



A thought for today

Neither India nor China can defeat the other

DALAI LAMA

Guard Up

New Delhi must prepare for a long term Chinese strategy of containment

With the Doklam standoff between Indian and Chinese troops at the India-China-Bhutan trijunction continuing, there are signs that the entire Line of Actual Control (LAC) will witness turbulent times ahead. On Tuesday Indian and Chinese troops pelted stones at each other at Ladakh after Chinese soldiers attempted to intrude into Indian territory. This comes after incursions by the Chinese side into a mutually agreed demilitarised zone at Barahoti, Uttarakhand, late last month. Experts believe that the Chinese People's Liberation Army could be trying to occupy a border territory similar to Doklam as a face saver. With an important party congress of the Chinese Communist Party coming up later in the year, the ruling dispensation in Beijing needs to show it has prevailed over New Delhi.

This means that India has to be extra vigilant against Chinese designs, both at the LAC and elsewhere. Although full-scale armed conflict still remains unlikely, Beijing won't hold back in unleashing psychological warfare and cyber bullying against New Delhi. The strident Chinese rhetoric on Doklam and incursions in other areas seem to be part of this strategy, which aims to defeat opponents without firing a bullet. New Delhi needs to be aware of this strategy of containing it – whose overall objective can only be setting up a unipolar Asia where everyone is forced to kowtow to Chinese demands – and come up with its own counter-measures. These must include shoring up its cyber defences.

In this context, the decision by the US to elevate its strategic consultations with India through a new 2-by-2 ministerial dialogue is welcome. Similarly, India is ramping up multi-sectoral engagement with Asean nations, many of whom have disputes with China. New Delhi should not hesitate to work with Tokyo, Djakarta, Hanoi, Taipei and other like-minded Asian capitals.

Finally, China's biggest strategic vulnerability is its trade surplus with most nations aided by unfair import barriers imposed by Beijing, of which India has certainly been a victim. With Chinese-made products and components flooding the Indian market there are concerns regarding security and data leaks. New Delhi has done well to start a review of imports of Chinese IT products and electronics which could become tools for hacking and procuring sensitive information. Beijing surely has no moral ground to complain, and if it starts a trade war it will be on the losing side.

Teenagers In Danger

Blue Whale challenge exposes many socio-psychological vulnerabilities

Technology is a mixed blessing. For children it can mean enriching new avenues of education as well as better entertainment. But the gadgetry that's such a defining part of their life today also brings with it constantly morphing dangers, which are very difficult for parents to track 24x7. The Blue Whale Challenge, which has been linked to teenage deaths from Russia to America, is a peril that's come to attention in India over the last month. The structure of this 'game' is that over 50 days the victim is given around 50 self-harm tasks, designed to culminate in suicide.

India's IT ministry has now directed top internet platforms like Google and Facebook to remove all links to the online game. This is necessary, but will not go far enough to correct the social predicament that underlies why some children may participate in such deadly online games. For one, there will remain corners of the internet where such dangers will still lurk. Two, many young people were being pushed to suicide even before the existence of such games, for reasons society does not really understand, and it is easy to blame such games as the proximate cause when actual causation is much more nebulous. In that sense the urban legends circulating in Delhi and environs about someone chopping off women's hair are a close analogy. They become ways of naming the state of collective insecurity and free-floating anxiety that we inhabit.

Pressure on young people today is enormous: they are confronted by a dysfunctional education system, support of joint families is gone, parents are overstretched by stresses of modern life. Among the solutions have to be better education as well as better parenting: Talk to the children, have a meaningful engagement with their life and, yes, pay attention to what they are up to online.

Yen for Lutyens

The old boy shows up in the least expected places

Bachi Karkaria

The British architect is celebrated in song and coveted in bungalow. Those drunk on nationalistic power clearly see no contradiction in desperately wanting to live in a colonial hangover. Some of the great unwashed who wash up in Parliament commit their own atrocities as tenants of these colonnaded gems, and, now, in the nightly battle hymn of the Republic, the bitterest grapes of wrath are roared at the 'Lutyens elitists'. Despite all this, Sir Edwin created a lasting legacy: architectural, social and, we thought, uniquely Indian.

