

مَدِينَةُ مَنُورَةٍ

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LUMIÈRES

POLITICS | PHILOSOPHY | ECONOMICS

STATE AND SOCIETY

Concerning the cooperation and resistance between the state and society. Discussed comprehensively and succinctly.

LUMIERES.CLUB

He who exercises government by means of his virtue may be compared to the north polar star, which keeps its place and all the stars turn towards it.

-Confucius

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Editors' Note

Lumières is an after-school club that occurs every Wednesday in room 314.

Lumières started in the academic year 2022/23 due to a shared passion between Vyom, Akshit, and Nipun. We want everyone in the school to have a platform to discuss and debate their ideas on historical topics or recent developments.

Dear readers,

We would like to introduce you to the first edition of the Lumières Quarterly Journal. We founded the Lumiere club taking inspiration from the French Lumière philosophers who discussed many important issues of their time, holding reason above faith and popular belief. We wished to follow in their footsteps and encourage our peers to evaluate the problems of our time from a critical lens, standing apart from the simplified information and generalizations propagated by the Media.

As our club meetings allowed for scintillating conversation and discourse on multiple subject matters, we believed it equally important for our members to pen down their thoughts in a structured manner. Thus, the Lumières Journal was born. This magazine aims to explore various aspects of these three interconnected fields, Politics, Philosophy and Economics, and their impact on our world.

As you read through the articles, we encourage you to engage with the ideas presented and to consider their relevance to your own lives and experiences. We hope this magazine will spark thoughtful conversations and inspire further exploration into the complex and fascinating topics of politics, philosophy, and economics.

We hope to publish many more editions, with our next being Technology and Society. If you are interested in contributing for the same kindly contact us for further information at: kvyom@tisb.ac.in, jakshit@tisb.ac.in, or anipun@tisb.ac.in

Vyom Kumar, Akshit Jain, Nipun Agrawal

Why Lumière?

Modelled after the Oxford/Cambridge course PPE: Politics, Philosophy, and Economics; this club aims to train you in research & writing within these fields, and the skills required to apply these concepts to other subjects.

Here are some university courses that our club can prepare you for: (University - Course)

1. Oxford - *Politics, Philosophy, Economics (PPE)*
2. LSE - *Politics, Philosophy, Economics (PPE)*
3. Yale - *Ethics, Politics and Economics*
4. Vanderbilt - *Political Science/Economics*
5. UC Berkley - *Environmental Economics and Policy + Political Economics*
6. Stanford - *Economics Policy Analysis*
7. UCLA - *Microeconomics (1, 11, and 101)*
8. Tufts - *Political Philosophy*
9. UMichigan (Ann Harbour) - *Philos, Politics, and Economics*
10. University of Pennsylvania - *Politics and Policy (PPOL) + Politics, Philosophy, Economics (PPE)*



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Politics Philosophy Economics



Wednesdays | Room 314

LUMIERE CLUB

Inspired by Oxford's PPE course, this club encourages understanding through philosophical discussion of political and economic issues. We aim to shine a light on untouched perspectives and ideas through debate and learning.

...

Sign up now!

2:50 - 4:10 PM EVERY WEDNESDAY

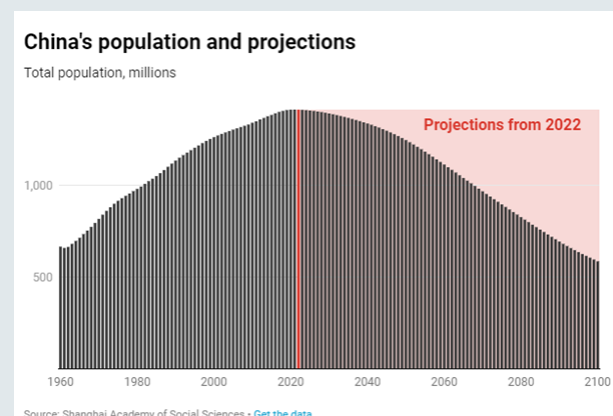
Does a shrinking population threaten China's Economic growth?

In 1979, China imposed a one-child policy, with propaganda and slogans encouraging people to limit themselves to one child. Small families received financial rewards and state benefits such as priority school placements. To that end, the Government made abortion readily available and popularized it as an option for birth control, this led to increased rates of infanticide and abortion of female foetuses, as in Chinese tradition, the firstborn son takes the family name and inherits everything.

Over the years this has led to a skewed gender ratio in the country with more men than women, further contributing to the falling birth rate. The current ratio stands at 120:100 boys to girls in the age group of 10-19, this means that when this generation comes to marriageable age, there will be an even steeper decline in the birth rates. Furthermore, even after changes to a two-child policy in 2016, couples still primarily chose one child due to the impact the propaganda of the one-child policy had, leading many to believe that one child is the logical option. In 2021, the Chinese government began actively promoting having three children, and making policy changes in support of that in the fields of family finance, employment and childcare. But this leads to the question, are these falling birth rates something to be worried about?

Firstly, to determine this, we need to evaluate the three factors of long-run economic growth: the size of the workforce, capital stock, and productivity. At the current rate, the size of China's workforce is expected to fall by 28% or 260 million workers in the coming three decades and a quarter of the population will be over the age of 65. Furthermore, the UN predicts that the population will fall by a further 45% by the end of the century. These

factors are alarming from the perspective of the Chinese workforce, as the economy has been relatively labour-intensive in its growth.



Source: World Economic Forum

This shifts the attention to China's capital stock. Analysts have worried about diminishing returns in China on their investments in infrastructure since 2008. Their capital-output ratio, which determines the efficiency or returns of the country's total capital stock, has deteriorated even with excess investments in the economy. For reference, China currently generates 50% less GDP for each new unit of capital than it did in 2007.

The overinvestment in Chinese infrastructure is also concerning, China and the USA have comparable landmass, and even with China

having a third fewer motor vehicles than the USA, their national highway system is two-thirds longer than the American highway system. Such overinvestments and diminishing marginal returns mean that China's debt burden is far too heavy for a middle-income country. This is indicated by China's debt-to-GDP ratio of 257%, which has doubled in just the last 10 years.

I believe that China's workforce falling so rapidly and an ageing population, with all the costs associated with them, could be severely detrimental to the economy, especially with the bog of debt and diminishing marginal returns the country has gotten trapped in.



On the other hand, if we consider the productivity of the country and foreign investment, there may potentially be a way out. Productivity is how well the workforce and the capital stock available are combined; China's increase in productivity has accounted for over 42% of their GDP growth in the past and as their current levels lie at around 50% of the USA, this shows clear room for growth. On the other hand, according to the Solow model of growth, China's economy is resistant to stimulation from changes in productivity and technological growth but reacts to fiscal policies and investment for growth.

Considering these conflicting views, I believe that the Chinese economy needs to redirect investment from their Capital stock to the workforce. This would entail better education and upskilling which would allow China to shift to a less labour-intensive production cycle.

