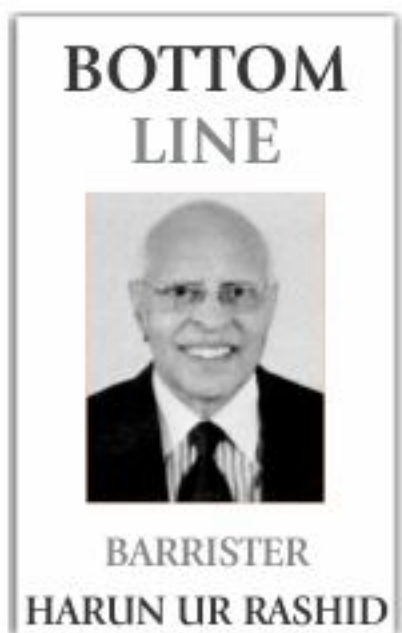


Chinese foreign minister in New Delhi



BOTTOM LINE
Wang Yi's two-day visit to New Delhi from June 8 has been significant in many ways. First, the visit was to assess each other's mindset. Second, the foreign minister visited New Delhi as Special Envoy of President Xi Jinping and called on President Pranab Mukherjee and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Third, the visit came soon after the Chinese prime minister spoke to Indian Prime Minister Modi over phone on May 29, and reflects the importance China attaches to its relations with the new government of India.

Chinese officials, media and state-run think tanks reportedly projected a new vigour in trade and economic ties between the two countries. Modi had visited China four times as chief minister of Gujarat, with the 2011 trip quite extraordinary in that Beijing rolled out the red carpet for him, a gesture usually reserved for heads of state.

Chinese media has highlighted Modi's plans to visit Bhutan this month followed by Japan in July and the US in September. Modi is expected to meet Chinese President Xi Jinping at the BRICS summit in Brazil next month.

Earlier, it was reported that China has expressed keen interest about the presence of President Mukherjee for celebrations marking 60 years of Panchsheel, the five principles of peace proposed by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and his Chinese counterpart Zhou Enlai in 1954. The function is proposed to be held in Beijing on June 28.

Yi, held talks with External Affairs Minister Ms. Sushma Swaraj and reportedly discussed the Chinese president's visit to India, and economic and border issues. The talks were described as "productive and substantive."

China has become India's biggest trading partner, with two-way trade jumping from \$5 billion in 2002 to nearly \$75 billion in 2011, although that figure declined to \$61.5 billion in 2012 because of the global economic downturn. Trade remains heavily skewed in China's favour. Indian trade deficit is about \$40 billion, which India wants to reduce by seeking great access to the Chinese market.

Relations between the two continue remain strained because of border issues. The Line of Actual Control between the neighbours has never been formally demarcated, although they have signed accords to maintain peace in the region that was the site of a brief Indo-Chinese war in 1962. Border talks have failed so far to produce a breakthrough despite 15 rounds of discussions over the past 10 years.

India says China is occupying 38,000

square kilometers of its territory in the Aksai Chin plateau in the western Himalayas, while China claims around 90,000 square kilometers in India's northeastern state of Arunachal Pradesh.

Other sources of tension include China's weapons supply to Pakistan, the presence in India of Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama and his self-declared Tibetan government-in-exile. Furthermore, India watches with concern the growing Chinese influence in Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka, India's traditional South Asian sphere of influence.

On border dispute, Chinese Prime Minister Li Keqiang during his visit to India in 2011 reportedly said that the dispute was a historical hangover and that there was a desire on both sides to resolve it. "We have established the principles for settling the question," Li said. He also stated: "I believe that there are far more shared interests between China and India than the differences we have. Without the common development of China and India, Asia won't become strong and the world won't become a better place."

The new Chinese leadership is keen to improve relations with India in the face of serious challenges over its maritime disputes with Japan in the East China Sea and with Vietnam, the Philippines and other maritime neighbours in the South China Sea amid a major US military push into the Asia-Pacific.

The current visit is evidence of the strength of the economic ties between India and China. It has set the scene for China's consolidation of economic relationships with India, which may pave the way to settle border disputes in future between the two Asian giants.

Another fact is to note that Modi also has a warm equation with Japan and its PM Shinzo Abe. Both leaders are strong nationalists and reportedly share the same perspective on the future of the geopolitical and economic order of Asia. The development of India-Japan relations will have an impact on India-China relations because China has strained relations with Japan.

