



Agreeing to disagree

Diplomacy has paid off in ending the Doklam stand-off, but India and China must repair ties

The separate announcements by India and China that the Doklam military stand-off has ended are a welcome sign that diplomacy has prevailed over the harsh rhetoric of the past 10 weeks. The measured tone of the statement from New Delhi, referring to the “expeditious disengagement of border personnel” as part of the understanding between the two countries, shows that the government’s policy of pursuing diplomatic measures in the face of China’s angry rhetoric was wise. In turn, China’s statement, which said that Indian troops had withdrawn from the disputed Doklam plateau while Chinese troops continue to patrol the area, gives Beijing the latitude it requires to end the stand-off peacefully. The differing versions and the lack of further information leave several questions unanswered about the terms of the disengagement. But the very fact that both countries have been able to issue statements – even if they were designed to satisfy their domestic audiences – suggests that in diplomatic negotiations, each took into account the other’s constraints. In issuing statements that were inconsistent with each other, both sides seem to have agreed to disagree. To that end, the importance lies less in the detail but in the détente itself, in the decision by the leaderships of both countries to pull back from what some feared could escalate into a full-blown conflict. In this, it must be noted that New Delhi and Beijing have respected the wishes of the Bhutanese government, which wanted an early end to the crisis before the bitter winter set in.

One hopes the decision on Doklam, which comes a week before Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to go to China, will guide the bilateral spirit beyond the September 3-5 BRICS summit to be held in Xiamen. Once Mr. Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping have met, diplomats must begin the heavy lifting required to repair the rupture in ties over the past few months, beginning with the cancellation of the Nathu La route for Kailash-Mansarovar pilgrims. Statements from China during the stand-off indicate that it no longer recognises the gains made in the Special Representative talks in 2012. Nor does it regard the India-Bhutan-China tri-junction near Batang-La to have been settled. India has made it clear that it does not consider the Sikkim boundary settled either, and both sides will have to walk swiftly to come back to some semblance of an accord on such basic issues before they can move further. India and China must revert to the spirit of the Border Defence Cooperation Agreement of 2013, which laid down specific guidelines on tackling future developments along the 3,488-km boundary the two countries share. The past two and a half months are also a lesson that India cannot be unprepared for “another Doklam”, as Chief of the Army Staff Bipin Rawat said on Sunday. India must necessarily “hope for the best, and prepare for the worst”, when it comes to tensions with its northern neighbour.

Nandyal for Naidu

Having won a hotly contested by-election, the Andhra CM should now focus on governance

In the absence of a driving issue, by-elections tend to favour ruling parties. The results of the current set of elections in Andhra Pradesh, Goa and Delhi thus held no big surprises. While the Telugu Desam Party won in Nandyal, the Bharatiya Janata Party won both Panaji and Valpoi in Goa, and the Aam Aadmi Party won in Bawana. In terms of political stakes, Panaji ranked quite high with Chief Minister Manohar Parrikar among the contestants. But the verdict was all too predictable with the voters evidently keen on giving the BJP some breathing space in the Assembly after a tightly fought State election earlier this year. In Delhi, the AAP made a comeback of sorts after having lost its deposit in a by-election in April. The jump from a third-place finish to the winner’s slot must have provided some satisfaction for Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, who is yet to reconcile himself to his party’s inability to expand beyond Delhi. Clearly, the setback in Punjab in March, where the party nursed an ambition to come to power, does not appear to have totally sapped the AAP’s enthusiasm in Delhi.

However, the most keenly fought by-election was in Nandyal, where the main Opposition party, the YSR Congress Party, raised the stakes considerably by calling it a referendum on the policies of Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu. Indeed, the election was seen as a contest by proxy between Mr. Naidu and YSRC leader Y.S. Jaganmohan Reddy. A loss thus would have considerably eroded the moral authority of Mr. Naidu, who still has close to two years before he faces the Assembly election. Nandyal, in the Rayalaseema region, was considered a stronghold of the YSRC. To add to the importance of the seat, there is a bitter history of defection and betrayal. Nandyal was won by Bhuma Nagi Reddy on the YSRC ticket in 2014, but he crossed over to the TDP shortly before his death. Shilpa Mohan Reddy, the YSRC candidate in the by-election, had switched loyalties from the TDP. Quite expectedly, the constituency saw a high-voltage campaign with Mr. Reddy going to the extent of saying there was nothing wrong in shooting or hanging Mr. Naidu for his failure to keep his election promises. The personal attacks, coming close to incitement of violence, forced the Election Commission to intervene and rap Mr. Reddy for violation of the Model Code of Conduct. The TDP thereafter made it a must-win fight, deploying a whole team of ministers to camp in the constituency, as a loss would have been interpreted as a slide in its popular appeal. With the by-election out of the way, Mr. Naidu should be able to look ahead and focus on his development agenda without being distracted by the vitriol of his younger, relatively inexperienced political rival.