This is of utmost importance as predictions show the workforce is expected to keep diminishing well into the future, and the Chinese economy isn't responsive to Capital investment. I think the government should definitely work to slow this fall in population as it could be disastrous in the short run, but in the long run I believe it is a blessing in disguise as it may allow the economy to enter the degrowth phase; a shrinking population may be what China needs for long run stability in this time of overutilized resources.

-Vyom Kumar

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More than Class Struggle: Ethnicity in the Soviet Union



In a 1920 address to the Congress of the Peoples of the Dagestan ASSR, the Soviet delegate, one Ioseb Jughashvili, stated that “the Soviet Government considers that the Sharia, as common law, is as fully authorised as that of any other of the peoples inhabiting Russia”, and that the Soviet government “gives every people the full right to govern itself on the basis of its laws and customs”. The delegate would later become the General Secretary of the Communist Party, serving till his death, better known to the world as Joseph Stalin.

As the study of the Soviet Union and its impact on the international socialist movement continues today, its redefining of ethnic dynamics, particularly within a socialist society, has been often overlooked. In this article, we seek to explore the historical and ideological context, implementation, and consequences of policy regarding nationalities in the erstwhile Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

The Soviet Union was the first socialist country in the world, and one of the first to implement a federal system based on ethnicity. So, how did the Soviet Union deal with ethnic and cultural differences, and what can we learn from it?

In the second half of the 19th century, the Russian Empire was rocked by a series of state-sponsored anti-semitic riots that killed thousands. Jews, now a sizable minority within the Empire after the acquisition of Poland and Lithuania, were prohibited from settling anywhere besides the designated Pale of Settlement (The western edge of the Empire) and were repeatedly harassed, with anti-semitic action often turning violent.

Tsarist authorities blamed the Jews for the hardships of ordinary peasants, organising mobs to kill Jews, loot their property, and raze their villages to the ground. Jews were linked to socialist organisations that sought to end the exploitation of the Russian people and overthrow the Tsar’s regime, with the assassination of Tsar Alexander II by a socialist group serving as the catalyst for the first wave of violence. Much later, the Nazis would claim that communism was a Jewish conspiracy, with revolutionaries like Trotsky often insulted for their Jewish backgrounds. Jews were not the only ones to suffer from oppression, however. With general Russification policies in other parts of the Empire restricting the cultural expression of

its national minorities.

Whether in the Caucasus, Russian Central Asia or the Western territories, minorities were routinely oppressed by the Russian chauvinism of the tsarist regime. It is no wonder then, that Lenin called the Russian Empire “a prison of nations”.

With the end of the Russian Civil War, the new Soviet power arose in the fractured ruins of the Tsarist regime. As soon as the last of the foreign armies had been driven out, the Soviets took to building a socialist society, and one of the first steps taken was to recognise national minorities and give them autonomous, self-governing units that ensured their right to practise their culture and govern as per their traditions. This facilitated the creation of a federal union from the unitary Russian Empire, with national minorities getting their own republics where they were free to promote their language and culture. The Ukrainian SSR, Kazakh SSR and Transcaucasian SFSR (later the SSRs of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan) were examples of this, with SSRs having the highest degree of autonomy, the Soviet Union itself being a union of all the SSRs.

Russia became the Russian SFSR, comprising smaller Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republics which had more limited autonomy than SSRs, largely due to population or economic constraints. The upper chamber of the all-union Supreme Soviet was the Soviet of Nationalities, where every SSR had equal representation regardless of population. With the establishment of the Soviet power throughout the union, there began a drive to promote the language and culture of each



nationality in their republic, and make sure that each republic was governed largely by members of the titular nationality.

This policy was known as *korenizatsiya* (trans. Indigenisation) and bolstered support for the Soviet Union among minority nationalities. At a time when other nations were either running colonial empires or being ruled by them, the application of national autonomy at this scale was truly revolutionary.

However, we must also ask why such policies were instituted, and examine the rationale behind them. Marxism-Leninism, the guiding ideology of the Soviet Union, makes clear the importance of the national right to self-determination. Lenin called for the Russian Social Democratic Party (the parent of the

Bolsheviks) to adopt a line allowing for the political self-determination of units making up the Russian Empire as far back as 1913, and expressed the “urgency” of the right to self-determination of nations in criticism of Rosa Luxemburg’s line opposing it. However, instead of supporting the self-determination of peoples, the Bolsheviks supported the right to self-determination of political units, created based on nationality. While this might seem a trivial difference, it was anything but.

As Stalin put it in *Marxism and the National Question*, the former promoted bourgeois nationalism and division, while the latter unified many groups towards a common goal and helped develop class consciousness, allowing for greater and more efficient utilisation of resources in a given area, while also helping build a socialist society. While each republic was dominated by a certain nationality, the “equal rights of nations in all forms (language, schools, etc.)” were assured for national minorities, and were considered an essential element of Soviet policy on nationalities. This implementation of policy can be seen in other socialist nations, namely the People’s Republic of China.

While the efforts of modern China and its revisionist leadership to suppress and erase regional cultures, namely those of the Uyghurs and Tibetans, cannot be ignored, one of Mao’s first decisions as the leader of a unified socialist China was to create autonomous zones in areas with significant ethnic minority populations, much to the chagrin of Han nationalists and the Kuomintang. The autonomous regions of Xinjiang, Tibet, Inner Mongolia, Ningxia and Guangxi were created in this manner. Therefore, it is undeniable that

Marxism-Leninism played a major part in shaping Soviet nationality policy.

However, the Soviet Union was no paradise for ethnic minorities either. The *korenizatsiya* policy ended in the late 1930s, as the Soviet Union began to industrialise and become more and more centralised. Many local communist officials were executed in the Great Purge, and many of the *korenizatsiya*-era laws were no longer enforced. Despite the continuation of school instruction in local languages, Russian became a compulsory subject in all schools, and a policy of soft Russification continued...



However, the Hujum program in the late 1920s incurred a lot of resistance and discontent among local groups. Soviet efforts to end patriarchal feudal traditions, such as veiling, child marriage and female seclusion and promote gender equality were seen as

affronts to culture and Islam, earning the ire of many. Soviet programs to encourage local-language education and empower women were viewed with great suspicion, despite their success in improving female education and reducing the prevalence of patriarchal traditions.

Despite aiming to uplift Muslim women and foster national unity, it instead antagonised a large section of Muslims, who viewed it as a foreign intrusion on their culture. Russification policies began becoming mainstream with the leadership of Nikita Khrushchev and the consolidation of a revisionist line in the Soviet Union. While having many other effects, it also promoted a gradual Russification of the Soviet Union under the guise of Soviet nationalism and pride, especially with the slow reintroduction of capitalism through Khrushchevite policies.

