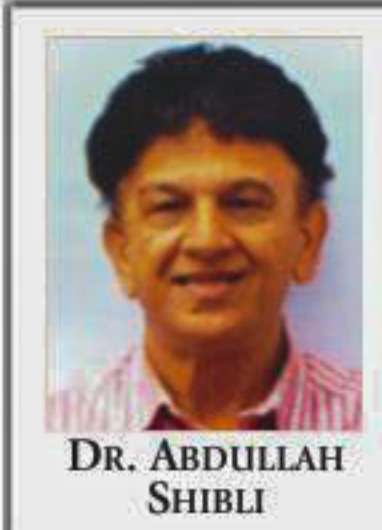


# Challenges facing the Chinese President



**C**HINA'S President Xi Jinping has been walking a very delicate tightrope since the inauguration of the new President of the USA who has threatened to launch an economic war with China. One of

candidate Donald Trump's promises to his nation was to declare China as a currency manipulator on day one of taking his oath of office. Fortunately for China, President Trump is busy with other more pressing problems and has missed his self-imposed deadline by more than a month already. It is a fair guess that President Xi Jinping is counting days before his US counterpart will succumb to the calls by Democrats to implement one of his campaign promises and declare China a currency manipulator. The top Democrat in the Senate, Chuck Schumer, called out to President Trump, "Mr. President: if you really want to put America first, label China a currency manipulator."

- Obviously, China is not eagerly looking forward to such an outcome, even though the measure is known to be popular with Trump's electorate. But would being labelled a "currency manipulator" hurt China or even be a legitimate one? Let us consider the yardstick against which China's policies would be held accountable. A legislation passed in 1988 authorises US secretary of the Treasury to "analyse on an annual basis the exchange rate policies of foreign countries ... and consider whether countries manipulate the rate of exchange between their currency and the United States dollar for purposes of preventing effective balance of payments adjustments or gaining unfair competitive advantage in international trade."
- Empowered by this legislation, every six months, the Treasury department puts countries in a blacklist known as "Monitoring List" on the basis of three tests:
- The country must have a significant trade surplus with the US.

- The country has a "material" current account surplus.
  - The country is engaged in persistent one-sided intervention in the foreign exchange market.
- In the past, China has met at least two of these criteria and has been on the "list" on and off since 1994. China's image in the US took a hit on the chin when Donald Trump declared his candidacy for the president's

that China had moved away from deliberately undervaluing the yuan. As a matter of fact, the yuan's value against the dollar has been declining since 2014 and it is at a six-year low. China, either to prevent yuan from sliding further or to forestall any accusation from US that the devaluation is a result of covert government manipulation and hurting US exports anyway, has spent more than USD 1.3

off and on since winning the elections. In mid-December he said on Fox News that "We're being hurt very badly by China with devaluation; with taxing us heavy at the borders when we don't tax them; with building a massive fortress in the middle of the South China Sea, which they shouldn't be doing; and, frankly, with not helping us at all with North Korea." He now appears to be leaning towards a

manufacturing to China and taken away jobs from US workers. He has also been threatening China with a 45 percent tariff on Chinese exports, similar to the 20 percent tax on Mexican imports to pay for the border wall. China and other countries are not powerless, though, against these threats since any form of tax on imports could be challenged in international courts as violation of WTO rules.



IMAGE: SEEKINGALPHA

position in 2015. On November 9, 2015, Donald Trump wrote in the *Wall Street Journal's* opinion page a harsh critique of China's currency practices. The article, "Ending China's Currency Manipulation", Trump did not mince words when he proclaimed that "China's de facto tariff on imported goods has cost the US billions of dollars and millions of jobs." Rightly or wrongly, he has kept up this barrage of attacks on China's economic policy throughout 2016, regardless of the evidence

trillion of its reserves to buy its currency to shore up its value. In other words, China is attempting to raise the value of yuan not to cheapen its value in the foreign exchange market. However, in an interview with the *Wall Street Journal* last month, Trump is not convinced and ridiculed Jinping's administration's claim about supporting their currency "because they don't want us to get angry". To compound the situation, Donald Trump has been continuously saber-rattling,

multi-pronged attack, along the economic front as well as in the geopolitical sphere. While it is not clear which economic measures the new Administration will finally take, the outline is pretty clear. The US wants China to step away from flooding the US market with cheap Chinese goods while keeping out US exports, thus causing US to run a trade deficit with China to the tune of USD 300 billion annually. More directly, President Trump has been singling out US companies that have outsourced their