A right for the future

The privacy judgment acknowledges the transformed landscape that the language of rights has to negotiate



LAWRENCE LIANG

The best works of fiction often contain a sentence that captures the essence of what the work is about regardless of how thick the full book is. So too with legal judgments, even when over 500 pages. They often have a sentence that captures its philosophical and political kernel. In *Justice K.S. Puttaswamy (Retd) v. Union of India* that can be found in para 121 of the judgment where Justice D.Y. Chandrachud writes, “When histories of nations are written and critiqued, there are judicial decisions at the forefront of liberty. Yet others have to be consigned to the archives, reflective of what was, but should never have been.” The sentence precedes a critique of judicial embarrassments from the U.S. and India, respectively (*Buck v. Bell* where the courts supported state-sponsored eugenic sterilisation and the infamous *ADM Jabalpur v. Shivkant Shukla* which held that there was no remedy against illegal detentions).

Burden of precedents

While there is much that will be written about the Supreme Court’s decision holding that right to privacy is a fundamental right under the Indian Constitution, I want to focus on the temporal dimension of Justice Chandrachud’s statement. What notions of time do judges call upon when deciding cases they believe will impact liberties in the future? In particular, how do we understand the nature and dilemmas of judicial innovation which – Janus-faced – is bound to the past (by the binding nature of precedent) even as it re-

sponds to unfolding and uncertain futures brought about by technological transformations of life?

Let’s begin with understanding a structural problem that served as the backdrop against which a reference was made to the nine-judge Bench about whether the right to privacy is a fundamental right in India. Like in other instances such as free speech, the Supreme Court has often found itself bound by decisions of larger Benches (constituted at a much earlier time when the court’s rosters had not been as stretched as they are today). The central dilemma is, what are courts to do when they find themselves curtailed by judgments given by larger Benches which are binding by virtue of the Bench strength but otherwise wholly inadequate in terms of their jurisprudential grounding as well as their political consequences? In the present case this was manifested in the form of two judgments (*M.P. Sharma*, a 1954 decision of an eight-judge Bench, and *Kharak Singh*, a 1962 six-judge Bench decision) – both of which had held that there is no fundamental right to privacy.

Kharak Singh was an ambiguous judgment, with the first half of the judgment seemingly making a case for privacy and the second half undoing itself on formal grounds. In his opinion (written on behalf of Justices J.S. Khehar, R.K. Agrawal, and S. Abdul Nazeer), Justice Chandrachud provides us with a fascinating history of the doctrinal evolution of the right to privacy to India. While *M.P. Sharma* and *Kharak Singh* had held that the right to privacy was not a fundamental right in India, the subsequent history of the doctrine as it emerged in future cases decided by smaller Benches is a story of adaptation, mutation and often fortuitous misinterpretation.

The turning point was in *Gobind v. State of Madhya Pradesh* (1975) where a three-judge Bench, while



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staying shy of declaring a right to privacy, nonetheless proceeded with the assumption that fundamental rights have a penumbral zone and the right to privacy could be seen to emerge from precisely such a zone, and they argued that if it were considered a right, it would then be restricted only by compelling public interest. In an erudite paragraph that leaps out of the judgment, Justice K. Matthew observed, “Time works changes and brings into existence new conditions. Subtle and far reaching means of invading privacy will make it possible to be heard in the street what is whispered in the closet.” This prescient observation and its reference to the temporal dimension of problems reiterate the difficulties that courts face when yoked to dated principles and yet compelled to respond to contemporary problems. It is also equally applicable to *Gobind* itself, which benefitted philosophically from *Griswold v. Connecticut* that was decided after *M.P. Sharma* and *Kharak Singh*.

Working around constraints

How then do courts adapt and innovate within a set of formal constraints? It would be helpful to use an analogy from urban studies. Solomon Benjamin and R. Bhuvanewari in their work on

urban poverty argue that in contrast to visible strategies of democratic politics such as protests, the urban poor also engage in ‘politics by stealth’ – a form of participation which relies on a porous and fluid approach that responds to stubborn structures such as the bureaucracy by sneaking up inside them, adapting and slowly transforming the structure itself. Might we think of the history of privacy jurisprudence as a form of ‘doctrine by stealth’ in the best sense of the term? The judgments of the court post the trilogy of *Sharma-Kharak Singh-Gobind* are simultaneously a story of such adaptations even as they serve as an inventory of new technologies of power and control. Thus in *PUCJ v. Union of India* (1996) the court said privacy is not a fundamental right, but telephone conversations are such an integral part of modern life that unauthorised telephone tapping would surely violate the right to privacy. In the *Canara Bank case* (2004), responding to the expectation of privacy for voluntarily given information, the court transformed the legal fiction that the *Gobind* decision was based on (“assuming privacy is right”) into putative reality by attributing to *Gobind* the holding that privacy is indeed an implied right.

