

ARISING STATE

EDITORIAL

Poetry's lasting impact on human life

The role of poetry in fostering empathy cannot be overstated. By presenting diverse perspectives and lived realities, poetry encourages readers to step beyond their own experiences and engage with the emotions of others. In a time when misunderstandings and divisions often shape public discourse, poetry serves as a subtle yet powerful tool for building compassion and mutual respect. Poetry, one of the oldest and most expressive forms of human creativity, continues to hold a profound place in our lives. Celebrated globally on World Poetry Day, poetry is not merely an artistic indulgence but a vital medium through which individuals understand themselves and the world around them. At its core, poetry gives voice to emotions that often defy ordinary language. In moments of joy, sorrow, love or conflict, poetry helps articulate the inexpressible. It condenses complex feelings into powerful imagery and rhythm, allowing readers and listeners to connect deeply with shared human experiences. In this way, poetry becomes both a mirror reflecting our inner world and a window into the lives of others. Poetry also plays a significant role in mental and emotional well-being. Writing or reading poetry can be therapeutic, offering a safe space to process thoughts and feelings. It provides clarity in confusion and comfort in distress, making it an invaluable companion in an increasingly fast-paced and often stressful world. For many, poetry becomes a form of quiet resilience—a way to cope, heal and grow. Beyond the personal, poetry has long been a force for social change. From resistance movements to cultural renaissances, poets have used their words to challenge injustice, question authority and inspire action. Even today, poetry continues to influence public thought, giving voice to the marginalized and highlighting issues that demand attention. Its simplicity and accessibility make it a powerful medium for awareness and advocacy. In educational and cultural contexts, poetry nurtures creativity and critical thinking. It sharpens language skills, enhances imagination and encourages individuals to see beyond the obvious. For young minds especially, engaging with poetry can open new avenues of thought and expression, helping them develop a deeper appreciation for language and culture. In the digital age, poetry has adapted without losing its essence. From spoken word performances to social media platforms, it has found new ways to reach audiences. While the formats may evolve, the purpose remains constant: to connect, to express and to inspire. Ultimately, poetry is woven into the fabric of human existence. It accompanies us in moments of celebration and grief, in solitude and in community. Its role is not confined to literature; it lives in our conversations, our memories and our aspirations. In recognizing the importance of poetry in our lives, we also acknowledge the enduring power of words to shape thought, emotion and society itself.

A war that the global economy cannot afford

SATYAJIT DAS

Given the imbalances in capabilities, an Iran weakened by decades of sanctions and isolation will lose the kinetic conflict. But the US and Israel's ability to win the strategic war is uncertain. As former US defence secretary James N Mattis understood: "In war, the enemy gets a vote".

The problem is the lack of clear objectives. The Trump administration has offered a confusing and ever-changing kaleidoscope of aims. Israel's goal is chaos and disarray to further its regional, territorial and hegemonic ambitions. The conflict is, in reality, a distraction for two leaders from major domestic and personal issues.

Unable to militarily match its opponents, Iran's focus is on inflicting economic and commercial damage. Even war now is financial rather than human. The object is to harm Gulf and Western citizens, focusing on their wealth and comfort with little tolerance for risk or pain.

First, the US is incurring costs of around \$1-2 billion a day. Congress has been asked for \$50 billion in immediate emergency funding. The overall cost could reach \$210 billion, depending on the conflict's trajectory. Given the public debt of \$39 trillion, it will strain the American government's



finances. The damage to Iran and the global economy will push this number higher. Second, Iran has targeted the Strait of Hormuz along with Saudi Arabian and Qatari energy facilities. It may seek to limit transit through the Bab-el-Mandeb. Oil and gas prices as well as shipping and insurance costs have risen sharply with the potential for further increases. The effectiveness of US proposals to provide escorts remains uncertain. A return to normality soon is unlikely as the risk of new hostilities remains. The availability and cost of energy will have far-reaching effects on electricity, fertiliser, shipping, chemicals, mining and manufacturing. Semiconductor supply chains,

refining and industrial chemicals and extractive industries will be quickly affected. An interruption to desalination, a major source of water for the Gulf, would not be trivial. Third, the economic impact on the Middle East is substantial. The curtailment of civilian air traffic has exposed a vulnerability. Every day, over 300,000 people transit through Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Doha. These cities act as key links between Asia, Africa, Europe, the Americas and Oceania. This will affect both people's movements and cargo, interfering with supply chains. After the invasion of Ukraine, the closure of Russian and Ukrainian airspace limits re-routing options. The effects on

