

## 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 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**.

#### Words

Clutch

#### Kind

#### Meaning

clamp, clasp, clench, clinch, connection, coupling, grapple, grasp, grip

Expel	dislodge, drive out, evacuate, remove, belch, ejaculate, eruct, erupt, exhaust, exude, spew
Nerve	confidence, courage, determination, fortitude, grit, heart, spirit, assumption
Defector	deserter, renegade, turncoat, recreant, runaway
Expulsion	banishment, discharge, displacement, ejection, eviction, exclusion, ouster
Concerted	united, combined, joint, planned, prearranged, agreed upon, collaboration
Purge	coup, evacuation, expulsion, extermination, liquidation, suppression
Covert	hidden, surreptitious, undercover, private, secret, buried, cloaked
Propaganda	disinformation, hype, doctrine, handout, inculcation, newspeak
Rogue	con-artist, crook, rascal, swindler, villain, cheat, cheater, criminal, defrauder
Bilateral	mutual, reciprocal, respective, two-sided
Collude	connive, intrigue, plot, scheme, angle, cabal, cogitate, wangle
Entity	body, individual, article, being, creature, existence, item, organism
Naive	ignorant, innocent, simple, sincere, unsophisticated, wide-eyed, frank, natural, original, fresh
Coalition	affiliation, alliance, amalgam, combination, combine, compact, confederacy
Manoeuvre	operation, exercise, activity, move, movement, action, steer, guide, drive
Exacerbate	aggravate, annoy, heighten, inflame, intensify, irritate, provoke, worsen
Imperative	compulsory, critical, crucial, essential, immediate, important, indispensable
Corollary	analogy, upshot, aftereffect, consequence, culmination, effect, end
Eschew	abandon, avoid, forgo, renounce, shun, swear off, abstain, elude, evade
Subversion	sabotage, disruption, overthrow, destruction, defeat, revolution

## 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.

<u>Words</u>	<u>Kind</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
Erosion		corrosion, decrease, destruction, disintegration, despoliation
Credibility		integrity, chance, prospect, reliability, sadness, trustworthiness

Nought	nonentity, blank, nada, naught, nil, nobody, nothing, nullity
Integrity	honesty, principle, probity, purity, rectitude, sincerity, virtue, goodness
Breached	disrupt, break in, violate, contravene, offend
Assert	affirm, allege, argue, cite, claim, contend, defend, press, proclaim, profess, say, stress, uphold
Inviolability	asceticism, blessedness, devotion, devoutness, divineness, divinity
Protocol	agreement, code, contract, convenient, custom, obligation, pact, compact
Quantitative	perceptible, significant, calculable, computable, fathomable
Vulnerable	accessible, defenceless, exposed, liable, ready, sensitive, susceptible, unsafe
Distort	alter, belie, deceive, disfigure, mangle, misinterpret, pervert, twist
Undermine	blunt, cripple, erode, frustrate, hurt, impair, ruin, sabotage, subvert
Apt	appropriate, apropos, correct, felicitous, fitting happy, relevant, suitable, applicable, fit, pertinent
Scramble	rush, melee, free-for-all, tussle, clutter, commotion, competition
Definitive	actual, categorical, clear-cut, decisive, definite, exhaustive, precise, reliable
Alleviate	allay, assuage, ease, mitigate, lighten, mollify, pacify