During this time, the aforementioned Kazakh SSR had become majority Russian, with Kazakhs a minority in their own country due to large-scale migration of Russians into the Kazakh SSR. This happened in China as well, as whatever Chinese minorities had gained under Mao slowly eroded under the revisionist regimes of Deng Xiaoping and his successors. Indeed, Uyghurs, a minority in their own region, in Xinjiang today face a cultural genocide at the hands of the Chinese state.

Whenever the Soviet Union is studied, it is often described as totalitarian, soulless, and oppressive. *While I do not seek to explore the economic and political aspects of the socialist project in this article, its impact on interethnic relations and the right to cultural expression has been almost overwhelmingly positive.* The

Soviets were forerunners in creating a progressive, egalitarian policy regarding the autonomy of ethnic minorities, with the implementation of a federal system that sought to address grievances among ethnic minorities.

While grave errors, such as the deportations of nationalities, were made, ethnic minorities found themselves with much more liberty under Soviet rule than they did under the Tsarist regime. When even supposedly developed nations like France suppressed and nearly killed minority languages like Breton, the Soviets were much more tolerant of diversity and sought to promote regional languages, and pro-soviet sentiment continues to pervade former soviet republics decades later. In a 2013 Gallup poll, the majority of citizens in the non-Russian former republics of Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine, Tajikistan, Moldova and Belarus claimed that the breakup of the Soviet Union brought more harm than good, and another poll by Pew Research Center recorded that 79% of Armenians claimed the breakup of the USSR was a bad thing for their country.

As ethnic minorities worldwide continue to face cultural, social and economic oppression at the hands of majoritarian states, there is a lot to be learned from the Soviet Union's treatment of its ethnicities. *In the words of Marx and Engels, no nation can be free if it oppresses other nations.*

-Aadhavan Balachandran



The Growth of Odisha



Why were they so poor?

Several wars for the state of Odisha had been waged between the Mughals, the British, and the Maratha, which is why no one considered them to be important. Considering there was just warfare around, they never grew as a civilization; poverty increased in the state during the Maratha control. The British broke the state into two provinces, one for Bengal and one for Madras, making it a minor part of a bigger province.

As a result of Odisha's proximity to the Bay of Bengal, textile exports increased in 1633, and the East India Company established its second plant in the state's Balasore area. Although the state exported clothing, new factories were being constructed in Bengal. The state's already-existing factories were given less priority and did not produce anything.

Odisha, an Indian state on the eastern

coast of India, is the 8th-largest state by area and the 11th-largest by population. It has a coastline of 485 km along the Bay of Bengal. It was the poorest state in 1999.

They had to face extreme weather on October 31, 1831, which overtook the salt manufacturers of Balasore and Cuttack; around 2,13,837 maunds of salt were swept away in the sea. They had to face famine in 1886, which killed around 10 lakh people in the state.

One of the main reasons for this was the poor government policies that were in place at the time. As output declined due to increased exports and food grain hoarding. There were also inadequate relief efforts from the British, which made the condition worse for them.

The Kalahandi district of Odisha experienced great poverty in the 1980s, which resulted in numerous hunger deaths. This drew the attention of numerous media outlets worldwide. A better level of living and significant development were promised by seven of the PMs who visited Kalahandi, but these have yet to materialise.

The main reasons for this are the depletion of forests, an increase in migration, and less support from the government for farmers growing crops. It was so hard to live there, for example, "Those who have been able to find jobs earn from 75 paise to a royal Rs 3.50 a day." Two out of every three children born die in infancy. There is fever, cholera, dysentery, and an ever-increasing number of respiratory

diseases. But in the once-royal district of Kalahandi, in Odisha, there is something much worse: women have now begun to abandon and sell their children because they can no longer afford to feed them.

In 1999, Odisha had to face the deadliest cyclone in the 20th century, which devastated the state's economy. The blocks of Erasma and Kujang in Jagatsinghpur were the worst affected. The storm affected 12.9 million people in total; estimates for the storm's death toll vary significantly, but the India Meteorological Department indicated that 9,887 people were killed. Most of these deaths occurred in Jagatsinghpur, where 8,119 were killed. The storm's effects damaged 1.6 million homes across 14,643 villages and 97 blocks. In turn, 2.5 million people were marooned. A total of 18,420 km² of cropland was impacted, and 444,000 livestock casualties were also reported.

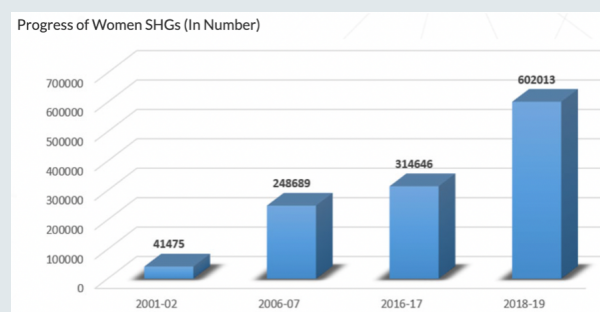
Naveen Patnaik's initiatives

The state's longest-serving Chief Minister, Naveen Patnaik, has been in office for 23 years and was chosen as Odisha's 14th Chief Minister in 2000. In honour of his late father, Biju Patnaik, he founded the Biju Janata Dal. He was once seen as a "guy who couldn't care," known for his private life and celebrity acquaintances, but he has since evolved, and now his first priority is to improve living conditions in the state of Odisha. His initiatives were essential to the development of Odisha:

1) Mission Shakti:

A self-help mission for empowering women through the promotion of Women Self-Help

Groups (WSHGs) to take up various socio-economic activities that was launched in the state on March 8, 2001, on International Women's Day. Mission Shakti has the clear objective of empowering women through gainful activities by providing credit and market linkage. Empowerment of women through WSHGs under Mission Shakti is a flagship programme of the government. It is projected that as time passes, an increasing number of women will join a WSHG (Women Self Help Groups).



The increase in the number of women currently a part of SHGs in Odisha

Its areas of focus include:

- Formation and strengthening of WSHGs: There are around 6 lakh women-led self-help groups (WSHGs) formed and nurtured by Mission Shakti in Odisha, comprising around 70 lakh women members. Institutionalization of WSHGs by federating them at the gram panchayat, block, and district levels
- Building up the capacity of community-based organisations (from SHGs to Federations)
- Strengthening livelihoods and consolidating the efforts through aggregation to ensure the sustainability of the initiatives
- Ensuring market linkage to SHG products

across the state

- Creating awareness among women on social entitlements and promoting inter-agency convergence for livelihood promotion
- Financial inclusion: Initiatives such as the provisioning of seed money and a revolving fund for WSHGs, the facilitation of credit linkage, the implementation of an interest subvention scheme, the financial strengthening of BLFs through a revolving fund, and financial literacy programmes across the state all aim at the financial inclusion of women.

2) Disaster Management:

It was established on December 28th, 1999, as a response to the deaths caused by the 1999 supercyclone.

