



Something special

India and Bhutan have a good thing going; each must take the other's concerns seriously

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's two day visit to Thimphu affirmed a long-standing tradition between India and Bhutan, where the leaders of both countries have given visiting each other a major priority early in their tenures. Mr. Modi returned a state visit to India by Bhutan Prime Minister Dr. Lotay Tshering in December 2018; this visit was actually delayed to include outcomes such as the inauguration of the 720 MW Mangdechhu hydropower plant. The relationship is indeed built on a traditional closeness, one that is unique in today's world. Open borders, close alignment and consultation on foreign policy, and regular, open communications on all strategic issues are the hallmark of the relationship that has maintained its consistency for the past many decades. Bhutan's unequivocal support to India on strategic issues has meant a lot to India on the international stage and at the United Nations. Equally, Bhutan's leadership has not flinched in opposing threats to India; for instance, the former King's efforts in 2003 to drive out ULFA rebels or more recently, support for India's stand against Chinese troops on the Doklam plateau. India's assistance to Bhutan's planned economy, to constructing its highest revenue earner of hydropower generated electricity, and then buying the electricity generated has also ensured a symbiotic and mutually beneficial base to the relationship, which has been nurtured by the leaders in both countries, in a manner Mr. Modi called "exemplary".

It would however, be a mistake for New Delhi to take the relationship with Thimphu for granted. In the past few years, ties came under a strain over India's sudden change in its power purchasing policy, rigid rates and refusal to allow Bhutan to join the national power grid and trade with third countries like Bangladesh. These issues are being addressed now. Another concern that could create differences is over Bhutan's worry that too much trade, transport and tourism from India could put its environment at risk. India's plans for a Motor Vehicles Agreement (MVA) in the Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal grouping have been held up, and a Bhutanese proposal to levy entry charges on Indian tourists could cause differences with India. Earlier generations of Bhutanese students never looked beyond India, but in recent years young Bhutanese have shown a preference for education destinations in Australia, Singapore and Thailand. There is thus much to repair in the ties. More importantly, New Delhi will have to remain alert to strategic powers which are courting Bhutan assiduously, as is evident from the high-level visits from China and the U.S. In a world of growing options, it remains in India's and Bhutan's best interests to make each other's concerns a top priority.

Soldier Number One

The creation of the post of CDS is a comment on the security environment

The creation of the post of the Chief of the Defence Staff, which Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced in his Independence Day address, fulfils a long-felt and consistently articulated need to strengthen India's defence posture. Considering that the Prime Minister underlined this announcement by saying that this was an "important" development, it gives legitimate pause to wonder why this has taken so many decades. Indeed, Manohar Parrikar, as Defence Minister, had said this was on the cards. Yet, two Defence Ministers came and went, Arun Jaitley and Nirmla Sitharaman, and this logical step was not taken. Since this is to be a 'single-point' advisory position to the government, there must have been entrenched opposition to this becoming reality. Ultimately the decision must have been thrust centre stage by the current strategic environment. What was always desirable became an urgent necessity. Pulwama and Balakot, the repeated offers for mediation in Kashmir by the U.S. President, the imminent pull-out of American troops from Afghanistan, which would leave Pakistan and its proxies the dominant players on the ground with a strong chance of blowback into Kashmir, as well as the abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A, are factors that have come together to confer urgency to taking this step. The forces will no doubt have to be on a heightened sense of alert and in a seamless state of coordination to meet the challenges.

Now, the ambit of the office, the tenure, and who will hold the post, will have to be decided soon. Consider briefly what transpired during Kargil, after which the Kargil Review Committee strongly recommended setting up the CDS: It took a fortnight after the incursions were initially detected before the Indian Air Force (IAF) could be pressed into countermeasures: the then Indian Army Chief was away on a foreign tour, there was inadequate appreciation of the ground situation by the Indian Army, and poor sharing of intelligence, and the squabbling between the IAF and the Indian Army over whether to use helicopters or fixed wing aircraft and how and who should call the shots, comprehensively blunted the initial response. The CDS is expected to bridge such dangerous gaps and reduce response time. It is envisaged he will keep the Defence Minister, continuously and fully briefed and effectively advised, be part of the adjunct apparatus of the Cabinet Committee on Security Affairs, and better link the three services in terms of planning, coordination and execution. It will certainly leave the three service chiefs to focus on running their arms of the forces more efficiently. This move will no doubt bring the strategic forces under the CDS as well. The government should use the opportunity to ramp up the intelligence apparatus that is concomitant to this office.

