

## Course correction – **Boris Johnson must reckon with grave consequences of Brexit**

*Britain's new PM should abjure his dangerous brinkmanship in seeing Brexit through*

**Boris Johnson, Britain's new Prime Minister**, has achieved one of his life's ambitions. His defiant speech at Downing Street on Wednesday, pledging a "no ifs, no buts" exit from the European Union before October 31, is clear indication that he will pursue a hard Brexit. "Doubters, doomsters and gloomsters," would be defeated, he declared in characteristic style. Several ministers from the previous government, who have either resigned or have been dropped, are all presumably among them. Conversely, the induction of several eurosceptics, most notably Jacob Rees-Mogg from the European Research Group, leaves no doubt that the Johnson team is nothing if not a Brexit cabinet. The other is Dominic Raab who, during the Conservative leadership race, advocated proroguing Parliament to ensure MPs did not stop a no-deal exit. Mr. Johnson's rhetoric is reminiscent of Theresa May's uncompromising early stance that no deal was better than a bad deal. While she was forced to back down from several unrealistic positions, Mr. Johnson's place in Downing Street is far more precarious than her's. His majority in the House of Commons could drop to just two seats if, as the polls forecast, the Tories lose the by-election in August. This arithmetic is crucial in what is a sharply polarised Parliament now. Party hardliners have threatened to vote out the government if the exit deadline was breached for a third time. With Brussels ruling out a renegotiation of the withdrawal agreement, the chances of leaving on October 31 seem remote.

Mr. Johnson has for too long painted the other 27 nations in the bloc as hostile adversaries that have undermined Britain's sovereignty. He has paid scant regard to mounting evidence, most recently from the International Monetary Fund, of the crippling economic impact of Britain leaving the union. Mr. Johnson has even dismissed the risks to the integrity of the Good Friday agreement between the U.K. and Ireland, in the absence of the prevailing soft borders connecting Dublin and Belfast. But as Prime Minister he can ill-afford to indulge the populist instincts of the narrow nationalists among the Conservatives. Instead, he must reckon with the real and grave consequences for the nation and even his party, of abruptly walking out on London's closest partners. The contradictions of that approach were laid bare this week in London's bid to coordinate with Brussels to protect European commercial shipping in West Asia. Clearly, London's interests lie in redoubling efforts to resurrect the multilateral order that U.S. President Donald Trump seems so keen to undo. The special relationship between the principal trans-Atlantic partners is nothing if it did not encompass a more universal vision. Mr. Johnson must abjure his dangerous brinkmanship. That would be in Britain's interest.

### **Meanings of Difficult Words :**

- **reckon with** (phrasal verb) – deal with/cope with; take into account, take into consideration.
- **grave** (adjective) – crucial/critical, important/significant, serious.
- **Brexit** (noun) – a term used for the (supposed) departure of the United Kingdom from the European Union.
- **abjure** (verb) – renounce, relinquish, reject.

