish in this journal particularly in the field of nuclear physics.

Nearly 82,000 articles by Russians were published in 2018. In the previous decade, publications by Russians rose 10 per cent annually – second only to India amongst the large nations. The situation is even more bleak if citation data is considered. Now, many other academicians read, download, and use the published work in their own research. The process is called citations. Russia is the last amongst the major nations in terms of citing their articles.

The possibility of discriminating against Russian academicians by the world's major research bodies is bad news for research communities globally. This will likely push Russia closer to China. China already has an active technological as well as research partnership with Russia. China can gain immensely from the technological insights of Russian academicians, particularly in the domains of nuclear physics, space research and ballistic missiles.

Politicization of research is not a simple step with far-reaching consequences that the world should avoid at all costs.

The writers are respectively, Professor and Dean at Jindal School of Environment and Sustainability, Flame University, Senapati, Maharashtra

100 YEARS AGO

OCCASIONAL NOTE

Much as the comparison may shock him, it would appear that there is a certain analogy between the experience of the Indian non-cooperative politician, as portrayed by the self-revealing speeches of Pandit Motl Lal Nehru, and that of the English policeman, as depicted by the late Sir W.S. Gilbert. The lot of both, that is to say, is far from being a happy one – and for an almost exactly similar reason – times are now in whole-side. For Sir William Gilbert makes his policeman lament the hardness, if not actually virtuous occupations with which the professional burglar begrudges his leisure. Similarly, the Pandit on his emergence from prison has discovered to his sorrow that when the enterprising non-cooperator is not non-cooperating he is apt to do the other thing. It appears from a speech which he has just delivered at Lahore that the people of the Punjab have ceased to be whole-hearted non-cooperators - in fact that the cause of non-cooperation is threatened with failure. "If the non-cooperative movement failed the blame would be laid at the door of the Punjab," he pointed out. This is hardly calculated to cheer the drooping spirits of the non-cooperative army along the figurative - possibly literal - retreat from Moscow.

NEWS ITEMS

RICE THEFTS CONSPIRACY CASE

BANGOON, JULY 6

In the Rice Case today, evidence was given by a man employed on a cargo boat. He said he knew of one of the conspiracy conspirators, but it was no good complaining to the police as nothing happened. He reported the matter to his master. He knew his master's bills had been cut by dishonest clerks on occasions because of the shortage. The next witness was one of a number of witnesses alleged to have been engaged in the actual handling of the stolen bags of rice. He recalled how they were employed by a man named Ko Ko, who arranged for the theft of the rice, and also how rice was transferred from one bag to another and finally taken ashore. He had stolen rice for four or five months.

BOMBAY COMMISSIONER OF POLICE

BOMBAY, JULY 6

The Sunni Anjuman Islam recently submitted a memorial to His Excellency the Governor of Bombay drawing his attention to increase in crime in Bombay city and to the frequent changes in the office of Commissioner of Police during recent years. The Government has sent a reply which says the desirability of maintaining continuity in the office of the Commissioner of Police, Bombay, is fully recognised by the Government. The post involves very severe mental and physical strain, and of four changes in the appointment during the last three years there were due to the officers concerned having to vacate owing to ill-health. In the fourth case the officer concerned was promoted to the post of Inspector-General of Police.

PLOTTING IN GERMANY

BERLIN, JULY 6

The question of the Independent Socialists entering the Government was discussed at an inter-party meeting today between the Democrats and the Centre Party, and the principle of the expansion of the Government by a coalition was agreed upon. It is expected that if the proposal is adopted, the Independents will be given the vacant portfolio of reconstruction and also one seat in the Cabinet without portfolio. Speaking in the Reichstag on the first reading of the Bill for the protection of the Republic, Dr. Gessler, Minister for the Interior, intimated that the measure was intended to replace the recent presidential decrees. He added that the control was in danger, and the Bill was necessary for the preservation of the Republic.

UNIONISTS THREATEN TO END COALITION

LONDON, JULY 6

Political significance is attached to Mr. Lloyd George's promise to introduce legislation headed by Lord Derby yesterday that the days of 12 and one half per cent on fabric gives imported from Germany would not be abolished until Lancashire cotton was adjudged had been fully examined. Meanwhile the House of Commons adjourned for the recess approve the order under the Safeguard of Industries Act for the duration of the Bill. The Unionists are already protesting against the decision, which is regarded as a concession to Free Traders, and threaten to end the coalition if the cabinet reverses its decision to enforce the order.

INDIANS AND LEGISLATION IN NATAL

LONDON, JULY 6

In the House of Commons today Colonel Wedgwood asked whether Mr. Churchill would do anything to prevent the enactment of three pieces of anti-Indian legislation recently submitted to the Natal Provincial Council. Mr. Churchill replied that it was for the Union Government to decide whether assent would be given to Ordinances to which Indian organisation objected if they passed the Council. Colonel Wedgwood asserted that the Ordinances were denounced by both the English and Indian newspapers in India, and asked whether Mr. Churchill could not advise the South African Government? Mr. Churchill replied that he refused to let in for a course of strife and friction with the Union Government.

1972 was a turning point for Pakistan

MAHR ALI

Over the decades I have tended to look upon 1972 as something of a halcyon year for a diminished Pakistan. There were elected governments in place at the centre and in the provinces, and a sense that after the trauma of the previous year, the nation was on the cusp of a hopeful new beginning.

The sense of liberation wasn't restricted to what had until very recently been the eastern wing of the nation. The shadow of seemingly endless military rule had suddenly been lifted. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto may have assumed power as the nation's first chief martial law administrator, but the masses seemed to be mostly behind him.

