



Life without GSP

India must not underestimate the impact of the U.S. withdrawal of trade privileges

The U.S. has ultimately acted on its threat to withdraw concessions granted to Indian imports under the Generalised System of Preferences. With President Trump indicating as much in a letter to the House of Representatives and Senate, Washington became the first to pull the trigger in a long trade stand-off between the two countries. India-U.S. trade tensions escalated last year when the U.S. took two consecutive decisions to increase import tariffs on steel and aluminium, and place India's eligibility for GSP benefits under review. Shortly after, India said it would impose retaliatory tariffs on imports from the U.S. and even notified the list of items on which these would apply. Meanwhile, the U.S. stood fast on not exempting India from its tariff hikes, with Mr. Trump complaining about India's high import tariffs several times. The GSP review, however, stretched on, with the two countries holding frequent talks to address the concerns. India, for its part, postponed the deadline for the imposition of the retaliatory tariffs six times; the latest deadline is on April 1. Washington's decision to review India's GSP status stemmed from complaints from American medical and dairy industries, both of which said India was not providing "equitable and reasonable access to its market". India has said it had tried hard to cater to most of the U.S. demands and reach an understanding, but key points of difference, especially regarding India's cultural concerns to do with dairy products, could not be accommodated. Given this, and the fact that the U.S. has been expressing discontent over India's policies to do with data localisation and FDI rules in e-commerce, the decision to withdraw the GSP status should not come as a surprise. The question is, how will New Delhi react?

Following the U.S. announcement, the Commerce Ministry was quick to downplay the impact, saying the GSP benefits amounted to only \$190 million while India's total exports under GSP to the U.S. stood at \$5.6 billion. Indian officials have stressed that talks on the issue would still continue during the 60-day period after which the GSP decision would come into effect. The other option the government can exercise is to impose retaliatory tariffs on U.S. goods. The government's efforts to downplay the impact of the withdrawal of GSP status and express readiness for more talks, however, suggest it is not keen to take a decisively strong stance. It bears emphasis that while the actual amounts at stake are relatively small, with even India's proposed tariffs on the U.S. amounting to just \$900 million, the impact on small industries in the country could nevertheless be significant. Export bodies have already said that such industries would lose their market share in the U.S. without fiscal support to help them maintain their edge. In its absence, orders meant for India could go to other GSP countries, signs of which are already evident.

Algeria for change

President Bouteflika should withdraw his re-election bid

Algerians have been protesting against their aging 82-year-old President, Abdelaziz Bouteflika, who is seeking a fifth term in elections next month. On the last day to file nominations, it was announced that the veteran would cut short his rule if he is re-elected and initiate constitutional reforms. But such vague assurances have had little impact on the protesters in the hydrocarbon-rich nation who are becoming increasingly frustrated with the lack of education and employment opportunities. Mr. Bouteflika, credited with restoring stability in Algeria after a bloody civil war in the 1990s between Islamist insurgents and the military, has remained a figurehead in recent years. Though he has held the post of President since 1999, ever since he suffered a stroke in 2013 he has hardly been seen in public. That, however, did not stop him from contesting the 2014 elections, which he won with a thumping majority, despite being out of action on the campaign trail. But the removal of top-ranking military and intelligence officials in subsequent years sparked speculation about who was really in charge. The government's *modus vivendi* in the years following the civil war was to clamp down on dissent, and hand out generous welfare benefits. Given the turbulence of the civil war years, the initial stability worked well in a country that had grown wary of change. Persisting in that approach enabled the ruling inner coterie to wield real power on behalf of the President. The *status quo* was allowed to persist as the opposition parties failed to rise above their divisions. Algiers even evaded the anti-establishment fervour that had swept several northern African countries during the Arab Spring. Now, Algerians are demonstrating a resolve to move on from being seen as dependents on the state, to assert their rights as citizens.

Mr. Bouteflika's latest re-election bid is being seen as a cynical manoeuvre by his inner circle. The voices of opposition have grown louder, as depleting oil revenues render the government's welfare programmes less sustainable. Moreover, the ruling National Liberation Front's contemptuous remarks against the clamour for change have incensed the public. Unlike in the past, the security forces have been more muted in their response so far. Thus, the government could well be misreading the situation if it believes the crisis will blow over. The military could be making a mockery of the electoral process by insisting on Mr. Bouteflika's candidacy, in effect undermining the highest elected office. It cannot reduce a vibrant society to one that is democratic only in name. Mr. Bouteflika, who is reported to be operating from a hospital in Switzerland, should withdraw from the fray. Algeria needs a new beginning.

