



## Leave them alone

Calls to take action against the Sentinelese for a tragic death are dangerously misguided

The death of a young American man at the hands of the inhabitants of North Sentinel Island in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands has led to dangerous lines of debate. Some have called for the Sentinelese to be convicted and punished and others have urged that they be integrated into modern society. Both these demands are misguided, and can only result in the extinction of a people. John Chau's killing was a tragedy but his attempt to make contact with the Sentinelese, who he seemed to know something about, was foolhardy and dangerous, not only to himself but to them. There is a reason why no one – whether missionary, scholar, adventurer, U.S. citizen or Indian – is allowed to venture near North Sentinel Island without permission, which is given only in the rarest of circumstances and with meticulous precautions in place to ensure that the Sentinelese are not disturbed. Having lived in isolation in an island in the Bay of Bengal for thousands of years, the Sentinelese have no immunity or resistance to even the commonest of infections. Various degrees of protection are in place for the indigenous people of A&N Islands, but it is complete in the case of the Sentinelese. The administration enforces an 'eyes-on and hands-off' policy to ensure that no poachers enter the island. A protocol of circumnavigation of the island is in place, and the buffer maintained around the island is enforced under various laws. The Sentinelese are perhaps the most reclusive community in the world today. Their language is so far understood by no other group and they have traditionally guarded their island fiercely, attacking most intruders with spears and arrows. Arrows were fired even at a government aircraft that flew over the island after the 2004 Tsunami.

Chau knowingly broke the law, as did those who took him to the waters off North Sentinel Island. Seven persons, including five fishermen, have been arrested for facilitating this misadventure. To call for an investigation on the island, however, is to fail to see its historical and administrative uniqueness. At the heart of the issue is the survival of the Sentinelese. According to the 2011 Census, their population was just 15 – though anthropologists like T.N. Pandit, who made contact with them in the 1960s, put the figure at 80-90. This degree of ignorance about the Sentinelese often sparks an Orientalist public discourse, instead of understanding the dangers of trying to physically overpower them. Chau's death is a cautionary incident – for the danger of adventurism, and for the administration to step up oversight. But it is also an occasion for the country to embrace its human heritage in all its diversity, and to empathetically try to see the world from the eyes of its most vulnerable inhabitants.

## Ahead on malaria

Odisha shows the way in bringing down the incidence of new cases

India has suffered from a major burden of malaria for decades, with high levels of morbidity and death. But the declining trend of the scourge shows that sustained public health action can achieve good results. The World Malaria Report 2018 of the World Health Organisation notes that India's record offers great promise in the quest to cut the number of new cases and deaths globally by at least 40% by 2020, and to end the epidemic by 2030. A lot of that optimism has to do with the progress made by Odisha, one of the most endemic States. Investments made there in recruiting accredited social health workers and large-scale distribution of insecticide-treated bednets, together with strategies to encourage health-seeking behaviour, seem to have paid off. The WHO report highlights a sharp drop in the number of cases in the State. The reduction in cases by half in 2017 compared to the same study period in 2016 appears to reinforce research findings: malaria cases in Odisha have been coming down steadily since 2003, with a marked reduction since 2008, attributed to greater political and administrative commitment. This positive trend should encourage authorities not just in Odisha, but in the northeastern States and elsewhere too to cut the transmission of the disease further. Importantly, the reduction in the number of cases should not produce complacency and lead to a reduction in deployment of health workers and funding cuts to programme components. Where allocations have been reduced, they should be reversed. It should be pointed out that even in 2017, the Union Health and Family Welfare Ministry put the number of malaria cases in Odisha at 3,52,140.

One issue that requires monitoring in India is resistance to combination therapy using artemisinin. Recent reports indicate that some patients in West Bengal became resistant to the treatment protocol used for the falciparum parasite, which causes debilitating cerebral malaria and leads to a high number of deaths. The phenomenon requires close monitoring – although the WHO said in a recent assessment that the treatment policy was changed to another efficacious set of combination drugs in some northeastern States, after statistically significant treatment failure rates were found in 2012. Eliminating malaria requires an integrated approach, and this should involve Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and West Bengal, which have a higher burden of the disease. Odisha's experience with using public health education as a tool and reaching out to remote populations with advice needs to be replicated. Given that emerging resistance to treatment has been reported in Myanmar, among other countries in this belt, there is a need for a coordinated approach to rid southern Asia of malaria.

# Ten years after the Mumbai attack

Vigilance is important against new variants of terror, remaining ahead of the curve is even more vital



M.K. NARAYANAN

Ten years ago on this day, Pakistan carried out one of the most heinous of terror attacks perpetrated anywhere in the world. The 26/11 Mumbai terror attack, named after the date in 2008 when the attack took place, is in some respects comparable to the September 11, 2001 terror attacks in the U.S. Comparisons with the Madrid train bombings in 2004 and the London bombings in 2005 are, however, misplaced.