No-ji, he was the go-to/must-have architect of the civilised world of the 1930s. His imprimatur is also on the cenotaph in London's Whitehall, country seats in Britain, and the World War I cemeteries of Northern France. A couple of days ago, when the echoes of India at 70 resounded at his Kingsway aka Rajpath, we found him in – Liverpool.

Actually, the city of the Beatles hadn't seen him 'standing there' for nearly a century. But now the 'Lutyens crypt' is the latest tourist attraction on Hope Street, the world's only avenue with a cathedral at each end: the largest Anglican one in the UK, and the modernist Roman Catholic Metropolitan Cathedral of Christ the King where a recent restoration project revealed Liverpool's best-kept secret.

Sir Edwin Lutyens was commissioned to design a cathedral. In 1933, the foundation stone was laid, and the first stage, a crypt, was built. Then WWII put paid to every civilian activity, followed by the familiar story of infestation. The entire project was shelved. But the Catholics still wanted their cathedral. An Anglican architect won the competition, fulfilling the two criteria: it shouldn't cost more than a million pounds and it had to be built in five years. Btw, the Anglican cathedral's designer was Catholic, and it took 70 years.

The grand halls of Lutyens's once-forgotten crypt house, apart from three tombs, the cathedral's priceless treasury and historical exhibits. In the edifying blend of sacred and secular now common in the West, it's also the venue of, et al, the annual beer festival.

What would make Sir Edwin turn in his own tomb? To be reviled as 'elitist' in India or, closer home, be glorified in 'a monument to the greatest building never built'?

Alec Smart said: "Pushing referees? Ronaldon't!"

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Who Will Save Our Children?

Go beyond immediate causes and buck passing on Gorakhpur child deaths, fix systemic failures

Ali Mehdi



Seventy child deaths on the eve of 70 years of Independence! The nation is shocked. Two doctors at the state-run BRD hospital were held responsible and removed by the Uttar Pradesh government. In its defence, the state government has been quoting statistics to prove that there has been a pattern of child deaths in Gorakhpur in August especially due to the long-standing problem of encephalitis – and, by implication, that it cannot be held responsible with just five months in power.

While the callous corruption of these two doctors may have been the immediate cause of child deaths in this particular case, who do we hold responsible for the systematic pattern of child deaths in Gorakhpur, or in UP and the country at large? India has been the world's largest contributor to all levels of child deaths since 1953 – the first year for which we have Indian data available. Starting out with nearly 4.7 million deaths a year under the age of five years (U5), it took us almost three decades to bring them down to 4 million a year.

Between 1969 and 1979 China reduced U5 deaths by 2.4 million, the highest in a decade in any country in recorded history. The beginning of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) did accelerate the pace of progress in India, but China again outperformed us. As did our neighbours Maldives, Nepal and Bangladesh between 1990 and 2015, to achieve their MDG targets on child survival.

We did not achieve our MDG targets, despite having a lower U5 mortality rate than our neighbours in the pre-MDG era. Maldives actually recorded the highest decline in the rate not just in South Asia, but in the entire world during the MDG period. We could dismiss the achievements of our neighbours on the ground that they are small countries. But can't we learn from their political commitment to child survival? Secondly, what about China, whose population size is



Clearly, sanitation and nutrition are not responsibilities of hospitals and doctors – although they can adopt measures to mitigate some of their impact – and are influenced by people's socioeconomic status, especially educational and economic status, as well as the efficacy and equity of municipalities and nutritional interventions of the government. While health systems and doctors are the immediate causes of child deaths, structural failures are responsible in the final run.

Is it the fault of parents that they are poor and illiterate – or that their localities are not cleaned by the municipalities? To a degree, their own socioeconomic status could be. But even a libertarian like Milton Friedman argued for 'paternalistic concern for children' and the 'financing of education' by the government on the grounds that holding parents responsible for children 'rests on expediency rather than principle'.

A state health officer in Lucknow told me in 2009 that poor people keep producing children and expect us to take care of them. Again, it is the economically and educationally weak who have more children. No matter how you approach the issue, the buck would ultimately stop at the state. Present governments have to accept their share of responsibility, but we as a nation and the Indian state since Independence are also responsible for the broader pattern of child deaths.