Recovering from the Hanoi setback

Whatever the reasons for the collapse of the U.S.-North Korea talks, both sides have kept alive hopes for their revival



RAKESH SOOD

The much awaited Hanoi summit (February 27-28) between U.S. President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un ended abruptly. A working lunch and the signing ceremony were cancelled, leading to speculation that the talks had collapsed. This may be a premature conclusion. Mr. Trump, 72, has shown, time and again, that while he may be a novice at nuclear negotiations, he is a master of 'The Art of the Deal' and a reality TV star. For him, summits are about political timing. Mr. Kim, though less than half Mr. Trump's age seems to have a natural knack for it too. The Trump-Kim bromance is like a three act opera and after two acts (Singapore in June 2018 and Hanoi), this is the Intermission, with a final act yet to unfold.

Suspense about Singapore

Remember the suspense before Act I, which took place despite all odds. There was initial optimism when U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo made a surprise visit last May to Pyongyang, returning successfully with three U.S. detainees. Days later, National Security Adviser John Bolton bungled a spanner in the works by proposing the "Lithuanian model" for North Korea's denuclearisation. North Korea reacted strongly with Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Kim Kye-gwan indicating that it would be forced to reconsider the summit if the U.S. insisted on driving it into a corner. Mr. Trump backtracked, released the letter he had sent to Mr. Kim, expressing regret about the delay and adding that he was still hopeful. He also publicly distanced

himself from Mr. Bolton's remarks by pointing out that what he wanted with North Korea was 'a deal'. South Korean President Moon Jae-in stepped in, visiting Washington in May and, on his return, meeting Mr. Kim at Panmunjom to restore calm. By the end of the month, the vice-chairman of the central committee, Gen. Kim Yong-chol, was in the U.S. meeting Mr. Pompeo and carrying a personal letter from Mr. Kim to Mr. Trump. And the June summit was restored!

While the summit resulted in a joint statement holding out tantalising prospects of establishing a new period of U.S.-North Korea relations, building a lasting and robust peace on the Korean peninsula and Mr. Kim reaffirming his firm commitment to the denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula, what was striking was the growing trust and respect between the two leaders. An unexpected personal chemistry had been established.

Setting the stage for Hanoi

Fast forward to Hanoi, Act II. Expectations were set high. Stephen Biegun, appointed Special Representative for North Korea last year, had hinted that forward movement on ending the 'war' was possible. The 1950-53 Korean War, which led to the division of the peninsula and claimed nearly three million lives, was paused with the 1953 Armistice Agreement. For North Korea, any move towards formalising peace is a step towards regime legitimacy. While a formal peace treaty would require U.S. Senate ratification, political steps towards normalisation would not. North Korea expected some acknowledgement of its continuing restraint with regard to testing and unilateral moves hinting at closing down some test sites.

Both Mr. Trump and Mr. Kim were aware that differences about 'denuclearisation' persisted. For North Korea, it means 'denucleari-



sation of the Korean peninsula', North Korea dismantling its facilities and giving up its arsenal to go hand in hand with a permanent peace that removes the U.S. military threat and normalisation. For the U.S., 'denuclearisation' is front-loaded, implying complete, verifiable and irreversible disarmament that requires North Korea to bring nuclear military activity to a halt, make a full declaration and subject itself to international verification, before sanctions are lifted.

Mr. Trump had indicated that he was happy about the continued ban on nuclear and missile testing and not in a hurry. However, the pitch was queered by intelligence reports surfacing that in addition to the principal nuclear facility (Yongbyon), North Korea had built another uranium enrichment facility at Kangson. It put a question mark on Mr. Kim's commitment to 'denuclearisation'. Another report indicated that though the Punggye-ri test site was shut, continued plutonium production and uranium enrichment during the last 12 months would have enabled North Korea to add up to seven devices to its existing arsenal estimated at 30 devices.

These disclosures diminished the value of North Korea's offer of closing Yongbyon, which houses reactors (one for plutonium production and the older one possibly

for tritium) in addition to an enrichment facility. Mr. Trump had accepted the idea of a road map but instead of working out the details, he prefers to rely on his sense of political timing to conclude a successful deal. Further, there was a growing perception that he was in too much of a hurry, which meant that any agreement would be modest and likely be labelled a bad deal by the non-proliferation hardliners. He cleverly chose 'no deal' to a 'bad deal' - and the curtain came down on Act II.

It seems the U.S. demanded more than Yongbyon, which was more than North was willing to give. Mr. Trump said, "It was all about sanctions. They wanted the sanctions lifted in its entirety and we couldn't do that. Sometimes, you have to walk and this was one of those times." His regret was evident when he added, "When we walked away, it was a very friendly walk." North Korean Foreign Minister Ri Yong-ho claimed they had "demanded only partial sanctions relief in exchange for dismantling Yongbyon". Whatever the reasons, reactions on both sides have been restrained. A return to the rhetoric of 'fire and fury' therefore seems unlikely.