The far right's disruption of globalisation

Donald Trump's emulators have tapped into globalisation's long-standing discontents



C.P. CHANDRASEKHAR

By launching a trade war against China, the United States government that had pressured many a country to liberalise trade and globalise seems to have turned against its own agenda. In a series of aggressive moves, the U.S. – the one-time votary of freer trade – has put in place and widened the coverage of a protectionist shield aimed at stimulating domestic production and reducing the country's trade deficit. While these moves initiated by the Donald Trump administration were on occasion targeted at multiple countries and involved rewriting the North American Free Trade Agreement with Canada and Mexico, the focus of the trade and technology war has been China.

Steps against China

China-specific tariff aggression began with a 25% tariff on imports worth \$50 billion, out of the total of \$540 billion imported by the U.S. from China in July 2018. Soon, an additional \$200 billion worth of imports from China were subjected to tariffs of 10%, and those levies were also raised to 25% in May this year. Most recently on August 1, the balance of around \$300 billion worth of imports from China were subjected to a phased 10% levy, with a clear threat that these levies too can be raised to 25%. China's responses to U.S. actions, which came at every step of the trade war, have in turn led to the \$120 billion of goods it imports from the U.S. being subject to a

25% duty. The U.S. has also imposed sanctions on and shut off business relations with individual Chinese firms, such as Huawei, on grounds varying from national security to alleged theft of intellectual property from U.S. firms. This prevents the firms targeted from either selling in U.S. markets and that of its allies or buying goods, services and technology from U.S. firms or those of its allies.

Parallel to all this, based on the allegation that the Chinese authorities have deliberately allowed the yuan to depreciate *vis-à-vis* the dollar to support its exporters, the U.S. Treasury has designated China as a currency manipulator. What additional action that would lead to is yet unclear. What is clear, however, is that given the importance of China as a global manufacturing hub, these measures have disrupted global value chains and production networks that are the hallmark of globalisation. De-globalisation may yet be a distant prospect, but the fact that the world's leading superpower is willing to disrupt globalisation provides both an example and the justification to other governments that find the need to move in that direction.

The U.S. argument

The U.S. justifies its actions against China by citing that country's significance as a source of inadequately reciprocated imports into the U.S. Imports from China account for more than a fifth of aggregate U.S. imports. With exports to China being nowhere as large, the U.S. runs an annual trade deficit with that country of around \$420 billion, which 'imbalance' is attributed to Chinese policy.

There are, however, two important facts that this argument sidesteps. First, the gains to the U.S. from its economic relationship



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with China are inadequately captured by the trade figures. A major gain for U.S. companies, even if not for the U.S. per se, is the local sales by subsidiaries of American multinationals located in China. Official statistics from the U.S. indicate that U.S. multinational affiliates based in China notched up local sales of \$222 billion in 2015, which do not figure in trade calculations. Second, these subsidiaries are responsible for a chunk of China's exports to the U.S. According to one estimate, more than half of Chinese exports to the U.S. originate in foreign invested enterprises which are either U.S. multinational arms or firms with parents in other advanced economies. That is, the U.S. trade deficit with China is the result of the off-shoring associated with globalisation, rather than to Chinese policy favouring its own firms.

Reading Trump

Not surprisingly, it troubles the neoliberal policy establishment that the fallout of this kind of trade aggression can set back globalisation across the world. Members of the G20 other than the U.S. have strenuously and unsuccessfully tried to get the latter to sign on to another call for strengthening free trade. The International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organisation and a host of international institutions have warned of the dangers of the

new protectionism. Implicit in their reasoning is that the tariff aggression is an error being made by a maverick or misguided administration. But that does not take into account the fact that Mr. Trump had been railing against trade agreements that hurt the U.S. even in the course of his election campaign and withdrew from the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement days after he took office. It also ignores the fact that a section hurt by the Trump tariffs – U.S. farmers for whom China was a \$6 billion market in 2018 with it absorbing 60% of U.S. soyabean exports – still support him. A survey by the Purdue Center for Commercial Agriculture found that 78% of farmers held that the Trump tariffs will in time benefit them and a Pulse survey by *Farm Journal* found that Mr. Trump had a 79% approval rating among farmers.

The faith in Mr. Trump and rejection of economic liberalism are telling. These farmers along with U.S. industrial workers have for long felt they had been left behind in the neoliberal years when elites in developed and developing countries alike captured all the benefits of growth and inequality increased hugely. With the increase in income and wealth at the top of the pyramid accruing largely through transactions in the financial sector, productive activity that could have delivered benefits to others has been lagging.

The idea that the benefits of whatever growth occurred under the neoliberal regime would trickle down to the poor and lower middle classes was shown to be what it was: patently false. Seen in that context, Mr. Trump is no maverick, despite his wild twitter and vocal outbursts. He tapped into a genuine grievance and railed against elements of a regime he too was a beneficiary of. That

brought him to power once. It may well return him to power again. When in power he needs to adopt at least some policies that go against the grain of free market philosophy and the globalisation that flows from it.