Social and systemic injustices have played their own set of roles. People are poor and uneducated because of both sorts of injustices. Confining ourselves to immediate medical causes is not going to take us far in addressing the systematic pattern of child deaths – we will have to go way beyond. If it is true that people get the government they deserve, can we, on our part, pledge that we will only vote for candidates who put forth a concrete vision for saving our children – the future of our nation – and will not indulge in social injustices that perpetuate poverty and illiteracy?

The writer leads the Health Policy Initiative at ICRER, Delhi. Views are personal

still larger than ours, and whose GDP per capita was lower than ours until 1990?

I am sure someone will jump up to say – China is an authoritarian country which can get things done, and is not diverse like us. Well, no one is like us as far as our commitment to child survival goes! Do we wish to continue with our uniqueness in this regard?

The story has been similar at lower levels of child survival as well. At the neonatal level (ie during first 28 days of birth), the Bihar states accounted for 55% of all deaths in the country in 2011 – UP (27%), MP and Bihar (10% each) and Rajasthan (8%) – and 15% of the global burden. While China performed even better at this stage, with a 90% decline in number of neonatal deaths during the MDG period, we had 695,852 neonates dying in 2015 – more than 7 times China's.

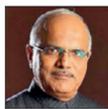
Clearly, with efficient and equitable health systems and doctors – particularly at the primary health care level – many

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of these deaths could have been averted. However, as the UP CM himself argued, in an attempt to shift responsibility to individuals, lack of sanitation was the reason for recent child deaths in his constituency. According to one report, doctors at the BRD hospital claimed, perhaps in their own bid to deflect some responsibility, 70% of children affected by encephalitis who visited the hospital were malnourished.

Redefining party building: Amit Shah is leading BJP with courage of conviction

Vinay Sahasrabudde



On the evening of Narendra Modi's swearing in as prime minister, Amit Shah was in the audience sitting next to a leader of a BJP ally. The alliance party leader informally enquired about Amit Shah's chances of becoming party chief and said it would be a welcome development. Amit Shah politely remarked, tongue in cheek, that the latter's joy may be short lived as in the event of his taking over, BJP may not part with so many seats. The ally leader was stumped by his candour.

Political scientist Rajni Kothari had famously defined what he termed the Congress system of party building. Pointing out the strength of Congress in the late seventies he rightly observed, "Congress is still, and is likely to be for a long time, the most organised political party in the country, with a nationwide following and considerable depth in the localities." Ironically, today's Congress seems to have squandered all that it had earned. And it is BJP that has emerged as the most organised party with pan-India following

and presence in localities.

In fact, that rightly sums up the work of BJP chief Amit Shah. He has, through unrelenting efforts, converted the 'nationwide following' of Prime Minister Narendra Modi into 'considerable depth in the localities'. For any objective political analyst, Shah's work presents a case study of party building.

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When Shah took over in August 2014, BJP was in power in just a handful of states. Today, it has its own chief ministers in 13 states and is a partner in another five states

states and is a partner in another five states. Its membership has increased from three crores to 11 crores. It has the largest number of MLAs and MPs as well. Even in Rajya Sabha, BJP is now the top party. To have achieved this in a span of barely three years is unparalleled and historic.



Through his presidency, Shah has ensured that party cadre remain engaged in one meaningful activity after the other. In the past two years BJP has conducted thousands of training programmes involving over ten lakh party workers. Many of these trained human resources are now engaged in grassroots party work as vistaraks, with their eyes set on party consolidation at the booth level. Over 4000 workers, dedicating six months to a year away from the cosy comforts of their homes, are engaged in this all over the country.

Shah believes in setting an example through his own untiring efforts. During the last few months, he has spent over 60 days undertaking systematic organisational tours to states

across the country. On these tours he interacts with all functionaries, seeks feedback from booth level workers, meets all elected representatives, breaks bread with artists and writers, listens to social media enthusiasts and engages in question-answer sessions, thereby establishing a powerful connect.

Shah richly deserves credit for institutionalising party functioning. He has established an integrated chain of party meetings. Its national executive meets every quarter followed by state, district and taluka executives, ensuring a seamless flow of message from the top and feedback from the ground. Also, from Policy Research to Party Literature and Good Governance to Party Programmes, he has

created 19 party departments with a clear functional mandate.