Preparing for Act III

Right now, the mantra in Washington is that no deal is better than a bad deal. Yet, realisation will soon dawn that the current situation only permits North Korea's stockpile to grow as there is zero likelihood for Chinese and Russian support for further tightening of sanctions. There are no plans for a third summit though Mr. Trump said that he "remained optimistic about a positive future outcome", adding, "there is a warmth that we have and I hope that stays." Mr. Pompeo acknowledged "real progress" and said the "U.S. is ready to get back to the table to continue the talks". It is likely that during this Inter-

mission, South Korea will step up its diplomacy with both Washington and Pyongyang. Mr. Moon has played a low-key but critical role in nurturing the process. Domestically, he has staked a lot, having had three meetings with Mr. Kim last year, including one in Pyongyang. Since last May, both sides have refrained from hostile activities and propaganda, the demilitarised zone (DMZ), is peaceful, landmines have been removed and some maritime confidence-building measures put in place. With economic troubles at home and hardliners in Seoul accusing him of being over-optimistic and naive, he is vulnerable. The South Korean Constitution only provides one term for the President and Mr. Moon is confident about the legacy he wants to leave behind.

More has been achieved during the last year since the collapse of the Agreed Framework in 2002 when U.S. President George W. Bush included North Korea in his 'axis of evil' speech. Between then and 2017, North Korea carried out six nuclear tests, including one believed to be a fusion device, and over a 100 missile tests, demonstrating intercontinental ballistic missile capability. Mr. Moon's goal is to register sufficient progress on both 'normalisation' and the 'denuclearisation' tracks so that the process becomes irreversible. Such a breakthrough needs a top-led process.

And so an Act III is likely. The hardliners will eventually recognise virtue in a step-by-step process as long as it is irreversible. A new stage will have to be found, Bangkok, even Hong Kong if China cooperates. But the cost is willing. After all, it is the blossoming of a beautiful relationship.

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Fifty years apart, the story of two OIC fiascos

Reaching out to the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation is morally wrong and politically futile



MOHAMMED AYOOB

India's most recent encounter with the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) bears an uncanny resemblance to India's failed attempt to gain entry to the inaugural session of the same grouping held in Rabat, Morocco, in 1969 and for much the same reasons. In the earlier episode New Delhi lobbied fiercely to wangle an invitation to the meeting. However, on Pakistan's insistence the invitation that had been extended was withdrawn and India was denied membership of the OIC despite its insistence that as the country with the third largest Muslim population in the world it deserved a seat at the "Islamic" table.

Contrary to secularism

I remember writing an oped at the time that New Delhi's bid for membership of the OIC was both morally wrong and politically futile. As a country whose foundational philosophy was based on secularism, it was inappropriate for India to join an organisation whose defining criterion was shared religious identity. In India's case this ap-

plied to all organisations that used religious criteria to define themselves, whether they be Muslim, Hindu, Christian or Buddhist.

Further, since India's membership of the OIC would be perceived as a powerful refutation of the basis on which Pakistan was created, it was bound to object stridently to India's induction into the organisation. Pakistan had great leverage with the conservative Arab monarchies for ideological reasons and because of the fact that its military was willing to provide the Arab monarchies with well-trained soldiers for hire that the latter needed to protect their insecure regimes.

Pakistan at that time also had close relations with Iran and Turkey with whom it shared membership of CENTO (Central Treaty Organisation, formerly the Baghdad Pact) and an anti-Soviet and pro-U.S. orientation. Consequently, Islamabad had much greater clout within OIC circles than did New Delhi and was in a position to thwart Indian attempts to attain OIC membership. As it turned out, my prediction came true. New Delhi's attempt to gain OIC membership led to unnecessary humiliation that could have been avoided had South Block acted with greater forethought.

The situation today is both different and similar to 1969, and this was clearly reflected in India's latest experience with the OIC. In an



apparent gesture of goodwill, the organisers of the OIC Foreign Ministers meeting in Abu Dhabi, which in effect meant the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia invited External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj as the guest of honour and keynote speaker (picture) despite Pakistan's objections. This was both a reflection of India's growing economic and political stature internationally and the desire on the part of the Gulf monarchies to cultivate New Delhi in order to take advantage of the opportunities provided by India's expanding economy and its technologically skilled workforce.