In Europe

This is not confined to the U.S. comes through from the rise of what is dismissed as "right wing populism" in Europe, which is not just sceptical of free trade even within the European Union but is coming out against the fiscal conservatism promoted by financial interests that leaves the continent mired in a trajectory of low growth and high unemployment and individual countries reeling under austerity. Combining this with anti-immigrant rhetoric delivers a toxic mix that is helping them gain popularity and even a seat in some governments. On the other hand, sections of the centre left that had bought into the neoliberal paradigm are being shown the door. The pleasure derived by the advocates of neoliberalism from the significant decline of the left in the decades since the collapse of the Soviet Union (which deprives the progressive critique of neoliberalism of a strong political base) has proved short-lived.

Needless to say, the far right is hardly committed to the anti-globalisation strain implicit in its rhetoric. It is as wedded to the hegemony of capital and the markets as are the neoliberal dogmatists. Their ideological pragmatism is opportunistic and fickle. Yet for the moment, their actions, especially that of Mr. Trump, have disrupted globalisation.

C.P. Chandrasekhar is Professor at the Centre for Economic Studies and Planning, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

Democracy under siege

Liberty, equality and fraternity are becoming subservient to a new idea of sovereignty



DUSHYANT DAVE

The Constituent Assembly formation was the culmination of the final stage of the struggle for freedom and independence, which was won by the supreme sacrifices made by millions of Indians. People across the length and breadth of the country made sacrifices in one way or the other. On January 26, 1950, India got its Constitution. Every succeeding generation in India owes an eternal debt of gratitude to the country's forefathers for this 'sacred text'. There is absolutely no doubt that we must keep the spirit of this text as well as the letter, while also protecting Constitutional values and its morality.

However, the current state of affairs in the country is an example of how the Constitution is slowly and steadily being made to wither away. Parliament, the judiciary and the executive are all under stress. Things are going wrong in these fast-changing times. People are moved, and getting moved, by

an ideology which is apparently in conflict with constitutional ethos and basic human values. As a result, people are tired of a government by the people and are instead leaning to support a government for the people. They are indifferent to whether it is a government of the people and by the people. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar warned us "not to be tardy in the recognition of the evils that lie across our path and which induce people to prefer Government for the people to Government by the people". But have we paid heed to this warning?

A missing debate

Today, liberty, equality and fraternity are becoming subservient to a new idea of sovereignty. Ultra-nationalism has trampled over basic human rights and the dignities of citizens, especially of the "down-trodden" and the "minorities". Constitutionalism is being forgotten. As a result democratic principles are unable to check legislative, judicial and executive powers. Each organ is paying lip service to this fundamental principle. Examples are writ large in front of us and happen everyday.

The government's focus on certain ideological issues to drive home its agenda is a serious point



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to be debated. A political party that is in power can push through its policies. But when it becomes an obsession to the point of neglecting real issues, it poses a challenge.

The ruling party cannot be satisfied with chest thumping on Triple Talaq or the abrogation of Article 370. Where are the much-needed discussions on poverty, the economic slowdown, hate crimes, the rise in population and agrarian distress? Why not 'wage war' on these issues?

The government's strategy on the abrogation of Article 370 is by far the most serious challenge to federalism. The bifurcation of Jammu and Kashmir is most condemnable. Does this not pave the way for any government with a majori-

ty to carve up States based on a whim?

Stepping back

The judiciary, especially the Supreme Court of India, is the custodian of the fundamental rights of citizens under the Constitution. But the problem is not the absence of the law but of its implementation. The judiciary's blanching over protecting the fundamental rights of the citizens of Jammu and Kashmir points to its abdication of carrying out its duty.

The judiciary itself has held that a judicial review of actions by the Executive is a part of the basic structure and has even proclaimed that "there are no unreviewable discretions under the constitutional dispensation". If one can go by various judgments, it is dutybound to inquire into the legitimacy of the exercise of powers.

Article 21, which is about the "protection of life and personal liberty", has been infused with new and enriched life by the judiciary. But in Jammu and Kashmir, restrictions virtually amounting to a deprivation of the liberties of the citizens of Jammu and Kashmir over the past fortnight are not "according to procedure established by law". Using Section 144 of the

Code of Criminal Procedure Code, 1973 in a blanket manner is wholly insufficient as a justification for all that has been done.

Then why is the silence of the higher judiciary so deafening? The reason is not far to fathom. The distance between the judiciary and political and executive leaders is blurring. Where is the expected aloofness?

It was B.R. Ambedkar again who said, "Because I feel, however good a Constitution may be it is sure to turn out bad because those who are called upon to work it, happen to be a bad lot." His strong warning – "It is quite possible for this new born democracy to retain its form but give place to dictatorship in fact. If there is a landslide, the danger of the second possibility becoming actuality is much greater" – does not seem to have registered with our constitutional functionaries. The election result of 2019 is the proof of Ambedkar's prophecy coming true. But sadly, the real protectors of the Constitution do not seem bothered. They are content with allowing the government to have either the last say or the last laugh. Democracy is certainly losing out to populism.