India, and Mumbai city, are no strangers to terror. In 1993, over 250 people were killed in Mumbai in a series of coordinated bomb explosions attributed to Dawood Ibrahim, reportedly as reprisal for the demolition of the Babri Masjid. In July 2006, bomb explosions in a number of suburban trains in Mumbai killed over 200 people and injured several more. The most audacious terror attack till the 26/11 Mumbai terror incident was the attack on the Indian Parliament in 2001 by the Pakistan-based terror outfits, Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM).

### Into the 21st century

Terrorism is hardly a post-modern phenomenon. Several of the terror attacks in the 21st century, however, reflect a paradigmatic change in the tactics of asymmetric warfare, and the practice of violence. Today's attacks carried out in different corners of the world by al-Qaeda and its affiliates, the Islamic State, al-Shabaab, and similar terror outfits, are very different from those witnessed in the previous century. The tactics employed may vary, but the objective is com-

mon, viz. achieving mass casualties and widespread destruction.

The 26/11 Mumbai terror attack was one of a kind, and not a mere variant of previous instances of terrorist violence. It was the rarest of rare cases, where one state's resources, viz. Pakistan's, were employed to carry out a series of terror attacks in a major Indian city. It was a case of 'war by other means', in which the authorities in Pakistan, the Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate, the Pakistani armed forces, were involved. It is difficult to recall any recorded instance in modern times where a state and its various agencies were directly involved in carrying out a terror attack of this nature. As is now known, the Mumbai terror attack was not based on a sudden impulse or whim. Several years of planning and preparation had preceded the attack, even as the Pakistani President, Pervez Musharraf, was talking peace with then Indian Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh.

The degree of involvement of the Pakistani deep state in the planning and preparation of the attack is evident from many aspects that have come to light subsequently. Seldom has any terrorist group then, or for that matter even now, used such highly sophisticated, state-of-the-art communications, including Voice over Internet Protocol. Planning for the attack involved the use of a third country address. Handlers in Pakistan were given unfettered freedom to provide instructions to the terrorists during the entire four-day siege. The choice of the sea route aimed at deception and avoiding detection, was again dictated by official agencies.

The involvement of the Pakistani Special Forces in preparing the 10-member fidayeen group was confirmed by one of the conspirators, Abu Hamza, arrested subsequent to the 26/11 terror attack. The training regimen dictated by



AP/GAUTAM SINGH

the Pakistani Special Forces involved psychological indoctrination by highlighting atrocities on Muslims in India and other parts of the globe, including Chechnya and Palestine; basic and advanced combat training; commando training; training in weapons and explosives; training in swimming and sailing – all under the watchful eyes of Pakistani instructors from the Special Forces. An even more unusual feature of the Mumbai attacks was the involvement of two U.S./Canadian nationals of Pakistani origin, David Headley (who at the time was a LeT operative) and Tahawwur Hussain Rana. The 10 attackers came via the sea from Karachi in a small boat, hijacked an Indian fishing trawler en route, and reached Colaba in a rubber dinghy on November 26 evening.

### Horror over four days

The targets were carefully chosen after having been reconnoitred previously by Headley for maximum impact, viz. the Taj and Oberoi Hotels, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus, the Jewish Centre at Nariman House, and the Leopold Cafe, since these places were frequented by Europeans, Indians and Jews. The Mumbai terror attack went on for nearly four days, from the evening of November 26 to the morning of November 29. Seldom has a terrorist incident lasted this length of time, since the Munich Olympics mas-

sacre in 1972.

From an Indian standpoint, it was perhaps for the first time that an operation of this nature involved Rapid Action Force personnel, Marine Commandos (MAR-COS), the National Security Guard (NSG) and the Mumbai Police.

It was inevitable that there should be a great deal of recrimination in the wake of terror attack. The principal charge was that the security establishment had failed to anticipate an attack of this nature, and was not adequately prepared to deal with the situation. In retrospect, it has to be recognised that the Mumbai terror attack was an unprecedented exercise in violence, involving not merely a well-trained terrorist group, but also backed by the resources of a state, viz. Pakistan. Till then, the Pakistani state was only known to harbour terrorist groups like the LeT and the JeM, and use terror as an instrumentality to create problems for India.

Secrecy was the very essence of this operation. Plans were limited to a mere handful of persons. In the LeT hierarchy, apart from Hafiz Sayeed, only a few like Zakiur Rehman Lakhvi, its chief military commander, Sajid Mir and Zafar Shah, its communications chief, were privy to the operational plans. U.S. intelligence is said to have penetrated Zafar Shah's computer, and possibly had far more details of the operation than were actually shared with Indian intelligence.