airfares, freight costs and choices remain unknown. Even after the war ends, the threat of future interruptions will likely change behaviour. The Gulf's standing as a business and financial hub will be tarnished, perhaps irretrievably. The illusion of liberal and lucrative centres for commercial activities has been shattered. Rebuilding reputations will be difficult unless the underlying geopolitical tensions are resolved—a Herculean task. The flight of expatriates and migrant labour from affected countries is another issue. They are critical to Gulf economies because of their small local populations. As workers return home, remittances from migrant labour will also be affected. Outbound remittances from the Gulf totalled over \$120 billion in 2022. The impact will be felt by originating countries, mainly in Asia and Africa, placing strains on domestic employment and services. Finally, the contraction in Gulf economies will affect global capital flows. These economies rely on energy, transport, logistics, finance and tourism. The petrostates may be asked to pay for the war. US President Donald Trump, consistent with his recent behaviour, will expect to be paid for 'protecting' them from 'evil' Tehran. In the long term, they

will have to increase defence spending. Some, such as Saudi Arabia, may need to acquire nuclear capabilities. This represents a significant claim on income, especially when countries like Saudi Arabia already face fiscal pressures. Gulf administrations are now reviewing investment portfolios because of cash flow pressures and reassessing their strategic relationships. The flow of funds into the West from regional investors—including sovereign wealth funds—will dwindle and probably reverse. If the war remains contained, these pressures will lead to a global slowdown. As is obvious, the more protracted and widespread the war, the greater the impact. It will result in a large diversion of resources that were already under way for defence. As beleaguered Iran switched to asymmetric warfare such as terrorist attacks against the West, more domestic security spending as after 9/11 will be required.

Thailand's fragile stability

SHANKARI SUNDARARAMAN

Since 2023, Thai politics has changed direction several times. In under three years, three different prime ministers from separate political families and parties have led the country. This instability has deepened the divide between those who support popular representation and those who favour the conservative monarchical and military order that has shaped Thailand for almost a century. The latest election in February 2026 has heralded the new government under Anutin Charnvirakul and the Bhumjaithai Party.

This article will address four key questions critical to any understanding of the political situation in the country. First, why did the Move Forward Party (MFP) not lead the government? Second, what decisions led to the shift from Move Forward's momentum to the Shinawatras' return through the Pheu Thai Party? Third, what reasons did the Constitutional

Court give for removing two elected prime ministers during the transitions between Srettha Thavisin and Paetongtarn Shinawatra? Fourth, how is the current election different and if Anutin's leadership could mean stability in Thailand?

First, although MFP became the largest party in the 2023 general elections, it could not even achieve a majority through coalition. This shows that winning the most seats does not always mean gaining power. The MFP's reform plans faced strong opposition. Senior party leader Pita Limjaroenrat questioned the influence of big business and the military in Thai politics. He argued that the close ties between the two limited participation and encouraged crony capitalism, which affected political leadership. The most sensitive topic was the monarchy. Pita's call to reform the lèse-majesté law, which makes it a crime to publicly criticise the monarch, drew strong reactions from conservative

groups. Since the monarchy is still highly respected in Thailand, these proposals made many people uneasy about what an MFP government might do. Second, even though the MFP won 151 seats and became the largest party, the way Thailand forms its government is not balanced. The House of Representatives has 500 seats, with 400 directly chosen by electors and the remaining by party-list voting. The party-list system lets parties win votes across the country and put 'loyal' candidates in Parliament, sometimes allowing people with little political experience but strong connections to become lawmakers. The Senate is just as important. According to the 2017 Constitution, all 250 senators are appointed and help choose the PM. When it was time to vote, the Senate gave little support to MFP's candidate, so Pita did not get enough votes. This allowed the Pheu Thai Party, which succeeded the Thai Rak Thai Party founded by



Thaksin Shinawatra, to form a coalition with groups linked to the military and monarchy. These former rivals joined forces, making Srettha Thavisin prime minister in 2023. Third, ongoing changes in leadership were also influenced by internal politics and court decisions. The switch from Thavisin to Paetongtarn Shinawatra hap-

pened after a Constitutional Court ruling. Thavisin's term was mostly uneventful, but he faced criticism for appointing a lawyer who had been convicted in a case related to the Shinawatra family. The court said this choice did not meet the ethical standards expected of the office and ordered Thavisin's removal.

Nepal's youthquake election

NAMRATA SHARMA

Balendra Shah and the newly strengthened Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP), headed by Rabi Lamichhane, have achieved a remarkable victory in Nepal's elections securing the two-thirds majority to form a government. RSP's blue party flags and election symbol 'bells' are flying and ringing across the Himalayan country, echoing the voice of young voters demanding an end to corruption and calling for change. However in remembrance of the people that had died during the previous year's Gen Z protests, Shah has requested to not hold any victory rallies.