Dushyant Dave is Senior Advocate, Supreme Court of India

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.

Unrest in Kashmir

It is a matter of concern that the situation in Kashmir is still not normal ("Curbs on movement back in Kashmir following clashes", August 19). Recurring incidents of disturbances, even if they are mild, should be taken seriously. If the Centre had taken into confidence the local leaders before abrogating Article 370, the situation could have been handled better.

The Bharatiya Janata Party was never in power in the State except for a couple of years. It is difficult for it to read the pulse of the people on its own. It is time the Centre involved local leaders in decision-making. Whatever happens in Jammu and Kashmir reverberates not only in other parts of India but also along the globe.

V. SUBRAMANIAN,
Chennai

■ It is typical of the middle class to go with the flow as

they are always more likely to side with the powerful rather than the powerless. This has always been the case, irrespective of which party is in power (Editorial page, "The Idea of India" is failing", August 19). What happens in Kashmir has very little relevance in the lives of middle-class citizens in India as they are not directly affected.

KARTHIK G.,
Chennai

■ It's important that we merge J&K with India completely because it borders a nation that has the intention of disturbing our internal security by making Kashmiris victims of terrorism. The writer says we think of Kashmir only as a tourist spot but that was because of the hurdle of Article 35A. If no one was allowed to make Kashmir their home, how could they develop a bond with the place? The move by the government was definitely not

constitutional but the motive is right, which is to secure the interest of the Union of India.

AUM CHHAYA,
Rajkot, Gujarat

■ It is because of a majoritarian mindset that Indians now believe that whatever Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah do is what the country really needs. Announcing suddenly drastic moves such as demonetisation and the abrogation of Article 370 while keeping an entire State in the dark is not how a democracy functions. Due to this one-man (or two-men) show, there is a decline in the spirit of secularism and fraternity.

ELOWN M. ALWYN,
Bengaluru

Policy of No First Use

Is the government contemplating a change in its 'No First Use' policy to checkmate Pakistan or is this mere posturing to lure the

people into believing that it can go to any extent to protect the nation from foreign aggression, be it from Pakistan or China (Editorial page, "An intervention that leads to more questions", August 19)? There must be clear enunciation of the policy in order to clear confusion and open up the issue for wider debate and discussion.

V. PADMANABHAN,
Bengaluru

■ India has so far remained a responsible nuclear power despite not being a signatory to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. India's bid to enter the Nuclear Suppliers Group has been supported by several countries only because of its clean nuclear record. It's unfortunate that the Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's ambiguous statement will undermine India's credibility in the global arena. The change in the 'No First Use' policy could create an arms race in the region. This

would also betray the vision of former Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee.

VIDHYA B. RAGUNATH,
Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu

A rebellious Hooda

In spite of its poor performance in the 2019 Lok Sabha election and knowing well that it is a sinking ship, the high command of the Indian National Congress party has still not learnt how to revitalise the party to take on the BJP. The grand old party seems to be committing a mistake in former Haryana Chief Minister Bhopinder Singh Hooda's case ("Hooda keeps everyone guessing", August 19). Mr. Hooda has been the Chief Minister twice and has a large following, so the Congress should not be egoistic; it should try to solve the issue amicably. His comments on Article 370 should be treated as his personal view. It will be a testing time for the interim president of the party, Sonia Gandhi, to set

things right in Haryana.

D. SETHURAMAN,
Chennai

Head coach again

The reappointment of Ravi Shastri as Team India's head coach was on expected lines and is wise ("Sport" page, "Ravi Shastri's tryst with head coach post extends", August 16). Perhaps the best aspect of Shastri is that he has struck a rapport with not only Virat Kohli, but also other senior players as well. This is a huge asset for Indian cricket as the team cannot afford to be dragged in directions by various personalities. Besides, there is a need for cohesiveness not just between coach, captain, players and support staff, but with selectors as well. This is where Shastri's experience, communication skills and knowledge on modern coaching methods would come in handy.

R. SIVAKUMAR,
Chennai

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Crouching tiger, hidden data

The forest bureaucracy has ensured that tiger survey data continue to be withheld from independent scrutiny



ULLAS KARANATH

The fourth national tiger survey has generated much euphoria, whereas the first one in 2006 had cast a pall of gloom. However, missing from all the four survey reports are details necessary to assess the reliability of the tiger numbers. A brief history of India's tiger censuses can shed some light on this issue. The tradition of reporting tiger numbers dates back to the 1970s. These numbers were based on the 'pugmark census method', which simply assumed that the pugmarks of every tiger could be found, recognised and tallied. As scientific critiques showed, these assumptions failed, rendering the numbers meaningless. However, the forest bureaucracy (the Ministry of Environment and allied institutions) ignored the problem for decades.