China could face other types of sanctions too. It has been reported that President Xi Jinping's counterpart in the White House is exploring a new plan under which "the US Commerce Secretary would designate the practice of currency manipulation as an unfair subsidy when employed by any country, instead of singling out China", allowing US companies to bring anti-subsidy actions themselves to the US Commerce Department against China or other countries.

All this uncertainty is throwing the Chinese leadership in turmoil since these challenges are coming on the eve of China's 19th National Congress scheduled for next autumn. 2017 is a big year for the Communist Party of China and its President. "The Chinese leadership will likely face significant political uncertainty both internally and externally, and in response they will likely place social and economic stability as a top priority throughout 2017," a Credit Suisse research team led by Vincent Chan wrote in a note.

President Xi Jinping, however, is not a pushover. Aware of the danger that Donald Trump faces if he carries his anti-China stance too far, Trump spoke with the Chinese president on the phone and reaffirmed US commitment to "One China" policy, which recognises Beijing's sovereignty over Taiwan. Trump's action to cancel TPP was also seen as a positive signal by China. And, Xi Jinping holds the ultimate trump card: China has more than USD 1 trillion in US bonds, notes and bills and Mr. Trump is aware that any move by China to sell these will cause major disturbances in US financial markets.

The writer is an economist and author of several books on economics.

## The language of hurt



**A** recent video circulating on Facebook, created for February 21, starts with a living room scene in a well-off household. A young girl of about eight or nine years – a house maid with bedraggled hair and a tired face – walks past her employer's daughter who is roughly as old as her. She watches the girl lounging comfortably on the couch, getting hugged by a mother who loves her, and cuddling a stuffed toy she has the privilege to love just as much. Distracted by the scene, the young house maid drops the cup of tea she has been asked to serve. Her employer rises up and threatens to slap her for her inefficiency. The scene then cuts to other scenarios – an old father insists on packing his son's suitcase, much to his grown up son's annoyance; a suited up man snaps rudely at an old, exhausted-looking porter trailing after him; a man driving a car calls out to a shocked pedestrian with an expletive, after almost crashing into him.

violence against the domestic help, insulting the background of anyone who mistakenly bumps into us on the road, to humiliating a rickshaw-puller who deigns to ask for more change than we think they deserve, language seems to have become an instrument used to demean others and revel in a false sense of superiority against those who cannot fight back.

A survey by Telenor last year revealed 49 percent of the student body in Bangladesh to either have bullied others, or been harassed themselves on the internet. In more severe cases, especially among teenage users, public humiliation on social media pushes victims to resort to self harm and even suicide. People who suffer from overweight and other medical issues, disabilities, familial discord, or low self esteem tend to face particularly serious mental and social implications of such acts of cruelty.

Cases of sexual harassment have become especially common of late. A story published by this newspaper last year, titled *Digital Sexual Harassment in Digital Bangladesh*, elaborates on how vulgar photoshopped images are often used to terrorise innocent women who may not even have been involved with the perpetrators in any way; more importantly, how rarely they receive significant help and respect in reporting against these crimes. In some cases, the images are shared

through fake social media accounts, making it impossible to hold credible proof and file a case against the perpetrator. Of course, this doesn't stop the onslaught of vile comments, insults, and even violent threats "slut-shaming" the victims, who are then pushed to take extreme measures to escape the embarrassment.

