

Narendra Modi and Monsanto: Making India Friendly to Global Capital

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Immediately prior to Narendra Modi being elected India's PM last year, there were calls from some quarters for him to usher in a Thatcherite-style revolution. The hope was that he would accelerate the trend of privatisation, sops and tax breaks to business, deregulation, land and labour reforms, etc., and would also eradicate 'blockages' to various projects (i.e. remove dissent and relax or do away with existing procedures).

What Margaret Thatcher did in the eighties was to make Britain friendly to global capital. Global financial institutions became the mainstay of the economy and much local manufacturing industry was offshored. Under Thatcher, anti-trade union legislation, welfare reforms and pro-business policies became the order of the day. Three decades on and Britain has one of Western Europe's most 'flexible' workforces in terms of a lack of protection and rights.

Thatcher's policies helped to deindustrialise Britain and [financialise the nation](#) with a deregulated and corrupt City of London finance sector being a key driver of the economy. The result is record corporate profits, an unofficial unemployment rate of 30 percent, high personal debt, bank bail outs, stagnant demand, increasing national debt and 'austerity' for the masses. Any semblance of democratic rights that did exist have become gradually eroded as global capital increasingly dictates.

What happened in Britain is part of a global trend whereby sovereign states have become hollowed out and made supine in the face of transnational corporate power. Various 'free trade' agreements have by-passed (NAFTA) or are about to (TTIP, TPA) by-pass the last vestiges of national sovereignty as 'regulatory barriers' and 'investor trade rights' will essentially mean that major political decisions that affect every aspect of people's lives could be [moved to the technocratic sphere and taken by unaccountable tribunals and committees](#) behind closed doors in Brussels, Washington and elsewhere.

The [Knowledge Initiative on Agriculture](#) and the proposed [EU-India trade agreement](#) will have a similar impact in India. These secretive, non-transparent deals will effectively hand over major policy areas to committees whose members comprise major financial-industrial enterprises or bureaucrat-politicians acting on their behalf. Such initiatives represent an extension and acceleration of trends that have been happening in India since the early 1990s and the introduction of neo-liberal economic policies.

India has been [under pressure](#) from US-dominated international bodies to restructure its agriculture and retail sectors to benefit the likes of Monsanto, Cargill and Walmart for some time. The requirement is that India reduces subsidies and tariffs and introduces a market-

driven approach to agriculture and bring it under corporate control. This will effectively mean that faced with unfair trade rules and heavily subsidised Western agriculture, farming in India will continue to be increasingly financially non-viable and farmers will continue to leave the industry.

The system of agriculture envisaged to replace the indigenous model will consist of large-scale industrial farms based on genetically modified seeds and the heavy use of petrochemical inputs. Mechanisation in agriculture and food processing, courtesy of Western companies, will destroy tens of millions of jobs.

Factor in those displaced from farming itself and one is led to wonder what these people will do to earn a living once having migrated to the cities. India cannot create sufficient jobs as it is to soak up entrants to the workforce and given the increasing automation of employment, the situation seems likely to get worse. As in Britain, any 'Thatcherite-style revolution' is destined to throw large sections of the population onto the scrapheap as society is recast in a pro-corporate image.

It all raises the question why is this being done? [India already produces enough to feed itself](#), and even where it does import foodstuffs, this is often because of the impact of political decisions and trade policy which means the country no longer grows certain items. Hundreds of millions are employed in agriculture, food processing or related sectors, and if they are currently in poverty, this again is partly a direct result of policies that have opted to put resources elsewhere, for instance [to help industry which has failed to deliver](#) in terms of jobs or exports.

Given the numbers employed in farming, food processing and small-scale retail, these sectors form the backbone of Indian society. The Modi administration should bear in mind that once farmers have been sacrificed on the altar of corporate profit and Monsanto has been allowed to genetically modify the food system, there will be no going back. GM agriculture is a scam. Steven Druker has shown in his book '[Altered Genes, Twisted Truth](#)' that it was placed onto the commercial market in the US due to fraudulent activities. It is a danger to health and the environment and as currently employed there is [no advantage](#) to be gained from it. The only benefits go to the agribusiness cartel who can patent seeds that they 'invented', or pirate seeds and 'reinvent' them, and sell their associated cancer-causing chemical inputs. Where is the sense in India selling out the nation's farmers and food sovereignty to Monsanto?

[Writing in The Hindu](#) last year, Aruna Rodrigues noted that the Technical Expert Committee (TEC) Final Report (FR) is the fourth official report exposing the lack of integrity, independence and scientific expertise in assessing GMO risk (see [here](#)). The four reports are: The 'Jairam Ramesh Report' of February 2010, imposing an indefinite moratorium on Bt Brinjal, overturning the apex Regulator's approval to commercialise it; the Sopory Committee Report (August 2012); the Parliamentary Standing Committee (PSC) Report on GM crops (August 2012) and the TEC Final Report (June-July 2013). And yet, open field trials have been given the green light, [dissent is being trodden on](#) and Modi has proclaimed that GM represents a good [business-investment opportunity](#).