Their responsibilities are:

- It carries out disaster mitigation activities such as mock drills and evacuation in vulnerable areas.
- Carry out reconstruction activities while coordinating other departments.
- Work with aid agencies, United Nations agencies, and international, national, and state-level non-governmental organisations for disaster management activities.
- Work with other states - and national - level relevant organisations for disaster management.
- Prepare and issue guidelines for disaster management for local administrations and other organizations.
- It also carries out pre-emptive disaster mitigation activities such as the construction of cyclone shelters, early

warning systems, and preparedness drills.

- In addition to major natural disasters like cyclones, floods, and earthquakes, the Odisha State Disaster Management Authority is also the primary organisation for capacity improvement to face events such as lightning, heat waves, whirlwinds, tornadoes, heavy rain, drowning, boat accidents, and snake bites.

As their special relief commissioner stated, the disaster team gains knowledge from this type of disaster and considers how they may better themselves "The state hadn't had a summer cyclone in 50–60 years before Fani in 2019. Fani taught us a lot because it was challenging to manage. We learn from every storm and our blunders. We are quite flexible and make an effort to take these aspects into account when developing our capacity for the upcoming year. We are constantly discovering new things." They want to be more than just management that operates on paper, and this is one of the reasons why. They evacuated 1 million people during the 2013 cyclone, earning UN recognition.

3) Government Aid:

The government offers food and grains to the poor to reduce hunger and starvation throughout their public distribution system; lakhs of people get rice and cooked food from their Aahar centres. They are also known for many progressive and flagship schemes like Kalia, Balaram, Matarata, BSKY, Odisha Millet Mission, Mission Shakti, Social Security Pension, Subsidized Food Grain, Provision of Housing, Drinking Water, and Electricity, etc.

Drawbacks

Under Naveen Patnaik, the economy grew by 8% from 2003 to 2007, owing to an increase in the tertiary sector, but economic growth is insufficient; social development is also required for an economy to grow. There is always inequality, like the tertiary sector growth only seen in coastal areas of Odisha.

A report showed that where there is more mining, the areas are poorer than non-mining areas due to corruption. Only some people get their hands on the resources and use them for their good, leading to fewer resources reaching the other areas of Odisha.

The fact that Naveen Patnaik has done so much for the state and that the people of Odisha are not opposed to receiving appropriate basic needs may be one of the key reasons for this. Give him some time to grow. Nonetheless, Odisha is still very impoverished and has made little progress in reducing poverty in the countryside. Because Odisha is a feudal state where only the wealthy and powerful dominate and the poor are uninterested, there is no political activism in the state. After all, their leader is only concerned with them. This can be observed in business, politics, or the media. recognition.

Most of the media are linked to Naveen Patnaik, which is why he can maintain such political power in the state. It is also stated that "this government is run by bureaucrats, not politicians." Despite healthy finances, the state is failing to provide basic services to its people. Its schools and hospitals are understaffed. Jobs are not easy to find.

Where is Odisha today?

Odisha is a state rich in minerals and metals, with a fifth of India's coal, a quarter of its iron ore, a third of its bauxite, and all its chromite. Odisha's primary industries are manufacturing, mining, quarrying, electricity, gas, water supply, and construction. It has 10% of India's production capacity in steel, it is the top aluminium-producing state in India, and two of the largest aluminium plants in India are in Odisha. Mining contributed an estimated 6.31% to the GSDP.

33.9% of the total working female population are main workers. 61.8% of the working population is engaged in agricultural activities. Odisha's real GDP (gross domestic product) is likely to have grown by 10.1% in FY21 compared with 8.8% for India. Between FY16 and FY20, Odisha's overall economic growth was 8.7%, compared to the national average growth rate of 6.6%. The industrial sector in Odisha grew significantly higher at 10.3% when compared to 5.4%. A decade ago, the per capita income in the state was Rs 48,499—about Rs 4,000 per month. Now, the same stands at Rs 10,615—a whopping rise of more than 250%.



Female labour force participation in the state, at 33.1%, was higher than the all-India average. Odisha has also established several higher educational institutions, such as AIIMS and IIT, to attract the skilled workforce required by new businesses. Odisha is also one of the top FDI destinations in India.

For far too long, entrepreneurs were worried about coming to the state because of its backward infrastructure and worries over getting skilled workers.

Odisha has worked to address this in recent years by building highways connecting remote mineral-rich districts to ports, as well as the twin cities of Cuttack and Bhubaneswar, which have air and rail connectivity. The state has a power surplus and has 11 percent of the entire nation's water resources (the presence of the massive Hirakud dam helps). These are statistics that automatically entice investors.

Odisha has also created a number of higher education institutions, such as AIIMS and IIT, in order to recruit the skilled labour required by new industries. The capital Bhubaneswar's "smart city" designation also contributes significantly. In his statement at the conclave, Mukesh Ambani mentioned that Odisha has one of the highest rates of mobile data usage in the country.

With other events like the Hockey World Cup taking place in the state and a calendar of events to keep Odisha highlighted on the national stage, the idea is to provide a positive spin on a state that has traditionally been considered backward.

Personal Views

Odisha has developed significantly in recent years, which is commendable given that they were originally considered one of the poorest states and nobody wanted to assist them. They have overcome all obstacles and fought their way to this point, but there are still improvements to be made, such as the necessity for greater governmental decentralisation. More low-income ministers must be hired, and they must be given authority. Also, they must provide the established ministers with adequate job descriptions that clearly define their responsibilities. They should look beyond mining because there are other resources they can use to make a livelihood and because ventures like these won't generate a lot of jobs for the local population. They must support missions, encourage them, and exert more effort in support of them.

-Madhav Pransukhka

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The Importance of Participatory Politics: India

Society's involvement in the actions of the state is imperative. Ignorance leads to societal fomentation and ultimately the formation of despotic regimes under autocrats. Cooperation in conjunction with resistance, on the other hand, leads to liberty.

Political scientists James Robinson and Daron Acemoglu expound in their book *The Narrow Corridor: States, Society, and the Fate of Liberty* that the state has despotism ingrained in its DNA. To counteract the state from wielding unhealthy and exploitative power, it is critical for the society, i.e. us (irrespective of whether or not we are a part of the enfranchised population), to resist such actions by the government. This sets into motion The Red Queen Effect. Simultaneously, positively reinforcing the agreeable measures and cooperating with the state leads to the economic and social development of the nation-state.

India is in a precarious state today: threatened by the rise of sub-nationalism transcending India slowly into an autocratic/theocratic regime. A regime led by Prime Minister Modi and his Bharatiya Janata Party, sponsored and propagated by Hindutva/RSS, consolidated in power through oligarchy. Hence, I felt it was imperative to explain our responsibility of keeping in place the framework of checks and balances, which our founding fathers formulated, to keep our society in the Narrow Corridor of Liberty.

