

Daily Editorial Analysis 10 July 2025

July 10, 2025 • vajiramandravi.com

End Custodial Brutality, Begin Criminal Justice Reform

Context

- In the shadowy corners of Tamil Nadu's police stations, **a quiet horror unfolds, custodial deaths that puncture the very soul of justice.**
- The **recent death of Ajith Kumar, a 27-year-old temple guard in Sivaganga, is not an isolated tragedy** but a recurring symptom of systemic dysfunction.
- His haunting last words, **'I didn't steal,' now echo in a society teetering on the edge of moral collapse.**
- Now, **it is important to examine the normalisation of custodial violence, the systemic flaws enabling it, and the urgent reforms required to humanise law enforcement** and restore the moral contract between the state and its citizens.

The Pattern and Normalisation of Force

- **The Pattern of Violence: Beyond Isolated Incidents**
 - Ajith Kumar's death is **part of a distressing continuum of custodial deaths** in Tamil Nadu between 2021 and 2025.
 - Vignesh, **a 25-year-old in Chennai, died under suspicious circumstances in 2022.**
 - Raja, **a Dalit cook from Villupuram, succumbed in custody in 2024 after being accused of a petty theft.**
 - A **30-year-old autorickshaw driver died in Tiruchi in 2023**, and Ajith's autopsy revealed 44 wounds, cigarette burns, and drug exposure.
 - **These are not unfortunate exceptions**, they are a grim pattern of state violence met with impunity.
 - They **point to a system where brutality has become institutionalised** and silence, complicit.
- **Normalisation of Force: Structural Violence Masquerading as Law**
 - The repeated occurrence of custodial deaths **highlights a deeper issue: the normalisation of force within the policing system.**
 - Enforcement has been prioritised over reform.
 - The **Tamil Nadu government invests heavily in police infrastructure, but very little in officer welfare**, training, or psychological care. Police officers, dealing daily with trauma and stress, are unequipped emotionally to process their realities.

- This **neglect leads to burnout**, which often manifests as brutality.
- When officers become both victims and perpetrators of a broken system, **the line between justice and violence disappears**.

Urgent Reforms Required to Humanise Law Enforcement

• Systemic Reforms: Rebalancing the Policing Budget

- A **structural overhaul of the policing budget is overdue**. Redirecting even a small percentage, **just 5%, towards establishing mental health units, routine counselling, and trauma-informed training** could radically transform outcomes for both detainees and officers.
- **Current spending favours equipment and surveillance**, but neglects the human beings enforcing the law.
- **Officers are tasked with managing everything from domestic abuse to gang crime**, often without the emotional tools to cope.
- Without intervention, the baton becomes a conduit of unaddressed trauma.

• Training and Accountability: From Cosmetic to Core Reform

- The **police training curriculum in India remains outdated and inadequate**. Designed in a pre-liberalisation context, it fails to address the socio-political complexity of modern India.
- What is **required is a complete revamp that prioritises ethics, human rights, community policing**, and trauma-sensitive methods.
- Moreover, **accountability mechanisms remain weak**. Suspending a few constables after a death is not justice, it is damage control.
- **India needs a dedicated anti-custodial violence law**, one that mandates time-bound investigations, video-recorded interrogations, and oversight by civil society.

• Reimagining Policing: A Vision of Empathy and Service

- At the heart of reform lies **the need to reimagine the role of the police**.
- The **uniform must cease to be a symbol of unyielding authority** and instead represent restraint, compassion, and public service.
- **The deaths of Ajith, Vignesh, and Raja are not merely individual tragedies**; they are manifestations of a state that has forsaken its responsibility to protect the vulnerable.
- To uphold the dignity of every citizen, **India must shift from reactive punishment to proactive reform**.