Critics of the Supreme Court may argue that this haphazard development of doctrine can have disastrous consequences in terms of a theory of precedents and some aspects of the court’s track record (where it often ignores its own precedents) would certainly support such a critique. Yet at the same time, looking at the diverse contexts in which the question of privacy has been adjudicated (validity of narco analysis, intrusions by media, sexuality as identity, safeguards of personal data, etc.), one cannot but appreciate the necessary distinction between a hierarchical command structure-

bound approach to judicial innovation versus an evolutionary perspective that is able to accommodate contingencies by adapting.

A future-ready right

Senior advocate Arvind P. Datar describes the judgment as articulating a right for the future – an apt characterisation to which I would add a further question: what kind of (present) futures will such a right speak to? The numerous historical references to media, urbanisation and technology in the judgment intimate a judicial intuition of the transformed landscape of personhood that the language of rights has to negotiate and a recognition of the challenge of living in what French philosopher Gilles Deleuze terms control society, where surveillance is not about the eavesdropping constable but self-submission to mandatory ID cards and corporate-owned computer servers.

The judgment might then be the first instance of the articulation of a human right in a post-human world (where the human as a natural subject finds herself inseparably enmeshed within techno-social networks). In that sense the location of the right to privacy within a natural rights tradition by the court seems a little archaic and romantic. For a judgment that is refreshingly unapologetic about its philosophical and jurisprudential ambitions, one hopes that in addition to the regulars of the liberal canon (John Locke, John Stuart Mill, Ronald Dworkin) one will start seeing the slow appearance of philosophers from science and technology studies if we are to truly articulate a jurisprudence for the future. But for now, let’s celebrate the first steps which this judgment takes.

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Diary of an unusual year

Urjit Patel’s continued silence on demonetisation is affecting the image of the RBI



PUJA MEHRA

When Urjit Patel was elevated to the post of Governor of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) a year ago, among the qualities that recommended him were his orthodoxy, technical competence and evident indifference to the limelight. He trained in macroeconomics at highbrow campuses, picking up BSc, MPhil and PhD degrees from the London School of Economics, University of Oxford, and Yale University, respectively. His expertise on India goes back to the 1991 reforms that he had, as the International Monetary Fund’s deputy resident representative in New Delhi, monitored up close.

An impressive CV

A deputy governor of the RBI since 2013, he was disposed well towards maximum convergence with Delhi. Those acquainted with Mr. Patel’s economic philosophy were somewhat surprised at the choice, for he

has never once throughout his career demonstrated an inclination for adventurism, and enjoys a reputation for conservatism. He is a firm believer in institutional checks that force governments – even the myopic and opportunistic regimes – to pick economically sound policies over those influenced by electoral calculations.

On out-of-turn interest rate cuts and other wild expectations, it was thought he’d be no more likely to yield to Delhi than his high-profile predecessor, Raghuram Rajan, was. A lot of his time in the RBI had been spent reshaping and retooling monetary policy, to insulate it from precisely such pressures. The manner of Mr. Rajan’s exit from the RBI, after a high-pitch campaign questioning his integrity, suggested the replacement would be someone pliable, a trait Mr. Patel did not seem to possess.

Living up to expectations, he has not toed Delhi’s line on interest rates. On the rare occasion, he has spoken plainly, coldly and publicly to powerful politicians, advising against an ill-informed policy: his denouncement of loan waivers came barely hours after Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath announced he was go-

ing ahead with his party’s poll promise to farmers. But the first year of this governorship is an unusual one, and cannot be judged on the usual metrics. Demonetisation puts Mr. Patel into sharp focus.

Mr. Rajan had established his voice as one that could be relied upon to tell us if something was amiss. He would let us know what the situation was, and what it ought to be – for instance, he got bank books combed for hidden bad loans that would have otherwise gone undetected. Mr. Patel has kept his public utterances to the minimum. We don’t know whether he too saw demonetisation as an ineffective policy tool for controlling black money and corruption, if he too found it unkind and unjust to the honest and vulnerable, and if it was bound to inflict undue economic hardships on people. In this, Mr. Patel’s silence is puzzling. Demonetisation does appear to be just the sort of policy tool he tends to be disapproving of.