One of his stock phrases initially was: 'give me more time'. Miracles cannot be achieved overnight. But the degree of anticipation he had built up in the preceding years came back to bite him at a moment when he seemed to be in charge of everything.

That wasn't entirely an illusion. Perhaps for the first time, the hitherto ruling force didn't have a leg to stand on. Its strategy through 1971 had led to the loss of East Pakistan and culminated in more than 90,000 prisoners of war. On the western front in December 1971, Pakistan had captured little more than 600.

After toying with the idea of extending martial law until later in the year, Bhutto eventually decided to dispense with it in April 1972. He also replaced the army and air force chiefs he had appointed a few months earlier.

It wasn't because the army was interfering too much in political affairs, but because of its reticence — Gen Gul Hassan, Yahya Khan's replacement as commander-in-chief, for instance, was reluctant to help repress the police strike that had erupted shortly into the Bhutto tenure. His successor as military chief (the C-in-C post was discontinued), Tikka Khan — already known in some circles as 'the butcher of Bengal', and not long afterwards as 'the butcher of Balochistan' — had no such qualms.

It wasn't just the police, mind you — workers in various industries across the country went on strike when their expectations of the new regime were not matched by the unfolding reality, notwithstanding labour reforms and sweeping nationalisation of certain industries. In that sphere, too, brutal repression wasn't a rarity.

Bhutto frequently appealed for more time, arguing that his promises could not instantly be implemented. He appears to have been aware, though, that his window of opportunity might be brief. Biographer Stanley Wolpert quotes Yahya Bakhtiar as relating that when, during an early visit to China, Zhou Enlai asked Bhutto why he was in such a rush to implement his reforms, ZAB responded that he couldn't be sure how long the military would tolerate him. He was well aware, it seems, that his populist charm had its limitations. Those limits were both extended and tested when he embarked in June on his journey to a Simla summit with Indira Gandhi. Given the circumstances — Pakistani forces had lost on the battlefield just six months earlier — it remains arguably the most significant encounter between the leaders of India and Pakistan.

Last-minute compromises secured the agreement that was concluded 50 years ago last week, although the POW question was deferred until Pakistan formally recognised Bangladesh. Bhutto did not return home empty-handed, but faced accusations of selling out both from the opposition and sections of his PPP. He responded with a superfully three-hour harangue in the National Assembly that defanged most of the doubters.

His considerable oratorical skills — un-nuanced in Pakistani politics — were inadjudent nonetheless to ward off a creeping loss of faith in his ability or willingness to implement the pro-mises made in the PPP's 1970 election manifesto. The sense of disillusionment was deepened by the fact that key party stalwarts who had repposed too much faith in the 'socialist' aspect of Bhutto's socialism' — the likes of Meraj Mohammad Khan and Mukhtar Rana — were not just discarded but sentenced to rigorous imprisonment.

The following year brought even bigger reverses, not least the effective demise of parliamentary democracy in Balochistan and NWFP. Bhutto did not — or could not — follow Zhou's advice to replace the regular military with a 'people's army'. Yet he did set up the wretched Federal Security Force which arguably contributed to his downfall.

There can be no doubt that 1972 was a turning point in the history of what remained of the nation, which was full of both hopeful developments and profound disappointments. The latter inexorably contributed to the disarray that paralyses the nation today. It's hard, though, not to look upon it as a year of previously thwarted opportunities that could potentially have fed into very different consequences, not just personally but nationally.

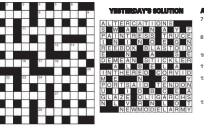
That must remain a source of enduring lament, particularly if it turns out that now it's too late for

Dawn/ANN.

CROSSWORD

NO 292122

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION



ACROSS

7 Inactive period (allied around outside)
8 Train, with money and uniform returned, to join forces again (7)
10 Copy hoot contract to hold charges (5)
11 Ancient Irish lord is upset (9)
12 She can spell 'nevermeth shallow dish' out loud apparently (6)
13 Surgical equipment to be transported of US city (5)
15 Social media platform wanting wife to have a laugh (6)
17 Gadget rotating plug in bonnet of Cadillac (5)
21 Brown Catholic priest, Irish Catholic, in Rome (9)
23 Person who delivers dog's dinner meets English Queen (6)
25 Reproduction in Indonesian families stopped by introduction of contraception (5)
27 Call for help about curb and other wounds (5)
28 Camp gears queue to hold a tweezer; a coat (7)
29 Period of occupation gutted Toulouse and another French city (7)

DOWN

1 Dancing from the beginning, or mid-April possibly (10)
2 Money to pay for Ireland's being welcomed by bridge player (5,5)
3 Steps used in country's borders to contain force and reduce air traffic? (6)
4 Dial tramp spread it out? (8)
5 Measure case to support British University without a single student (6)
6 Rich source belonging to Ireland (5)
9 Material question introduced by lawyer close to victim (9)
14 Guarantee clubs being charged from criticism (9)
16 Astonishing cart 's left to be replaced by graffiti artist (10)
18 Communist-controlled state was left behind (8)
19 (8)
20 Honour soldier protecting lives and showing respect (8)
19 Masterly and concise description of gallery? (8)
20 Lively female broadcaster bored by religious programmes (8)
22 Contributor feature in Spectator? Protocol is encapsulated (4,2)
24 Contraceptive curtailing passion in silence (6)
26 Smart way to reduce energy (6)

NOTE: Figures in parentheses describe the number of letters in the words required (by arrangement with The Independent, London)