

Course correction – Rouge Nation?

The West must find some means to bring Russia to the negotiating table

Russia made headlines for all the wrong reasons this week, when a **clutch** of countries led by the U.S. **expelled** more than 100 of its diplomats and intelligence officers over suspicion that the Kremlin was behind a **nerve** agent attack on a Russian spy and **defector** to the U.K., Sergei Skripal, and his daughter Yulia, in Salisbury on March 4. Besides the U.S., 14 member states of the European Union, including Germany, France, Poland, the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Italy, Denmark, the Netherlands and Latvia, undertook coordinated **expulsions**, with Australia also joining them. In a sense this move, seen as the most dramatic, **concerted** such **purge** since the Cold War years, has been coming for some time. Last week the U.K. led the way when it expelled 23 Russian diplomats, but the week before that the U.S. had slapped Russia with sanctions against multiple individuals and entities for interfering in the 2016 U.S. presidential election through **covert** online **propaganda**, including fake news. Beyond these specific charges lie other alleged violations: in Afghanistan, President Donald Trump's senior most ground commander has accused Russia of arming Taliban militants; on the North Korean crisis Mr. Trump mentioned in January that Russia was helping Pyongyang avoid UN sanctions; and the UE last year voted to extend into 2018 sanctions that prohibit its businesses from investing in Crimea. Has Russia truly gone **rogue**, and is this its grand strategy to reclaim its superpower status?

The answer is yes and no. To, an extent the U.S. response, significant though it may appear on the surface, signals to Russia an inconsistent application of any principles of **bilateral** and **multilateral** engagement. Scarcely a week ago, Mr. Trump congratulated Russian President Vladimir Putin on his re-election, apparently against the advice of senior White House Officials, and this drew sharp criticism even from fellow Republicans. He apparently did not deem the nerve agent attack a subject deserving of mention on that phone call. Yet, shortly thereafter he replaced National Security Adviser H.R. McMaster with John Bolton, a long standing Russia hawk. What would concern democracy minded Americans is that the expulsion of Russian diplomats might serve as an easy distraction device in the ongoing investigation into whether Mr. Trump or his associated **colluded** with Russian **entities** to influence the 2016 presidential election. Whatever the true intentions of the current U.S. administration are, it would be **naïve** to assume that Moscow will miss any opportunity to tighten its strategic grip on global geopolitics, whether in terms of influencing foreign elections, undermining Western **coalition** forces in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan, or shadow **manoeuvres** that **exacerbate** instability in the context of North Korea and Iran. Contrarily, it is **imperative** that the West, perhaps led by the U.S. or the EU, find some means to bring Mr. Putin to the negotiating table, the **corollary** of which is that he must **eschew** his current preference for political **subversion**.

WORD LIST

1. **Clutch** : (Strong hold, grab, snatch)
Synonym : clamp, clasp, clench, clinch, connection, coupling, grapple, grasp, grip
2. **Expel** : (discharge, throw out, banish)
Synonym : dislodge, drive out, evacuate, remove, belch, ejaculate, eruct, erupt, exhaust, exude, spew
3. **Nerve** : (daring, boldness, strengthen, hearten)
Synonym : confidence, courage, determination, fortitude, grit, heart, spirit, assumption, assurance, audacity, bravery, crust
4. **Defector** : (traitor)
Synonym : deserter, renegade, turncoat, recreant, runaway
5. **Expulsion** : (banishing)
Synonym : banishment, discharge, displacement, ejection, eviction, exclusion, ouster, purge, removal, suspension, dismissal, debarment, deportment
6. **Concerted** : (coordinated)
Synonym : united, combined, joint, planned, prearranged, agreed upon, collaboration, mutual
7. **Purge** : (elimination, removal, rid of clean out)
Synonym : coup, evacuation, expulsion, extermination, liquidation, suppression, abolition, catharsis, clarification, disposal, ejection, eradication
8. **Covert** : (clandestine, underhanded)
Synonym : hidden, surreptitious, undercover, private, secret, buried, cloaked, disguised, masked.
9. **Propaganda** : (information that is designed to mislead or persuade)
Synonym : disinformation, hype, doctrine, handout, inculcation, newspeak
10. **Rogue** : (person who deceives, swindles)
Synonym : con-artist, crook, rascal, swindler, villain, cheat, cheater, criminal, defrauder, devil, fraud, lowlife, mischief, outlaw