A new twist

However, this is where the difference between 1969 and 2019 ends and the similarities kick in. The impact of Ms. Swaraj's speech, especially her denunciation of terrorism that was clearly aimed at Pakistan, was more than neutralised by a number of events that followed her address. First, the Abu

Dhabi declaration issued at the end of the meeting did not contain even a simple expression of thanks to the Indian External Affairs Minister for addressing the plenary session of the assembly. Furthermore, it failed to mention the fact that Ms. Swaraj was the guest of honour at the meeting and delivered the keynote speech. This omission was very glaring in view of the fact that the document mentioned all sorts of unimportant issues, such as the UAE hosting the 2020 Expo in Dubai.

Second, to add insult to injury, the document's only reference to the India-Pakistan stand-off stated that the OIC welcomes the "positive initiative undertaken by the Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan to hand over the Indian pilot as a gesture of goodwill to de-escalate tensions in the region". The Pakistani "initiative" was given a very positive twist by decontextualising it totally. There was not even an implicit reference to the primary reason that led to the most recent India-Pakistan conflagration, namely, Pakistani support for terrorism as witnessed most dramatically by the attack in Pulwama that killed 40 Central Reserve Police Force personnel.

Third, what was even more galling from the Indian perspective was the resolution on Kashmir that accompanied the Abu Dhabi declaration. This included the phrase "Indian terrorism in Kash-

mir" while condemning what it called "atrocities and human rights violations" in the State. It is clear from this sequence of events and the wording of the documents that emanated from the OIC meeting that despite the invitation to Ms. Swaraj, the leopard has not changed its spots and that Pakistani influence within the organisation has diminished only marginally.

Once again, the Ministry of External Affairs, instead of prematurely celebrating the invitation to Ms. Swaraj to address the Abu Dhabi conference, should have thought long and hard before advising the Minister to accept the invitation. It was particularly incumbent upon the Ministry of External Affairs to do so in light of the resolutions passed by the OIC over the years regarding Kashmir and India-Pakistan issues which had always favoured the Pakistani point of view. It appears from hindsight that the External Affairs Minister's participation in the OIC Foreign Ministers' conclave, like the Indian attempt to gain admission into the Rabat conference in 1969, was nothing short of an avoidable fiasco.

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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.

Veracity of counts

The Indian Air Force has made it clear that it achieved its mission in Pakistan, which has again been reiterated by the IAF chief, Air Chief Marshal B.S. Dhanoa (Page 1, "We hit target in Balakot, didn't count casualties: IAF chief", March 5). Even if one presumes that no terrorist was killed, the Balakot mission sends a clear warning to Pakistan: failure to take action against terrorists will result in India hunting them down. India has demonstrated its capability to do this. This is more important than the evidence of casualties which the government's critics, including the Opposition parties, seem so keen on wanting to know ("Breach

of security or a lie: Yechury", March 5 and "Ahluwalia video creates a furor", March 3).

P. MANGALACHANDRAN,
West Ponniam, Kannur, Kerala

■ It is strange that after the air strikes, a section in India has begun demanding proof of the attack with the exact number of casualties of terror groups. One must support the acts of our defence forces who ensure that we are safe in every corner of India. This demand for proof is embarrassing, indirectly giving the enemies of India an advantage.

ISHANT CHUTTANI,
Bahadurgarh, Haryana

A.P. data breach

The case of alleged data breach in Andhra Pradesh, which investigators are calling possibly "one of the

biggest cases in the world after Cambridge Analytica", is shocking ("Police ask IT firm chief to surrender", March 5). That the breach may also be linked to a political party's app in order to aid it in the election is even more unsettling. The government's recent directive, that allows 10 agencies to monitor citizens' digital footprints, along with reports of "leaks" from the Aadhaar database will disincite people from using digital channels, especially government initiatives, to collect data. This case is yet another instance of why people in India need to be wary of trusting the government with their data. This trust deficit could also seriously impact India's digital revolution. Delaying the promulgation of a data protection law is the

root cause of such breaches as there are no robust mechanisms to hold the perpetrators accountable.

Y. MEENA,
Hyderabad

Blow against inclusion

The Prime Minister's remark made during his recent video-conference with students, when one of them was explaining how her project could help dyslexic children, was insensitive ("PM uses dyslexia to mock Rahul, draws flak", March 5). One wonders whether our leader is even aware of how those diagnosed with dyslexia have achieved greatness in their lives, examples being Alexander Graham Bell, Lewis Carroll, Leonardo da Vinci, John Irving, Pablo Picasso and Lee Kuan Yew, to name a few. He has mocked the differently-

abled, marking a new low in our political discourse. When the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act talks about non-discrimination and respect for persons with disabilities, disability rights activists are well within their rights to demand an unconditional apology.