In this article, I start by explaining Acemoglu and Robinson's aforementioned theory to

understand why our role as citizens is significant in politics and demonstrate how the RTI Act 2005 acts as a channel to access public governmental information.

1

Wielders of power in political institutions attempt to expand their rein of control, provided they have no overburdening opposition.

Muammar Gaddafi is the paragon: a celebrated hero following the 1969 Al-Fateh Revolution, he eventually went on to epitomize the supreme despot. The public initially intoxicated by his persona overlooked the 'reforms,' which directed power into his hands through social and political restructuring.

His stated political philosophy was "government by the masses," which was extensively discussed in *The Green Book*. The Libyan "Jamahiriya," a neologism that roughly translates to "state of the masses," was established by Gaddafi in 1977. According to the theory, Libya had evolved into a popular democracy run by regional Revolutionary Councils. In reality, he maintained tight control over the state's wealth and all

significant decisions. This system was a lie.

There was a stagnation of economic growth (failed nationalisation of the oil industry), no freedom of expression, and endless political unrest in the later Gaddafi years, when people began to see through the facade.

2

The leader grows the economy out of self-interest.

Professor Paul Collier explains in his book *The Bottom Billion* how a leader grows an economy and implements the tax system out of pure self-interest - to consolidate his power.

Caesar Augustus created the *vicesima hereditatium* (Roman 5% tax on inheritance money) and the *centesima* (tax of 1% levied in Rome upon all goods that were open for public sale). By introducing this tax infrastructure, Augustus was able to provide public goods and a secure source of income for the military.

This allows a ruler to consolidate his power through the military and by increasing the morale of his people.

3

The condition wherein the people, enfranchised or not, are actively involved in the activities of the state results in the development of society as a whole. The Red Queen comes into motion.

The term 'Red Queen' is derived from Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass*, where the Red Queen informs Alice, "here, you see, it takes all the running you can do to keep in

the same place."



This is analogised to the Red Queen Hypothesis: species must constantly adapt, evolve, and proliferate in order to survive while pitted against ever-evolving opposing species. Here the species evolving are the State and the Society. In order to be on the same playing field, society must adapt and scrutinise state action, while the state attempts to grow in despotism (while simultaneously developing the nation). Thus, the same conclusion is reached: society must be aware of the state's actions.

When the Red Queen Effect is in motion, the nation is in a state of growth and development. As long as this balance is maintained - the state and society work in conjunction - economic growth is usually guaranteed.

The participation of the people (originally the elites, then the broader population, and eventually women) is the categorical reason for Europe's supremacy in the latter half of the previous millennium, and partly the reason for the conceptualization of the myth of European Enlightenment leading to Eurocentrism.

Acemoglu and Robinson explain, "this static view (that where freedom exists, it's a steady

state, arrived at by 'enlightenment') is a fantasy." In the book *The Narrow Corridor*, they explain that the corridor to liberty is narrow and stays open only through a self-reinforcing struggle between the state and society.

The power of the people is exemplified in the case of the Franks - a germanic tribe that fought for nearly two centuries against the Romans. Archbishop Hincmar of Reims, France, in 882, noted the remarkably participatory assembly system of governance of the Franks. The king's actions were challenged, too, in the assemblies. The Frank's empire extended into France in the 9th century, and Hincmar noted their rise and consolidation of power was due tremendously to their institutional setting: *At the time the custom was followed that no more than two assemblies were to be held each year. The first assembly determined the status of the entire realm for the remainder of the year... All important men, both clerics and laymen, attended this general assembly. The important men came to participate in the deliberations, and those of lower station were present in order to hear the decisions and occasionally also to deliberate concerning them... by their understanding and agreement.*



The foundation of democracy is weakening in India due to the dwindling voter turnout. Questions of legitimacy and representation arise when a sizable portion of the population abstains from participating in the democratic process. The right to vote is guaranteed by the Indian Constitution to every adult citizen; however, poor voter turnout compromises this right. Also, when people don't vote, it leaves a power vacuum that can be filled by affluent people with special interests.

As responsible citizens, we must scrutinise government action. This, in turn, suggests being cognizant of the administration's actions. In India, the RTI Act of 2005 allows this. Its purpose is succinctly described on the online portal to submit an RTI application: to empower the citizens, promote transparency and accountability in the working of the Government, contain corruption, and make our democracy work for the people in real sense. The RTI is an example of a check and balance - keeps us aware of government actions - and creates a positive externality. Nevertheless, the government has an incentive to under-provide it, of course, as previously mentioned: the state has despotism in its DNA.

Plausibly, not many individuals are acquainted with the processes of drafting an application to request unrestricted government information. Hence, the subsequent article provides a template, accompanied by guidelines, to help the common Indian to submit their RTI application.

-Akshit Jain

A Simple Guide: How to Submit an RTI Application

It is quite a hassle to submit an online application. The framework is purposely difficult; it is easier to post an RTI by post. So, take an A4 sheet that can be used as a letter. Purchase an IPO of ₹10 from the postal office; this must be attached to the letter. Attach a printed copy of your Aadhar card (strike through it). Below is a template that you can follow. You must receive a response within a month. If not, a complaint can be made to the Chief Public Information Officer.

To: The Public Information Officer O/o (enter the name of which government sector you wish to request information from; followed by address)

Subject: Application under RTI Act 2005.

Respected Sir/Ma'am,

As a citizen of India, I request the following information per the RTI Act 2005. Please provide me with this information as I would like (very briefly enter your reason here).

Provide Context. Explain what exactly you are requesting information. For example: *The information required pertains to Lala Lajpat Rai's Ancestral house in Jagraon, Ludhiana, and the allotment of a fund of 10 lakhs to renovate the house in 2022.* You can also attach a copy of a news report.

Then in bullet points request information. Do not end them with a question mark. Note: not all the information requested can be provided by the government.

I would like to request information on the same:

1) *Was the renovation project assigned to a private firm.*

2) *If not, was it undertaken by a government body.*

...

You can ask up to 8 questions per RTI. Be succinct and to the point.

Ensure that all the information provided to me has been attested and certified. RTI Application fee of Rs.10 I.P.O. No.: (enter IPO number) attached with the application.

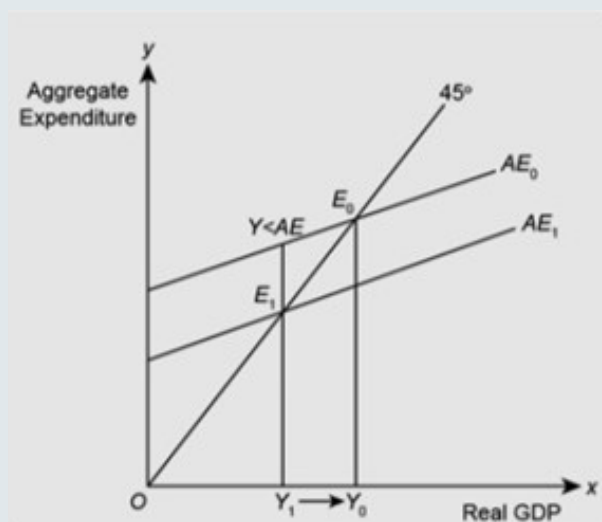
Regards
(Name)

The monetary policy conundrum facing central banks throughout the world due to the Russo-Ukrainian crisis.