New methods

In the 1990s, many tiger scientists and statistical ecologists working in collaboration developed robust new methods for tiger monitoring. These methods could estimate numbers using 'distance sampling' and the extent of tiger habitat employing 'occupancy sampling of tiger spoor'. Critically, they could even directly estimate numbers, survival rates and recruitment in each population employing 'photographic capture-recapture sampling'. These methods were independently honed in tiger reserves across India and over 25,000 sq km in the Western Ghats harbouring 20% of India's tigers.

By 2004, the new methods had rapidly been adopted worldwide for assessing populations of threatened cat species such as leopards and jaguars. However, the Director of India's Project Tiger decided these as fancy sampling methods, inferior to India's indigenous pugmark census.

Then in 2005 came the shocking revelation that all tigers in Sariska Reserve had been poached, even as the pugmark censuses claimed all was well. A Tiger Task Force (TTF) appointed by the Prime Minister discarded the pugmark census. The Di-



Tiger cubs at Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve near Nagpur in Maharashtra.

• K.R. DEEPAK

rector of Project Tiger performed a breathtaking backflip, now denouncing the pugmark census as "trash".

I had hoped these dramatic events would lead to a serious revamping of India's tiger monitoring methods. India's remarkable conservation efforts had rescued the tiger from the brink of extinction; they deserved an honest evaluation to identify both successes and failures. The dire situation demanded technically rigorous tiger population surveys conducted by independent, qualified scientists.

However, blocking this progress was a serious conflict of interest: The same forest bureaucracy that managed tiger populations was also expected to assess its own successes or failures by monitoring tiger populations. This had led to the fiascos in Sariska and other places.

Changes in tiger numbers, survival rates, and recruitment in key tiger populations have to be monitored every year to track the fate of tigers in real time. Periodic assessments of colonisation and extinction of tiger populations across larger regions by employing the cost-effective 'occupancy sampling of tiger spoor' method are required. A public-private partnership framework led by qualified scientists is needed to conduct such independent monitoring. However, instead of calling for better monitoring methods, TTF ended up further strengthening bureaucratic monopoly over tiger monitoring. Inevitably, the new National Tiger Estimation method, also created by the forest bureaucracy, ignored or distorted critical elements underpinning the new tiger survey methods. These flaws were masked by misleading technical jargon, hype about ad-

vanced technologies and cursory reviews by 'foreign experts'.

Consequently, in spite of all the effort and expenditure, four tiger surveys have not generated ecologically credible results. Nor are they practically useful. For instance, in spite of spending crores of rupees on official tiger research and monitoring, the government has failed to generate estimates of annual rates of changes in tiger numbers, survival or recruitment in tiger populations at key sites.

Plainly put, the tiger numbers reported are useful only to generate the media spin to meet the needs of the forest bureaucracy and to satisfy momentary public curiosity. This is clear from the 2006 survey report, which made a bold confession: India's tiger numbers had collapsed by a massive 61% (from 3,642 to 1,411 tigers) in just four years! This made no sense because the first number was from the discredited pugmark census and the second from the wobbly new survey method.

However, this confession killed three birds with one stone. It gained public acceptance of the new "scientific method"; it set an unrealistically low baseline of 1,400 tigers, around which future claims could be tailored; and the National Tiger Conservation Authority walked away unblemished from tiger declines, blaming them on State governments.

The results of subsequent surveys show that the new methodology is flexible enough to generate increases or decreases in coarse-scale estimates of tiger numbers and habitat occupancy. And this is what seems to be going on now, in preparation for claiming a 'doubling' of India's tiger population at the next Global Tiger Summit in 2022.

Summit in 2022.

Over the past decade, independent researchers have published several critiques of the design, models and flaws in field implementation in India's tiger surveys. Most of them had to rely on sparse information gleaned from skimpy survey results in the public domain. The magnitude of the problem that could be revealed by a deeper examination of actual survey data is mind-boggling. The forest bureaucracy, however, has stubbornly blocked qualified scientists from conducting any such deeper scrutiny. The astuteness with which it has maintained monopolistic control over tiger monitoring is a testimony to its political skills.

Nothing has changed

While releasing the 2010 tiger survey results, Planning Commission Member Montek Singh Ahluwalia suggested "aggregate tiger survey data" to be shared in the public domain. He pointed out how Economics had progressed through such data transparency. Unfortunately, nothing has changed since. The hiding of tiger data by the forest bureaucracy is in clear defiance of scientific ethics and public interest. Sadly, even larger conservation NGOs have not challenged this.