Besides, he is out to change the very culture of party mobilisation. He wants party workers to be sensitive to the agonies of the underprivileged and aspirations of all. In order to further sensitise party workers, he has also asked party units to undertake some ten projects, three of which have a clear social content.

What is remarkable is his clear vision. He understands very well the importance of groundswell of goodwill, public trust and support earned by Modi. He knows these are the best of times to build upon this capital. Setting up well equipped party offices at every district with a library and e-library, containing rich collection of books, is a key item on his agenda.

Felicitating Shah on his Rajya Sabha election, Modi pointed out that to galvanise party organisation when the party is in power is extremely difficult. But difficulties have never deterred Shah. In his view "electoral success is important, but remember we are not an election winning machine. We are a party with a mission, a mission of reconstructing a great India."

The writer is BJP's National Vice-President

dilbert



The Body As Object Of Mindful Observation

Navtej Johar

Mindfully seeing or witnessing with the inner-eye is integral to the embodied practices that have emerged in the subcontinent over the last 2,500 years.

The Buddha revolutionises the idea of spiritual practice by proposing "mindful seeing" as a mode of enlightenment. After six long years of arduous self-mortifying practices, he realises that: 1) Depriving or arresting movement of the body does not in fact arrest the compulsive flux of the mind; and 2) Spiritual experience is a pleasant one, imbued with sukha and priiti. He proposes vipassana, a method of observing involuntary movements on the screen of the mind, but in a manner that is "special" – detached, unengaged, and non-judgemental, as though witnessing from one-removed.

Drawing heavily from the Buddhist canon, Patanjali, a few centuries later, offers the model of abhyasa with vair-

gya – literally meaning, "practice with detachment" – in the Yoga Sutras. The aim is to disable compulsive turnings of the mind so the "inner-seer" may regain its original and autonomous condition within, unperturbed, unengaged and uncoloured by fluctuating tendencies of the mind. And to this purpose he includes within his model the practice of pranayama, the tempering plus observing of the breath as though it was that of another, seeing from the position of a pari-drishtau.

It may interest practitioners of (hatha) yoga asana, intensely preoccupied with the body, to be introduced to another model proposed by a Kashmiri Shaiva text of the 8th century CE, the Shiva Sutras, in which Vasugupta offers the body, shariram, as the object for detached-spectating, or drishyam.

The "body" here does not imply the body alone but encompasses all phenomena, the objective, perceptible world, that

constitutes "our" vishwa. Swami Lakshmanjoo says, there are "two ways in which this sutra is to be translated. One, this whole objective world is his own self and two, his own body is an object."

While the object of observation shifts from the mind, to breath, and finally to the body in the Buddhist, Patanjali, and Tantra traditions respectively, the idea of detached seeing has remained common and integral to all three. All three objects are categorically material and belong to the phenomenological, perceptible world. All require a practice of cultivating a finely discerning sensitivity in order to open up a breathing space between the perceived object and the perceiving subject, even if they are maybe essentially the same! Yoga, by definition, is the practice of reigning in or disabling the projective tendencies of perception, resulting in, as the Shiva Sutras say, vishwa

samhara, or the destruction of our "perceived" universes.

Somatic practice includes yoga and dance, inspired by both the Yoga Sutras as well as the subsequent Shaiva model of sensitively facilitating and witnessing the body as it mindfully negotiates the external forces of density, gravity, buoyancy, fluidity, airiness, space and time, with the aim to let the body exercise and reveal its sensory intentions, subtle forces and directional pulls within the present moment.

Somatic practice is of both gently observing as well as moving authentically from the inside; it does not subscribe to the more popular "purity" model of being self-correcting and perfectionist in pursuit of an external ideal, even if spiritual. It is the practice of first stationing "self-will" within the physical body, and then moving autonomously from "within" with sensory clarity, awareness, respect. This in turn is a result of the subtle, self-accepting, pleasant and sonorous capacities of the inner-eye.

Sacredspace

True Freedom

What is freedom? To know yourself as the Being underneath the thinker, the stillness underneath the mental noise, the love and joy underneath the pain, is freedom, salvation, enlightenment.

Eckhart Tolle