The Role of Technology: Surveillance as Safeguard

- Technology can be a powerful ally in the fight against custodial violence, **but only if implemented with integrity**.
- **CCTV cameras in custody areas should be tamper-proof** and subject to real-time audits. Too often, footage is missing or inaccessible when deaths occur.
- **Surveillance must not become a silent spectator to abuse**; it must serve as a sentinel of justice, holding both detainees and officers to account.

Conclusion

- The **call for justice cannot be answered posthumously**. It must be woven into the policies, training, and ethos of the institutions meant to safeguard democracy.
- **Custodial deaths are not just the failure of law enforcement**; they represent the collapse of the state's moral duty.
- As **Ajith Kumar's final cry, I didn't steal, fades into the nation's conscience, it must become a rallying call for transformation** and the time for reform is not tomorrow. It is now.

End Custodial Brutality, Begin Criminal Justice Reform FAQs

Q1. What event did Israel nickname the "Red Wedding"?

Ans. Israel nicknamed its June 2025 strike on Iran's nuclear and military infrastructure the "Red Wedding."

Q2. What was Israel's main goal in attacking Iran?

Ans. Israel's main goal was to cripple Iran's nuclear programme and eliminate its top military leadership.

Q3. How did Iran respond to the Israeli attacks?

Ans. Iran responded with a swift counterattack using drones and ballistic missiles, demonstrating its military resilience.

Q4. What role did the U.S. play in the conflict?

Ans. The United States, under President Trump, launched limited airstrikes on Iranian nuclear sites and then pushed for a ceasefire.

Q5. Did the war destroy Iran's nuclear capabilities?

Ans. No, the war did not destroy Iran's nuclear capabilities but only caused a temporary setback.

Source: **The Hindu**

Israel Has Failed to Solve the Persian Puzzle

Context

- In the turbulent **landscape of West Asian geopolitics, metaphor and reality often merge** and the most recent and **explosive example of this was the Israeli military strike on Iran's nuclear infrastructure** in June 2025, which Israeli generals reportedly dubbed the 'Red Wedding.'
- This **deliberate reference to the infamous massacre from Game of Thrones** was not merely rhetorical flair, it **signified a calculated attempt to decapitate Iran's military command** and cripple its nuclear capabilities in one swift operation.
- However, **despite the initial operational success, the strike fell short of achieving Israel's strategic objectives.**

- Instead, **it revealed the limits of Israeli power, the resilience of the Iranian state**, and the complicated dynamics of global intervention, most notably by the United States.

The Red Wedding Parallel: A Metaphor of Betrayal and Overreach

- The **Red Wedding in Game of Thrones** is etched in memory as a **treacherous slaughter** disguised as a wedding feast, **a cunning strike that annihilated House Stark's military leadership** and aspirations for independence.
- **Israel's naming of its June 2025 attack as the 'Red Wedding'** was **symbolic** of its aspiration to pull off a similarly devastating surprise against Iran.
- Israel **aimed to decimate Iran's nuclear facilities, eliminate its top scientists**, and neutralise its military leadership in one brutal stroke.
- The **strategy drew from historical precedent**. In 1967, Israel had launched a pre-emptive strike against Egypt's air force that brought about a rapid and overwhelming victory.
- The **hope was that a similar tactic would lead to Iran's military paralysis**, a weakening of its regional influence, and possibly, regime change.

An Analysis of Operational Success and the Trump Factor

- **Operational Success vs. Strategic Failure**
 - Tactically, **the Israeli strike was a feat of coordination and precision**.
 - **Iran's nuclear sites in Natanz and Isfahan were hit**, top nuclear scientists were assassinated, and many high-ranking commanders were killed.
 - The **attack reflected years of preparation, intensified after the Hamas attack on October 7, 2023**, which had plunged Israel into a prolonged regional conflict involving Hezbollah and Iranian proxies across Syria and Lebanon.
 - However, **this operational success belied a deeper strategic failure**. Unlike Egypt in 1967, Iran proved far more resilient.
 - The **Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps swiftly reorganised and launched retaliatory drone and missile strikes** that exposed vulnerabilities in Israel's multi-layered, U.S.-supported defence systems.
 - **Israel's illusion of total control was shattered** as its reliance on American backing became unmistakable.
- **The Trump Factor and the Limits of U.S. Involvement**
 - President **Donald Trump's return to office in 2025 altered the geopolitical calculation**.
 - **Although Trump ordered U.S. air strikes on Iran's fortified nuclear facilities**, including Fordow, his intervention was brief and heavily politicised.
 - **Declaring victory after the strikes, Trump announced a ceasefire**, cutting short Israeli aspirations for a longer campaign that might have resulted in regime change.
 - **Trump's reluctance to escalate mirrored a broader American hesitancy** to be drawn into another protracted Middle Eastern conflict.