However, India and China, the most populous countries and also the largest emerging markets in the world, are expected to surpass the GDP of Japan by 2028 according to the report released in December 2013 by the Danish Centre for Economic and Business Research. If the two Asian giants take a bold initiative to craft a stronger cooperative strategy by settling the on-going political irritants, they would be able to emerge as a global power, the effects of which would reverberate across the world, transforming this century into "Asian century."

The writer is a former Bangladesh Ambassador to the UN, Geneva.

Pillars pilloried?

IMTIAZ HUSSAIN

BANGLADESH independence was fought upon four pillars: democracy, socialism, secularism, and nationalism. How do they fare after forty-three years?

Given the December 1970 elections, democracy denial, which was at the heart of Bangladesh's Liberation War, continues to remain a contested term and practice. Although democracy was in full bloom in the country's first elections (in 1973), the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1975 erased it from the political firmament until the 1990s. His creation of Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Awami League (Baksal) also helped evaporation of democracy: Khondakar Mushtaque's administration eliminated the other original flag-bearers of democracy (Tajuddin Ahmed, Syed Nazrul Islam, Captain Mansur Ali, and Kamruzzaman), while the subsequent military administrations simply toyed with democracy. Though it was resilient enough to triumph in the 1991 election, it had to rely on a caretaker government ever since. Even as the masses were fully mobilised, institutions were not built, leaving as residue a praetorian society.

Socialism was hacked apart more severely. Nationalised industries thrived under Bangabandhu, but neoliberal onslaughts after him irreversibly changed our economic infrastructure. With the public sector floundering, socialism was replaced by Adam Smith's "nation of shopkeepers." Without the noteworthy contributions of non-governmental organisations (like Brac), and benevolent economics (like Mohammad Yunus's microfinance), poverty would have long consumed the country.

Unlike our questionable democracy, the socialism volte-face blended with both prevailing domestic and international trends. Domestically, socialism conflicts with neo-liberal instincts, accumulation, and property-swallowing tendencies. Internationally, the widespread post-Cold War shift towards a neo-liberal order appealed to an economically hungry Bangladesh.

Secularism faced its own about-turn with Bangabandhu's passing. From officially dropping secularism as a pillar in 1978 to becoming an Islamic state in 1988, Bangladesh is now making up for lost religious time, with proportionally more subscribers today than ever before. It hosts global religious gatherings and invites all stripes of Muslims, from the moderates to the fanatic, without background checks -- even as the persecution of minorities spirals beyond the East Pakistani level.

Defying global historical trends, religion in Bangladesh may be determining political priorities, rather than vice versa. Internecine warfare between the Awami League (AL) and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) has diverted so much institutional attention away from politics for the rural masses that it did not become hard for religious forces to quickly fill the vacuum, typically through madrasas, in turn, rattling the city-country divide. While Dhaka stands out as a "foreign" land to rural dwellers of the same country, actual foreign perpetrators (that is, from outside Bangladesh), capitalise on our domestic mayhem.

Of all the four original pillars, this one alone carries the wherewithal to destroy the country built in 1971. Though our democracy has not meshed with our external environment as our abandonment of socialism has, it is perhaps our shift from secularism that probably distances us more from our external partners than any other pillar.

Our fourth pillar, ironically, has strengthened while the others have weakened. Nationalism was a steadfast force under Bangabandhu, but so too under the military generals and democratically-elected politicians. One reason why could be that economic growth boosts confidence and, when properly channelled, strengthens self-identity. Another could be the sheer neo-liberal competitiveness between countries, breeding the "my country right or wrong" mindset. Even a third variant can be found as the byproduct of international isolation: the more a country disagrees with or diverges from external expectations, the more nationalism intensifies.

Of the three nationalism types, the third is the costliest since Bangladesh depends on external ties. The second is the least expensive since competition dilutes every policy approach: if nationalism gets in the way, deregulate; and if liberalism reduces competitiveness, become protectionist. The first fits in between the two others but shifts whichever way the wind blows: if it favours the market, that is, dependence on export markets, nationalism begins to weaken and wilt; but if it is pushed by politics, nationalism begins to deepen and darken.

BNP officially adopted "nationalism" in its identity from the very start; but though the AL adopted it in 1971, today nationalism serves as an instrument of defiance variably used against unsavoury external decisions rather than as a pillar. There is a co-relationship between growth and nationalism: the more resources one has, the more the swagger.

