



Tough times

A coordinated security and civil response is needed to help peace return to the Valley

All indications are that 2017 will turn out to be the deadliest year in Jammu and Kashmir in almost a decade, and Monday's terrorist attack on Amarnath pilgrims is a stark reminder that a clear-eyed security response is required to deal with the challenges. The attack, in which at least seven persons died, shows the vulnerability of civilians in spite of the dense security deployment in the Kashmir Valley. The bus carrying the pilgrims had fallen behind a convoy when it came under fire. But for the alertness of the driver, the casualties could have been much higher. For a few weeks there had been intelligence warnings about terrorists possibly targeting the Amarnath Yatra, given the tone and tenor of the new phase of Kashmir militancy and the sustained tension along the India-Pakistan border, with infiltration continuing. But finger-pointing about a security lapse would be meaningless before an inquiry is conducted. The attack, significantly, comes around the first anniversary of the killing of Hizbul Mujahideen 'commander' Burhan Wani, the fallout of which the security forces and the State government continue to struggle to contain. While militancy in Kashmir began taking a new turn sometime in 2013, it escalated in the wake of Wani's death. According to informed estimates, since his death, over 250 local youth have taken up arms in the Valley. In comparison, in 2013 only 31 local youth were estimated to have enrolled for militancy.

Projected estimates suggest that this year the number killed, including security forces personnel and civilians, could finally be more than 400, the highest since 2009, when 375 people were killed in Kashmir. Since then violence had steadily fallen, and in 2012, 117 lives were lost. There are other disconcerting inputs coming from the security agencies. A recent video clip, which is doing the rounds on social media and which the intelligence agencies consider authentic, indicates that the Lashkar-e-Taiba, Hizbul Mujahideen and Jaish-e-Mohammed are operating together, or at least coordinating attacks. The spike in militant activity has coincided with increased street protests, public mobilisation to help militants escape security operations, and intimidatory tactics such as burning of schools to bring normal life to a standstill. This cycle can only be broken through a coherent security strategy and outreach by the civil administration to foster confidence and reduce tensions on the street. The security establishment needs to step up its response to the new reality. The quality of intelligence-gathering needs to improve, through traditional human skills and technical capabilities. Personnel need better training to handle this phase of unrest, so that they are more alert to the seemingly blurred, but always vital, line between a security intervention and a human rights violation. Containing violence is crucial to guide Kashmir to a peaceful future.

Ominous retreat

Weaning the world off easy money won't be painless

Bond markets around the globe showed signs of weakness last week, with major central banks hinting at a possible end to years of ultra-loose monetary policy. The yield on German government bonds reached their highest level in 18 months, while that on the 10-year U.S. Treasury bonds reached its highest level in eight weeks. Results of the auction of 30-year French government bonds were the immediate trigger behind the rout as it pointed to a drop in excess demand; the bid-to-cover ratio dropped to 1.5 from 1.93 in January. Notably, the minutes of the European Central Bank's June meeting indicated that the bank might walk back on its commitment to expand its €60 billion bond purchase programme. The U.S. Federal Reserve has already hiked rates this year, and warned of the risks posed by low rates. The Bank of England and the Bank of Canada have shown signs of hawkishness. Bearish comments from investors that the yield on the 10-year U.S. Treasury bonds might head towards 3% did not help matters either. The Bank of Japan has been the sole exception, promising to purchase unlimited amounts of government bonds at low rates. There is thus widespread concern among investors that central banks, through these bearish signals, may be testing the reaction of markets to a possible interest rate hike. Further, they fear the possibility of a coordinated tightening of monetary policy globally.

The fact that the drop in bond prices has coincided with hawkish central bank policy is not totally surprising. The multi-year bull market in bonds has been driven mainly by central bank purchases of government bonds; in fact, sovereign bonds yielded negative rates not too long ago. A major concern right now is whether higher rates in the bond market will spell doom for equities. After all, a higher interest rate places a greater discount on future cash flows, which in turn translates into lower equity prices. What this means for banks and other financial institutions betting on these instruments will define the systemic risk that a long-feared rate hike poses. According to estimates by Goldman Sachs last year, even a 1% increase in rates by the Federal Reserve alone would lead to losses anywhere between \$1 trillion and \$2.4 trillion to bondholders. This is bigger than the losses incurred during any other bond collapse in history. Even more important will be the risks to the broader economy from an end to the present regime of historically low interest rates. For almost a decade now, investment decisions have been based on low interest rates and high levels of liquidity. An increase in rates, combined with lower levels of liquidity, will require a change in business decisions and a reallocation of resources. This will mean some amount of unavoidable economic pain. In such a scenario, it will not be a total surprise if central banks decide to step back from their plans to normalise rates.