The power to say ‘no’ to government over demonetisation may not be available to the RBI, as it is bound legally to manage currency. But did the Governor try to buy time to arrange some supplies of the new notes? It is unclear what



REUTERS

the RBI’s role in demonetisation was: of a bystander or a participant. All information related to demonetisation is being withheld on grounds of national security. The government has blocked all queries related to demonetisation, including from the press, RTIs and parliamentary committees. Initially, the RBI had been transparent. Details of banned notes tendered were published daily at the end of the day on its website. It even gave a few replies to RTIs. But opacity soon set in; and now it continues to adhere to the gag orders from Delhi.

The window for turning in the demonetised notes closed on December 30. Months later, the central bank is still not done counting, and is unable to say how many were turned in. Not only is the

delay tardy, it is holding up evidence-based assessment of the extent of success or failure of the note ban. Without the data, how much black money was extinguished, if any at all, cannot be estimated.

Stuck with the blame

Trouble is, with the RBI taking full blame for demonetisation’s messy execution and the missing numbers, its public standing has suffered. Mr. Patel’s own reputation too has taken a beating; even senior parliamentarians can’t resist making fun of the Governor publicly. Meanwhile, the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party has picked rich electoral dividends on the issue of demonetisation, riding on its putative successes in penalising the corrupt. The rise in political popularity has come alongside an erosion in institutional credibility. It must be asked: if the idea of demonetisation originated in government, then why is the RBI getting the flak for it?

This is the context in which Mr. Patel’s continuing silence has put the RBI, one of India’s most respected institutions, at the centre of a political issue.

Puja Mehra is a Delhi-based journalist

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.

Making India proud

Saina Nehwal, who stood along the railings and watched the World Badminton Championships final in Glasgow before P.V. Sindhu and Nozomi Okuhara, reportedly walked up to Pullela Gopichand and said, “*Mera petrol khatam ho gaya dekhte dekhte* (I ran out of fuel just watching this game). Wonderful match.” (“Touching distance” and “Sindhu loses epic final to Okuhara”, Aug. 28) This was truly a nail-biting finish and it is unfortunate that Sindhu was finally defeated. The real winner was badminton. For India, this was a historic day as two of our badminton players stood on the podium to receive medals. The nation is extremely proud of both of them.

BIDYUT KUMAR CHATTERJEE, Faridabad

After winning the silver medal in the Rio Olympics last year, P.V. Sindhu has been under a lot of pressure

to perform at her best. Many hearts would have skipped a beat watching this final. Such close encounters only help create more interest in the game. In a country which is obsessed with cricket, it is heartening that players like Saina Mirza, Saina Nehwal, and P.V. Sindhu are able to grab attention for tennis and badminton. People were similarly hooked to the ICC Women’s World Cup final, although it’ll take more time to shake off the glitter from men’s cricket. Sports federations should make more efforts to encourage women to take up sports right from the school level. Saina, Sania, and Sindhu are great inspirations.

V. SUBRAMANIAN, Chennai

Haryana held hostage

It was disheartening to see that Haryana leaders gave more importance to vote-bank politics than people’s safety (“Anarchy in Panchkula”, Aug. 28). This

episode tells us clearly what is wrong with the leaders of this country. These so-called god-men have established and sustained their power by taking advantage of people’s vulnerabilities and beliefs. One thing is clear though, and this gives some hope: no one is above the law, as Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh’s conviction and sentence show.

VRINDA RAJVANSHI, New Delhi

It is a terrible irony that millions gathered in the national capital just five years back to protest against increasing incidents of rape and thousands gathered last week to the capital to riot in support of a rapist. People should think rationally instead of believing blindly in religion.

GUNASEKAR T., Chennai

While our brave soldiers guard our borders, there are others who expose evils

within a country and protect us from them (“The man who exposed Dera chief paid with his life”, Aug. 28). The journalist, Ramchandra Chhatrapati, safeguarded the very conscience of his profession by exposing the flagrant practices of Singh. This is what journalism is all about. It is high time he is accorded the status that he deserves. The nation salutes him.

ABHISHEK SINGH TOMAR, Bhiwadi

The Prime Minister’s belated statement (“The guilty will be punished, says Modi”, Aug. 28) appears to be hollow and ineffective after the colossal damage that has been done to property and the number of lives that have been lost all because the law was *allowed* to take its course. The unruliness has been such that the judge pronouncing the verdict had to be given security! This is a classic example of the increasing level of violence in India

sponsored by self-styled ‘god-men’ who enjoy the support of those in power. J. EDEN ALEXANDER, Thanjavur

A sad reader

Respected Sir/Madam, I was very concerned to hear the news that J. Mathrubootham is not going to write letters for more than a month in your esteemed newspaper (“I will be back, warns J. Mathrubootham”, Aug. 27). This news has thrown my entire family’s schedule in disarray. This is the only column we read every Sunday, while sitting in the living room and drinking tea. It is very disappointing to know that we cannot do

this for the next one month. My son, who generally reads out aloud the letter, is very upset and my daughter is looking blank.