Does anyone smell a rat? They should. Vandana Shiva highlights the arm twisting that has gone on in an attempt to force through GMOs into India, with various politicians having been [pushed aside](#) until the dotted line for GMO open field testing approval was signed on. Of

course, Modi is only accelerating what former PM Manmohan Singh had set in motion – a politician whose pro-GMO policies are regarded by [Arun Shrivastava](#) as total treachery. However, much of urban India seems oblivious to it all.

Duplicitous politicians are clever at using poor management, bad administration and overblown or inept bureaucracies as a proxy for privatising and deregulated everything. Thatcher was an expert at this: if something does not work correctly because of bad management, privatise it; underinvest in something, make it seem like a basket case and privatise it; pump up a sector with public investment to turn it into a profitable, efficient enterprise (then describe it as a massive drain on the taxpayer) then sell it off to the private sector. The tactics and ideology of and the justification for neoliberal economic policies take many forms.

Similarly, due to neglect and under-investment, rural India is too often depicted as a failure and a drain on the economy and thus ripe for a corporate takeover. It was the British who introduced mono-cropping and [began to devastate local systems of food self-sufficiency and the dynamism of the village economy](#). Post-independence, successive administrations have done little to reverse this trend. However, despite the sector being deliberately run down, agriculture still manages to deliver bumper harvests, as food and trade policy analyst Devinder Sharma describes [here](#).

Some 300, 000 farmers have committed suicide since 1997 as a result of spiralling debt, a shift to (GM) cash crops and the introduction of neoliberal economics, yet as long as food remains relatively cheap, thanks to the neglected, impoverished farmer, and people have enough disposable income to buy a 100 rupees coffee in a fancy long-neck glass at the latest swish shopping mall, who cares? Out of sight, out of mind. (Hundreds of millions in rural India live on less than 100 rupees a day.) Government priorities lie elsewhere.

Many leading politicians at the helm in India are (wittingly or unwittingly) serving US interests. Those who are ultimately setting the agenda in the US have designed a type of global capitalism that, from Syria and Ukraine to the US and India, increasingly incorporates barbarity and militarism and displays tendencies towards [corporate feudalism](#) and [political fascism](#). The goal to secure control over global food and agriculture is very much part of the designs of an [interlocking directorate](#) of state-corporate interests in the West who through trade agreements or militarism, or a combination of both, seek to colonise and control all facets of life, not least food and agriculture. Look no further than Monsanto's gains in [Ukraine](#) on the back of a US-led coup and its position in [Iraq and Afghanistan](#) on the back of illegal invasions. Or read Steven MacMillan's piece about Monsanto's connections to the US military-industrial complex and the globalists.

Writing in 2014, [MacMillan](#) said:

On Monsanto's Board of Directors sits the former Chairman of the Board and CEO of the giant war contractor Lockheed Martin, [Robert J. Stevens](#), who was also appointed in 2012 by Barack Obama to the Advisory Committee for Trade Policy and Negotiations. As well as epitomising the revolving door that exists between the US Government and private trans-national corporations, Stevens is a [member](#) of the parallel government in the US, the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR). A second board member at Monsanto is [Gwendolyn S. King](#), who also sits on the board of Lockheed Martin where she chairs the Orwellian 'Ethics and Sustainability Committee'. Individuals who are veterans of the corporate war industry should not be allowed control over any populations food

supply! Additionally, Monsanto board member [Dr. George H. Poste](#) is a former member of the Defense Science Board and the Health Board of the U.S. Department of Defense, as well as a Fellow of the Royal Society and a member of the [CFR](#).

By having US companies dominate supply lines and control food and seeds through patenting – and by [controlling commodity markets](#) – Washington is in a position to use food as a [weapon](#). And it is clear from the above quotation that Monsanto is a key component of a highly weaponised US global geopolitical strategy. With this in mind, let us cast our minds back to 2006 when Hugo Chavez addressed the UN General Assembly. In recommending Noam Chomsky's book 'Hegemony and Survival', he stated:

It's an excellent book to help us understand what has been happening in the world throughout the 20th century, and what's happening now, and the greatest threat looming over our planet... the American empire is doing all it can to consolidate its system of domination. And we cannot allow them to do that. We cannot allow world dictatorship to be consolidated.

As a nation, when you rely on foreign corporations for your food and seeds, you rely on them to determine its price, its supply and what is in it (for instance, 'terminator' trait technology or the Epicyte 'sterility' gene.) In the style of the late Hugo Chavez, perhaps it's time for someone to publicly recommend William F Engdahl's book '[Seeds of Destruction: The Hidden Agenda of Genetic Manipulation](#)' to Narendra Modi. Like Chomsky's book, it too discusses threats and domination. It locates the GM issue and the 'green revolution' firmly within the context of empire via the destruction of indigenous agriculture and its replacement with a model dominated by US agribusiness. Engdahl also locates the Rockefeller-Gates hand behind the great GMO project to a sinister eugenicist strategy of depopulation.

However, it must be assumed that reading this book would have little impact. You kind of get the impression that Modi, like Singh, before him is already on board with 'the project'.

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