### Streamlining security

In the wake of the terror attack, several steps were initiated to streamline the security set-up. Coastal security was given high priority, and it is with the Navy/Coast Guard/marine police. A specialised agency to deal with terrorist offences, the National Investigation Agency, was set up and has been functioning from January 2009. The National Intelligence

Grid (NATGRID) has been constituted to create an appropriate database of security related information. Four new operational hubs for the NSG have been created to ensure rapid response to terror attacks. The Multi Agency Centre, which functions under the Intelligence Bureau, was further strengthened and its activities expanded. The Navy constituted a Joint Operations Centre to keep vigil over India's extended coastline.

Notwithstanding increased vigil and streamlining of the counterterrorism apparatus, the ground reality is that newer methodologies, newer concepts more daringly executed, and more deeply laid plans of terrorist groups have made the world a less safe place. The actual number of terror attacks may have declined in recent years, but this does not mean that the situation is better than what existed a decade ago. Terrorism remains a major threat, and with modern refinements, new terrorist methodologies and terrorism mutating into a global franchise, the threat potential has become greater.

One new variant is the concept of 'enabled terror' or 'remote controlled terror', viz. violence conceived and guided by a controller thousands of miles away. Today the 'lone wolf' is, more often than not, part of a remote-controlled initiative, with a controller choosing the target, the nature of the attack and even the weaponry to be used. Internet-enabled terrorism and resort to remote plotting is thus the new threat. Operating behind a wall of anonymity, random terror is likely to become the new terror imperative. There are no ready-made answers to this new threat. Vigilance is important, but remaining ahead of the curve is even more vital.

M.K. Narayanan is a former National Security Adviser and a former Governor of West Bengal

# Along the new Silk Roads

Regional agreements such as the BRI could embrace greater trade liberalisation goals



LEÏLA CHOUKROUNE & JAMES J. NEDUMPARA

At the recent Paris Peace Forum commemorating the end of World War I, the heads of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank made the case for a more inclusive multilateralism. Drawing comparisons between 1914 and today's situations in terms of inequalities, they warned against the temptation of a divisive globalisation which could only benefit the wealthiest.

China's discourse on a new "connected" multilateralism, through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), is building upon the same inclusive project now led by a non-Western and non-democratic superpower. There is indeed an ambition to influence the world – if not directly control it – by making the rules on which it functions. This normative determination to achieve a far greater objective has hardly been addressed when analysing China's BRI and its impact.

There is more to the BRI than the six economic corridors spanning Asia, Europe and Africa, of which the \$50 billion China-Pakis-

tan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is perhaps the most controversial. The BRI is included in the Constitution of an officially socialist China. The BRI "shared interest" and "shared growth" hence coexist with Marxism-Leninism and "capitalism with Chinese characteristics" in a country now said to be more trade-friendly than its protectionist American rival, the U.S. Beijing has never been afraid of contradictions in terms and this capacity to "Sinicise" concepts is a signature trait. The BRI is a political project and a Chinese one no matter the number of other partners joining the effort and participating to its funding.

### Normative yet not legal

In this regard, the normative framework put in place by Beijing plays an interesting role. These norms manifest themselves in the form of guiding principles, declarations, general agreements and other communication tools including the hardly studied "Digital Silk Road" envisaging "innovation action plans for e-commerce, digital economy, smart cities and science and technology parks". They constitute a normative discourse, a form of behaviour, a standard to abide by, but are not legally binding yet. The BRI indeed develops without any dedicated law, nor is it a comprehensive trade or economic partnership. It is different from

conventional trade agreements that seek to eliminate market access barriers, harmonise regulations and impose preconditions for entry. The only legal texts one could refer to are to be found in the network of foreign trade agreements, bilateral investment treaties and other international investment agreements China is a party to. However, these networks of agreements have no special link with the BRI, although they could be brought in to resolve issues emanating from the BRI. China is a party to numerous state-sponsored business contracts between Chinese firms, including state-owned companies, and foreign business partners, public or private.

This non-legal yet rather pioneering proposal is not a surprise. The fluid, if not vague, nature of the BRI is nothing but a manifestation of a pragmatism with Chinese characteristics that has the capacity to constantly adjust to a fast-changing environment. The absence of law is actually partial and temporary. China is preparing for the domestic resolution of BRI disputes with the creation by the Supreme People's Court of two dedicated branches of the China International Commercial Court, one in Shenzhen to tackle the Maritime Road disputes, and one in Xi'an to settle overland Belt issues. In addition, the Hong Kong International Arbitration Centre has specific BRI arbitration clauses



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and administered arbitration rules. Naturally, investor-state disputes could also be settled on the basis of China's investment agreements, nationally or internationally, in a given arbitration forum – for example, the World Bank-sponsored International Centre for Settlement of Investment Dispute (ICSID).

