

# Should China worry about India-US rapprochement?

MOHAMMAD ATIQUE RAHMAN

THE historic visit to India by United States President Barack Obama has opened up a new vista of diplomatic relations and cooperation between India and the US. The signing of the "India-US Civil Nuclear Cooperation" agreement no doubt symbolises the new level of mutual trust and confidence between the two largest democracies in the world. President Obama's executive power to roll back the condition that US authorities be allowed to monitor use of nuclear material purchased by India even from third countries is a sign of such high level of mutual confidence. President Obama extended his hand of cooperation to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to foster economic prosperity and security cooperation not only for themselves but also for the region. There were lots of aspirations and expectations in the air with regard to his visit. In spite of this enthusiasm, the reaction of another powerhouse in Asia -- China -- is quite uneasy, particularly after the India-US joint statement regarding the adoption of new vision in Asia and Pacific. In the joint statement, India and US declared that they affirm "the importance of safeguarding maritime security and ensuring freedom of navigation and over-flight throughout the region, especially in the South China Sea." Now the question is, why should China worry about US-India rapprochement in Asia and Pacific? Does such an alliance overlap China's expectations over the South China Sea?

To answer these questions, let us explore Chinese interests in the South China Sea and how they may overlap with the joint interests of India and the US. First of all, given the current Chinese economic and military interests in the region, it is difficult to bypass China while discussing economic and security cooperation in Asia and Pacific. In 2009, George Friedman in his book *The Next 100 Years* wrote: "Any discussion of the future has to begin with a discussion of China as future global power." Ted C. Fishman, in his book *China Inc.* wrote: "China is everywhere these days, powered by the world's most rapidly changing large economy which influences consumers, employers and citizens in the region and around the world."

It is the world's second largest economy, maintaining 10% of GDP or more over the last 30 years, and has become the largest manufacturing country of the world. Geo-politically, however, China is an island country. Most interestingly it is not surrounded by water but by impassable terrain and wastelands -- Siberia and the Mongolian grassland in the

North; the impassable Himalayas in the Southwest; and mountain and jungles along the Southern borders with Myanmar, Laos and Vietnam. China's only viable access is the South China Sea. This sea route is critically important for China in its trade with other nations. The majority of the people of China live within one thousand miles of the coast located in the major port cities like Shanghai and Guangzhou.

China, over the last two decades, has become a gold mine for low cost manufacturing of products. The label "Made in China" has become universal. But nowadays, China is

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experiencing sharp increase in labour cost, which increased by 10% in 2014 compared to Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. Therefore, China and the world's MNCs are now adopting 'China Plus' policy to relocate their production plants in East, South and South East Asian countries which are also located in the South China Sea region.

The current government in China therefore adopted the historic 'Maritime Silk Road' policy in the region to develop an effective, secure, reliable and navigable international sea route for trading and connecting future manufacturing zones of Chinese companies and MNCs in

the East, South and South Asian countries. China is desperately trying to enhance maritime trade security among the East, South and South East Asian countries, developing an effective framework of economic cooperation including Free Trade Zone, and supporting infrastructure projects like building roads and railways in the region to materialise the idea of Maritime Silk Road. China has also developed effective relations with Sri Lanka in the Indian Ocean to allow Chinese submarines to dock at their ports. China's relations with its maritime neighbours are both friendly and tense. As for example, China is engaged in territorial disputes over Spratly Islands with Vietnam and over Senkaku Islands with Japan.

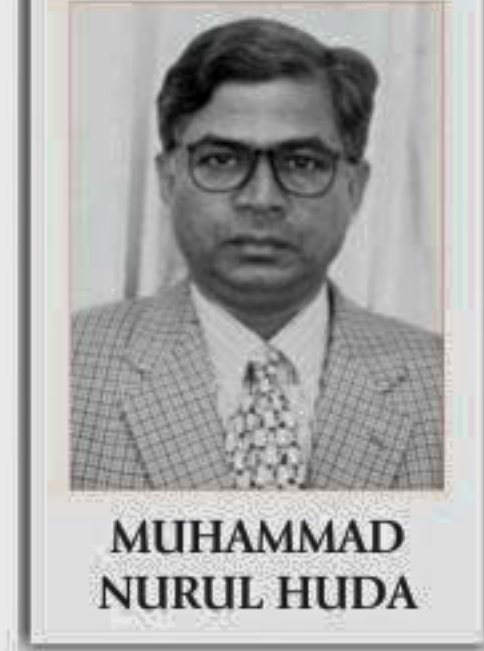
Today, the sea is the most cost-effective and reliable trading route, and no doubt India and the US have vital strategic and economic interests in the Indian Ocean and South China Sea across the Asia-Pacific as US allies Japan, Singapore, Malaysia and Vietnam are located in this region. The US has also entered into a Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) agreement with Brunei, Malaysia and Vietnam. On the other hand, India has aspirations to achieve blue water capabilities and explore huge amounts of natural resources and establish viable trading route in the Indian Ocean.