Paint the united colours of India

The Sangh Parivar's saffron agenda must not dictate the country's foreign policy



HAPPYMON JACOB

By deciding not to gift copies of the Bhagavad Gita to Donald Trump or Benjamin Netanyahu during his recent visits abroad, Prime Minister Narendra Modi appears to have ignored the self-congratulatory statement of Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, that foreign dignitaries were now being given copies of Gita and Ramayana instead of Taj Mahal replicas (because they, according to Mr. Adityanath, do not reflect Indian culture). As a matter of fact, Mr. Modi's gifts over the past three years have included an impressive selection, even as Hindu religious texts have become more prominent than ever in the Prime Minister's gift bag.

Even though Mr. Modi's gifts to foreign dignitaries have comprised more than Hindu religious books, the BJP-led government in New Delhi has exhibited strong tendencies of saffronising India's foreign policy, one step at a time, and without much resistance. Remember the strong pitch made by none other than External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj in 2014 to declare Bhagavad Gita as India's 'Rashtriya Granth' (national book)? During Mr. Modi's recent visit to Israel, some BJP leaders even referred to the underlying belief within the Sangh Parivar of the desirability of forging strong bonds between Hindutva and Zionism. The issue of 'saffronising' foreign policy is serious, and deserves to be examined in greater depth.

Religious symbolism

Mr. Modi's official visits abroad have often been steeped in Hindu religious symbolism. Recall his first visit to Nepal in 2014 when he visited the Hindu temple, Pashupatinath. Clad in saffron attire, wearing a rudraksh garland and sandal paste smeared on his forehead, the

religious symbolism of Mr. Modi's visit to the temple was spectacular, if not prime ministerial. It is a different matter that the development of a potential Hindu religious plank in Indo-Nepal relations, a key piece in the Sangh Parivar's long-cherished dream, was sabotaged by events thereafter, including India's 'unofficial' economic blockade of Nepal in 2015.

When Mr. Modi visited Abu Dhabi in 2015, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) government announced the allocation of land for the UAE capital's first Hindu temple. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) tweeted on the occasion, "A long wait for the Indian community ends. On the occasion of PM's visit, UAE Govt decides to allot land for building a temple in Abu Dhabi," with Mr. Modi following up with another tweet: "I am very thankful to the UAE Govt for their decision to allot land in order to build a Temple in Abu Dhabi. This is a great step." How so?

While providing land to construct a temple for the Hindu community in the UAE (for Hindu migrant workers from countries such as India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, etc.) is in itself a laudable act, what does the official visit of a secular republic's Prime Minister have to do with the allocation of land for a Hindu temple in an Islamic country? These tweets, by the MEA and the Prime Minister, were not in keeping with the secular traditions of India's foreign policy engagements. Wasn't ensuring that the In-



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dian migrant workers in UAE are not mistreated, as they regularly are, more important than portraying the "land for temple" as a major foreign policy achievement? Let's not get carried away: it was neither foreign policy, nor an achievement. The Bharatiya Janata Party's fixation with 'Mandir' cannot be projected as the Indian state's legitimate foreign policy interest.

Refugee policy

The BJP's proposed refugee policy also tells the story of a deep-seated saffron agenda. Its 2014 election manifesto was unequivocal in stating that "India shall remain a natural home for persecuted Hindus and they shall be welcome to seek refuge here". Note that the statement is not one that promises to protect all persecuted minorities in the neighbourhood, as the country has done in the past, but a pointedly Hindutva sentiment. The party followed up on its promise when it came to power by proposing a controversial Bill to amend the country's citizenship laws. The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016, proposes that Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, Parsis and Christians entering India from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan not be considered as "illegal immigrants" — no word on Muslims here! By not providing any justification whatsoever for discriminating against Muslims (if there can, in fact, be any), given that Hindus and Muslims comprise most refugees turning up at India's borders, the

motivation is clear. While on the one hand this appeases the communal vote banks in mainland India, the move also could potentially enhance BJP's electoral fortunes in the north-eastern borderlands since the proposed law could alter the voter demographics in the region to BJP's advantage. To get a more complete picture, read this together with the recently passed 'Enemy Property (Amendment and Validation) Bill, 2016' which could potentially dispossess many Muslim families of their inherited property.

India abroad

New Delhi has traditionally viewed the Indian diaspora to be a powerful force multiplier and has both used their services and catered to their needs. The Modi government has gone way beyond the legitimate exercise of engaging the diaspora to enthusiastically promoting overseas Hindutva/Sangh outfits for ideological ends, couched in sophisticated foreign policy showbiz, of course.