In the middle of 2014, Bangladesh is at odds with both its own history and the international context. Historically, on nationalism remains of the original four pillars, but it is precisely the one that should loosen up in a rapidly globalising environment. Evaporating socialism streamlines with the global post-Cold War Kantian setting, but predicts greater widening than narrowing of income-gaps in a neo-liberal order. Secularity meshes with globalisation and a market-economy, but as Bangladeshi nationalism and external/Islamic meddling intensify, more religious intolerance is expected.

For good or bad, today's Bangladesh is not the one of 1971. Emerging post-independence generations will eventually determine, deliberately or by default, if we need any pillars at all -- and if we do, what they should be. Without landmarks of sorts, we become a horse with no name.

The writer is Professor Emeritus of International Relations, Universidad Iberoamericana, Mexico.

Tunisia's successes and Egypt's regressions

RUBY AMATULLA

ON January 26, 2014, the Constituent Assembly of Tunisia voted overwhelmingly [200 out of 217] to approve the most liberal democratic constitution in the Middle East. The constitution protects civil liberties, establishes separation of powers and proper checks and balances, and guarantees gender equality in socio-political processes. Paradoxically enough, the dominant group in the Assembly consists of Islamists.

The charter is an outcome of a long-protracted process of negotiation, consensus and trust-building between Islamists and secularists. A Turkish New York Times columnist, Mustafa Akyol, recently stated that Tunisia can be a role model for Turkey -- even though Turkey is a sixty-year-old democracy.

Egypt, a regional leader and a pivotal country in the Muslim world, has a different story to tell. Only two-and-a-half years after the revolution and one year after Mohamed Morsi from the Muslim Brotherhood was elected president, a military coup removed Morsi from power on July 3, 2013. Now again a military man, the former defense minister, al-Sisi, who led the last coup is on the throne claiming to have received over 90% vote in the recent election. Egypt is back full circle.

Tunisia and Egypt had ousted their long autocratic rulers through creative civic resistance movements, and started their journey towards self-rule around the same time in 2011. Tunisia appears to be moving ahead towards achieving its goals, while Egypt is regressing.

Tunisia succeeded in building consensus among the political rivals to establish a functioning democratic system while Egypt failed to do so.

History is a testament to this fact that whenever adversaries create a consensus -- often through long difficult negotiations entailing compromises -- and they remain committed to the ideas and principles of inclusive politics and sharing powers it leads to a long term win-win state of affairs.

Like Egypt and many other Muslim majority countries Tunisia had its share of unfortunate past lives -- including long-standing colonial rule as well as post-independence authoritarian rulers for approximately 55 years. Corruption, favouritism, misuse and abuse of power, decaying institutions, politicised bureaucrats, and failing economies are all too common in undemocratic systems that dysfunctionally manage countries.

Under western influence, the autocratic regimes that ruled both Tunisia and Egypt imposed liberal and secular policies on peoples without building a national consensus in favour of these policies. Thus, these nations became deeply divided along secular and religious lines for a long time.

One reason that Tunisia appears to be creating a paradigm shift for the Middle East and North Africa is that both the Islamists and the secularists are committed to create a fair environment in which both sides feel secure and confident to work together to establish self-rule. The leadership of Rachid Ghannouchi in the Islamist party 'Ennahda' (Renaissance) plays a critical role in avoiding political gridlock for Tunisia.

Tunisia emphasised 'process first' transition that framed the constitution first by the Constituent Assembly, whose members would be elected by the first election. After that, the second election would elect the president for the country. This way, the binding rules of governance laid down in the constitution would impose constraints and allow for limited power at the disposal of the president, as desired in a democratic system.

Egypt's process, however, was just the opposite -- electing the president first and then allowing the Constituent Assembly to draft the constitution. That gave the elected president, in the absence of a set constitution, a huge capacity to mold primordial political ground to his party's advantage. This made liberals nervous and restless after Mohamed Morsi of the Freedom and Justice Party -- the offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood -- became elected through a narrow 51% margin. And this situation of uncertainty and lack of trust between the Islamists and the secularists lead to widespread conflicts and protests.

In stark contrast, the major political parties and civil society members of Tunisia came together soon after the dictator, Ben Ali, was ousted in January, 2011, to form the Ben Achour Commission, an inclusive decision making body that turned out to be, according to Alfred Stepan from Columbia University, "one of the most effective consensus-building bodies in the history of 'crafted' democratic transitions."