When Prime Minister Indira Gandhi set out to rescue India's wild tigers, there were less than 2,000 left. Intense struggles of foresters and conservationists for five decades resulted in sporadic population recoveries at some sites, and continuing losses elsewhere. How many tigers should India now aspire for, given that habitat potential exists for 10,000-15,000 tigers? The current crop of forest bureaucrats, in spite of being flush with resources, believe we cannot have more than 3,500. Surely a nation aspiring to be a \$5 trillion economy should set its sights higher? India's political leadership recognises past successes achieved by infusing creativity and private enterprise in sectors like communication technology. These became possible only after jettisoning inefficient, over-funded, self-serving government monopolies, not by pandering to them. Conservation cannot be an exception.

K. Ullas Karanth is Director, Centre for Wildlife Studies, Bengaluru. Views are personal

Can a CDS act as a catalyst for further defence reforms?

In India, a strategic process delivers results only when it is backed by political heft, which this government can provide



ARJUN SUBRAMANIAM

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's announcement from the ramparts of the Red Fort that India will soon have a Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS) is a welcome step and reflects a multi-sectoral urgency within the government to initiate reform. To be honest, this writer had earlier been sceptical about such a measure because of the fear that it would be a piecemeal step without any accompanying change in the Ministry of Defence (MoD).

While the previous dispensations did not display the seriousness and political will needed to view the military as a tool of statecraft, this government's approach seems to be different. The close involvement of the political leadership, ever since the cross-border strikes into Myanmar, in the military's operational matters has probably given it a bird's-eye view of the necessary reforms.

Further, even while acknowledging the military's contribution to national security, Mr. Modi has often expressed concerns about the lack of synergy within the armed forces – not to the media, but directly to the senior leadership of the forces at the Unified Commanders' Conference.

The three services, on their part, have been involved in sparring for space in this debate by protecting their respective turfs and trying to orchestrate some middle-level reform. Here again, this writer has repeatedly argued that to be effective, a top-down approach to defence reform is the only way forward.

Questions and challenges

So, will the CDS be a glorified Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, or will he be an empowered bridge between the military and the political leadership? Will the government be bold enough to immediately assign him operational responsibilities in a phased manner, or will it follow an incremental approach of first entrusting him with issues such as acquisitions, training and policy? Will there be an accompanying reform in the MoD? These are among the questions that merit serious reflection. It also needs to be assessed whether the military ecosystem has kept pace with the rapid changes in warfare and geopolitics.

The demands and challenges confronting a CDS will be of the kind that the military leadership has never faced before. Balancing national interests, shedding his own service affiliations, and looking after the interests of all the three services will always be a tough act. He must also have the world view and political awareness necessary to engage with diverse stakeholders. As seen from the Western experience, this will happen only after years of joint-service assignments, an exposure to working with government and educational interludes in a military career.

India currently faces multiple security challenges. Ingrained with a mindset shaped by conflicts and face-offs on its land frontiers and near-continuous internal armed conflicts, India's security landscape has been naturally dominated by the Indian Army. Balancing this reality with a realisation that both maritime and air power are going to play an increasingly important role in India's rise as a leading power will be among the initial strategic challenges any CDS faces.

Achieving inter-services synergy

Whether the creation of CDS will lead to the creation of 'integrated theatre commands' is too early to predict. However, four of the immediate tasks for the CDS are: improving inter-services synergy and laying the road map for time-bound integration; attaining seamless integration of the MoD with service headquarters; assuming the operational responsibilities for all tri-service commands and agencies; and steering the creation of integrated battle groups for various contingencies as a precursor to validating the concept of theatre commands.

Cynics will argue that given the difficulties faced by the Chief of Integrated Defence Staff – who had been tasked with a large part of this mandate almost two decades ago – to push for reform at the desired pace, how will the CDS succeed? The simple answer is that, in India, only when political heft is attached to a strategic process will it deliver results. A classic example is the ongoing, politically driven, shift from a reactive and restrained form of deterrence to a more proactive and preventive form. Having bitten the bullet, the Modi government has the needed momentum to not just appoint a CDS, but to continue with a top-down reform of national security structures.

Arjun Subramaniam is a retired Air Vice Marshal from the Indian Air Force and a visiting professor at Ashoka University

Navarros on the ascendant

What explains the trend of economists taking odd policy positions, defying scholarly evidence?

CHIRANTAN CHATTERJEE

The term 'Navarro recession' was recently coined in the U.S. media, and highlights the manner in which misguided trade and currency policies by the current U.S. administration, guided by economist Peter Navarro, may be creating distortions in the economy, leading to a slowdown. Apparently, U.S. President Donald Trump overruled all his economic advisers but Mr. Navarro in imposing new tariffs on China.