Sir/Madam, Onam is a good festival and generally we visit our home in Palakkad for a maximum of ten days. Beyond ten days everybody will start asking, ‘when you are going back’, ‘any issues with your job’, ‘is your company OK’, etc. Since you have taken the decision to go ahead, we wish you a happy Onam and expect to hear from you in October. Yours in expectation, R. ROCHIT AND V. RAJENDRAN, Visakhapatnam

MORE LETTERS ONLINE: www.hindu.com/opinion/letters/

CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS: >> The photo caption in the Sports page report, “Brilliant Bumrah restricts Sri Lanka” (August 28, 2017, early editions), erroneously said Chamara Kapugedera was bowled by Jasprit Bumra. It should have been Axar Patel.

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: +91-44-2818257/28556300 (11 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Friday); Fax: +91-44-28552963; E-mail: readers.editor@thehindu.co.in; Mail: Readers’ Editor, The Hindu, Kasturi 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

Spot the similarities

Recent developments threaten the long-cherished unity in diversity in India and Indonesia



PALLAVI AIYAR

Southeast Asia's largest economy, Indonesia, has often felt like a moderate oasis in an angry, global desert of religious extremism. Until only a few months ago two of the Muslim-majority nation's most important, if unlikely, leaders, President Joko Widodo and Jakarta Governor, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, embodied this optimism.

They were unlikely because neither came from the usual bastions of political power: the military, big business, political dynasties or the Islamic establishment. Mr. Widodo is the son of a carpenter who ran a successful furniture business before entering the political fray in 2005 as Mayor of a mid-sized city, Solo. He eventually became Governor of Jakarta in 2012 and went on to run for President in 2014.

Mr. Purnama is even more of an outlier as a Christian of Chinese descent, two minority groups with which mainstream Indonesian society has historically had a difficult relationship. About 88% of Indonesians are Muslim and the archipelago's Chinese community has periodically been subject to pogroms. Mr. Purnama shot to national attention first as Vice-Governor of Jakarta under Mr. Widodo. He later ascended to the governorship after Mr. Widodo's presidential win.

In the 2014 elections Indonesian voters eschewed identity politics in favour of policies. Mr. Widodo's main opponent was Prabowo Subianto, a former military general with massive financial backing and the support of the majority of Indonesia's Islamic parties. His campaign was linked to fake news memes portraying Mr. Widodo as a Christian (he is a Javanese Muslim) in an attempt to use the religious card against him. And yet, Indonesia chose a humble man with a commitment to pluralism and clean government, thereby providing a refutation of the pernicious argument that the only viable path for poor, populous nations is authoritarianism.

Mr. Purnama, in the meantime, maintained consistently high approval ratings as Jakarta Governor stemming from his widely acknow-



Downfall: "Jakarta Governor Basuki Tjahaja Purnama's sentence on charges of blasphemy was a punch in the gut of Indonesian liberalism." His supporters weep after hearing the verdict in Jakarta. ■ AP

ledged ability to get things done. Amongst his achievements were settling minimum wages, calling for free school education and health care, reducing traffic congestion and tackling corruption in government. But three years after taking over the reins in Jakarta, Mr. Purnama is currently languishing in jail. He was sentenced to two years' imprisonment in May this year on charges of blasphemy. It is a punch in the gut of Indonesian liberalism.

Rise of vigilante Islamists

Mr. Purnama's slow-motion downfall began in September last year when right-wing vigilante groups began alleging that he had committed blasphemy while on the campaign trail for his 2017 re-election. The 'blasphemy' consisted of telling voters that they shouldn't be duped by religious leaders who misuse the Koranic verse Al-Maidah 51 to justify claims that Muslims should not have non-Muslim leaders.

In the ensuing months, extreme Islamist groups like the FPI (Front Pembela Islam or The Islamic Defenders Front) whipped up religious sentiments using social media and organised a series of anti-Purnama demonstrations, some of the largest ever to jam Jakarta's streets. After years of playing a relatively fringe role in Indonesian politics, Islam as a political mobiliser emerged as a force to be reckoned with.

Most worryingly, the mantle of representing Islam in Indonesia is edging away from mass-based Islamic groups like the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah that are, to varying degrees, supportive of

Indonesia's syncretic traditions. Until recently, organisations like the FPI were anathema to mainstream politicians, and known largely as fringe groups that smashed up bars and disrupted concerts by Western pop musicians.