The Resilience of Iran and the Paradox of Deterrence

- Iran emerged from the 12-day war bloodied but unbroken.
- **Despite severe blows, its leadership and military apparatus survived**, and it rapidly began rebuilding.
- Intelligence reports suggested **Iran had pre-emptively dispersed its enriched uranium**, and experts like IAEA chief Rafael Grossi acknowledged that Iran retained the industrial capacity to resume enrichment within months.
- This **resilience poses a paradox for Israel**.
- Far from destroying Iran's nuclear ambitions, **the war may have accelerated them**.
- **Many in Iran now argue more forcefully for the acquisition of a nuclear weapon**, seeing it as the only credible deterrent against future aggression.

The Geopolitical Fallout: Israel in a Strategic Labyrinth

- For Israel, **the aftermath of the conflict has revealed a grim strategic labyrinth**.
- **The Red Wedding-style operation failed to eliminate the Iranian regime** or its nuclear programme.
- It **exposed Israel's military dependence on the United States** and demonstrated that its conventional deterrence, while effective against Arab states, falters against Iran's asymmetric and deeply entrenched defence strategies.
- The **Israeli leadership now faces the daunting task of rethinking its long-term strategy** toward Iran, caught between the desire to eliminate a perceived existential threat and the reality of limited options.

Conclusion

- In Game of Thrones, the Red Wedding did not mark the end of House Stark and **Arya Stark's revenge against House Frey served as a reminder of the dangers of incomplete victories**.
- **Israel, too, must reckon with this lesson and its inability to rip out Iran's nuclear and military apparatus** root and stem means that the Islamic Republic remains a formidable adversary.
- The **war may have ended on paper with a ceasefire**, but the ideological and strategic conflict between Israel and Iran is far from over.
- **With Iran rebuilding its capabilities and potentially drawing closer to a nuclear threshold, Israel's Red Wedding has morphed from a decisive blow** into a cautionary tale, a symbol of hubris, overreach, and the enduring strength of a determined opponent.

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India's Critical Minerals Diplomacy - Strategic Engagement through Minilateral 'Clubs'

Context:

- India's participation in global mini-lateral groupings or clubs like the **Quad** (India, Japan, Australia and the US) and the Minerals Security Partnership (**MSP**) marks **a strategic pivot** in its mineral diplomacy.
- This is particularly crucial amid the **green energy transition and growing dependency on China** for critical minerals.
- Recently, the Quad foreign ministers launched the **Critical Minerals Initiative** to secure and diversify mineral supply chains vital for clean technologies.

The Importance of Critical Minerals:

- **Critical minerals** are those deemed essential for economic prosperity and national security, and whose supply chains are vulnerable to disruption.
- Critical minerals such as lithium, cobalt, and rare earths are **essential for green technologies** — electric vehicles (EVs), solar panels, batteries, and semiconductors.
- **India's over-reliance on China** poses strategic and economic risks, as seen during Beijing's recent export control on rare earth magnets.