Congratulations are pouring in. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's warm telephonic conversations with Shah and Lamichhane made headlines in Kathmandu and New Delhi. Modi stated that he looked forward to working together on mutual prosperity. Lamichhane reverted by thanking Modi and expressing eagerness to work together. As it became clear that RSP would form Nepal's next government, speculation spread

in the media about how the new faces, especially the incoming PM, will perform. While Nepal faces many internal challenges, its geopolitics is among the most closely watched issues. Sandwiched between India and China, Nepal occupies a sensitive strategic position for these neighbours and the West. For Nepal, the challenge has long been maintaining balanced relations with both as its day-to-day functioning depends on them. Its landlocked status further weakens its bargaining power. Past governments have often lacked clear foreign policy or negotiation strength with either country. The geopolitical stance of a Balen-led RSP government, particularly toward India and China, is therefore under close scrutiny. Thirty-six-year-old Shah—popularly known as Balen—is a structural engineer-turned-rapper and the former mayor of Kathmandu. He resigned as mayor in January and joined the RSP as its prime ministerial candidate. In a dramatic move, he challenged former four-time PM K P Sharma Oli in Jhapa-5—Oli's long-held constitu-

cy, which he had won six times—framing the contest as a choice between integrity and corruption allegations that had plagued the Oli government before its collapse on September 9, 2025. The result was decisive. Balen defeated Oli by nearly 50,000 votes, positioning himself to become not only Nepal's youngest PM but also the first from the Madhesh Province bordering India. Most of the 125 first-past-the-post-elected parliamentarians who won by large margins—including Lamichhane—are likewise young, educated and known for honest work. These elections come exactly six months after the Gen Z protests—events that fundamentally altered Nepal's political landscape. Tragically, the protests turned violent after police opened fire on demonstrators outside the Parliament building. Among those killed were students in school uniforms. Nineteen young protesters died on September 8, while the final toll reached 77. Public outrage quickly intensified, forcing Oli to resign and flee. Former Chief Justice Sushila Karki was appointed

as Nepal's interim prime minister by President Ram Chandra Poudel at the request of the Gen Z protestors. Balendra Shah, initially the first choice, declined the offer and supported Karki's appointment. She was tasked with forming a caretaker government, conducting fresh elections and ensuring justice for those killed during the protests. On the day she took oath, Karki announced that parliamentary elections would be held on March 5, 2026. Despite facing intense political pressure, Karki remained firm in her commitment to hold fair and legal elections. She has now emerged as a statesperson who placed national stability above personal or political interests. The elections were ultimately conducted peacefully, raising hopes that Nepal may finally see a stable full-term government—something the country has struggled to achieve since the restoration of democracy in 1990. The RSP's rise itself has been rapid. The party first emerged during the 2022 general elections when Lamichhane—then a popular

television anchor—entered politics. Inspired partly by Balen's victory as an independent candidate in the 2022 Kathmandu mayoral election, candidates across Nepal contested for the parliamentary elections independently. Lamichhane later brought many of these voices together into the RSP. Lamichhane served briefly as home minister and later as deputy PM, gaining prominence for reopening corruption cases involving influential political figures. However, he faced cooperative fraud charges and citizenship accusations for which he was briefly removed from Parliament. After legal contestation and proving the validity of his citizenship, he won his seat again with a large majority. Balen and Lamichhane's popularity is undeniable, particularly among Nepal's younger generation. If their leadership succeeds in translating public expectations into effective governance, Nepal may finally enter a new political era of stability and prosperity. Their biggest challenge is to fulfil the Gen Z protestors' demand

for actions against the perpetrators of the killings and vandalism. A commission report on the incident was submitted to Karki on March 9. For a country long frustrated by instability, corruption and unfulfilled promises, this election could mark the beginning of a different political trajectory. Congratulations are pouring in. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's warm telephonic conversations with Shah and Lamichhane made headlines in Kathmandu and New Delhi. Modi stated that he looked forward to working together on mutual prosperity. Lamichhane reverted by thanking Modi and expressing eagerness to work together. As it became clear that RSP would form Nepal's next government, speculation spread in the media about how the new faces, especially the incoming PM, will perform. While Nepal faces many internal challenges, its geopolitics is among the most closely watched issues. Sandwiched between India and China, Nepal occupies a sensitive strategic position for these neighbours and the West. For Nepal, the challenge has long

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