- **brinkmanship** (noun) – the practice of trying to achieve an advantageous results by engaging in a dangerous issue or event to the edge of safety, especially in politics, by pushing dangerous events.
- **see through** (phrasal verb) – bring to completion/finish, continue to the end; follow through.
- **defiant** (adjective) – aggressive, belligerent/bellicose; uncooperative, non-compliant.
- **no ifs, ands, or buts** (phrase) – no excuses will be accepted for not accomplishing a task; no excuses, no doubt, with certainty.
- **pursue** (verb) – engage in, follow, conduct.
- **doomster** (noun) – cynic, prophet of doom; doubter.
- **gloomster** (noun) – a negative person.
- **presumably** (adverb) – probably, in all likelihood, undoubtedly.
- **conversely** (adverb) – inversely, the other way round, oppositely/reciprocally.
- **induction** (noun) – inauguration, introduction, swearing in (to a new job or position).
- **euroseptc** (noun) – a person who is opposing to increase the powers of the European Union.
- **advocate** (verb) – support, champion, uphold.
- **prorogue** (verb) – to postpone/terminate a session of a Parliament without dissolving it.
- **rhetoric** (noun) – bombast, loftiness, hyperbole/extravagant language.
- **reminiscent** (adjective) – similar to, comparable with, bearing comparison with.
- **uncompromising** (adjective) – stubborn, relentless, resolute/headstrong.
- **stance** (noun) – point of view, opinion, standpoint.
- **back down** (phrasal verb) – yield, give in, reconsider.
- **precarious** (adjective) – uncertain/unsure, insecure, unreliable/risky.
- **House of Commons** (noun) – the lower house of the Parliament of the United Kingdom (“the House of Lords” is the upper house).
- **forecast** (verb) – predict, indicate, project.
- **arithmetic** (noun) – calculation, reckoning, tally.
- **hardliner** (noun) – a group/a political party with people who support a strict ideas and they are extreme & uncompromising.
- **breach** (verb) – break, contravene, violate.
- **Brussels** (noun) – The headquarters of the European Union. Brussels is a **metonym** of the European Union.
- **remote** (adjective) – unlikely, improbable, implausible, doubtful.
- **renegotiation** (noun) – a process of negotiating again to modify or reconstruct previous / existing trade terms.
- **paint** (verb) – portray, depict, represent.
- **bloc** (noun) – group/fold, association, partnership.
- **hostile** (adjective) – opposed; aggressive, confrontational/belligerent.
- **adversary** (noun) – rival, enemy, nemesis/opponent.
- **undermine** (verb) – weaken, spoil, damage.
- **sovereignty** (noun) – supreme power, authority, domination.
- **scant** (adjective) – little, minimal, hardly any, negligible/meagre.
- **pay regard to** (phrase) – to look attentively; pay attention to, concentrate on.
- **mounting** (adjective) – increasing, growing, rising, escalating/intensifying.

- **crippling** (adjective) – ruining/destroying, weakening, paralyzing.
- **integrity** (noun) – principles, ethics, morals.
- **Good Friday Accord/Agreement** (noun) – Belfast Agreement; This agreement (signed on 10 April 1998) helped to bring to an end a period of conflict in the region called the Troubles (of Northern Ireland as part of the UK, and the Republic of Ireland as a separate country).
- **prevailing** (adjective) – existing; current.
- **ill-afford** (verb) – unable to afford.
- **indulge in** (verb) – become involved in (an undesirable activity).
- **populist** (adjective) – relating to the politicians who claim that they are representing the common/ordinary people.
- **instinct** (noun) – urge, drive, need.
- **narrow** (adjective) – inward-looking, illiberal, short-sighted.
- **walk out** (phrasal verb) – desert, abandon, leave.
- **contradiction** (noun) – disagreement, opposition, inconsistency; rebuttal/negation.
- **lay bare** (phrasal verb) – reveal, expose, disclose.
- **lie in** (phrasal verb) – be present, be contained, exist.
- **bid** (noun) – attempt, effort, endeavour/try.
- **redouble** (verb) – make something more intense.
- **resurrect** (verb) – revive, restore, regenerate/revitalize.
- **multilateral** (adjective) – involving many different countries (in which all WTO member countries are party to the agreement).
- **keen** (adjective) – eager, wishing, determined.
- **trans-Atlantic** (adjective) – concerning/relating to countries on both sides of the Atlantic.
- **encompass** (verb) – include, subsume, incorporate.

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## se correction – **The terrorist tag: on the latest amendments to the NIA Act**

### ***India needs tough laws to combat terror, but the proposed amendments could be misused***

The idea of designating an individual as a terrorist, as the **latest amendments** to the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act propose to do, may appear innocuous. However, designating an individual as a terrorist raises serious constitutional questions and has the potential for misuse. The practice of designating individuals under anti-terrorism laws, prevalent in several countries, is seen as being necessary because banned groups tend to change their names and continue to operate. However, there is no set procedure for designating an individual a terrorist. Parliament must consider whether an individual can be called a 'terrorist' prior to conviction in a court of law. The absence of a judicial determination may render the provision vulnerable to invalidation. There ought to be a distinction between an individual and an organisation, as the former enjoys the right to life and liberty. The likely adverse consequences of a

terrorist tag may be worse for individuals than for organisations. Further, individuals may be subjected to arrest and detention; even after obtaining bail from the courts, they may have their travel and movements restricted, besides carrying the taint. This makes it vital that individuals have a faster means of redress than groups. Unfortunately, there is no change in the process of getting an entity removed from the list. Just as any organisation getting the tag, individuals, too, will have to apply to the Centre to get their names removed.