This is precisely what Tunisia needed to break away from the past -- to build a future based on legitimacy and solidarity. Tunisia succeeded because the arch rivals were willing to share power, establish consensus and take part in an inclusive political agenda. After the first election, even the parties that did not do well acknowledged the fairness and credibility of the election. The Commission in Tunisia invited and encour-

aged foreign observers while Egypt severely restricted them.

It is long overdue that liberals and Islamists find ways to reach out to each other. In a Muslim-majority society where religion matters a great deal yet ignorance and false indoctrinations prevail and where a huge young generation remains frustrated about the way their society is managed, an enormous collective responsibility exists.

After Morsi took office on June 30, 2012, he spared no time in consolidating power unilaterally, and generally ignored the voices of the 49% who did not vote for him in the 2012 election. When Morsi faced serious turmoil and opposition to his presidency, he decided to hang on to power and became increasingly rigid and defiant. Morsi's actions sent an unmistakable signal to the opposition about his intent to monopolise rule like his predecessors. Morsi turned a blind eye to the agitation on the street until the army stepped in and removed him. This could have been avoided had consensus building between the Islamists and the secularists be given priority in a country like Egypt, with 80 million people belonging to different camps coupled with a long history of polarisation and confrontation.

Wisdom prevailed on Ghannouchi, and he saw the writing on the wall. He witnessed what happened in Egypt, and he did not want that scenario to happen to his own people. When his party faced a similar situation in October 2013 after the death of two leaders of liberal groups as well as increasing dissension, Ghannouchi stepped down willingly to hand over power to a neutral caretaker-government. Ghannouchi thus avoided turmoil and sought consensus in building a critical period of his country's history. He and his party compromised on some of the thorniest issues facing Islamists, through deals with liberals that aimed to achieve viable self-rule. This was not a sign of weakness or defeat by any means. To the contrary this move was a sign of strength, vision, and true statesmanship by willingly giving up power for the greater interests of the nation.

If history is any reference, it is not only Tunisians who won. The whole world won as well. This courageous move is likely to give birth to a functioning democracy, and Ennahda has earned the goodwill and trust of the people and ensured itself a solid place in the nation's politics and history. Islamists anywhere in the world should take a hard look at this trailblazer of our time.

The writer is Executive Director, US-based Muslims for Peace, Justice and Progress. E-mail: ruyamatulla@yahoo.com

Tunisia succeeded in building consensus among the political rivals to establish a functioning democratic system while Egypt failed to do so. History is a testament to this fact that whenever adversaries create a consensus -- often through long difficult negotiations entailing compromises -- and they remain committed to the ideas and principles of inclusive politics and sharing powers it leads to a long term win-win state of affairs.

QUOTABLE Quote

Human beings are perhaps never more frightening than when they are convinced beyond doubt that they are right.
Laurens van der Post

