

Course correction – Friends for polls: On Congress's need for more allies

The Congress may have won this round of elections, but it needs more allies

Post-poll alliances between parties, shaped as they are by intractable realities, are easier to form than pre-poll alliances that have to reconcile competing expectations of the prospective partners. Soon after the results of the Assembly elections were out, the Bahujan Samaj Party, which had played hard-to-get with the Congress in pre-election alliance talks, announced its support to the party in both Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. The Congress is just short of a majority in these two States, and the BSP's support was more than welcome. But the Congress leadership may now well pause to consider the huge number of seats that would have been reaped if a pre-poll tie-up with the BSP had materialised, especially in M.P. With 5% of the total vote, the BSP won only two seats; but a pre-poll alliance would have delivered a total of 143 seats for the two parties in the 230-member House. In the first-past-the-post electoral system, a seat-sharing arrangement, though difficult to realise, holds more benefits than a post-poll understanding. Both the Congress and the BSP may therefore be tempted to think ahead on seat adjustments for the 2019 Lok Sabha polls to beat back the BJP's challenge. For the BSP, the stakes are higher in Uttar Pradesh than in the rest of the Hindi belt. The BSP's reasoning would be that in M.P., Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan, the Congress needs it more than it needs the Congress. It is for the senior partner with higher stakes to be more accommodative to a junior partner that has nothing to lose and little to gain.

In Chhattisgarh, where a huge swing away from the BJP enabled the Congress to win a two-thirds majority, an alliance may seem unnecessary. But the third front of the BSP and Ajit Jogi's Janta Congress Chhattisgarh got more than 11% of the vote. Given this, the Congress may have to forestall any attempt by Mr. Jogi to link hands with the BJP. In the Lok Sabha election, it will be critical for the Congress to maximise the yield from M.P. and Rajasthan, both big States, in order to squeeze the BJP at the national level; it may not be enough to just nose ahead as it did in the Assembly elections. If it has learnt from its experience in the Gujarat election last year, the Congress may be persuaded to be more accommodative to prospective partners in the other States where it is in direct contest with the BJP. Every victory not only adds to its own tally, but also denies the BJP. The Congress lost Gujarat despite its alliances, and it won Chhattisgarh, M.P. and Rajasthan without any major allies. But the lesson is that it will have to repeat Gujarat, where it adopted a good strategy, and not Chhattisgarh, where it deployed indifferent tactics.

Meanings of Difficult Words :

- **Ally** - someone who is ready to help you, especially against someone else who is causing problems for you
- **Alliance** - a group of countries, political parties, or people who have agreed to work together because of shared interests or aims
- **Intractable** - very difficult or impossible to deal with
- **Reconcile** - to find a way to make ideas, beliefs, needs etc that are opposed to each other capable of existing together
- **Prospective** - likely or expected to happen
- **Play hard to get** - to pretend that you are less interested in someone than you really are as a way of making them more interested in you

- **Majority** - the number of votes by which a person or party wins an election
 - **Reap** - to get something as a result of something that you do
 - **Materialise** - to happen or to become real
 - **First-past-the-post** - a first-past-the-post system is one in which only the person or political party that gets the most votes is elected
 - **Accommodative** - willing to adjust to differences in order to obtain agreement
 - **Forestall** - to prevent something from happening by saying or doing something before it can happen
 - **Yield** - to make a profit
 - **Nose ahead** - to get into a position that is slightly in front of someone or something else
 - **Persuade** - to make someone agree to do something by giving them reasons why they should
 - **Despite** - used for saying that something happens even though something else might have prevented it
 - **Deploy** - to use something
 - **Indifferent** - not very good
 - **Tactic** - a particular method or plan for achieving something
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Course correction – **Homeward bound?: on extradition of Vijay Mallya**