A wrongful designation will cause irreparable damage to a person's reputation, career and livelihood. Union Home Minister Amit Shah's warning that his government would not spare terrorists or their sympathisers, and his reference to 'urban Maoists', are portentous about the possibility of misuse. It has been argued by some members in **Parliament** that the Bill contains anti-federal features. The provision to empower the head of the National Investigation Agency to approve the forfeiture of property of those involved in terrorism cases obviously overrides a function of the State government. At present, the approval has to be given by the State police head. Also, there will be a section allowing NIA Inspectors to investigate terrorism cases, as against a Deputy Superintendent of Police or an Assistant Commissioner. This significantly enhances the scope for misuse. The 2004 amendments to the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967, made it a comprehensive anti-terror law that provided for punishing acts of terrorism, as well as for designating groups as 'terrorist organisations'. Parliament further amended it in 2008 and 2013 to strengthen the legal framework to combat terror. While none will question the need for stringent laws that show 'zero tolerance' towards terrorism, the government should be mindful of its obligations to preserve fundamental rights while enacting legislation on the subject.

### **Meanings of Difficult Words :**

- **tag** (noun) – identity, label, name.
- **combat** (verb) – fight, battle against, counter/oppose.
- **designate** (verb) – classify, label, tag.
- **innocuous** (adjective) – harmless, inoffensive, non-injurious.
- **prevalent** (adjective) – widespread, usual/common, ubiquitous.
- **conviction** (noun) – sentence, judgement, verdict.
- **render** (verb) – make, cause to be, represent.
- **provision** (noun) – term, clause, requirement.
- **vulnerable** (verb) – weak, feeble, unprotected.
- **ought to** (modal verb) – must, should.
- **adverse** (adjective) – unfavourable, disadvantageous, bad.
- **subject to** (verb) – put through, treat with, submit to.
- **detention** (verb) – confinement/incarceration, captivity, custody.
- **taint** (noun) – discredit, dishonour, blemish/blot.
- **means** (noun) – method, way, mode.
- **redress** (noun) – compensation, reparation/restitution; requital.
- **irreparable** (adjective) – irreversible, irremediable, unrecoverable.
- **reputation** (noun) – character, status, position.
- **livelihood** (noun) – source of income, means of support, living, subsistence.

- **spare** (verb) – pardon, excuse/forgive, leave unpunished.
- **sympathiser** (noun) – supporter, well wisher, ally.
- **portentous** (adjective) – threatening, unfavourable, warning.
- **empower** (verb) – authorize, allow, entitle.
- **forfeiture** (noun) – confiscation, loss, denial/giving up (a property or a right as a result of violating legality).
- **obviously** (adverb) – clearly, evidently, visibly.
- **override** (verb) – disregard/ignore, pay no heed to, overrule/reject (a view, idea, suggestion etc).
- **comprehensive** (adjective) – thorough, all-inclusive, complete.
- **strengthen** (verb) – reinforce, make stronger, shore up.
- **framework** (noun) – structure, scheme/system, organisation.
- **stringent** (adjective) – strict/stern, severe, tough/rigorous.
- **zero tolerance** (noun) – a complete refusal to accept certain behavior (Courtesy: VOA Learning English).
- **obligation** (noun) – necessary condition/necessity, requirement; duty/responsibility.

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## Course correction – **Undermining RTI**