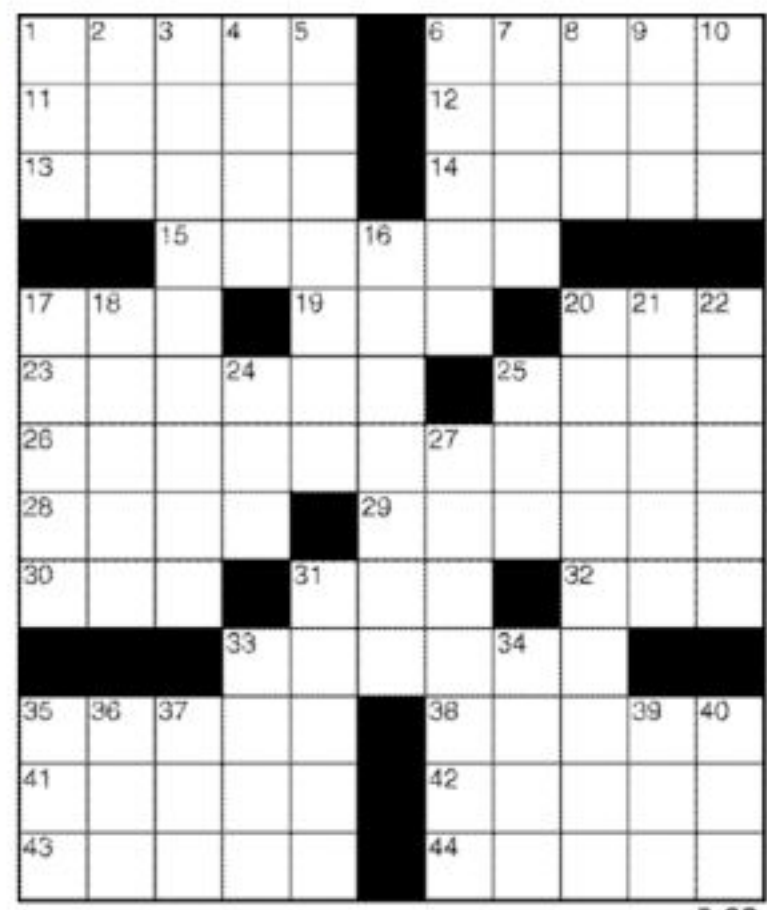
CROSSWORD by Thomas Joseph

ACROSS

- 1 Flat floaters
- 6 Photo holder
- 11 "The Waste Land" poet
- 12 Shrek's love
- 13 Under-handed
- 14 Genesis event
- 15 Vivacious wit
- 17 Yak it up
- 19 Cowboy nickname
- 20 Diet no-no
- 23 Suspects' stories
- 25 Verdi opera
- 26 Military targeting
- 28 Lose color
- 29 Horror director George
- 30 Twisty letter
- 31 score amts
- 32 Dramatist Jonson
- 33 Former Spanish coin
- 35 Bayou native
- 38 "The Hobbit" hero
- 41 Squirrel's treat
- 42 Burns' partner
- 43 Like some frat parties
- 44 "Beau--"

DOWN

- 1 Checkers side
- 2 Ring legend
- 3 Orioles
- 4 Young ones
- 5 Bleeding stopper
- 6 Tack on
- 7 Bounce tune
- 8 Scary cry
- 9 One, for Juan
- 10 Steamed
- 16 Travel meccas
- 17 Social blunder
- 18 Rap sheet item
- 20 Energetic people
- 21 Fine darling
- 22 Eagle's claw
- 23 Pollen collector
- 25 Money machine
- 27 Oats holder
- 31 Bit of change
- 33 Contented sound
- 34 Floor unit
- 35 Truck part
- 36 Super serve
- 37 Coffee, in slang
- 39 Put on the line
- 40 Afternoon hour



CRYPTOQUOTE

ITISL KHSV UGUJ RZ NPPIWZZJSJL
HPEL DHNSV HTIS UGI ZRVI HC J
MSROORPAORPV.

-- RW WISH

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: THOU SHALL NOT BE A PERPETRATOR, THOU SHALL NOT BE A VICTIM, AND THOU SHALL NEVER, BUT NEVER, BE A BYSTANDER.

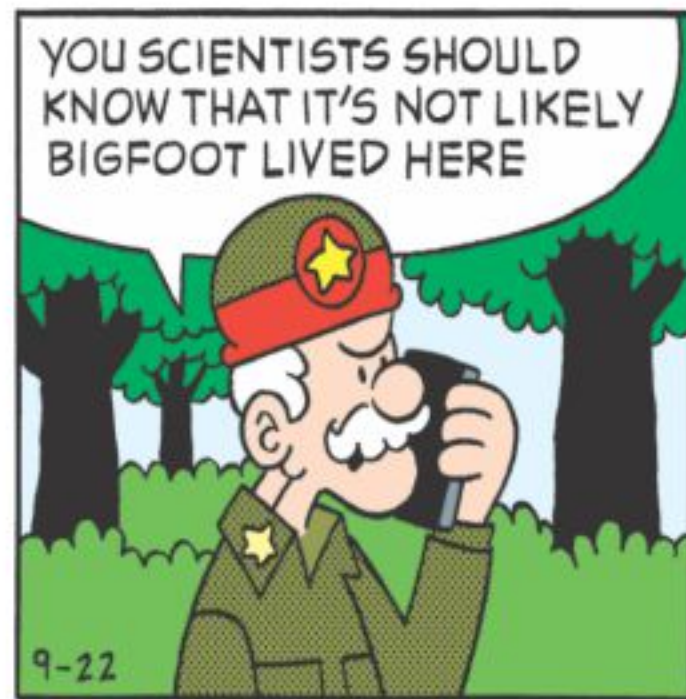
-- YEHUDA BAUER

Yesterday's answer

POLED RAPT
UVULA FOLIO
NECKS RAINY
IRIS BERATE
SPA AYE SOD
HANDLERS
ROOT IOWA
HARDLENS
SAC ROE ADA
CROSBY BRAS
ROME MOONS
AMITY ACUTE
MACH DATED

BEETLE BAILEY

by Mort Walker



HENRY

by Don Trachte