Clearly, the outright enlistment of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh-affiliated organisations such as the Overseas Friends of BJP (OFBJP) and the Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh (HSS) for the government's foreign policy pursuits and other official purposes can only be termed as attempts at saffronising our secular foreign policy. Recall how the HSS and the OFBJP-USA, along with the MEA and the Indian embassy in Washington, played a crucial role in organising Mr. Modi's official visit to the U.S. in September 2014.

Several events in the Prime Minister's official visits abroad today are organised by HSS/RSS/OFBJP activists in collaboration with the MEA and the Indian embassy. While these activists are indeed members of the Indian diaspora, they only represent one fragment of it, and a communal one. What is even more worrying is that many of these Hindutva organisations are increasingly partnering with Indian missions abroad to organise official functions of the Indian

state. Consider this: during this year's International Day of Yoga, the official partners of the Indian Embassy in Washington included the Association of United Hindu and Jain Temples, Baba Ramdev's Patanjali Yogpeeth, Hindu American Foundation, HSS, and several other Hindu organisations (<http://bit.ly/2sLjxaA>).

This brings back memories of the appointment of Bhisma Agnihotri, an office-bearer of the HSS, as India's Ambassador-at-Large in the U.S. by the Vajpayee government. Mr. Agnihotri's ad hoc appointment had led to run-ins between him and India's official representation in Washington.

The proclivity of the Hindutva organisations, many of whose members are not Indian citizens, to grab the limelight of New Delhi's official engagements abroad is resented by career diplomats who have often cautioned the MEA that such organisations should be kept away from official functions. Moreover, the BJP's tendency to promote overseas Hindu organisations through the foreign policy engagements of the country will not only undermine the official and formal nature of the practice of diplomacy but will also divide the Indian diaspora along communal lines.

These organisations are also compensated by the government particularly during the 'Pravasi Bharatiya Divas' celebrations. The outsourcing of India's foreign policy activities to overseas Hindu organisations should therefore be put to an end.

India's foreign policy engagement, the BJP leadership needs to remember, is the sovereign function of the Indian state, not an instrument of the Sangh Parivar's ideological agenda. Let us hope that Mr. Adityanath's communal rhetoric about avoiding 'unindian' gifts for foreign dignitaries does not alter the standard practice.

Happymon Jacob is Associate Professor, Disarmament Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University

Getting GST right

Why tax exemption on personal hygiene products for women is crucial



SUSHMITA DEV

I will always remember the mid-night launch of Goods and Services Tax (GST) on June 30/July 1 as the moment when my government let down a girl who died in Assam's Baksa district. Maggots had found their way into her stomach because she had used a rag during her periods. Her parents refused to treat her as they thought she was pregnant. Eventually it was too late even though she was taken to a hospital.

The road to rights

When I started my online petition on March 8, requesting the Union Finance Minister to make eco-friendly sanitary pads tax-free and reduce the tax bracket of other napkins from 12-14% to 5%, I found more than three lakh people joining me in my appeal. I also found support from across the political spectrum. The Union Health and the Women and Child Development Ministers also agreed that it

was a proposal with merit.

The Finance Minister readily accepted that it was a cause mooted by activists and non-governmental organisations, but it did not resonate with members of the GST Council that for an adolescent girl, an affordable sanitary napkin is actually essential for her well-being. Over the months, activists, writers and I have thrown pertinent facts and figures at the government trying to convince them that this tax exemption would be an important health intervention. That a woman needs all means possible to help her during menstruation can only be forcefully argued by women.

I have argued in Parliament on many an occasion to deliberate on issues of women's empowerment using data on the dismal percentage of women in the workforce, the high percentage of school dropouts among girls, and the rise in gender crimes. These have always been received by the government with sensitivity, and have drawn assurances about the government's commitment. While we continue to focus on and highlight the problem, the solution is complex. The right to equality is not an easy right to ensure and enforce.

My empowerment has to be about saving me from damage and



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not saving me after I am damaged. It has to be about building my ability to seize an opportunity in education, employment or a seat in a panchayat. It has to be about minimising and containing my inherent disadvantages because of my gender, which stand in my way.

The Constitution recognises this and allows women a head start in life. Yet, girls have to drop out of school because menstruation is a stigma; they have to stay away from education because they have no restroom in school; and there is female foeticide because a girl is considered to be a liability. The real empowerment of women does not need doles and handouts. It needs

interventions that tackle the problem.

We are a country where many women are still dependent on cloth-based products as they cannot access high quality, expensive personal hygiene products or lack sufficient information about sanitary pads. If a woman has to use hay, ash, sand, wood shavings, newspaper, dried leaves, or even plastic as a substitute for a hygiene product, despite subsidised napkins being distributed under the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) in many States, I hope the government is compelled to think about the limitations of their prevailing interventions in this regard. Their system of distribution is failing to ensure last-mile delivery.