By fleeing India, Vijay Mallya has only helped establish the charges against him

The judicial order in the United Kingdom allowing the extradition of businessman Vijay Mallya marks a rare victory for India in getting back a fugitive from the law from another jurisdiction. Coming shortly after the United Arab Emirates handed over Christian Michel, the alleged middleman in the AgustaWestland helicopter deal, progress in the Mallya extradition case is another victory for the Central Bureau of Investigation, which is in the throes of a raging controversy over a power tussle involving its two top officers. It must be a matter of satisfaction to the Government of India that the controversy did not affect the outcome of the extradition proceedings before the Westminster Magistrates' Court in London. Mr. Mallya's lawyers raised doubts about the CBI's independence, its alleged susceptibility to political interference, the perception that the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party and the Opposition Congress were using his case to score political points, the possible pressure on Indian courts due to adverse media coverage and, lastly, the conditions in Indian prisons as overcrowded and with appalling facilities for its inmates. Chief Magistrate Emma Arbuthnot rejected these issues. On preliminary evidence, in an order that analyses documents and the sequence of events relating to borrowings made by Kingfisher Airlines from IDBI Bank, she concluded that there is a *prima facie* case against Mr. Mallya as well as some bank officials. The industrialist does have an opportunity to go on appeal before higher courts. But the categorical finding that there appears to be an intention to defraud, and that the end-use of the borrowed money did not match the stated purpose for which the loans were taken, may make it a little harder for him to obtain relief.

It is clear that fleeing India in March 2016 while a consortium of lenders to the defunct airline was seeking to recover about Rs. 9,000 crore from the company has not helped Mr. Mallya's cause, beyond buying him time. He has failed to portray himself as a victim of the political system and the

media back home. And the verdict, by which his case has been sent to the U.K. Home Secretary for a formal decision on his extradition, reinforces the widely held perception that his company's financial predicament is due less to the problems that beset the aviation sector at the relevant time and possible poor management, than to his profligate ways and flamboyant lifestyle. In particular, the extradition court accepted evidence that showed that "the offence may have begun with the obtaining of the loans, but continued with the disbursement of the loan proceedings and his subsequent avoidance of his liabilities". With the court also having spoken of a *prima facie* case of money-laundering being established, Mr. Mallya's attempt to play victim has failed. It is only appropriate that he be brought back to India at the earliest and made to submit himself to the legal process.

Meanings of Difficult Words :

- **Homeward bound** - travelling towards home
- **Extradition** - to send someone accused of a crime back to the country where the crime was committed for a trial
- **Flee** - to escape from a dangerous situation or place very quickly
- **Establish** - to make something start to exist or start to happen
- **Charge** - an official statement accusing someone of committing a crime
- **Fugitive** - someone who has done something illegal and is trying to avoid being caught by the police
- **Jurisdiction** - the right or power to make legal decisions
- **Alleged** - claimed to be true, even though this has not been proved
- **Middleman** - someone who helps to arrange business deals and discussions between other people
- **Bureau** - an organization that provides information or services
- **In the throes of something** - involved in a difficult or unpleasant situation or activity
- **Raging** - happening with a lot of force or violence
- **Controversy** - a disagreement, especially about a public policy or a moral issue that a lot of people have strong feelings about
- **Tussle** - a disagreement between two people who are both trying to get or to achieve something
- **Controversy** - a disagreement, especially about a public policy or a moral issue that a lot of people have strong feelings about
- **Outcome** - the final result of a process, meeting, activity etc
- **Proceedings** - the actions taken, usually in court, to settle a legal matter
- **Susceptibility** - the tendency to be easily affected or influenced by something
- **Interference** - the process of deliberately becoming involved in a situation and trying to influence the way that it develops, although you have no right to do this
- **Perception** - a particular way of understanding or thinking about something
- **Adverse** - negative, unpleasant, or harmful
- **Overcrowded** - containing too many people or things
- **Appalling** - very unpleasant and shocking
- **Inmate** - someone who is kept in a prison, mental hospital, or other institution
- **Preliminary** - coming before the main or most important part of something
- **Evidence** - facts or physical signs that help to prove something
- **Prima facie** - based on what seems to be true, before a situation has been examined in detail