The Need for Strategic Mineral Partnerships in India:

- **Weak domestic ecosystem:**
 - **Underexplored reserves** and a late start in global exploration.
 - Indian firms **lack capital** and advanced extraction **technology**.
 - **Political risks** abroad deter private investment in resource-rich but unstable nations.
- **Bilateral agreements - Scope and shortcomings:**

- Agreements with countries like **Argentina and Zambia** target exploration and mining, while deals with **UAE, UK, and US** focus on processing and recycling.
- Without secure mineral inputs, processing units risk becoming stranded assets.

Mini-lateral ‘Clubs’ - Strategic Value for India:

- **Role of mini-laterals:**
 - Mini-lateral groupings (e.g., Quad, MSP) **pool technical, financial, and diplomatic resources.**
 - Enable blended finance, export credit access, and co-development of value chain projects.
- **Leveraging foreign expertise:**
 - **Australia and Japan** bring cutting-edge know-how in exploration and refining.
 - **Joint efforts help de-risk Indian investments** and accelerate clean-tech innovation.

Risks and Safeguards for India:

- **Avoiding unequal value distribution:**
 - India risks being seen as merely **a processing or transit hub**, while value-added activities shift to developed countries.
 - **Must negotiate for technology transfer**, IPR sharing, and R&D investment clauses.
- **Guarding against protectionism:**
 - Political changes (e.g., **Trump’s policies**) can disrupt trade and resource-sharing.
 - India must ensure **transparent governance, reciprocal obligations, and robust access terms.**

Alignment with Domestic Goals and Global Standards:

- **“Make in India” and “Atmanirbhar Bharat”:**
 - Aim to build **self-reliance** in critical minerals and **export-driven green industries.**
 - Participation in clubs enables compliance with **ESG** (Environmental, Social, and Governance) standards and global competitiveness.
- **Championing the Global South:**
 - **India’s diaspora** and historic ties with Africa and Southeast Asia make it a credible bridge between Global North and South.
 - India can push for **inclusive development, scientific sovereignty, and fair global norms.**

Conclusion:

- **India’s engagement in mineral mini-laterals** like the Quad and MSP is essential to secure critical mineral supply chains, **reduce dependence on China**, and achieve green technology ambitions.
- As India seeks to become a global green power, it must **balance strategic partnerships with national interests**, negotiate equitable value chains, and ensure capacity building, in line with its developmental ethos.
- India should achieve this without becoming extractive or overly reliant on great power blocs.

India's Critical Minerals Diplomacy - Strategic Engagement through Minilateral 'Clubs' FAQs

Q1. Discuss the strategic significance of India's participation in minilateral groupings such as the Quad and the Minerals Security Partnership (MSP) in securing critical mineral supply chains.

Ans. India's engagement in minilateral forums like the Quad and MSP enables it to secure diversified mineral supply chains through collaborative financing, technological access, and strategic project development, reducing dependence on China.

Q2. Critically evaluate the challenges faced by India in domestic and overseas critical mineral ventures and suggest possible policy interventions.

Ans. India faces challenges such as limited domestic exploration, lack of extraction technology, and investment risks abroad, which require policy support in the form of concessional finance, de-risking mechanisms, and public-private partnerships.

Q3. How can India balance its participation in mineral "clubs" with its national interest and developmental priorities?

Ans. India must negotiate for technology transfer, R&D investment, and equitable value addition while ensuring that foreign collaborations do not undermine domestic capacity building or strategic autonomy.

Q4. Examine the role of critical minerals in India's green transition and its alignment with the objectives of 'Make in India' and 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'.

Ans. Critical minerals are essential for clean technologies like EVs and solar panels, aligning with India's goals of self-reliant manufacturing and export-driven growth under 'Make in India' and 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'.

Q5. In the context of global ESG norms, how can India leverage its leadership in the Global South to shape a more inclusive mineral governance framework?

Ans. India can champion developmental sovereignty and advocate for fair ESG standards by leveraging its partnerships, diaspora ties, and leadership role in the Global South to promote inclusive and balanced mineral governance.

Source: IE

Source: <https://vajiramandravi.com/current-affairs/daily-editorial-analysis-10-july-2025/>

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