BIDYUT KUMAR CHATTERJEE,
Faridabad, Haryana

■ As the mother of a dyslexic child - he has other disabilities too - I am pained by the remark. When parents of special children like me try hard to ensure that these youngsters have a better future against the many odds - life is a struggle every day - I find it deeply insensitive and disappointing on the part of the Prime Minister to have made such a crass remark. It is also a reflection of the general and regressive

mindset that one often comes across in India and where many have no idea about different forms of disability.

ANJALI KAPOOR,
Mumbai

Inflight order

It is a disappointment how those managing the largest democracy in the world appear to be dictating every little thing to their citizens. Slogans do not aid in imparting patriotism. Rather than being forced to do something unproductive, the managers of Air India would do well to focus on better things and make the loss-making airline profitable ("Air India crew will now chant 'Jai Hind'", March 5).

MONICA SHARMA,
New Delhi

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THE WEDNESDAY INTERVIEW | SHYAM SARAN

'India really needs to enhance its counterterrorism capabilities'

The former Foreign Secretary on isolating Pakistan diplomatically, the world's responses to the Pulwama attack, and New Delhi's Kashmir policy

VARGHESE K. GEORGE

Shyam Saran, senior fellow at the Centre for Policy Research, is a former Foreign Secretary. He served as the Prime Minister's Special Envoy for Nuclear Affairs and Climate Change and was also chairman of the National Security Advisory Board. Against the backdrop of post-Pulwama India-Pakistan tensions, Mr. Saran explains the important components of India's counterterrorism strategy, says no one has the right to hand out nationalism and patriotism certificates, and calls the coverage on television of terrorism "reprehensible". Excerpts:

Considering where we are, what do you think is the future course of India-Pakistan relations?

I cannot see much happening until the elections in India are over. The nature of the political dispensation that emerges from the elections will decide the direction of bilateral ties later.

Pakistan evokes very strident public opinion in India. Do you think that might continue after the elections also, forcing the government's hand?

Over the years, Indians are getting more and more angry with the continuing support for terrorism by Pakistan, and the stridency can be explained by this fact. One should not be very surprised that there is a very negative perception about Pakistan in India. Having said that, we have to think of how we can find a way out of this. You have to have a strategy that convinces decision makers in Islamabad that continuing with this policy will impose a high cost on Pakistan and it will not be in its interests. That cannot be achieved by angry rhetoric.

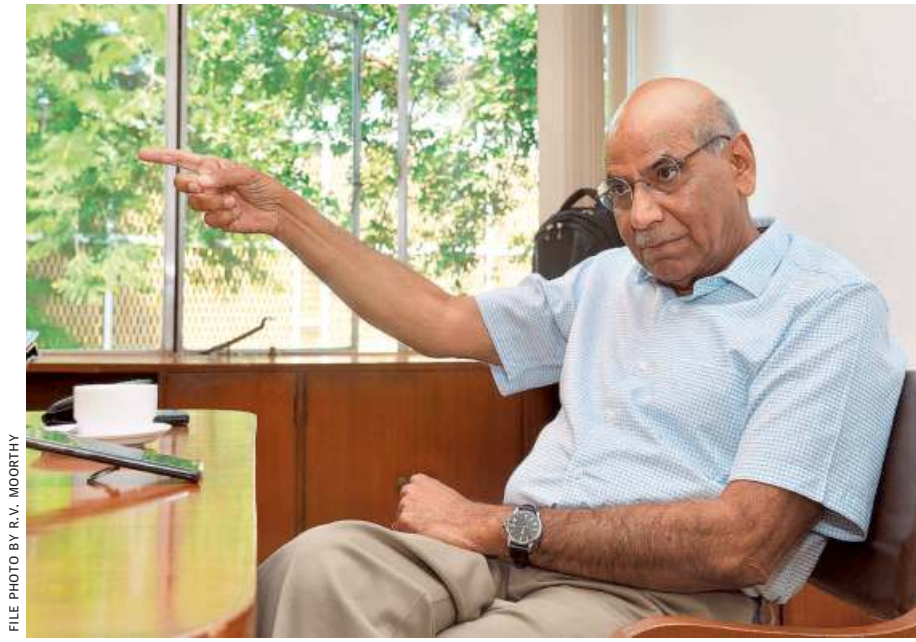
India tried to do that with the deep strikes in Pakistan. That was a message to Pakistan's decision makers. How are they taking this message?

If you look at the situation

objectively, whatever message we may have tried to convey to the Pakistani side, we have not been able to claim significant damage and casualties through evidence that is credible both domestically and internationally. There is also a report - I don't know how credible that is - that our aircraft never crossed the LoC, let alone flew into sovereign Pakistani territory. We have to wait and see what the government has to say on this particular aspect. If that is true, then the deep penetration was through precision-guided missiles and not with aircraft. But still, one could argue that a target deep inside Pakistani territory has been hit and India has lowered the threshold for response. Has it changed the strategic calculus of Pakistan? I don't think so.