Ensure last-mile access

In India, 70% of women say that their families cannot afford to buy sanitary pads. Distribution of free or subsidised napkins in schools by States is a good step but cannot solve the problem. If the government has to push the social campaign 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao', it tells us that there are more girls out of school than in them in India. A government that champions the idea of disinvestment/privatisation of its own businesses in the name

of greater business efficacy should have realised that commercial, private sector entities can deliver better in rural and remote markets if the product becomes cheaper and within the purchasing power of the economically weaker sections.

The celebrations of the mid-night GST launch have numbered many. The harsh truth is that ultimately, every manufacturer shifts the burden of cost to the consumer. If a huge budget of the NRHM and its network can't ensure last-mile delivery to the women of rural India or the urban poor, it could have been achieved at a lesser cost by reducing the tax on sanitary napkins, where only 12% of women use sanitary napkins. This could have worked as an incentive for private manufacturers. It could have been a significant intervention.

Where some 11,000-plus products were discussed by the GST Council, I have no doubt the members did have women in mind — bangles and bindis have been exempted from GST. Whether they had women empowerment in mind, I don't know.

Sushmita Dev is a Congress MP in the Lok Sabha

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

Act quickly

The killing of Amarnath pilgrims, in a terror attack, is shocking. Clearly, militants are going too far in their sinister plot of unleashing violence and terror. The State government and the Centre must act together to crush these dangerous designs and anti-national activities; there can be no soft-peddling and complacency here. While talks and attempts at reconciliation can keep going on, those indulging in violence, terrorism and instigating anti-national elements should be quelled. The message should be loud and clear.

R. RAMANATHAN, Coimbatore

The great migration

The need for respect for the human rights of migrants from the northern States who are increasingly relocating to the more prosperous southern and western States in India in

search of employment is important from the perspective of national unity (OpEd - 'Single File' - "The Great Indian migration", July 11). Diego Palacios's piece also offers an implicitly tacit reflection of the uneven development that characterises our nation where the northern States trail the south and the west in both manufacturing as well as technology job-creating industries.

This disparity brings to the forefront the hitherto unaddressed burning need for the Centre and the governments of these northern States to create the necessary conditions that are conducive for entrepreneurs, both domestic and foreign, to make the kind of massive investments in these States that their counterparts in the south and the west have been doing for over a decade.

It is also odd that the Prime Minister, who promotes the 'Make in India' programme

abroad, has never articulated solutions to this burgeoning problem of disparity in development among States — more prominently, the north and the south.

Stray incidents that uncover deep undercurrents of State regionalism will be a natural consequence of increasing and unabated inter-State migrations if such disparities get exacerbated.

ARAVIND SRIDHAR, Bengaluru

Firewalled?

Cyberattacks are a global phenomenon, fuelled by increasing dependence on digitisation ("Cyberattack link to glitches in Rjio, NSE under probe", July 11). The risks that digitisation carries along with it have been exposed time and again. The West may be technically savvy to restore normalcy after such an event, but considering the high illiteracy in India, one wonders whether we are prepared to set right the

system in the event of a breakdown here. Despite our much-touted IT prowess, India is still in a nascent stage as far as digitisation is concerned. During Rajiv Gandhi's time, a separate cell was in operation to improve telecommunications in India. It is in order if a separate cell is created to ensure cybersecurity and is looked after by public and private professionals. Dependence on China for crucial equipment only reveals that the 'Make in India' campaign has yet to make an impact in India.

VENKATRAMAN SUBRAMANIAN, Chennai

We two, ours two

India has one of the largest concentrations of young people in the world between ages 15 to 34 ("Reading between the numbers", July 11). This will be a challenge for any administration in providing them resources, education, health, nutrition and, importantly, gainful

employment. A fresh national approach of encouraging small families should be our priority. With Aadhaar now covering a large section of our citizens, the government should be bold enough to extend benefits to all those who follow the two-child norm.

H.N. RAMAKRISHNA, Bengaluru

Blinkered vision

For long, researchers have worked out the role that carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases play in regulating temperature. The 1980s saw supercomputers model the climate with ever greater power. G20 nations represent the world's advanced scientific mettle,

CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:

In the map that accompanied the report, "In Mysuru, a yoga hub in the making" (July 9, 2017), *Kodagu*, one of the districts of Karnataka, was wrongly labelled as *Mysuru*.