### *Amendments should not downgrade the status of information panels*

Any amendment to a law is bound to be viewed with suspicion if no fundamental need is seen for the changes it proposes. **Amendments passed by the Lok Sabha** to the Right to Information Act are so obviously unnecessary that naturally many see an ulterior motive. It is difficult not to concur with activists who contend that the amendments pose a threat to the freedom and autonomy of Information Commissions at the Central and State levels. The Central Information Commissioner, the corresponding authorities in the States (State Information Commissioners) and other Information Commissioners at both levels are statutory functionaries vested with the power to review the decisions of public information officers in government departments, institutions and bodies. The amendments propose to modify the status, tenure and conditions of appointment of these Commissioners and empower the Union government to set their tenure and remuneration. While the original law assured incumbents of a fixed five-year term, with 65 as the retirement age, the amendments say the Centre would decide their tenure. In one stroke, the security of tenure of an adjudicating authority, whose mandate is to intervene in favour of information-seekers against powerful regimes and bureaucrats, has been undermined. The original legislation says the salary and terms and conditions of service of the CIC are the same as those of the Chief Election Commissioner, equal in status to a Supreme Court judge. Similarly, the other Information Commissioners at the Central level have the same conditions of service as Election Commissioners. At the State level, the SIC has the same terms and conditions of service as Election Commissioners, while other Information Commissioners are equated with the Chief Secretary of a State. The government claims its aim is to 'rationalise' the status of the authorities. It argues that while the Chief Election Commissioner is a constitutional functionary, the CIC is only a statutory authority. And while the CEC is equal in status to a Supreme Court judge, it would be incongruous for the CIC to enjoy the same status as the CIC's orders are subject to judicial review by the high courts. This is a fallacious argument as even the Election Commission's decisions can be reviewed by high courts. Protecting

citizens' **right to information** is a cause important enough for adjudicating authorities to be vested with high status and security of tenure. Given the extent to which the RTI Act has empowered citizens and helped break the hold of vested interests over the administration, the law has always faced a threat from many in power. The RTI Act was a consensus law and a product of public consultation. The present amendments have not been put to any debate. The government would do well to drop the Bill or at least send it to a parliamentary select committee for deeper scrutiny.

**Meanings of Difficult Words :**

- **undermine** (verb) – weaken, spoil, damage.
- **downgrade** (verb) – decline, lower in status, reduce in rank.
- **bound to** (adjective) – certain/sure, very likely, guaranteed.
- **suspicion** (noun) – misgiving, doubt/qualm, scepticism.
- **obviously** (adverb) – clearly, evidently, visibly.
- **ulterior** (adjective) – hidden, secondary, undisclosed.
- **concur with** (verb) – agree, assent, accept (a decision).
- **activist** (noun) – advocate, champion, supporter (of a political or societal change/cause).
- **contend** (verb) – claim, argue, allege/insist.
- **autonomy** (noun) – freedom, sovereignty, independence.
- **statutory** (adjective) – legitimate, acceptable, permissible/admissible.
- **functionary** (noun) – official, civil servant, bureaucrat.
- **vest** (verb) – bestow on, confer on, grant to.
- **tenure** (noun) – term, period, time.
- **empower** (verb) – authorize, allow, entitle.
- **remuneration** (noun) – payment, earnings, wages.
- **incumbent** (noun) – the holder of an office/post.
- **at one stroke** (phrase) – immediately, forthwith, straight away.
- **adjudicate** (verb) – judge, give a verdict on; decide, settle/resolve.
- **bureaucrat** (noun) – a powerful officer, civil servant, functionary.
- **rationalise** (verb) – streamline, make more efficient, hone/simplify.
- **incongruous** (adjective) – inappropriate, unsuitable; contrasting.
- **fallacious** (adjective) – erroneous, false/wrong, incorrect.
- **be vested with** (verb) – give/provide/grant a person the legal right.
- **vested interest** (noun) – a personal interest in something to get benefit.
- **consensus** (noun) – an idea or opinion that is shared by all the people in a group. agreement, concurrence.
- **parliamentary select committee** (noun) – ‘parliamentary select committee’ can be formed for a specific purpose, for instance, to deliberate on a particular bill. Once the Bill is disposed of, that select committee ceases to exist. whereas “parliamentary standing committee” is usually constituted on an annual basis. but the purpose of these parliamentary committees is to enable detailed consideration of a piece of legislation.
- **scrutiny** (noun) – observation, inspection, examination.

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## Course correction – Karnataka crisis: BJP must wait until fresh elections are held for vacant seats

*The BJP stands to gain by not rushing in to fill the space vacated by a fractious coalition*