So, in the unfortunate event of another terror strike, India will have to better the last response. Are we now bound to an escalation ladder?

That is based on the assumption that we really have no leverage beyond reacting militarily. I think the counterterrorism strategy of India, which has military response as a component, also has other important components. For example, we really need to enhance our own counterterrorism capabilities - in terms of intelligence, neutralising targets,



FILE PHOTO BY R.V. MOORTHY

better SOPs for security forces, better technology. Also, to do more efficiently what we are doing currently, to isolate Pakistan diplomatically. Already, its reputation is at its lowest. It is significant that despite tensions between the two countries, the OIC [Organisation of Islamic Cooperation] still went ahead with the invitation [External Affairs Minister] Sushma Swaraj-ji. So Pakistan is facing international pressure. Therefore, instead of merely looking at the military options, we need to have a much more comprehensive view on what our counterterrorism strategy should be. Efforts should be made to ensure that such an act of terrorism does not occur again.

There were a lot of initiatives following the 2008 Mumbai terror attack, to develop counterterrorism capabilities, such as the idea of a National Counter Terrorism Centre. Is the progress of these initiatives disappointing for you?

I think a lot of new me-

You cannot have a solution to the Kashmir issue which is entirely dependent on security measures.

chanisms came into place. For example, the National Investigation Agency. Our technical capabilities have also increased. It should be appreciated that for a hundred successes that you have in preventing terrorist incidents from taking place, there is always the possibility of one failure. That is the nature of the whole phenomenon of terrorism. This fact needs to be appreciated, while we do all we can to make it more and more difficult for a terrorist to plan and carry out an attack. This is also the reason why we must focus on the vulnerabilities on our side. For example, if we are not completely successful in stopping drug-smuggling across the India-Pakistan border, it should come as no surprise that a terrorist could also slip in. Here, counterterrorism is not merely military opera-

tions, but also of governance.

Talking of international response, how do you assess the responses of the U.S., China and Russia to the incident? They appear to be conscious of Pakistan's strategic value.

Well, this is a challenge you will have to deal with yourself. Every country, including India, works according to its national interests. Currently, China has a higher - in fact, unprecedented - level of commitment to Pakistan than before because of the critical role the latter is playing in the Belt and Road Initiative [BRI]. They say that the CPEC [China-Pakistan Economic Corridor] is the flagship project for the BRI. The current U.S. administration has taken some measures against Pakistan, but it also has compulsions connected to its plans for Afghanistan. It has come to the conclusion, wrongly in my opinion, that Pakistan has an important role to play in that. Even when countries are sympathetic to India, have good counterterrorism

cooperation with India, they have other considerations too, and there may be limits beyond which they may not be ready to go in targeting Pakistan.

Is there a new equilibrium between India and Pakistan after this round of conflict?

I don't accept the suggestion of any equilibrium between India and Pakistan. India is a much bigger economic and military power. If you look at the trajectory of these two countries in recent years, the gap between them is only growing. India's growth story, its march towards the status of a great power, has not been impacted even remotely by Pakistan's activities against it. Pakistan's efforts to 'bleed India through a thousand cuts' and derail India's economic success have continuously failed. We should reflect on this fact in our sober moments. On the other hand, by pursuing such a policy against India, Pakistan has ended up with a radicalised society and a vulnerable economy. It has also earned the reputation of being the breeding ground of global terrorism. Pakistan is hurting itself, and today its per capita income is less than that of Bangladesh. So, there is no balance between India and Pakistan to speak of. India should focus more on achieving some approximate balance with China, which is its real challenge. Pakistan, even with its use of cross-border terrorism as an instrument of state policy, is a distraction from dealing with the real issues confronting India in its march towards great power status.

That takes us to the question of the responses within India to terrorism. There is mass hysteria being sought on most mainstream

television channels. How does this impact national security?

Well, what is happening on Indian television these days is reprehensible. At moments like these, we need to have a reasoned debate. We cannot have a situation where anyone who raises a question, or who has a different point of view, is immediately branded as an anti-national and non-patriotic. Who gave the right to an anchor or a political leader to give certificates to others on nationalism and patriotism? That is not acceptable to me as an ordinary citizen of this country.

High officials in the government, including the Prime Minister, have made such statements.

Wherever it comes from, it is not justifiable. Yes, we are in the midst of an election season. Even elections should be an occasion to have polite and civil conversations. Democracy is something that we take pride in. If that is going to be eroded, all of us will suffer.

In the last five years, the Government of India has discontinued engagement with Pakistan and separatists on the question of Kashmir and has continuously sought to undermine the regional political parties. How wise is that policy?