### Institutional strategies

The institutional setting of the BRI is also rather light. Joint committees are put in place and the existing institutions mobilised from the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation to the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), which is contributing to the BRI despite the rather distant position of some of its members and India in particular, which is the largest recipient of AIIB funding. In this context, China is not challenging the existing institutional set-up or proposing something different than what exists in the Bretton Woods Institutions. From the functioning of the banks to their advisory committees, the same structure and often

the same people are found.

The BRI as it stands is not conceived as a tool for economic integration. The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) negotiations between the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and six countries is better equipped to deal with market access and integration goals within the Asia-Pacific region. Again, the BRI's dispute resolution will be predominantly on commercial disputes, involving either projects or contractual obligations. However, with the world trading system passing through a turmoil, the possibility of regional trade agreements or amorphous legal devices such as the BRI embracing greater trade liberalisation goals cannot be entirely ruled out. A failure to resolve the WTO Appellate Body crisis or any consequent weakening of the multilateral dispute resolution process could present an opportunity for purely nationalistic initiatives to transmute and assume larger objectives.

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

### Kartarpur corridor

At last there seems to be some movement in bilateral relations after the change in guard in Pakistan (Editorial, "Corridor of hope", November 24). People-to-people contact can be furthered by sports and cultural exchanges, especially between youth of both countries. Reviving the SAARC grouping for political dialogue can also be looked at. However, terror and talks cannot go together.

HARSAHIB SINGH,  
Ludhiana, Punjab

■ That Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan would do a ground-breaking ceremony for the corridor on November 28 and the statement on the Sikh community being welcome

in Pakistan for the auspicious occasion" can be considered a defining moment – that things might become better in the future.

SIMRAN KAPOOR,  
Dehradun

■ Why can't both countries implement a common and normal visa regime – easy visas, or visa on arrival for elders, on a reciprocal basis? Or work towards an open transit trade regime like in the EU? Both nations have suffered enough for 70 years since Independence. Religious pilgrimages can revive commerce and the economy.

SANTHOSH MATHEW,  
Puducherry

■ The slight thaw in relations, made possible by the idea of the Kartarpur corridor, is a

positive sign especially after the two sides have been mired in no-holds-barred aggression for many years. Religion has been a cause of riots and animosity but this step is sure to promote brotherhood. This baby step should be extended to other domains such as a much-needed revival of sports ties.

DEEPAK SINGHAL  
Noida

■ Any peace offer seen coming from Pakistan should be taken with a pinch of salt. History is witness to many distressing examples. India needs to be on guard against certain elements present in Pakistan having a likely influence on pilgrims and attempts at disrupting communal harmony. Such a strategy was evident recently when Indian officials were

prevented from gaining access to certain important Sikh shrines in Pakistan.

AMIT MANGAL,  
New Delhi

### Medical marijuana

The initiative taken by the CSIR-IIIM and the Tata Memorial Centre in Mumbai to research the effectiveness of strains of marijuana in cancer treatment is praiseworthy. The research project needs to be transparent so that the public understands the possible benefits of medicinal cannabis.

SAHELI MUKHERJEE,  
Kolkata

### Mary Kom

The indomitable spirit of Mary Kom, the legendary pugilist, deserves praise. Her exploits in the ring are a

source of inspiration especially for women.

HELDON FERNANDO,  
Thoothukudi, Tamil Nadu

### Smart Alyque

The passing of ad guru Alyque Padamsee is a great loss. In the 1980s and 1990s,

### CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:

In the Ground Zero feature, "Stopping the virus" (Nov. 24, 2018), a sentence that read, "This delay in launching intensive communication campaigns can cost lives, according to Zika researchers, because all Zika strains have been shown to cause birth defects" should be recast to read: "This delay in launching... because all Zika strains can probably cause birth defects."

The picture caption in the report headlined "Maratha quota is a betrayal: OBC groups" (Nov. 20, 2018) erroneously said Shiv Sena MLAs protested against the grant of Maratha quota under a special category. Actually, the MLAs were supporting the grant of the quota.

A Sports page story titled "Sonia Chahal scripts a grand fight to reach summit clash" (Nov. 24, 2018.) said: "The 21-year-old's entry into the title clash made sure that more than one Indian was in the finals after 2006 and fans will look forward to Mary Kom and Sonia's final bouts on Saturday." The correct year is 2014.

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