It is the policy of The Hindu to correct significant errors as soon as possible. Please specify the edition (place of publication), date and page. The Readers' Editor's office can be contacted by Telephone: +91-44-28552963; Fax: +91-44-28552963; E-mail: readerseditor@thehindu.co.in; Mail: Readers' Editor, The Hindu, Kasturba Buildings, 859 & 860 Anna Salai, Chennai 600 002, India. All communication must carry the full postal address and telephone number. No personal visits. The Terms of Reference for the Readers' Editor are on www.thehindu.com

THE WEDNESDAY INTERVIEW | SHIVSHANKAR MENON

'The only way to deal with the Chinese is directly'

As the Doklam spat between Beijing and New Delhi flares, the former NSA says the neighbours need a new strategic dialogue to recalibrate their relationship

SUHASINI HAIDAR

As the stand-off between Indian and Chinese troops in Bhutanese territory of the Doklam plateau enters its second month, former National Security Adviser Shivshankar Menon, who is an old China hand, says Beijing is changing the status quo with its actions in the area, and it is time for a new "modus vivendi" between the two countries. Excerpts from the interview:

You have been Ambassador to China, Foreign Secretary, National Security Adviser and the Special Representative on border talks. How serious is the situation in Doklam?

I think it is different from previous such occasions. The last most serious one was Depsang in 2013 and we had Chumar after that (2014). But basically you could say that since the 1980s we have had a modus vivendi with the Chinese. It was formalised during Rajiv Gandhi's visit in 1988 and then during the border peace and tranquility treaty of 1993, which contained both sides to maintaining the status quo and where they had doubts about a part of the boundary, they would actually sit down and talk their way through the problem. And that has helped keep this more or less peaceful for many, many years.

What is different this time?

It is much more complicated for three reasons. One, it is happening near the western tri-junction of India, Bhutan and China. So it involves three countries. And that's a tri-junction area where, in principle, all three countries have to agree on the posts. Two, it represents a change in the status quo, and a considerable change, because to build a road represents a permanent presence. Three, I can't recall this kind of rhetoric for a very long time. The spokesperson of the Chinese Foreign Office saying this is very serious, and so on. In the past we have handled this sort of thing with quiet dip-

lomacy. It wasn't always easy, but both sides were able to achieve a resolution satisfactory to both. In most cases, it amounts to restoring the status quo and then discussing whatever issues either side might have.

That's for the immediate incident, but there is a broader context as well. India-China ties are under stress for some time, whether it is the Chinese attitude toward the membership of the NSG (Nuclear Suppliers Group), or Masood Azhar's listing (as a global terrorist by the UN), or the CPEC (China-Pakistan Economic Corridor), all of which have come up in the last few years. My own sense that both of us must sit down and worked out a new modus vivendi to govern the relationship. We have both since the '80s been rubbing up against each other in the periphery we share. So we do need a new strategic dialogue to discuss how we should sort out problems. It is in both our interests to do so.

Isn't it particularly worrying that the Doklam incident is taking place in an area previously considered settled, or at least not an active part of the boundary?

The Sikkim tri-junction is basically the watershed between the Amo (also called the Torsa river) and the Teesta rivers in the Chumbi valley, so it is clear, and parts of it have been settled. Since 1960, when this was discussed by both sides, both sides have constantly said that this boundary is not such a problem. But the tri-junction remained to be settled, and that is a

part of the issue.

It does seem as if China is not only changing the status quo, it is taking control, however temporarily, of a significant part of the Doklam plateau by setting up tents there. What is the message China is giving here?

I am not aware of what is actually happening on the ground. On the message, you need to ask the Chinese. They are very clear about what they mean to say. And I think you should take what they say at face value. Certainly, what their Foreign Office spokesman says must be taken seriously.