Recently, the raging popularity of a group called "Your Filtered and Other

behalf, and the suggestions on how to deal with the vulgar advances, provide support and encouragement to those who are subjected to harassment. However, some of the messages shared on the group tend to come from harmless admirers who simply have poor vocabulary in English or an unusual way of writing. They can simply be ignored or politely turned down at the very least.

language has deteriorated. This, in addition to the verbal cruelty practiced in almost all spheres of the society, in a way explains the increasing reach of violence and the growing lack of empathy in our midst, taking forms of intolerance of diversity and open-mindedness.

These effects are addressed in the promotional video about International Mother Language Day



*This culture of taking pride in belittling others, or feeling entitled enough to hurl abuse at relatives, employees, friends, and even strangers, demands reflection on our part.*

Inbox Messages" on Facebook has become an especially graphic proof of just how far online harassment can go. It is a platform for users to share screenshots of everything from hilariously worded romantic messages, to vulgar innuendoes and images sent to woo or harass them. On the one hand, the group serves as a safe space. The shower of comments showing indignation on victims'

on Facebook. It highlights commonly traded words – *chotolok*, *biroktikor*, *oshobho*, *opodarhho* – as they become etched onto the skins of those who receive them, unnoticed by others, but hurtful nonetheless.

The Sapir Whorf hypothesis in linguistics explains how the language we speak shapes the thoughts, behaviour, culture, and patterns of society around us. Regardless of

theoretical studies, the power of words to influence a society has been proved throughout history – from the Soviet Russians' control over literature to influence public perception, to the killing of writers and artists during our own Liberation war. Language, used in the right way, has the power to heal and uplift, and also cause destruction. It is imperative that we realise that, and take note of the effects our words can have on the lives around us.

This culture of taking pride in belittling others, or feeling entitled enough to hurl abuse at relatives, employees, friends, and even strangers, demands reflection on our part. How many people did we hurt or insult in our rush to battle through the traffic this morning? Who among our friends may secretly be suffering from harassment online or in real life? Which of our relatives did we unknowingly humiliate through our clever rebuke on a Facebook post?

Sixty-five glorious years have passed since we won the right to our own language. A week after this year's International Mother Language Day, as the choruses of *Ekushey February* fade and the wreaths laid on the Shaheed Minar begin to wither, as we switch back to our regular, banal lives, how appropriately are we using our right to speak as we choose?

The writer is a student at North South University, and a member of the editorial team, *The Daily Star*.

**QUOTABLE Quote**

**LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN**  
AUSTRIAN – BRITISH PHILOSOPHER

*The limits of my language are the limits of my world.*

**CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH**

**ACROSS**

- Dealer's need
- Increase
- Car bar
- Lease signer
- Whirled
- Tenor Bocelli
- Kidnap victims
- Summit
- Hair clusters
- Play part
- Bowler's challenge
- Road goo
- Thurman of film
- Starts business
- Trouble
- Bike part
- Leaf lifter
- Slim cigar
- Most important thing to do
- Wrinkle remover
- Full-price payers
- Split
- Stand up to
- Daring

**DOWN**

- Morse T
- Tightly grouped
- Jazz great Stan
- Unescorted
- Beliefs
- Finishes
- Hole number
- French article
- School org.
- Clumsy fellow
- Rattled
- Watch reading
- RBI or ERA
- Organ part
- Matador's need
- Port of Italia
- Biases
- Meadow cry
- Whole
- Comfy spot
- Drawn out
- Opie's dad
- Mayo buy
- Pindar piece
- Tour carrier

**BEETLE BAILEY**

**by Mort Walker**

**BABY BLUES**

**by Kirkman & Scott**

**YESTERDAY'S ANSWER**

R I P S    H O W A R D  
I D L E    A D A G I O  
P E T E    R E N E G E  
E A R    W E S T  
A D A M S    J A B  
S A V O R    A N K L E  
O V E R    T R I E  
F I R S T    T R O T S  
A D S    A R R O W  
P L O Y    L O G  
B L A R E S    R I D E  
R E D O N E    I N O N  
A D O P T S    O G R E

**CORRIGENDUM**

The crossword published on February 25 was incorrectly printed. The answers for February 24 and the next puzzle is printed today. We regret the error.