The reasons for this shift are complex and include internal divisions within traditional Islamic organisations like the NU, a rising tide of popular conservatism resulting in part from Saudi-funded and trained preachers, and finally the cynical collaboration of otherwise "moderate" politicians who are using extremist groups for personal political gain.

The politician who eventually defeated Mr. Purnama in the Jakarta election, Anies Baswedan, was formerly thought of as the quintessential "moderate" Muslim. With a PhD from the University of Northern Illinois on 'Democracy and Decentralisation', Mr. Baswedan was the rector of one of Indonesia's leading universities. During the campaign, however, he shelved all progressive credentials in favour of vote garnering, throwing in his lot with the likes of the FPI, with whose leaders he made public appearances. At one point he even compared the election to the AD 624 Battle of Badr when the Prophet Muhammad faced an army of non-Muslims.

The space for non-Muslims to make personal comments in public or on social media is shrinking. According to Human Rights Watch, 16 people have been persecuted and sentenced for blasphemy in the last three years. One example is that of Donald Ignatius Suyanto, a chef who uploaded a video on YouTube last

year in which he questioned the integrity of the Islamic *shahada*, or statement of faith. Following complaints by some Muslim bloggers, he was arrested for blasphemy last month and is behind bars awaiting trial. Again, earlier this year, Aking Saputra, a real estate executive, opined on Facebook that the majority of cadres of the Indonesian Communist Party (banned since 1966) had been Muslim clerics. He is now facing trial on blasphemy charges.

Resonance with India

The similarities between India and Indonesia are many. The world's largest and third-largest democracies are home to multiple languages, ethnicities, cultural customs and religions. Nonetheless they have defied, thus far, the exclusions implicit in the European concept of the ideal nation state, wherein a single religion, single language and single ethnicity are assumed to be the only "natural" basis for a sustainable political unit. They could be the best examples the world has of the possibility of successfully generating a common identity out of seemingly irreconcilable multiplicity.

Neither are theocracies, nonetheless religion has an active space in the public life of both nations, unlike in 'secular' Europe. Other than Islam, Indonesia recognises five official religions, each with substantial numbers of adherents: Hinduism, Buddhism, Protestantism, Catholicism, and Confucianism. Theirs is not the classic secularism of separation of state and church, but rather one of equal respect for all religions. They could consequently be important experiments in developing a third way for countries where religion remains a valuable part of the identity of most citizens, but where the more exclusionary and intolerant aspects of religion are held in check.

Recent developments from the increasing operationalisation of blasphemy laws in Indonesia, to the lynching of Muslims and suspected beef-eaters in India, are pouring cold water over these hopes. In the past, India and Indonesia have defied various pessimistic predictions ranging from their 'inevitable' Balkanisation to their descent into mass sectarian strife. But what of the future? The 2019 general elections in both countries will hold some answers.

Pallavi Aiyar has reported from China, Europe, Indonesia and Japan. She is a Young Global Leader with the World Economic Forum

The stories rocks tell

Efforts need to be taken to safeguard our geological heritage



C.P. RAJENDRAN

Travelling from Bengaluru International Airport to the city's downtown, you cannot escape the ugly sight of a billion-year-old granite hillock being vandalised in the name of quarrying. Once a hillock with a panoramic view, it has now been reduced to half its size. This is just one of several cases of regular destruction of India's geological heritage. The fact that the country accounts for more than 30% of stone production in the world speaks volumes about the magnitude of quarrying and excavation. Apart from marble that dominates the stone production industry, export of what is collectively called granite – the term encompasses diverse suites of metamorphic and igneous rocks – fetches billions in foreign exchange.

This industry is unscientifically mined and managed, is generally outside the pale of public scrutiny, and remains unregulated. Weak environmental laws govern it. The area under stone mining operations exceeds more than 10% of the total area of India and if these activities are allowed to go on unchecked, especially in the context of current developmental interests, India's topography and geological heritage stand to be lost forever. We need sustainable conservation approaches to safeguard our natural geological heritage as has been done in the area of biodiversity.

Non-cultural heritage

Geological diversity includes rocks, minerals, fossils, and landscapes that have evolved over billions of years. India's tumultuous geological past is recorded in its rocks and landscapes and should be considered as our non-cultural heritage. Unfortunately, geological conservation is an ignored subject in the country.

