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people. The casualties are our patriotic values, the absence of which seriously compromises our nation-building capacity. The dream rapidly becomes a nightmare, as our youth ceaselessly and fruitlessly chase chimeras of prosperity.

Small wonder that our armed forces are finding fewer and fewer recruits. A vocation that calls for commitment, values and the ultimate sacrifice in the service of the nation simply does not appeal to our youth. The defence services are short of 14,000 officers. Even young people from families with a long tradition of service in the armed forces are opting for more lucrative careers. Our scientific community faces a similar shortage of talented youngsters. It is indeed difficult to find individuals who can inculcate patriotism among our youth.

If the country's youth do not take steps to cleanse society of the twin evils of greed and corruption, then our future is dark indeed. Hungry for high office and greedy for power, are our political leaders capable of awakening patriotic sentiments in our youth?

Indeed, the existing political establishment is leading our nation astray, shifting the focus from core issues concerning the common man to divisive issues like caste and community. The arduous task of motivating our youth and cleansing the political system thus falls on the civil society. Our society is the structural basis of the nation. It is the template on which our government rests and not the other way around. Today's political leaders have not understood this basic fact or have preferred to overlook it.

It has taken 50 years for the country's senior political leaders to realize that they themselves are bankrupt, lacking the vision and the skills to guide the nation; that untrained politicians cannot set the agenda for a highly trained bureaucracy; that like bureaucrats, politicians too must be trained. In truth, the country's political leaders have reached a dead-end. They are incapable of charting the way forward and steering the nation's destiny.