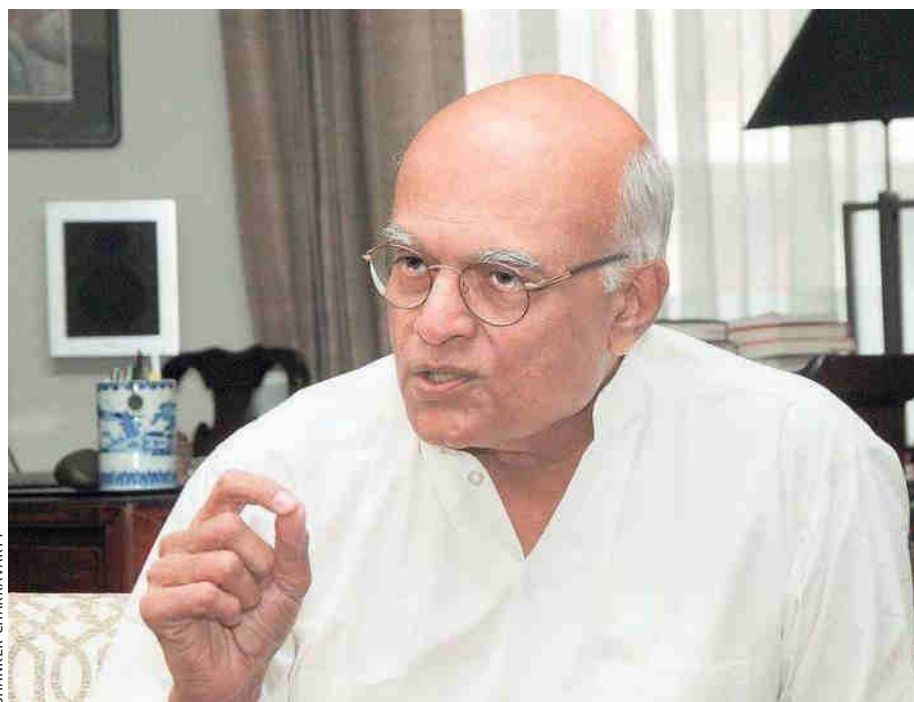
Is there a similarity between what China is doing in Doklam and what is has done previously in the South China Sea... laying claim to certain areas, pushing the boundaries on where its armed forces are placed?

You can construct beautiful theories, and many people have. But the only way to deal with the Chinese is directly, both on the ground and through a negotiation.

You mentioned theories, so I want to list some. One is that this is a reaction to India's new alliance with the U.S. The other is that statements made in India, for example a Chief Minister questioning whether our borders are with Tibet or China, have triggered this...

There are clearly a thousand such irritants on both sides. I consider them as symptoms of stress in the relationship, a relationship that needs to be recalibrated.

Some suggest the stress point is internal for China, and President Xi Jinping is showing strength ahead of



They are very clear about what they mean to say. And I think you should take what they say at face value. Certainly, what their Foreign Office spokesman says must be taken seriously.

a possibly difficult Chinese Communist Party National Congress this October-November.

As a general rule, I don't think foreign policy affects domestic politics in either India or China, certainly not to the extent most foreign policy wonks [assume it does].

When it comes to the rhetoric from the Chinese side, has India adopted the correct course by not responding, issuing only one statement in the face of the barrage from Beijing?

I don't want to second-guess the government, as I don't know what they know.

I presume they are doing what they are on the basis of facts that they possess. The ultimate test of what they do is the end result. Some of these situations take a long time to resolve. The situation at Sumdorong Chu (Wangdung, north of Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh, that saw action in 1986), for example, took eight-10 years to resolve.

Is it also significant that everyone is speaking of an India-China stand-off, when in fact the area under dispute is claimed by Bhutan, not India?

It is Bhutanese territory, but we are there because of Bhutan and we have a certain relationship and certain obligations to Bhutan.

A Chinese scholar has suggested that if India could come to Bhutan's aid, then a "third country" would be justified coming to "Kashmir's aid", referring to Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. Is China playing for a broader equivalence

here?

We have scholars like that too, and let them deal with each other. But I'd rather go by what China does officially, and what they communicate to us officially.

Has China's decision to invest a considerable amount in terms of resources and reputation in the CPEC also changed the calculations?

China has gone in different directions with Pakistan in the past. In 1996, for example, President Jiang Zemin stood in the Pakistan National Assembly and counselled them to put political problems with India aside, and work on other aspects of a normal relationship, trade, travel, etc. Pakistan never took that advice. China's stand on Kashmir has gone from calling for self-determination to calling it a bilateral problem for India and Pakistan to sort out. Today they have a commitment to Pakistan that is explicit, in terms of the CPEC. But let's see how this evolves... We

should be worried more about our own interests with China, rather than with others.

In your recent book 'Choices', you have spoken of the inevitability of India and China challenging each other. Is the Doklam stand-off part of that trend?

What I wrote was that China will be increasingly assertive, and so will we. It is part of our development. Our need for the world in terms of trade has gone up many times, and the same is true for China. This is a natural consequence, and India and China have done this faster than any other economies in history.

Is the clash inevitable then?

That depends on whether we can work out a new way of dealing with each other in this changed scenario. At one stage, both our leaderships would say there is enough space for both India and China to grow. I don't hear that so much any more, but they haven't said the opposite either.

These are man-made issues, and that means there are solutions to them, so long as we respect each other's core interests and manage our differences.

Given your own experiences in negotiating previous stand-offs in Depsang and Chumar, what do you think are the chances of de-escalation?

I don't know enough about this situation. I think what worked in previous such occasions was the fact that neither side wanted to get into trouble or be embarrassed militarily. The simplest way forward is to restore the status quo ante, which means clearing the area of both armies and then

talking about it. We have had stand-offs that have lasted a long time in the past too, so there are no timelines.