11. **Bilateral** : (having two sides)
Synonym : mutual, reciprocal, respective, two-sided
12. **Multilateral** : (agreed upon or participated in by three or more parties, especially the governments of different countries)
Example : "Multilateral negotiations"
13. **Collude** : (conspire)
Synonym : connive, intrigue, plot, scheme, angle, cabal, cogitate, wangle.
14. **Entity** : (object that exists) (nature of a being)
Synonym : body, individual, article, being, creature, existence, item, organism.
15. **Naive** : (childlike, trusting)
Synonym : ignorant, innocent, simple, sincere, unsophisticated, wide-eyed, frank, natural, original, fresh
16. **Coalition** : (allied group, association)
Synonym : affiliation, alliance, amalgam, combination, combine, compact, confederacy, confederation, conjunction, consolidation, conspiracy, federation, fusion, integration, party.
17. **Manoeuvre** : (a movement or series of moves requiring still and care)
Synonym : operation, exercise, activity, move, movement, action, steer, guide, drive, negotiate, navigate, pilot, direct, manipulate, work.
18. **Exacerbate** : (infuriate, make worse)
Synonym : aggravate, annoy, heighten, inflame, intensify, irritate, provoke, worsen, excite, madden, vex
19. **Imperative** : (necessary, authoritative)
Synonym : compulsory, critical, crucial, essential, immediate, important, indispensable, inescapable, obligatory, pressing, urgent, vital
20. **Corollary** : (conclusion, deduction)
Synonym : analogy, upshot, aftereffect, consequence, culmination, effect, end, induction, inference, issue, result

21. **Eschew** : (have nothing to do with)

Synonym : abandon, avoid, forgo, renounce, shun, swear off, abstain, elude, evade,
refrain

22. **Subversion** : (undermining, ruin)

Synonym : sabotage, disruption, overthrow, destruction, defeat, revolution

Course correction – Testing Exam

The HRD Ministry must pull out all the stops to restore trust in the CBSE exam process

The central Board of Secondary Education faces a serious **erosion** of **credibility** with the leak of its annual examination question papers on Economics for class 12 and mathematics for class 10. Thousands of students are naturally frustrated that their best shot at these papers has come to **nought**; they must now make another strenuous effort in a re-examination. Clearly, the Ministry of Human Resource Development failed to assign top priority to secrecy and **integrity** of the process, considering that its standard operating procedure was easily **breached**, and the questions were circulated on instant messaging platforms. Yet, the problem is not new. State board question papers have been leaked in the past. When the HRD ministry was asked in the Lok Sabha three years ago what it intended to do to secure the CBSE class 12 and 10 examinations, Smriti Irani, who was the Minister then, **asserted** the **inviolability** of the process, since the question papers were sealed and stored in secret places and released to authorised officials with a window of only a few hours. In addition, the board has dedicated secrecy officers for each region. But the **protocol** has failed, and HRD Minister Prakash Javadekar should conduct a thorough inquiry to get at the truth and initiate remedial steps without delay. One of the options is to institute a National Testing Agency, although it was originally supposed to take charge of entrance examinations in the first phase. State school boards also need help to reform systems.

A major leak such as the one that has hit the CBSE raises a question often debated in academic circles; is a high-stakes test the best option? To some sociologists, the use of a **quantitative** indicator with rising importance for social decision – making makes it more **vulnerable** to corruption pressures, and **distorts** and **undermines** the very processes it is intended to monitor. That seems to be an **apt** description of what has taken place. Today, what is needed is a credible testing method to assess a student's aptitude and learning. But the answer may lie not in one all-important examination, but in multiple assessments that achieve the same goal. Such an approach will end the **scramble** for high scores in a **definitive** board examination, and the exam stress that the government has been trying to **alleviate**. It will also

limit the **fallout** of a leak. These and other options need to be debated by academic experts. More immediately, the CBSE has to restore faith in its processes. The board went into denial mode when the leaks were first reported, but **subsequently** decided to acknowledge the problem and ordered a fresh examination in the two subjects. In the current scheme, the annual exercise is all-important to students. Everything should be done to inspire total confidence in the board examinations.

WORD LIST

1. **Erosion** : Deterioration; wearing away
Synonym : corrosion, decrease, destruction, disintegration, despoliation, spoiling
2. **Credibility** : (believableness)
Synonym : integrity, chance, prospect, reliability, sadness, trustworthiness, validity, believability, likelihood
3. **Nought** : (as in nil, zero, nothingness)
Synonym : nonentity, blank, nada, naught, nil, nobody, nothing, nullity
4. **Integrity** : (honour, uprightness, completeness)
Synonym : honesty, principle, probity, purity, rectitude, sincerity, virtue, goodness, honestness.
5. **Breached** : (break)
Synonym : disrupt, break in, violate, contravene, offend
6. **Assert** : (insist, declare, maintain)
Synonym : affirm, allege, argue, cite, claim, contend, defend, press, proclaim, profess, say, stress, uphold
7. **Inviolability** : (sanctity)
Synonym : asceticism, blessedness, devotion, devoutness, divineness, divinity, faith, godliness, goodness, grace, mercy, purity, religiousness, reverence.
8. **Protocol** : (rules of conduct, behaviour in certain situation)
Synonym : agreement, code, contract, convenient, custom, obligation, pact, compact, decorum, manners, order, prosperity
9. **Quantitative** : (measurable) as in wholesale. (determinable)
Synonym : perceptible, significant, calculable, computable, fathomable
10. **Vulnerable** : (open to attack)
Synonym : accessible, defenceless, exposed, liable, ready, sensitive, susceptible, unsafe, weak.
11. **Distort** : (deform; falsify)
Synonym : alter, belie, deceive, disfigure, mangle, misinterpret, pervert, twist, warp
12. **Undermine** : weaken
Synonym : blunt, cripple, erode, frustrate, hurt, impair, ruin, sabotage, subvert, threaten, undercut, wreck.
13. **Apt** : (suitable)
Synonym : appropriate, apropos, correct, felicitous, fitting happy, relevant, suitable, applicable, fit, pertinent