Capitalism works on the premise that the market forces decide what to produce, how to produce, and for whom to produce. Prior to the Great Depression of 1929, this theory worked, and the role of the government was merely to ensure security for its citizens.

During the great depression, equilibrium was achieved at less than full employment. Keynes' solution for achieving equilibrium at full employment was to add the government's demand for goods and services. This is where the role of government increased from just being a police state to one that participates in the demand process.

Figure 1: Diagrammatic Representation of Keynes' equilibrium analysis with the help of government demand



Source: Google Images

In the above diagram, to achieve full employment equilibrium, movement from Y_1 to Y_0 is essential, (Y_0 is the optimal output), as Y_0 includes consumption (C) plus investment (I) plus government demand (GD) plus net exports ($X-M$) should be a part of the

AEO line. With the role of the government increasing, today's central banks are dependent on monetary policy to control problems that arise due to excess money supply or else unprecedented inflation.

Inflation could be due to the following reasons:

- Demand-pull inflation
- Cost-push inflation
- Imported inflation

According to Keynes, the solution to demand-pull inflation is to control the money supply, which requires a rise in interest rates (tight monetary policy). This would cool the demand and the subsequent rise in the price of commodities.

Cost-push inflation indicates that the prices of raw materials have increased, leading to inflation. The solution would lie in discovering alternate inputs or else using production functions with alternative technology, ultimately leading to the reduction of the prices of products in the economy.

Monetary policy may not be the only effective tool in controlling cost-push inflation. The policy required would include fiscal measures like allowing cheaper imports, and the use of other policy measures to cool down prices.

Imported inflation on the other hand is not in the hands of the government but it is an issue that needs to be accepted and addressed. This impact is felt more in countries that are overly dependent on imported products whose price is increasing. In such cases, the government

would have to depend on both monetary and fiscal policy to reduce the adverse impacts of inflation.

Most economies of the world today follow an inflation-targeting monetary policy. This means that the primary aim is to control inflation, which they feel would lead to higher growth rates. Developed economies aim to keep inflation levels at $\pm 2\%$ and emerging economies like India would like to keep the rate at $\pm 4\%$. This indicates that some inflation is good and acts as an incentive for growth but beyond the targeted levels, it would be detrimental to the economy.

The recent Russo-Ukrainian crisis has led to a huge disruption in all economies of the world. The current inflation that the world is facing is supply shock driven. The earlier inflation that was witnessed was demand led primarily driven by rising incomes. The current food inflation is idiosyncratic and supply shock driven, due to the war in Ukraine.

The world was already witnessing some inflation due to shortages in imported agricultural output, but the Russo-Ukrainian war has worsened things by squeezing supplies from the two countries which have a substantial share of the world's wheat, corn, barley, and sunflower oil exports. Food inflation that results from war is different from structural demand-pull factors.

This inflation could lead farmers to increase supply, which means that it could be an incentive to increase the production of food grains furthering the impact on inflation. Besides food, the other areas which have been

impacted in the world are oil and also the ongoing chip shortage. Russia controls 44% of global palladium supplies and Ukraine produces 70% of the global supply of neon, the key raw materials that are needed to make chips. The war is a part of geo-political development that has further aggravated the challenges and dilemmas for most central banks throughout the world.

Central banks are in a bind. If they act aggressively to contain inflation, which may reduce in case the war ends (but given the present scenario, there does not seem to be any sight of such a development), it could lead to risking economies into recession. If the world's central banks do not react aggressively to the current inflation levels that their economies are facing, then it might lead to "too little, too late" and would be blamed for "falling behind the curve" which would result in a lot of catching up later which is more likely to be extremely detrimental to growth. The current war, just after two years of the pandemic, is posing extremely complex challenges for central banks around the world.

Besides the above issues, financial markets have turned extremely volatile due to uncertainty over the pace of the future of monetary policy normalisation. Central banks around the world have to find an optimal ground considering all these challenges. Almost all economies of the world are facing multi-decadal high inflation rates due to:

- Supply disruption
- Tighter labour markets
- The fragility of the just-in-time inventory management
- Geopolitical disturbances

Monetary policy is managing expectations as well as shaping the market to reach the levels that have been decided as intermediate targets. Besides just announcements and actions, there is a continuous endeavour to react to every new type of situation that these economies face.

There does not seem to be the best fit for the type of inflation that the world is facing today, resulting in the monetary policy changing and evolving as the markets evolve due to a reaction of geopolitical conditions. Earlier, the monetary policies used to be more directive and discretionary, following a fixed pattern and path but recent situations have resulted in all economies of the world following a more pragmatic path where rules are followed along with out-of-the-box measures. All this requires the right extent of communication and adequate data such that it should not spook the market and neither should the market be left in a “guessing state”. Many a time, the expectation of a market is not according to the assessment by the central banks, in which case, the policy that is announced may result in huge fluctuations in the market. The war has led to a huge amount of suffering and a humanitarian crisis but it has also led to the entire global economy feeling the impact of slower growth and higher inflation rates.

To counter higher inflation rates, monetary policies across the world have followed the path of a “tight one”. This essentially means that interest rates have been high and will continue in this manner till the price pressures are fully broken. The interest rates in the US are between 4.25% and 4.50% in 2022 while they are 3.50% in the UK, and the inflation rate currently is 11% in the UK and 7.1% in

the US (December 2022), indicating that though inflation rates have reduced marginally, they have not reached the targeted $\pm 2\%$ of these countries.



Figure 2: Interest rates(left) and inflation rates(right) in the UK in 2022. *Source: tradingeconomics.com*



Figure 3: Interest rates(left) and inflation rates(right) in the US in 2022. *Source: tradingeconomics.com*

Recession is defined as the contraction of the economy for two consecutive quarters along with job losses and a reduction in overall demand. Most of the economies of the world decided on a substantial fiscal stimulus to counter the negative impact of the covid-19 pandemic. Two years of such stimulus resulted in expansionary demand and allowed the economies to survive, as all other parameters were under control. The war completely disrupted the economy, forcing the

central banks to move to a tightening monetary policy. This policy has been advocated since the time the war broke out and the economies faced unprecedented inflation. Recent studies are indicating an inversion of US treasury yields. People expect the interest rate on bonds to fall in the long term.

The US is experiencing decreasing levels of unemployment which is what is indicated by the Phillips Curve.