But do you think talks are the only way forward, or do you see the risk of a military escalation?

What would a military conflict solve from either side's point of view? But both India and China would have to reach that same conclusion at the same point of time to avoid it.

You're not ruling it out?

That's an extreme, but part of any negotiation is also the threat of violence. Some of the rhetoric is often meant to make space for negotiation. So right now, we are working out the terms of engagement, but I don't see it in either side's interest to have a military conflict.

Since 1988, there have been incremental improvements on managing the boundary between us. Do you think the clock has been reversed?

No, not yet. They are clearly signalling that the situation is a new one. We don't have enough knowledge yet to draw conclusions.

Does the situation require the top leadership to be involved to clear the logjam?

Well, even when Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping meet for the BRICS summit in September in China, there will be some sort of preparatory meetings. We are in touch, we have Special Representatives, and we have had a series of visits from both sides. Our ministers have been in Beijing this month. So I presume they will find the ways and means to talk at all levels.

SINGLE FILE

Mothers as monitors

Ready-to-eat fortified meals are not the best solution to tackle malnutrition among children

ANURADHA RAMAN



On the occasion of World Hunger Day on May 28, Union Minister for Women and Child Development Maneka Gandhi had spoken eloquently about the need to serve ready-to-eat fortified meals to tackle malnutrition in the country. India still has an unenviable track record when it comes to tackling malnutrition among children and pregnant women. What was not surprising was the similarity in approach of Ms. Gandhi and her predecessor, Renuka Chowdhury, towards addressing the issue of malnutrition among the very young. While expressing horror at the quality of meals served to children between the age group of six months to five years, both the ministers found an easy solution in ready-to-serve meals.

Two States, two examples

In a country of 1.31 billion people, how difficult can the task of monitoring food for malnourished and starving children be? Eight years ago, in Bihar's Bettiah district (also known as West Champaran), someone had worked out a simple solution to ensure that quality food was served.

The district administration decided to enrol mothers, who kept a watch on what their children were fed in mid-day meals at school. The logic: which mother would cheat on feeding her own? On the blackboard, the menu of the day was displayed. On the rolls were mothers who cooked nutritious meals for the children. It was a heart-warming sight to see kids holding their shining plates above their heads marching in single file to the school. The aroma of freshly cooked food wafted in the premises. The food, an essential ingredient for their survival. The quality, assured.

A similar approach was followed in Thane district of Pune a few years ago in the anganwadi centres after the district had earned notoriety when Grade III and Grade IV levels of stunting on account of malnutrition were reported.

A solution worth emulating

The question Ms. Gandhi should have asked on World Hunger Day as she addressed multinational companies in the audience, many of whom are willing to lend a helping hand, was not whether they could offer help. She should have instead sought their suggestions on how to monitor the food being served to youngsters. As she reeled off reasons for the poor track record of serving hot cooked meals, from poorly paid anganwadi workers to siphoning off rations meant for malnourished children and mothers, surely she could have addressed the problem of monitoring the food served. Seeking the help of corporates is an easy way out - opening the door to a system of contractors. A few years ago, liquor baron Ponty Chadha was awarded a contract under the Integrated Child Development Services scheme in Uttar Pradesh! If Bihar and Maharashtra districts can show the way, is it that difficult to replicate the example in the rest of the country?



CONCEPTUAL

MAD doctrine

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

A military doctrine, also known as the doctrine of mutually assured destruction, which states that when two adversaries possess nuclear weapons, neither of them is likely to use them. This is because both sides are likely to suffer severe losses from a nuclear attack, irrespective of who attacks first. The MAD doctrine is considered an application of the Nash equilibrium, wherein the threat of a strong retaliatory attack prevents both sides from initiating a conflict. The result is lasting prevention of a nuclear attack. The doctrine has been criticised for assuming that the victim of the first attack will possess sufficient capabilities after the attack to retaliate strongly.

MORE ON THE WEB

Who is Gilles Muller?
<http://bit.ly/GillesMullerProfile>

NOTEBOOK

Lest they be called anti-national

Protesters have to double down on patriotism in these times of vigilantism

SMITA GUPTA

On July 7, the lobby of Delhi's Constitution Club was crawling with armed policemen. Inside, in a T-shaped hall, the recently formed National Campaign Against Mob Lynching (NCAML) was due to release the draft of a proposed law, MASUKA, or the Manav Suraksha Kanon (a law to protect human beings). Activists, journalists and concerned citizens milled around, waiting for the chief guest, Prakash Ambedkar, to arrive.