14. **Scramble** : (mix-up, confusion)
Synonym : rush, melee, free-for-all, tussle, clutter, commotion, competition, race, hassle, hustle, jumble.
15. **Definitive** : (authoritative)
Synonym : actual, categorical, clear-cut, decisive, definite, exhaustive, precise, reliable, specific, ultimate, unambiguous, absolute, complete, concluding, ending, final, last, perfect, real
16. **Alleviate** : (relieve; lessen)
Synonym : allay, assuage, ease, mitigate, lighten, mollify, pacify.
17. **Fallout** : (radioactivity)
Synonym : radioactive dust, radioactive waste
18. **Subsequently** : (afterward)
Synonym : finally afterwards, later, after

SOME IMPORTANT IDIOM AND PHRASES

1. Be on cloud nine
Example – I will be on cloud nine when I pass UPSC exam this year.
Meaning – Be very happy
2. Fool's paradise
Example – They were living in a fool's paradise, refusing to accept that they were facing poverty.
Meaning – False sense of happiness or success.
3. Give cold shoulder
Example – The principal has given the cold shoulder to the proposal to arrange an inter-school dance competition.
Meaning – To ignore
4. Get a raw deal
Example – It is very sad that the backward class poor children get a raw deal in education.
Meaning – Not to be treated as well as others.
5. Hit the nail on the head
Example – He always hit the nail on the head in troubled situations.
Meaning – to do the correct thing
6. Hand to mouth
Example – Heavy rainfall led the farmers to live hand to mouth.
Meaning – Live on only basic necessities.
7. Hit the bull's eye
Example – Your suggestion hits the bull's eye in the exam.
Meaning – To be exactly right about something or to achieve the best result possible.

8. Let the cat out of the bag
Example – John had planned a surprise party for his wife. But their five-year-old son let the cat out of the bag and ruined the party.
Meaning – To reveal the secret carelessly or by mistake.
9. Make a face
Example – Do you have any better suggestion? If not, then don't make a face.
Meaning – To show dislike or disappointment through facial expression.
10. Don't put all your eggs in one basket
Example – Try to invest in different ways. Don't put all your eggs in one basket.
Meaning – Do not put all your resources in one place.
11. To be a good Samaritan
Example – I was stuck in the middle of the highway, and then a good Samaritan offered me a ride.
Meaning – To be kind and compassionate to someone in distress.
12. To put in a nutshell
Example – One of my lecturers is expert in teaching the topic in a nutshell.
Meaning – To say in a few words. To make something concise.
13. To pour oil on troubled waters
Example – The argument between Jack & David has turned worse, so I tried to pour oil on troubled waters but failed to do so.
Meaning – To do or say something in order to make people stop arguing and become calmer.
14. To move heaven and earth
Example – The ACP ordered the police to move heaven and earth to find the murderer.
Meaning – To do everything possible to achieve the result.
15. Bear the palm
Example – India may bear the palm in the Champions Trophy.
Meaning – to win.
16. To egg someone on
Example – My classmates egged on me to talk with the principal.
Meaning – To urge someone to do something that is usually negative.
17. On the spur of the moment
Example – I decided to go on the spur of the moment.
Meaning – Suddenly, without any planning
18. A man of straw
Example – In today's match, the opponent team members are like men of straw.
Meaning – A person or idea that is weak and easy to defeat.
19. Cut the mustard

Example – Mr. Bansal appointed Rajesh as the project manager, but can he cut the mustard?

Meaning – To succeed. To come up to expectations.

20. To fish in troubled waters

Example – My uncle is fishing in troubled waters by buying shares of that software company.

Meaning – Involving oneself in a difficult situation in the hope of gaining some personal advantage.

21. The green-eyed monster

Example – She criticized Maya's effort of presenting the demonstration. Do you think it is valid or is just a case of green-eyed monster?

Meaning – The feeling of being jealous.

22. End in smoke

Example – He is trying to figure out the programming error since two days. But unfortunately, all his efforts end in smoke at last.

Meaning – No concrete or positive result.

23. To get into hot water

Example – Rajesh gets into hot water after he had a fight with the manager.

Meaning – To get into trouble.

24. To bury the hatchet

Example – These two teammates should bury the hatchet to win the final match.

Meaning – To forget about arguments and disagreements with someone.

25. To wet one's whistle

Example – You must be tired after all days work. Would you like to wet your whistle?

Meaning – To take a drink, especially an alcoholic drink.

**NO MATTER HOW
MANY MISTAKES YOU
MAKE OR HOW SLOW YOU PROGRESS,
YOU ARE STILL WAY AHEAD OF EVERYONE
WHO IS NOT TRYING.**