- **Categorical** - clear and definite about what you mean
 - **Defraud** - to get money from a person or organization in a dishonest way
 - **Consortium** - a group of companies or people with similar interests or aims who have agreed to work together
 - **Defunct** - not existing or working any more
 - **Portray** - to show or describe someone or something in a particular way
 - **Victim** - someone who has been harmed, injured, or killed as the result of a crime
 - **Verdict** - an official judgment made in a court
 - **Reinforce** - to make an idea, belief, or feeling stronger
 - **Perception** - a particular way of understanding or thinking about something
 - **Predicament** - a difficult or unpleasant situation that is not easy to get out of
 - **Beset** - to cause someone difficulty or danger over a period of time
 - **Aviation** - the practice of flying planes
 - **Profligate** - wasting money or other things
 - **Flamboyant** - behaving or dressing in a way that deliberately attracts attention
 - **Disbursement** - an amount of money that is paid from a fund (=an amount of money available for a particular purpose)
 - **Proceedings** - the actions taken, usually in court, to settle a legal matter
 - **Subsequent** - happening or coming after something else
 - **Liability** - legal responsibility for causing damage or injury, or for paying something
 - **Money-laundering** - to hide the origin of money obtained from illegal activities by putting it into legal businesses
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Course correction – Time after time: on TRS victory

In Telangana, the TRS banked on its regional appeal to keep the Congress out again

In continuing with its politics of regional identity, the Telangana Rashtra Samithi won a second term in office in India's newest State, pushing the national party, the Congress, to a distant second. TRS leader K. Chandrasekhara Rao, sworn in again as Chief Minister, had made a calculated gamble by advancing the election, which was due along with the Lok Sabha election. The motive was clear: he did not want to fight the Assembly polls alongside the Lok Sabha election, in which the Congress would have been a strong contender at the national level. The gamble paid off handsomely, and the TRS has added 25 seats to its 2014 tally of 63 with an increase of 12 percentage points in vote share. For the second time, the Congress failed to capitalise on its role in carving out Telangana from Andhra Pradesh, allowing the TRS a runaway victory. While it did not get any credit in Telangana for bringing the State into being, it had to take all the blame in Andhra Pradesh for the bifurcation, where it conceded space to its breakaway party, the YSR Congress Party. Mr. Rao is now firmly entrenched in government, and his son, K.T. Rama Rao, is a parallel power centre. In the last five years, far from being able to challenge the TRS politically, the Congress appears to have slipped in voter estimation.

Some of the Congress's failures will have to be attributed to the national leadership, which hurriedly entered into an alliance with the Telugu Desam Party. Although the TDP does enjoy support in Hyderabad and surrounding areas, it is seen in the rest of Telangana as essentially a party of the neighbouring State of Andhra Pradesh. Congress president Rahul Gandhi may have been

looking at the bigger picture when he welcomed the TDP as part of a broad Opposition alliance, but Telangana voters took a cynical view of the coming together of the two parties that were principal rivals just five years ago. Although the People's Front of the Congress and the TDP drafted a common programme, and held a joint campaign, this was not enough to challenge the TRS, which moved to poll mode several months in advance. The result could also have implications for the Assembly election in Andhra Pradesh next year, as the TDP might be wary of being identified too closely with the Congress, which is still seen as having facilitated the bifurcation. The TRS, which talks of maintaining equidistance between the Congress and the BJP, is more likely to back the BJP than the Congress in the post-election scenario. And given that the TDP, until a few months ago, was an ally of the BJP, any which way the Congress looks at it the twin States of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh remain a difficult terrain.