This begs the broader question of whether economies across the world are in turmoil because of the rise of the 'Navarros', with trained economists taking unconventional policy positions that undermine market expectations and scholarly evidence on free markets. In some cases, they seem to have received robust training in U.S. universities such as the University of Chicago. This argument applies to Brazil, Turkey, India and Hungary.

There are also cases where their candidacy has been mired in corruption. Some of them have also turned against their leader if the latter is not in alignment with their policy vision.

This is interesting since, perhaps for the first time in many decades, theology and divinity are jointly influencing economic policy decisions.

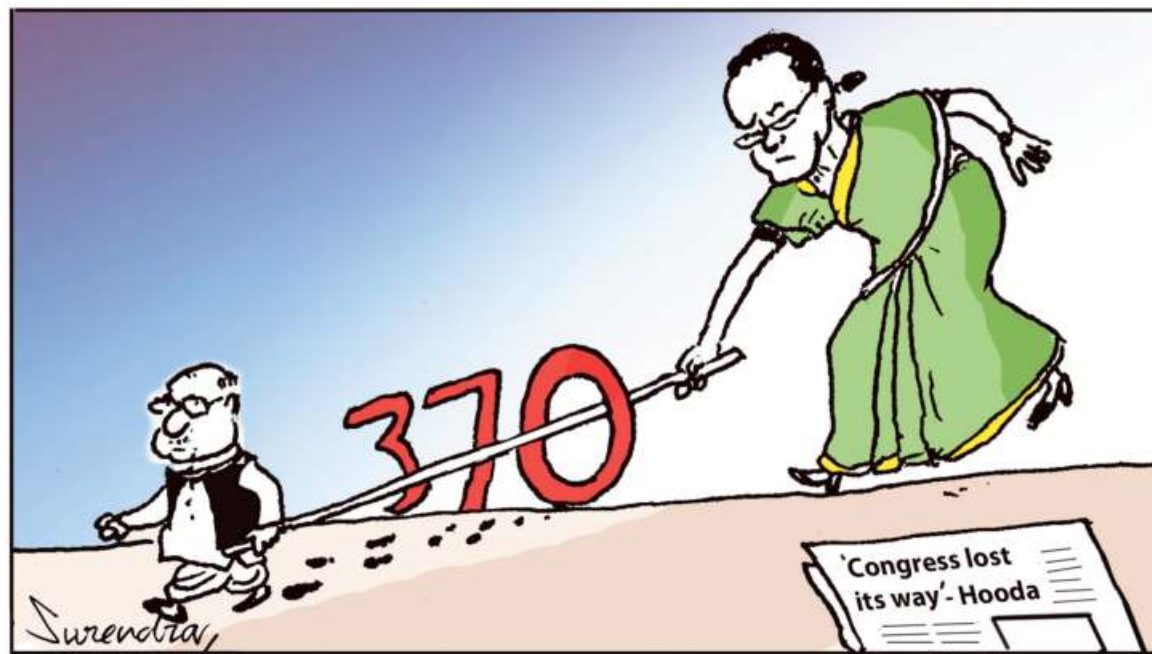
Maa Sharada and Article 370

In India, Chief Economic Advisor (CEA) K.V. Subramanian, also a Chicago-trained economist, invoked Indian goddess Maa Sharada, whom he also referred to as 'Kashmira Pura Vasini', while welcoming the government's decision to abrogate Article 370, the constitutional provision granting special status to Jammu and Kashmir. One would have expected the CEA to outline a policy pathway to incentivise entrepreneurship, economic growth and development in Kashmir, but nothing much has been said on that by his office yet. This is all the more remarkable when we consider the fact that he and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman are struggling to revive a slowing economy. Meanwhile, in Hungary, Lajos Simicska, an oligarch and friend of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, guided the Orbán economics of fear and his policy of setting up of large nationalised organisations. However, he has since fallen out of favour with the Hungarian Prime Minister.

Overall, these examples point to a larger trend as the discipline of economics tries to reinvent itself to adjust to globalisation and automation, factors that have created inequality and have been instrumental in the growth of social unrest and the rise of populists across the world.

Should these 'Navarros' be allowed to capture the pole positions in economic policymaking and guide the new economics of a populist world? What explains their rise and unconventional stances? Even more, how are their policy ideas impacting and deepening social and economic distortions? The answers are not clear yet, but their examination cannot be postponed any longer.