First of all, we have an issue with Pakistan to resolve on Kashmir, which is the return of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir [PoK]. It is illegal occupation. Therefore, Jammu and Kashmir has to be part of the agenda of India-Pakistan engagement. Secondly, while cross-border terrorism continues, there have been periods of relative peace that

the security forces have achieved in the Valley which should have been utilised by the political class in order to resolve the political issues that are internal. There have been repeated failures on the part of the political leadership on this question. Instead of using the periods of peace to reach out to people and seek political solutions, the political class slips into complacency. Any policy that pushes more and more political constituencies away in Jammu and Kashmir, by saying they are anti-nationals, unpatriotic, separatists - who are you then going to end up talking to? You cannot have a solution to the Kashmir issue which is entirely dependent on security measures. This is what our Army officials and paramilitary leadership will tell you: we can create some relative peace, but we are not the answer to the political issue.

The approach of former Prime Ministers Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh went beyond merely seeking the return of PoK. They both sought to involve Pakistan in a resolution to the Kashmir conflict, right?

Yes. What Dr. Singh said about Kashmir is this: 'I do not have the mandate to change the border of India. But I do have the mandate to make the borders as open as possible to exchange goods and the movement of people.' That is not the final solution. While that final solution is still awaiting us, these are the things we can do to make life better for people on both sides of the LoC. That does not in any way compromise our claim over the whole of Jammu and Kashmir.

Broadly speaking, that was Vajpayee's policy too, right?

Yes.

SINGLE FILE

Promise amidst strife

It is an encouraging sign that Sudanese protesters are rising above ethnic and religious divisions

GARIMELLA SUBRAMANIAM



Since December, Omar Hassan al-Bashir, Sudan's embattled President, has stared down the deepening resistance against his 30-year rule with brutal repression. Protests sparked by a price hike have morphed into the 'just fall that's all' movement, leaving many dead and several others detained, including opposition figures and journalists. The dissolution of the federal and provincial governments, declaration of a year-long national emergency, and installation of military officials in key positions are desperate acts of a dictator who seized power in a 1989 coup.

Mr. Bashir was indicted in 2009 by the International Criminal Court for war crimes and crimes against humanity in Sudan's Darfur region, the first instance of a sitting head of government charged by The Hague court. But the former army officer's subsequent election as President is but one apparent limitation of the Rome Statute. When Mr. Bashir flew out of South Africa in 2015, despite the High Court's instruction against leaving the country, it was one more occasion on which he was allowed smooth passage.

There is little sign of the autocrat loosening his grip in the wake of ongoing protests, except handing the ruling National Congress Party leadership to his deputy. Mr. Bashir has since put on hold a controversial move to make him eligible to run for a third term in 2020. The months-long protests have been characterised as the most formidable opposition to Mr. Bashir and parallels have been drawn with the region's 2011 Arab Spring. But the beleaguered President has cautioned the Opposition of civil war and prolonged instability in some of the countries in the region.

The rate of inflation in Sudan is among the highest in the world. The country is among the bottom 10 countries on the Corruption Perceptions Index published by Transparency International. The combination of a large working age population and widespread unemployment is not healthy for the nation. Moreover, Sudan's foreign currency reserves have dwindled since oil-rich South Sudan seceded in 2011. A ballooning trade deficit has compounded this situation, as the economy was opened up during Sudan's bid for WTO membership. Meanwhile, the government's efforts to earn debt relief have been hampered by lack of multilateral aid because Sudan, although out of the U.S. trade embargo, is still on its terror sponsor roster. It is lobbying hard to be taken off that list and is wooing investments in the energy sector. But foreign firms would be wary of falling foul of U.S. regulators, especially after investigations showed illegal transactions some years ago with Sudan and Iran.

Reports suggest that the protesters, mostly comprising millennials, have been rising above religious and ethnic divisions of the kind that led to the 2011 partition of Sudan. That is a most encouraging sign in this strife-torn nation. It is time Mr. Bashir sets in motion a peaceful transition.

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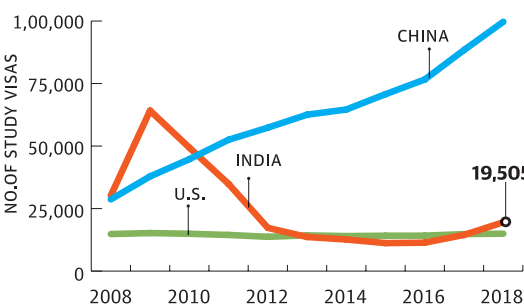
DATA POINT

Heading to the U.K.