Ticking all boxes

Within minutes of Mr. Ambedkar's arrival, the electronic screen behind him that till now was displaying the #StopMobLynching logo faded out. In its place appeared a tribute to Indian soldiers who guard the snowy heights of Siachen. Then, in the second surprise of the day, one of the organisers requested the audience to stand up for a rendering of the national anthem. The NCAML was born in

the wake of government indifference to the recent spate of mob lynchings across the country. Young people as different as Pune businessman Tehseen Poonawalla, Jawaharlal Nehru University students Kanhaiya Kumar and Shehla Rashid, Gujarat's new Dalit youth leader Jignesh Mewani and actor Swara Bhaskar came together to confront the ugly phenomenon of mob lynching. Overcoming the diversity of their social and economic backgrounds, and differences in political outlook, they asked a team of experts to draft a new law whose passage they now hope the government will ensure in Parliament.

As I sat listening to the young voices speaking their parts fluently and convincingly, interspersed with video bites of colleagues who weren't able to make it to the event, I kept asking myself: what's the connection between our soldiers at Siachen, the national anthem and mob lynchings? And then it all became

clear: since any protest these days against the government, or any act that appears to be a criticism of its shortcomings, is likely to be construed as anti-national, maybe even an act of sedition, the NCAML team had decided that before it became the target of the prevailing vigilante culture, it needed to tick at least two boxes - "I love and honour our brave soldiers" and "I am patriotic, I stand up for the national anthem" - before it embarked on dealing with mob lynching.

Indeed, when the NCAML campaigners came in that day to hold their press conference, the first question posed to them by the policemen on duty was: had they come to remember Burhan Wani, the Hizbul Mujahideen commander who was killed in an encounter in the Kashmir Valley with Indian security forces a year back on July 8, 2016? Clearly, the NCAML knows what it is doing, but that such precautions have to be taken is a tragic comment on our times.

FROM THE HINDU ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO JULY 12, 1967

India knows how to make nuclear weapons

India is in possession of the full know-how for making a nuclear weapon. This was the inference drawn by the replies made by the Prime Minister in the Lok Sabha yesterday [July 10, New Delhi]. The Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi replied in the affirmative to a question by Mr. Samar Guha (P.S.P.) whether the Indian scientists of the Atomic Energy Commission were acquainted with the know-how of fission technique of purified nuclear fuel amounting to its critical size. The Prime Minister also replied in the affirmative to a question whether the Indian scientists knew of the mechanics of assembling fissionable fuel into its critical mass, and preparing the blueprint necessary for the fission of nuclear fuel to an amount equal to its limiting quantity. All the cryptic written reply in the affirmative amounts to meaning that India has got the full know-how for making a nuclear weapon.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JULY 12, 1917

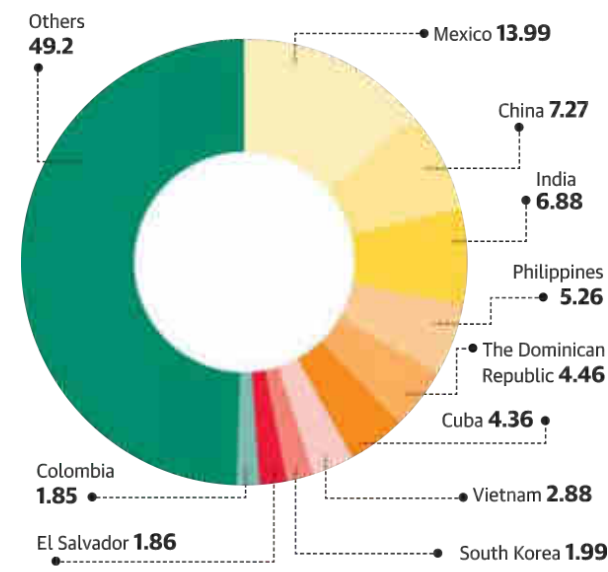
Silver imports.

Under an ordinance issued to-day [July 11] the Government of India are taking power to acquire all silver coin and bullion imported on private account other than current silver coin of the Government of India. The silver so acquired will be paid for in London at a rate 5 per cent, below the London quotation on the date of acquisition by the Government of India. The reason for adopting this particular basis of payment is that 95 per cent of the London price represents approximately the American price of silver plus the cost of freight and insurance from America to India and it is necessarily lower than the London quotation which includes an additional 5 per cent, on account of the greater cost and risk involved in shipping silver from America to London.

DATA POINT

A green card summary

More than 50% of the applicants who were granted permanent resident status in the U.S. in the last three years were from 10 countries alone. India ranked third in this list with a 6.9% share



Note: 4.4% of those granted permanent residency belonged to the seven countries whose citizens were issued a travel (to the U.S.) ban by the Trump administration recently
SOURCE: U.S. IMMIGRATION STATISTICS