The rise of China and India is a reality in Asia. Both the nations are increasing the size and capabilities of their naval powers in the vast deep oceans. C. Raja Mohan, in his book *Samudra Manthan: Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Indo-Pacific* published in 2013, argued that rising China and emerging India are becoming major maritime powers. Beijing and Delhi are building powerful blue water navies to secure their vital interests far beyond their immediate shores. As the naval footprints of China and India overlap, their maritime competition has begun to roil the waters of the Indo-Pacific, the vast littoral stretching from Africa to Australasia. While China has quantitative advantage, India has been gaining qualitative and strategic advantage over China in the oceans. Therefore, the joint statement of strategic cooperation between India and US in Asia-Pacific reveals their mutual interests in the Indian Ocean and South China Sea regions. In future, their joint effort could help them gain balance with the growing strategic presence of China in the greater Indian Ocean. So the question remains, why should China not worry about their rapprochement?

The writer is Assistant Professor, Dept. of International Relations, University of Dhaka. E-mail: atique@du.ac.bd

# Prime minister's directive and lawmen

STRAIGHT LINE



MUHAMMAD NURUL HUDA

PRIME Minister Sheikh Hasina has ordered the police to take whatever steps necessary to stop the ongoing violence in the country. The PM said: "I will take the responsibility for whatever happens (due to the action)."

But you will have to ensure the security of common people. You will take whatever steps are necessary against those responsible for burning and attacking people."

The head of the government's concern and urgency for people's safety cannot be disputed as we see a perilous addiction to conflicts as the substitute for the complexities of political understanding and civilised manner of discourse in a supposedly democratic polity. However, in carrying out the directives, the custodians of law and liberty have to be clear-headed and level-headed in upholding the best practices of law enforcement in maintaining public order.

Bearing in mind the public servant's unflinching loyalty to State machinery and the constitution, it needs to be emphasised that the public servants' absolute neutrality in dispensing their duty without any political bias is a constitutional requirement in a democratic set-up. To be specific, law enforcers must not stand accused of violating the constitution and hurting some cardinal principles of democracy.

The law enforcement machinery, while carrying out the directives, must have in mind the legally stipulated right of private defense of body and property as enshrined in our Penal Code. The laid down limits within which rules and instructions apply and the conditions to which they are

subject in a public order situation have to be obeyed and scrupulously adhered to.

The protesters need to know that the right to protect one's own person and property against the unlawful aggressions of others is an inherent right. The duty of protecting the person and property of others is a duty which man owes to society of which he is a member and the preservation of which is both his interest and duty. It is, indeed, a duty which flows from human sympathy.

In our present situation the lawmen as well as dutiful and conscientious citizens should be made to display that indignation which kindles at the sight of the feeble injured by the strong. The law enforcers and the citizens together should be able to make us forget our own danger at the first cry of distress. In fact, an environment should be created wherein every honest human being should consider himself as the natural protector of every other.

The fear of law should be able to sufficiently restrain the bad men from committing mischief. As such, the utterances of lawmen must strike enough fear in the hearts of real miscreants. At the same time the fear of sum total of individual resistance should be able to make an effective difference. The utterances of warning by law enforcers must not scare away the law-abiding and the public spirited.

Democrats in our polity, surely, do not want the re-surfacing of enforcement aberrations in the form of deaths in doubtful encounters with the lawmen. However, the burning and maiming of innocent people, if continued, will help in fostering a culture wherein the excesses of State agencies will not be viewed with appropriate concern and indignation. That would be a very sorry state of affairs to live in. Those wishing to conduct public affairs need to take a serious note of such eventualities in public interest.

# Understanding youth's involvement in violence

NAHELA NOWSHIN

THE death toll in the ongoing political ruckus has climbed to at least 34, half of which were the result of targeted arson attacks on buses and trucks. Mass arrests of around



7,500 opposition activists have been reported as civilians continue to be attacked indiscriminately by petrol bombs and torching of vehicles. On January 21, Social Welfare Minister Syed Mohsin Ali talked about possibly implementing "shoot on sight" giving

law enforcement authorities the licence to kill arsonists saying the latter "need not be tried."

What we are witnessing is the participation of an overwhelming number of youth in unleashing violence across the country. Reports of young men being paid to hurl bombs or set public buses on fire are common. The number of young people in Bangladesh has been on the rise since the '80s along with the corresponding increase of the global young population (1.8 billion out of 7.3 billion). Bangladesh is in the midst of a demographic transition, experiencing a youth bulge (i.e. an excess in young population) with the median age somewhere between 25 and 30. The 'youth bulge' theory, which states that an overabundance of young, adult males in a country is likely to cause social unrest, is supported by periods of rise in communism during the Cold War, Arab Spring and even the current climate of terrorism (Islamic State). The importance of this must not be underestimated, particularly with regard to reversing the unpromising national outlook for the significant portion of our country's young population. The interplay of poor governance, lack of education and unemployment among other factors must be taken into account in order to understand the rationale behind our youth's affinity to political violence.