Geological features that should be declared as national assets include bodies of unusual rock types, landforms that preserve records of natural events of the past, significant fossil localities, stratigraphic type sections, areas where significant advances in geology have been made, and deposits of particular minerals. For example, the now-defunct Kolar gold mines should be developed into a geological museum with an educational outreach unit for students. Indian geo-diversity can boast of the world's greatest mountain peaks, coral reef islands, coastal dunes, and large inland waterbodies and wetlands. A variety of rocks, minerals, and distinctive fossil assemblages can be found in a number of places. For instance,

Kutch in Gujarat and its vicinity contain dinosaurian fossils of the Mesozoic age (200 million years), but many geological sections in that region are lost forever due to construction of highways and real estate development. It is ironic that while on the one hand we aim to go to Mars in search of evidence of early life, on the other, we destroy in our own backyard precious evidence of early life.

Japan offers a good lesson in conservation of geo-diversity. The Kobe earthquake memorial park preserves a section of the fault line (around 150m) which ruptured during the 1995 disaster through the town of Hokudan. The 1993 earthquake in Latur, Maharashtra, had also generated a vertical ground rupture of 1m near Killari town, but I doubt we have ever considered creating an earthquake memorial park around this feature, or a suitable memorial in the areas affected by the 2004 tsunami. The collective memory of such natural tragedies reinforced through such efforts will prepare communities over generations to meet such eventualities. Memories help us to have existential reconstructions – a means by which people make sense of their lives.



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The Geological Survey of India is the agency entrusted with the protection of geological features. Its website suggests that more than 26 sites have been selected as part of its commitment to preserve them for posterity. However, we are yet to see a concerted strategy from officials to do this. A major challenge for Indian geologists is the creation of a complete inventory of geological structures in the country and to ensure that all government plans take full account of the country's geological heritage. Educational outreach programmes about these treasures need to be organised for officials and politicians. Most importantly, we need to evolve practical mechanisms to ensure that our geological heritage survives in the long term. Geo-conservation should be a major factor in land use planning, and a stringent legal framework needs to be evolved to support such conservation strategies. Our history does not begin at Harappa and Mohenjodaro; it goes back a billion years.

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SINGLE FILE

The cult of Rooney

For those who supported United in the 2000s, England was the default choice largely because of one man

N. SUDARSHAN



In October 2002, when the mighty Arsenal arrived at Goodison Park, Everton's home ground, on the back of a 30-game unbeaten streak, little did it know that it would be felled by a thunderous 30-yard drive by a cherubic 16-year-old.

Arsene Wenger, one of the best minds in football and an even better purveyor of great young talent, claimed afterwards that he hadn't seen that good a player aged below 20 since he became manager at Arsenal. Wenger had arrived from France more than six years earlier.

As Wayne Rooney announced his retirement from international football last week, after having displaced Bobby Charlton as England's record goal-scorer (53) and overtaken David Beckham as the country's most-capped outfield player (119), not just Wenger but a legion of football fans would have been vindicated.

When Rooney lit up Euro 2004, scoring four goals in his first three matches, he was seen as destiny's child. England's only major title was – and still is – the 1966 World Cup and no one seemed better placed than him to unburden the country of this weight of history. A broken metatarsal ended those hopes in that tournament, but he was more than a dying ember.

That he never reached those dizzying high levels in another major competition – he played six of them – will forever be held against him. But underachievement in tournaments, as the great Lionel Messi would also attest, is often a problem of the collective and it cannot be helped that the talisman will always be blamed. To those outside England, Rooney's cult was largely built in the colours of Manchester United for whom he played for 13 long years, won every trophy there was to be won, and ended as the highest goal-scorer. He was very much the product of the television era as the English Premier League, in its sanitised, post-hooliganism version, was beamed right across the world. For a generation which grew up in the 2000s supporting United, England was the default choice largely because of allegiance to one man.

Rooney may not figure in everybody's list of the best footballers ever but in his prime he was an irrepressible blend of pace, power, awareness and potency in front of the goal. At a time when football is increasingly regimented and technical, nothing may ever have the same unshackling effect a lung-busting run by a player like Rooney might.

In the past two years, Rooney has been a diminished force. After failing to nail down a place under Jose Mourinho at United, the 31-year-old was dropped from the England squad in early 2017. Yet, such was the level of professionalism he displayed that Mourinho declared, "Wayne is the captain, no matter what – on or off the pitch."

It is perhaps a measure of the same selflessness that Rooney called it a day when he was back in favour with the national set-up after an encouraging start at his boyhood club Everton. Only six caps separated him from Peter Shilton's English record, but it was not something he wanted through token cameo appearances as a substitute. He left on his own terms.