Chirantan Chatterjee is ICICI Bank Chair in Strategic Management at the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad

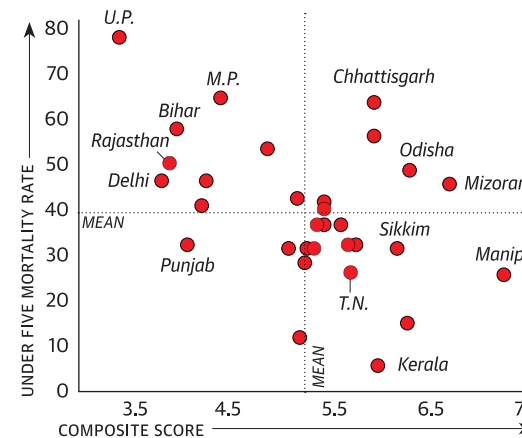


DATA POINT

Variably nourished

U.P., Rajasthan and Bihar fare the worst among States in breastfeeding. Infant mortality under the age of five is relatively higher in these States than others. In India, less than 50% of newly borns receive breast milk within the first hour of their birth, a low number compared to other developing countries. By Sumant Sen

U.P., the worst off The chart plots the composite score of three feeding indicators against State-wise under-five mortality rates. The composite score is based on % values of the following indicators: initiation of breastfeeding within an hour of birth, exclusive breastfeeding until six months, and complementary feeding until nine months. A high composite score indicates good infant feeding practices

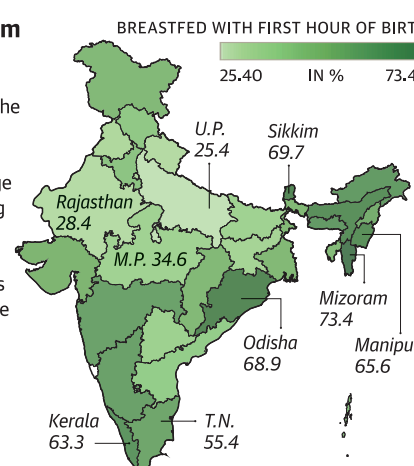


Most States with an above average score have a lower under-five child mortality rate while States with a poor composite score tend to have a higher under-five child mortality rate (per 1000 live births). Uttar Pradesh has a composite score of 3.32, the lowest, and under-five mortality rate of 78, the highest, in India. Mizoram has the highest composite score (7.27) and is one of the best performing States for under-five mortality rate (26)

Source: Breastfeeding and Infant and Young Child Feeding Practices Report Card (Health Ministry), NFHS-4, UNICEF REPORT 2018

Best in Mizoram

Over 73% of newly borns were breastfed within the first hour of birth in Mizoram, the highest percentage in India. According to the WHO, this "first milk" which the infant receives is rich in protective factors and nutrients. A State-wise look



Poorly positioned

Only 41.5% of infants in India received breast milk within the first hour of birth. India was ranked 56 out of 76 nations that were surveyed. Sri Lanka topped the charts with 90%

Rank	Country	Infants who received breast milk within first hour of birth (%)
1	Sri Lanka	90.3
2	Vanuatu	85.4
3	Burundi	85
4	Kazakhstan	83.3
5	Kyrgyzstan	82.5
56	India	41.5

The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO AUGUST 20, 1969

DMK ready for agitation

The ruling Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam will launch an agitation if the Centre refused to accept its plea for greater autonomy to the State Governments, declared Mr. M. Karunanidhi, Chief Minister, in the Tamil Nadu Assembly to-day [August 19]. The Chief Minister said the Government had appointed a committee headed by Mr. P. V. Rajamannar, former Chief Justice of Madras High Court, to recommend in what manner the powers may be reallocated between the Centre and States. The State Government would place the recommendations of the Committee before the Centre and try to "persuade" it to accept them. "If we fail in our persuasion, we will launch an agitation", Mr. Karunanidhi said. He said the D.M.K. had never hesitated to spearhead agitations to achieve its objects. The Chief Minister asked Mr. M. P. Sivagnanam, leader of the Tamil Arasu Kazhagam, to abandon his one-day token agitation proposed to be launched to-morrow, to demand greater autonomy for States.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO AUGUST 20, 1919.

Soldier, Explorer and Naturalist. (Book review)

No picture of late President Theodore Roosevelt is more familiar to the average man than that which represents him as a fighter and a man of action, not merely a militant advocate of aggressive Imperialism, but the champion of popular liberties and honest government against organised forces of privilege and corruption. It is naturally in this light that Hermann Hagedorn [the author] exhibits the object of his admiration. The stubborn courage and dogged persistence, the resolution to "carry through" in the face of all difficulties, the consciousness of the vital importance of realising in modern social and political life the good old common place virtues which all assume but few practise – these and other qualities which distinguished the late President stand out in vivid relief in the pages of this work. Alike as a young man resolving to live up to the ideals embodied in the deeds of his heroes; as a statesman putting into practice radical schemes of reform in the teeth of the unforfeiting hostility of the 'interest'; as a ranchman; as colonel of the "Rough Riders" charging wildly at the Spaniards; as a naturalist hunting big game and collecting specimens in the wilds of Africa; as explorer; and as man of letters... the wonderful personality of Roosevelt is brought home to us.