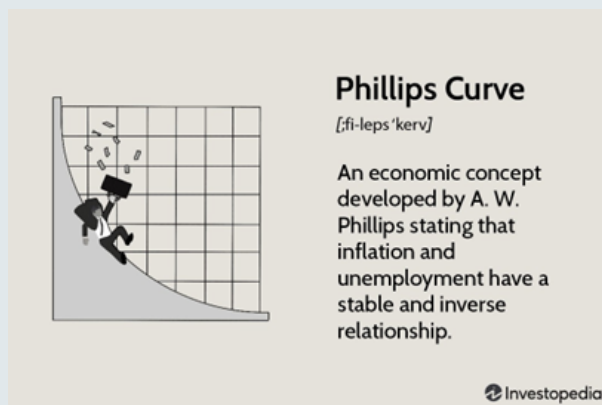


Figure 4: Diagrammatic explanation of the Phillips Curve. *Source: Investopedia.*

The scare for the economies is that a continuously tightening monetary policy which is not bringing inflation rates down to the targeted level would lead to the countries entering a recession, which is already being indicated by an inverted yield curve.³ The continuous emphasis on inflation is likely to impact the growth rate of subsequent quarters. Getting the economy back onto the rails might then require a different monetary approach. Are the developed economies willing to risk the continuous emphasis on inflation with an impending recession in the future?

-Nipun Agrawal

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The Nigerian Elections

Nigeria, although seemingly inconsequential, is Africa's most populous country, with the largest economy and a fickle yet long-standing democracy. People, especially young people, are speaking out against rampant corruption, poverty, political instability, violent insurgencies, and others. Faith in the government has shifted from Muhammadu Buhari to Peter Obi, what does it say about Nigeria as a state and the people's voice as a representation of society?

Let's talk about governance in Nigeria. Nigeria can be roughly divided into the Muslim North and the Christian South. It is a well-known fact that people tend to vote for candidates who know their region, speak their language, and are essentially someone to relate to. Hence, it is no surprise that people in Nigeria tend to vote on the basis of religion rather than political values and beliefs.

Given the lack of unity in the country, the president of the state is decided based on the majority and a 25% in-favour vote in 1/3 of the 36 states in Nigeria as well as Abuja, the National Capital, to ensure a fair spread of votes in the country.

Despite the difficulty in the possibility of winning outright, Bola Tinubu, former minister of Lagos, the ruling party (APC; All Progressive Congress) secured a victory. However, this has sparked protests by both the major opposition parties, the People's Democratic Party (candidate: Atiku Abubakar), and the previously unknown Labour Party (candidate: Peter Obi).

It goes to show that political parties in Nigeria have accepted the level of guarantee for the validity of elections and whether the state is a representation of society's voice or a result of

a series of corruption schemes plaguing Nigeria.

This brings us to the challenges faced by the democracy in Nigeria and the incumbent president of Nigeria. Violence and corruption and the threat they pose to democracy are a result of religious divides that exist all over the country.

Boko Haram has plagued the North of the country for several years and has traumatized people in cities like Maiduguri, where every citizen has felt the impact of the kidnappings and murders by this group. Insurgent groups, bandits and gangs have become increasingly common even in large cities, affecting the poor and rich indiscriminately. This violence has also transpired at polling stations in several past elections. The current elections are no different.

While biometric technology has been implemented, the credibility of each vote is highly questionable as a large majority of these voters are subjugated to threats or bribery. The sale of votes is unsurprisingly common given the fact that 40% of the population is under the poverty line, with youth unemployment rates soaring (currently at 19.6%), such that anyone would be willing

to change their mind if offered a wad of cash, which could possibly be more than their monthly wage.

It seems that corruption has been ingrained in Nigerian democracy such that it is being eroded from within. The lack of political representation for the poor or the youth is also a major issue as the candidate nomination form costs 100 million Naira, which is far from the reach of an ordinary Nigerian.

With such issues ravaging the country, irrespective of social status, an approach based on education, collective action and inclusivity must be adopted by the incumbent government.

In any society, the future is the younger demographic and the concern of this demographic of Nigeria is fighting for a country that is conducive to every individual's personal growth, one that is capable of sustaining the basic needs of future generations and one that has a safe and stable political, socio-cultural and economic system.

A growing voice of the youth has begun resonating in the country and this is evident through the 10 million new voters registered, 84% of whom are under 34 years of age. A significant proportion of this demographic has rallied behind Peter Obi was his appearance as an accessible and humble man. The #EndSARS movement is one of many examples of the tumultuous history between the youth and the state, which is why Peter Obi wants to take reforms such that the Nigerians will have their trust in the police, restored. Moreover, Mr Obi is willing to

represent the under-represented which is precisely what the youth have been fighting for. However, Criticisms against Peter Obi include the lack of clarity in his plan of action, which is bound to take a fatal blow if not solved. What Nigeria needs the most is unity; unity in diversity, concerning religion and social class and Peter Obi, seems willing and dedicated to the cause.

We have seen governments come and go in Africa due to youth movements. However, this enthusiasm must not lead to disillusion in any circumstance. Whether it be the PDP, APC or the Labour Party, a clear expectation of the new government must be set up. These elections were a chance for the citizens to renegotiate what Nigerian democracy truly meant to them, and yet we succumbed to another unsatisfactory election. The future of the relationship between the state and society in Nigeria now lies in the hands of Mr Tinubu. *It is up to him to live up to the glory of what democracy as an ideology can bring for Nigeria or be another pawn to the corrupt schemes tormenting society today.*

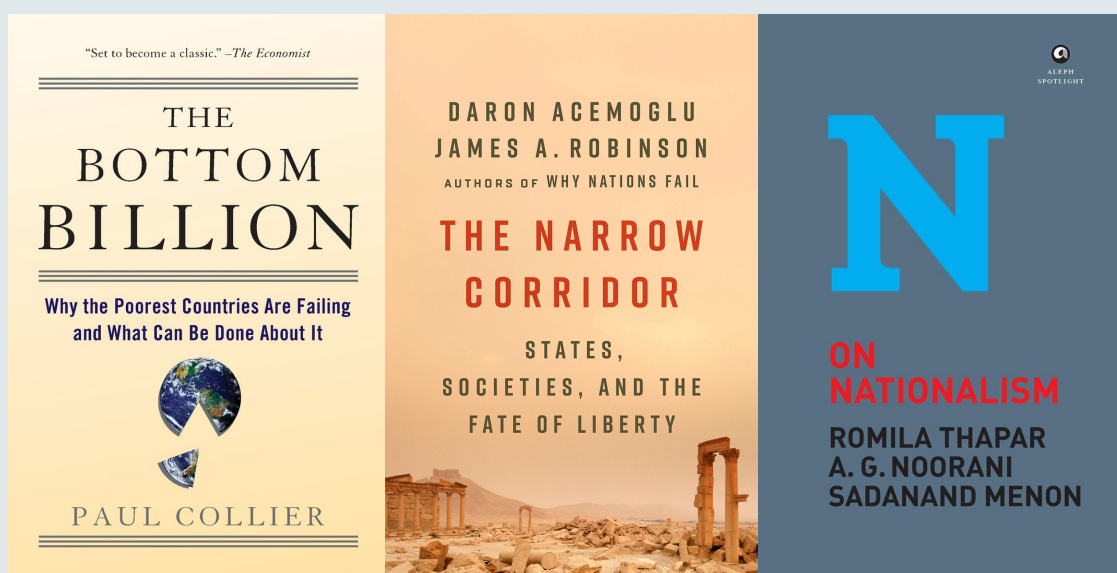


Obi before the elections.