CONCEPTUAL Quinque viae THEOLOGY

Also known as the Five Ways, Quinque viae refers to a set of five logical arguments to prove the existence of god. One of them is that the marvels of the world cannot be explained except by the existence of an intelligent creator. The other four are based on the logic that everything must have an original cause. The arguments were proposed by Catholic religious philosopher St. Thomas Aquinas in his 13th century book *Summa Theologica*. Aquinas believed that while god may not be obvious to the human mind, his existence can be recognised through observation of how the world works, which in turn served as the basis for his five arguments for god.

MORE ON THE WEB

Timeline: the story of the Doklam stand-off

<http://bit.ly/Doklamtimeline>

ABSTRACT

Weapons of mass distraction

How China handles discussions on social media

SRINIVASAN RAMANI

If in India the emergence of social media as a "new public sphere" has given an impetus to opinion-generation in a largely free society, how has this impacted a single party-ruled country like China? How has the Communist Party-ruled regime intervened in social media? This is what Gary King et al. seek to answer in "How the Chinese government fabricates social media posts for strategic distraction, not engaged argument" (*American Political Science Review*, 2017).

The authors find that the Chinese government intervenes in social media to prevent any collective action over issues that might ultimately threaten the regime. The government aims to distract participants from engaging in critical issues. The authors try to ascertain if there is a set of participants engaged by the regime who are into "astro-turfing" –

"posting fabricated social media comments as if they are the genuine opinions of ordinary Chinese people". They rely on a large tranche of leaked emails from the Internet Propaganda Office of Zhanggong in Ganzhou, Jiangxi Province, to find out about the existence of social media participants termed the "50c party".

Using novel methods of content, network analysis, and categorisation, the authors then classify the content posted online by the 50c party obtained from the tranche. They find patterns and connections which they extrapolate into forming an understanding of the 50c party's functioning in the rest of the social media universe in China. They then find that the bulk of the content posted by the 50c party (estimated to be around 448 million posts a year) corresponds to cheerleading for regime positions/ policies/ leaders; or factual reporting

about government policy or activity; or non-argumentative praise or suggestions for activity such as housing and welfare projects. The commonly understood role of the 50c party as speculated by journalists and earlier academics was that these were social media commentators paid by the Chinese regime to engage in "taunting foreign countries" or "argumentative praise or criticism" of opinions that are unfriendly to the regime.

The authors negate these ideas. They say the Chinese regime is keen on mediating opinion on social media only to the extent that the criticisms and arguments do not amount to collective action. Engaging in "flame wars" and arguments only has the potential of prolonging critiques and it is precisely the reason why the 50c party engages only in posting non-controversial issues as a means of distraction.

FROM The Hindu. ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO AUGUST 29, 1967

Sabarigiri heralds new era

Amidst scenes of great enthusiasm, undampened by the pouring rains, the Moozhhiyar power station of the Sabarigiri project, Kerala's first big hydro-electric project, was formally commissioned by the Vice-President, Mr. V.V. Giri, here [Moozhhiyar (Kottayam Dt.) this afternoon [Aug. 28]. As Mr. Giri pressed a button, the veil over the tablet parted, the front shutters of the power house rolled up and the generators started spinning, amidst thunderous applause. The roar of the machines and the rushing of the waters, accompanied by the display of fire works sent a thrill through the large gathering. Earlier, on his arrival at the power house, the Vice-President was given a big reception. Three captioned elephants and school girls holding plates containing lighted wicks and auspicious offerings greeted Mr. Giri and other invitees including Mr. Herbert P. Piwack, Minister Counselor of U.S. Embassy in India.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO AUGUST 29, 1917

Hindus enfranchised in Canada.

The Soldiers' Voting Bill is now practically through the Dominion House of Commons [in Ottawa] as amended in Committee. It enfranchises all overseas soldiers enlisted in Canada. Those who are not regularly domiciled will vote as if they were living in the constituency in which they enlisted. Right to vote is conferred on Hindus of British Columbia and also on Canadian Indians serving overseas.

DATA POINT

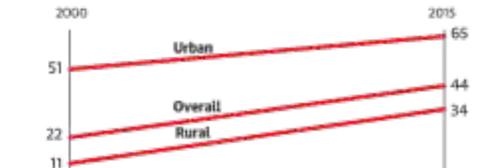
Essential strides

A WHO/UNICEF study on the extent of the use of basic drinking water and sanitation services in various countries documents the impact of 'Swachh Bharat' in India since 2014

Access to basic drinking water service in India (proportion of population %)



Access to basic sanitation service in India (proportion of population %)



A basic drinking water service involves the use of drinking water from an 'improved source', and a basic sanitation service the use of 'improved sanitation facilities' like certain types of toilets
Source: Progress on drinking water, sanitation and hygiene: 2017 update and SDG baselines, WHO/UNICEF