## A disillusioned bunch

According to Population Reference Bureau, the youth (ages 10 to 24) makes up one third of Bangladesh's total population of nearly 160 million. A workshop on "Labour Market Transition for Young Women and Men in Bangladesh" held by Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) revealed some glaring statistical data. The national youth unemployment rate is above 10% with the unemployment rate of young university graduates (26.1%) being four times as much as that of young people with primary level education (6%). Around 37% of youths are neither in the labour market nor in education and the rate of informal employment of youths has gone through the roof at 95%.

The widespread lack of job opportunities resulting in an epidemic of youth unemployment plays a vital role in our youth's recourse to participate in political violence. Disillusioned and frustrated with the inefficacies of our socio-economic institutions, the youth feels a sense of inclusion and empowerment by taking matters into their own hands. Young men entrust their time and resources to entities like Chhatra Dal and Chhatra League with hopes of climbing the ladders of social and economic mobility. A World Bank report on South Asian inequality revealed that the probabilities of falling

back into poverty and out of the middle class are highest in Bangladesh. In addition to all this, the marginalised youth's under representation in formal institutions of politics and public debate fuels the desires of angry, young men to engage themselves through violent political means.

## A culture of miseducation

Instances of question paper leaks of primary exams have become ubiquitous throughout the country. Just recently, Primary School Certificate (PSC) question papers of all subjects were alleged to have been leaked. A probe conducted by the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education found that 53% of Bangla paper questions and 80% of English paper questions had been leaked in 2013. These malpractices not only create unfair competition between students but also develop indifference towards education from a young age.

Further crippling the educational system is the national crisis of residential facilities at universities. In 2013, 69% of students in public universities had no accommodation facilities. The widening gulf between the total number of students and available seats/residential facilities leads to the unethical practice of ruling party backed student organisations compelling students to join their party in exchange for accommodation or seats.

The current politicisation of educational systems and mobilisation of students are a far cry from noble, student-led movements such as the Language Movement in 1952 and the Liberation War in 1971. For the sake of posterity, our educational institutions must be repaired and depoliticised immediately.

In a 2014 report, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) emphasised the urgency to invest in our burgeoning human capital in order to benefit from a "large demographic dividend" that is our young population. The report also recommended revamping macro-economic management, trade, and system of governance to boost employment rates among the youth. More organisations like JAAGO and Bangladesh Youth Leadership Centre (BYLC) aimed at ameliorating the state of our youth are needed to inspire and inculcate into the young population values of education, leadership and civic engagement. An exigency of our civil society is economic and political reform that makes it irrational (costs outweighing benefits) for our youth to resort to political violence. The young population must feel represented, included and valued. As Kofi Annan aptly put it: "A society that cuts itself off from its youth severs its lifeline; it is condemned to bleed to death."

The writer is a graduate of University of California, Los Angeles.

**QUOTABLE Quote**

Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred.

Martin Luther King Jr.

## CROSSWORD by Thomas Joseph

- ACROSS**
- Trolley's kin
  - Foot-wiping spots
  - Long for
  - Exemplary
  - Add zest to
  - Nick of "Grace-point"
  - Drink cooler
  - Tall tale
  - Alley item
  - Out of control
  - Strut
  - CEO's kin
  - Kitchen come-on
  - Very dry
  - Sadat's predecessor
  - Plunder
  - Yale student
  - Lend a hand
  - Fumes
  - Pig part
  - Colander's kin
  - Reason
  - Claire of "Homeland"
  - Cherished
  - Troubling sign
- DOWN**
- One of the Nixons
  - Baltimore team
  - Opposite of "sans"
  - Computer screen sight
  - One with a pick
  - Commotion
  - Bank worker
  - Swift work
  - Film excerpts
  - Onions' kin
  - "Crazy in Love" singer
  - Places for the pampered
  - Toppers
  - Copes
  - Pentagon bigwigs
  - Came down
  - Destroyed
  - Peaceful
  - Late hour
  - Midway sights
  - Fall flower
  - Thailand, once
  - Olympics chant

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45

## Yesterday's answer

SPOT CLOD  
NONOS HINES  
ARENA ELECT  
PTA INSTORE  
SINGLES REA  
ADDED STEM  
TAD DUH  
ACHY PORES  
LEE TENFOLD  
INSHAPETE  
STAIR USHER  
TEMPO PEEVE  
REST CRED

## CRYPTOQUOTE

WM FXDUT'M QYMMDA KBYM UMXAH KD' AD MDZZWTJ, KD'AD MDZZWTJ MBD UMXAH XN NYQWZH.  
-- DAWIY ZXAAYWTD UIBDWFM

Yesterday's CRYPTOQUOTE:  
I FIND THE FAMILY THE MOST MYSTERIOUS AND FASCINATING INSTITUTION OF THE WORLD.  
-- AMOS OZ

## BEETLE BAILEY by Mort Walker

WHY DON'T YOU WEAR YOUR HAIR LIKE THAT ANYMORE?

IT WAS A PAIN IN THE NECK

WHY?

TOP HEAVY!

## HENRY by Don Trachte

I CAN'T SEEM TO STOP YAWNING!