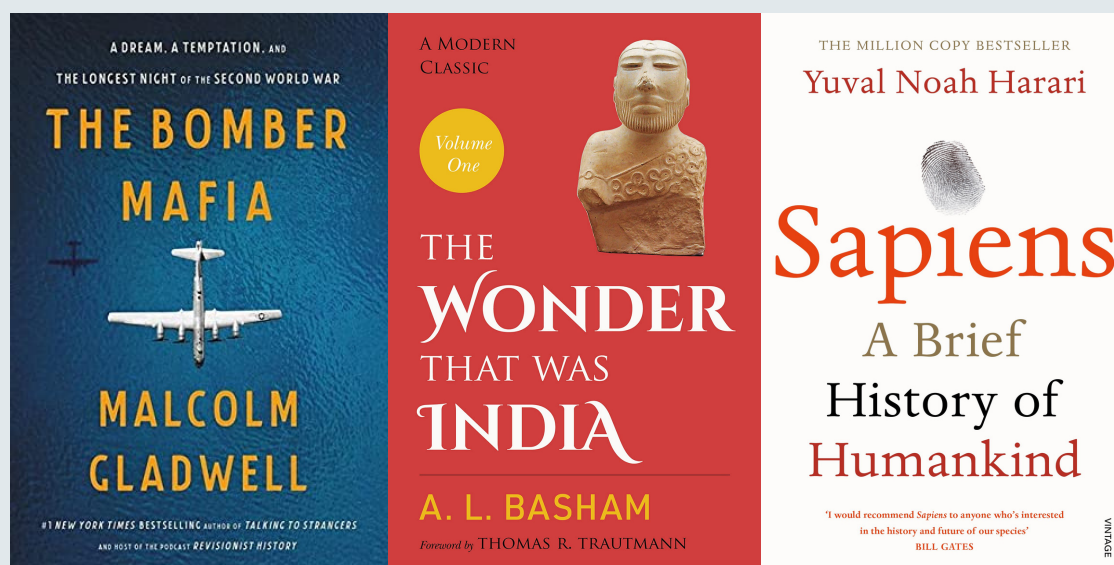
-Aditya Gupta

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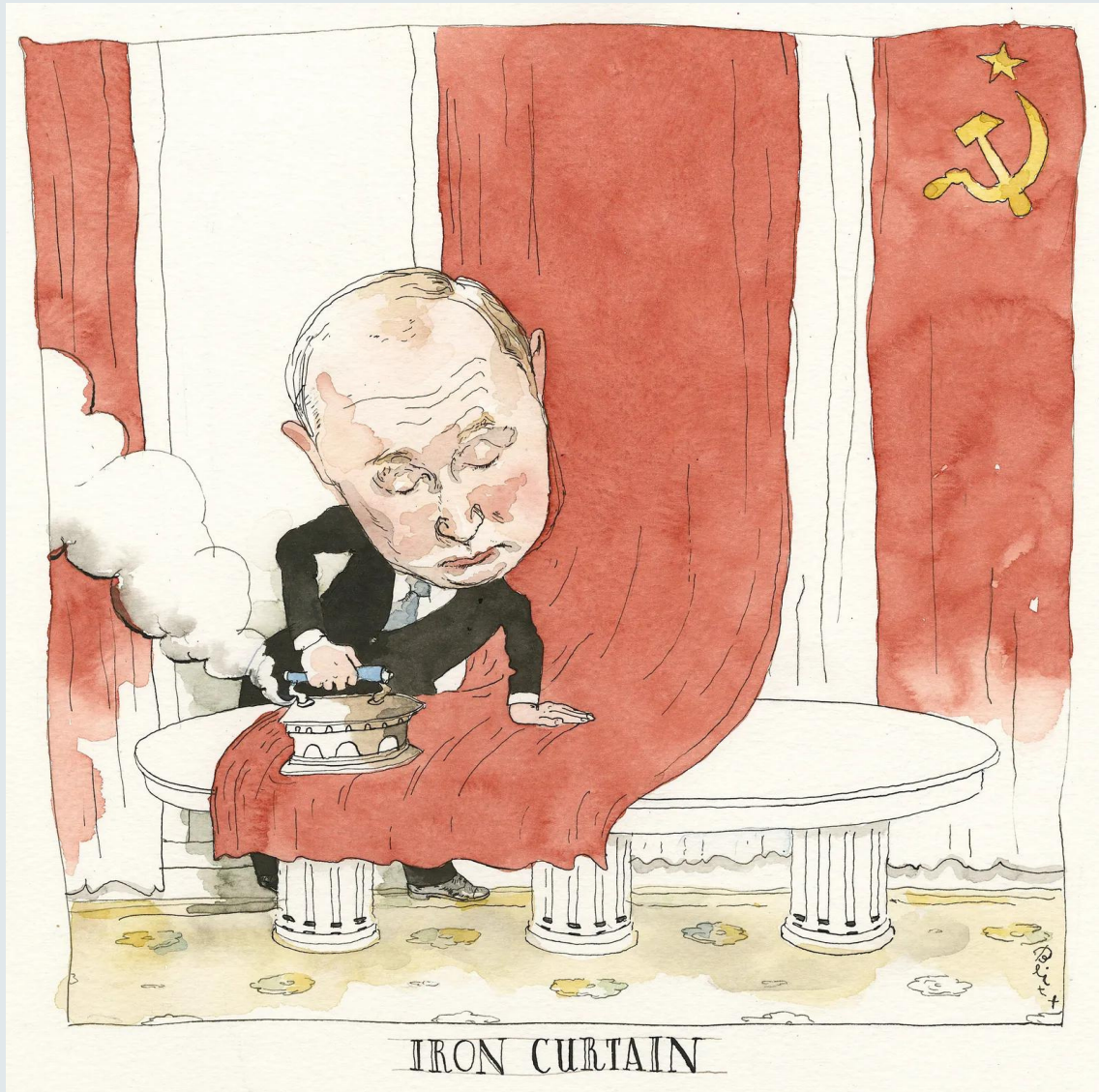
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Columnist



Thanking our mentor Miss Moumita Paul and our columnists: Aadhavan Balachandran, Aditya Gupta, and Madhav Pransukhka for their time and dedication. The Lumieres team hopes you enjoyed reading!

- Vyom Kumar, Nipun Agrawal, & Akshit Jain