The number of Indians going to the United Kingdom to study and work was higher in 2018 compared to 2017. This increase in 2018 came after a period of little change between 2012 and 2017. Indians were granted the highest number of work visas in 2018. By Faizi Noor Ahmad and Varun B. Krishnan

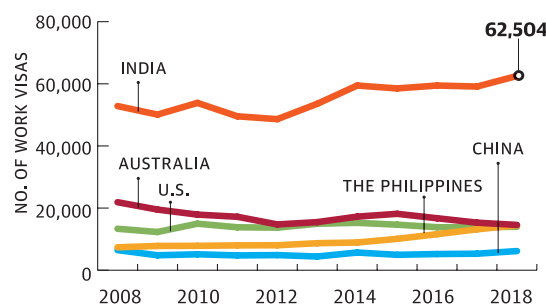
Picking up

In 2018, the no. of Indians going to study in the U.K. showed an increase of 35% from 2017, the highest increase since 2009



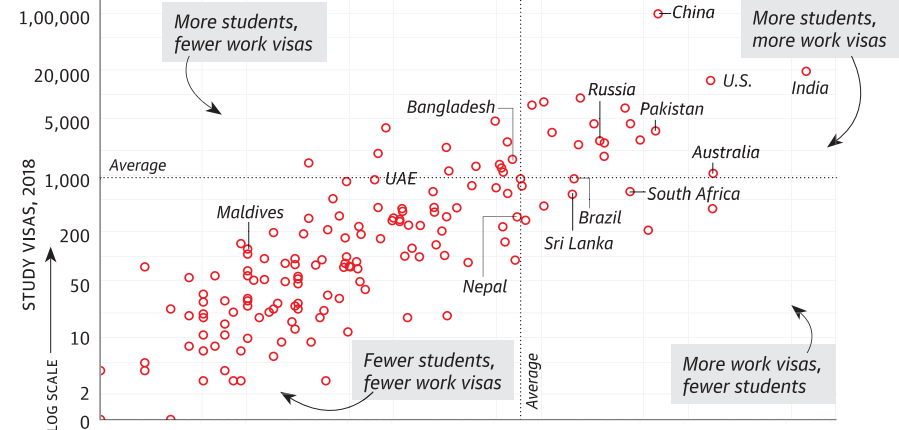
Work, work, work

The number of work visas received by Indians in 2018 showed a marginal increase of about 6%, but Indians remained the top recipients of work visas by a large margin



Study-work equation

China had a high number of students going to study in the U.K., but significantly fewer work visa recipients compared to the number of students, whereas the number of Indian work visa recipients was three times the number of Indian students going to the U.K.



FROM The Hindu. ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO MARCH 6, 1969

Astronauts crawl into lunar module

The U.S. astronauts to-day [March 5] completed their first transfer from one space vehicle to another. This further vital step to an eventual American manned moon shot came however well behind the schedule set for the Apollo 9 spaceman trio now in their third day of orbit. Astronauts Russell Schweickart and James McDivitt edged one after another through the narrow passageway connecting the mother craft to the linked Lunar Module (LEM). Their transfer came after the two, with fellow astronaut David Scott, had battled to overcome problems with their navigational equipment. Snags hit both the sextant and the telescope which was blocked at 75 degrees. It was deemed advisable to try to solve these problems before the ship switch was started.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MARCH 6, 1919.

Rice Situation in Calicut.

Yesterday (March 4, Tuesday) at about 3 P.M. the big bazaar was started by the news of a great looting at the rice market near the southern pier. Crowds gathered and several shops were closed. The police rushed to the beach. The excitement however did not last long. It seems that some poor men went to a rice merchant and demanded rice at the fair price of Rs. 13 fixed by Government for Burma rice. Since the merchant refused, some hundreds of men who were evidently prepared for it, rushed into the shop and threatened to loot. But soon the police came and the looters disappeared. The police then passed through the bazaar in armed array for a demonstration that was hardly required. The rice merchants were asked to open their shops and sell rice at Rs. 13 and lo, over 200 bags were at once sold for ready cash! This fact and the fact that the looters did not care to loot the thousands of bags lying practically unprotected on the open beach, showed that it was not a criminal attempt but was a threat to the merchants who had raised the prices quite artificially.

CONCEPTUAL

Hamiltonian spite

BIOLOGY

This refers to spiteful behaviour that is exhibited by certain organisms towards other organisms of the same species that is aimed to improve the chances of survival of their own genes. It is believed that while organisms can be altruistic towards other organisms that are closely related to them genetically, they can also exhibit spiteful behaviour towards others of the same species that are genetically distant. Such behaviour helps the organism reduce competition against its genes for limited resources. The idea is named after English evolutionary biologist William D. Hamilton.

MORE ON THE WEB

A race only for solar-powered vehicles

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