Meanings of Difficult Words :

- **Time after time** - again and again
- **Victory** - an occasion when you win a game, competition, election, war, etc
- **Bank on something** - to expect something or depend on something happening
- **Sworn in** - when someone is sworn in, they make a formal promise to be honest or loyal, either in a law court or when starting a new official job
- **Calculated** - planned or arranged in order to produce a particular effect
- **Advancing** - moving forwards or progressing
- **Motive** - a reason for doing something
- **Alongside** - next to, or together with
- **Contender** - someone who competes with other people to try to win something
- **Gamble** - to do something that involves risks that might result in loss of money or failure, hoping to get money or achieve success
- **Paid off** - if something you have done pays off, it is successful
- **Handsomely** - very well or to a great degree
- **Tally** - a record or count of a number of things
- **Capitalise on something** - to use a situation to your own advantage
- **Carving out** - to successfully create or get something, especially a work position, by working for it
- **Runaway victory** - runaway victory is surprisingly sudden or great
- **Take the blame** - if you take the blame for something, you say that you did it or that it is your fault
- **Bifurcation** - the fact that something is divided into two parts or the act of dividing something into two parts
- **Concede** - to admit, often unwillingly, that something is true
- **Breakaway** - an act of separating from a group, especially because of disagreement
- **Entrenched** - established firmly so that it cannot be changed
- **Attribute something to somebody** - to think that someone or something has a particular quality or feature
- **Alliance** - an agreement to work with someone else to try to achieve the same thing
- **Essentially** - relating to the most important characteristics or ideas of something
- **Bigger picture** - the most important facts about a situation and the effects of that situation on other things
- **Cynical** - used to say that someone's feelings or emotions are used to your own advantage

- **Principal** - main
 - **Rival** - a person, group, etc. competing with others for the same thing or in the same area
 - **Campaign** - a planned group of especially political, business, or military activities that are intended to achieve a particular aim
 - **Implication** - an occasion when you seem to suggest something without saying it directly
 - **Wary** - careful because you do not completely trust someone or something or are not certain about what you should do
 - **Facilitate** - to make something possible or easier
 - **Equidistance** - equally far or close
 - **Scenario** - a description of possible actions or events in the future
 - **Terrain** - an area of land, when considering its natural features
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Course correction – **Theresa must**

Having survived a party challenge, the British PM should spell out London's next steps

British Prime Minister Theresa May has survived a trust vote on her Conservative party stewardship. But there is little sign that the bitter infighting within the ruling party will abate. Nor is there any assurance that Parliament will back her government's controversial Brexit deal with the European Union. The leadership challenge was suddenly triggered by a growing number of Tory rebels who felt emboldened by widespread opposition to the withdrawal agreement that has united Europhiles and Eurosceptics across parties. Their resistance gained momentum when Ms. May, deeply apprehensive about its approval by the Commons, decided to defer a vote on the deal. Following her victory in the party leadership battle, Ms. May hopes to secure more assurances from European leaders that Britain would not be permanently locked into a customs union with the EU. The customs union is the backstop arrangement meant to continue the open border between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic, a lifeline of the 1998 Good Friday peace agreement. London has sought to sell the backstop as the best possible deal that could protect the U.K.'s territorial integrity. The EU insists the withdrawal agreement cannot be reopened for negotiations. The Remain and Leave camps want legal assurances that the customs union would at best be temporary, given the curbs it would impose regarding trade agreements with third countries.

It is possible that Brussels will adopt a flexible stance, despite its protestations to the contrary, to avert a no-deal scenario on the expiry of the Article 50 deadline on March 29, 2019. Examples of how the dilemma posed by the Danish rejection of the 1991 EU treaty, or Ireland's 'No' to the Lisbon treaty were legally overcome are being cited in relation to the present difficulty with the Irish backstop. Clearly, the EU's main concern is not to stretch the basic idea that the benefits of membership are limited to insiders. But the U.K. will have to show some flexibility, of deferring to the democratic mandate of the referendum, while recognising the practical imperatives of ceasing a long partnership. In that respect, it would be wishful thinking, to paraphrase former Prime Minister John Major, to want to dispense with the Irish formula that has been written into the withdrawal agreement. Tory rebels should rise above their narrow differences in the national interest and back the final agreement presented to Parliament in January. Else, they risk an extension of the Brexit deadline and even possibly a second referendum on the EU membership issue. The meaning of the 2016 referendum verdict has evolved from implying that a no-deal withdrawal was better than a

bad deal to an acceptance that a soft exit is the more realistic option. Now, opinions on a second referendum are being openly voiced. It's time London decided what it really wants.