The fall of the Congress-JD(S) coalition government in Karnataka, at the culmination of weeks of political skulduggery, hardly marks the end of uncertainty and the beginning of stability for the State. The crisis in the ruling coalition had crippled governance, even as allegations of bribing and kidnapping of legislators by the Opposition BJP emerged. The coalition tried every trick to hold its flock together, but to no avail. Howsoever delayed, the inevitable happened on Tuesday as the government led by H. D. Kumaraswamy lost a trust vote in the Assembly. In a House shrunken by the resignation of several coalition MLAs, the BJP, which had won 105 seats in the 2018 election, had a majority. Its protestations notwithstanding, the BJP has been instrumental in engineering the rebellion. Regardless of the claims of both sides, it would be difficult to concede that their slugfest had to do with any principles. The legislators who resigned from the Assembly have demonstrated a remarkable disregard for the people's mandate, and their excuses for doing so are shallow and dishonest. This drama must end, at least now. Though it had not won a majority, the BJP, as the single largest party was invited to form a government after the 2018 election. The Supreme Court intervened to enforce an early trust vote that the BJP failed to win, paving the way for the government that has now collapsed. The BJP never ceased its machinations to drive a wedge in the coalition, and now wants to form a government. Seventeen coalition MLAs abstained from the voting, and most of them had resigned already. The status of their resignations and questions regarding their disqualification are now subjects of scrutiny by the Speaker and the Supreme Court. Many of the questions are without precedent and complicated, but they need to be settled urgently. Until then, it would be undesirable to form a new government. It would be facetious for the BJP to claim a majority in the House with its strength reduced by schemed absenteeism of members or vacant seats. Nothing in the statute prevents the BJP from staking claim, but it should not pursue that path. Instead, it should wait until fresh elections are held for all vacant seats. It is possible that the BJP could repeat its performance in the Lok Sabha election and win most of these seats. It needs at least eight more MLAs to cross the halfway mark in the House that has a strength of 224 elected members. No government with the support of fewer than half the total strength could be deemed to have a mandate. Waiting might be in the BJP's best interests. The party has an opportunity to demonstrate that it wants to form an alternative government not because of any desperation to wield power, but because it wants to ensure political stability and restore good governance.

### Meanings of Difficult Words :

- stand to gain (phrase) – to be in a position where one can get an advantage.
- fractious (adjective) – difficult, uncontrollable/unmanageable, out of hand.
- culmination (noun) – climax, finale, conclusion.
- skulduggery (noun) – trickery, double-dealing, underhandedness.
- uncertainty (noun) – lack of certainty, indecision, irresolution.

- **cripple** (verb) – disable, paralyse, immobilize.
- **allegation** (noun) – charge, accusation, indictment.
- **bribe** (verb) – corrupt, pay off, suborn.
- **flock** (noun) – a large number of people.
- **to no avail** (phrase) – in vain, without success, unsuccessfully/ fruitlessly.
- **howsoever** (conjunction) – in whatever way, however.
- **inevitable** (adjective) – unavoidable, sure to happen, unpreventable.
- **shrunk** past participle of **shrink** (verb) – reduce, decrease, lessen.
- **protestation** (noun) – declaration, announcement, statement.
- **notwithstanding** (preposition) – in spite of, despite, regardless of.
- **engineer** (verb) – organize/mastermind, orchestrate, choreograph.
- **rebellion** (noun) – dissent, nonconformity, defiance.
- **concede** (verb) – admit, acknowledge, accept/recognize.
- **slugfest** (noun) – fight/dispute, fistfighting, commotion/ruckus.
- **have — to do with** (phrase) – be connected with.
- **disregard** (noun) – inattention, heedlessness/carelessness, neglect.
- **shallow** (adjective) – foolish, silly, unthinking.
- **cease** (verb) – end, stop, conclude.
- **machinations** (noun) – schemes/plots, intrigues, conspiracies.
- **drive a wedge (between)** (phrase) – separate, divide.
- **abstain** (verb) – refuse, decline; avoid/shun.
- **precedent** (noun) – previous example/instance, prior instance, exemplar.
- **facetious** (adjective) – not serious, funny, playful.
- **schemed** (adjective) – secretly planned, intrigued, conspired.
- **absenteeism** (noun) – non-attendance, non-appearance, truancy.
- **statute** (noun) – act/law, regulation, rule.
- **stake a claim** (phrase) – assert, declare, state (ones right).
- **pursue** (verb) – engage in, follow, conduct.
- **deem** (verb) – regard as, consider; view as.
- **desperation** (noun) – hopelessness, despair, distress.
- **wield** (verb) – exert, be possessed of, have/hold.

☞ **“What Comes Easy Won’t Last,  
What Lasts, Won’t Come Easy”** ☞