Meanings of Difficult Words :

- **Survive** - to continue to exist, especially in a difficult or dangerous situation
- **Spell out** - to explain something in a very clear way with details
- **Conservative** - not usually liking or trusting change, especially sudden change
- **Stewardship** - someone's stewardship of something is the way in which that person controls or organizes it
- **Infighting** - competition between people within a group, especially to improve their own position or to get agreement for their ideas
- **Abate** - to become less strong
- **Assurance** - a promise
- **Controversial** - causing disagreement or discussion
- **Triggered** - experiencing a strong emotional reaction of fear, shock, anger, or worry, especially because you are made to remember something bad that has happened in the past
- **Tory** - a member of the British Conservative Party
- **Rebel** - a person who is opposed to the political system in their country and tries to change it using force
- **Embolden** - to make someone brave
- **Widespread** - existing or happening in many places and/or among many people
- **Europhile** - a person who admires Europe or is in favour of participation in the European Union
- **Euro sceptic** - a person, especially a politician, who opposes closer connections between Britain and the European Union
- **Resistance** - the act of fighting against something that is attacking you, or refusing to accept something
- **Momentum** - the force that keeps an object moving or keeps an event developing after it has started
- **Apprehensive** - feeling worried about something that you are going to do or that is going to happen
- **Commons** - one of the two parts of parliament in the UK and Canada, whose members are each elected to represent a particular official area of the country, or its members, or the place where it meets
- **Defer** - to delay something until a later time
- **Backstop** - something that can be used to solve problems after everything else has been tried
- **Territorial** - relating to territory (an area of land, that is considered as belonging to or connected with a particular country or person)
- **Integrity** - the quality of being whole and complete
- **Insist** - to say firmly or demand forcefully, especially when others disagree with or oppose what you say
- **Negotiation** - the process of discussing something with someone in order to reach an agreement with them, or the discussions themselves
- **Curb** - a limit on something that is not wanted
- **Flexible** - able to change or be changed easily according to the situation
- **Protestation** - an act of saying something forcefully or complaining about something
- **To the contrary** - saying or showing the opposite

- **Avert** - to prevent something bad from happening
- **Expiry** - the situation in which something that lasts for a fixed length of time comes to an end or stops being in use
- **Dilemma** - a situation in which a difficult choice has to be made between two different things you could do
- **Pose** - to cause something, especially a problem or difficulty
- **Treaty** - a written agreement between two or more countries, formally approved and signed by their leaders
- **Concern** - a feeling of worry about something, especially one that a lot of people have about an important issue
- **Mandate** - to give official permission for something to happen
- **Referendum** - a vote in which all the people in a country or an area are asked to give their opinion about or decide an important political or social question
- **Imperative** - extremely important or urgent
- **Cease** - to stop something
- **Wishful thinking** - the imagining or discussion of a very unlikely future event or situation as if it were possible and might one day happen
- **Paraphrase** - to repeat something written or spoken using different words, often in a humorous form or in a simpler and shorter form that makes the original meaning clearer
- **Dispense** - to give out things, especially products, services, or amounts of money
- **Back** - support
- **Verdict** - an opinion or decision made after judging the facts that are given, especially one made at the end of a trial
- **Evolved** - having developed through a gradual process
- **Voice** - to say what you think about a particular subject, especially to express a doubt, complaint, etc

☞ "There is no substitute for hard work. – Thomas Edison" ☞