

Trying to be a first-rate reporter on the average American newspaper is like trying to buy Bach's 'St. Matthew's Passion' on a kiosk.
Bagdikian's Observation

US-China Trade War

The brewing US-China trade war has now burst into the open. President Donald Trump has announced that to remedy a "multi-billion dollar trade deficit with China" he is taking a series of steps. US tariffs will be raised on about \$50 to \$60 billion worth of Chinese goods for 'levelling' tariffs between the two countries. Also, new restrictions will be imposed on Chinese investments in US. Then the US will also 'take action' against the Chinese at the World Trade Organization (WTO). China is unhappy with the US decision. Though Chinese spokespersons said that China was not afraid of a trade war with the US and would "fight such a war to the end", Chinese Prime Minister Li Keqiang said: "A trade war does no good to anyone. There is no winner."

A trade war between two countries which have the two biggest economies in the world will affect other countries as well, besides affecting the global economy. If both the countries wage a no-holds-barred trade war against each other, nobody knows what the consequences will be. The world economy today has been integrated and no country can afford to withdraw into a cocoon. All countries are interdependent in matters of trade and commerce. India-China bilateral trade is also very unequal and heavily tilted in favour of the Chinese. The trade deficit for India jumped from \$48.48 billion in 2014-15 to \$52.68 billion in 2015-16. India is trying to reduce the deficit but a boycott or heavy reduction in import of Chinese goods is out of the question. Corrective steps have to be taken in mutual consultation and not unilaterally.

Bilateral trade between a small country with a weak industrial base and a big country with a far stronger industrial base and a far bigger-sized economy is normally tilted in favour of the bigger and stronger one. Indo-Bangladesh trade is an example. Indian exports to Bangladesh far outstrip Bangladesh's exports to India. Both countries are trying to reduce the gap. The same is true for India-China trade. Indian markets have been flooded with Chinese consumer durables—some entering legally, some clandestinely. But any unilateral step by India is out of the question. A US-China trade war will impact almost every country. Japan and Australia, for example, have already shown their concern at the possible impact of the trade war on their respective economies.

India's population and unhappiness factor

REFLEX ACTION

Gyan Pathak

India is increasingly losing happiness by the year. World Happiness Report 2018 of the United Nations reveals that Indians are increasingly becoming unhappy. It scored only 4.190 on a scale of 0-10 in 2017, which is only a little more than the passing mark of 3.3 if life would have been an exam. It fell in global happiness ranking by 11 places in comparison to its fall in 2016 by four places. Only 23 countries out of 156 surveyed are unhappier than India, which ranked 133rd in the world. It means 84.61 per cent countries are happier than we are. We have lost our level of happiness during 2015-17 compared to 2008-10 by 0.698 points, making us the top 15th loser of the world ranking 128th out of 141. The fall was primarily due to declines in average life evaluations suffered due to a combination of economic, political, and social stresses. Increased rates of crime, conflict, suicide, and depression can be cited as its effect.

Almost two hundred people, both male and female, per lakh were suffering from opioid use disorders, and over 400/lakh from depression in 2016. With the further increase in unhappiness, the country seems to be at the verge of depression epidemic, which is reflected in a significant rise in adolescent depressive symptoms and suicide rates. The rising rate of depression, particularly among adolescent, is correlated with the use of new screen technologies (smartphones, video games etc) and social media. Causation may run in both directions. From depressive syndromes towards screen time (as a kind of self-medication) and from screen time towards depressive symptoms. For example, addictive behaviours to the new technologies and other depression-inducing

conditions such as increased loneliness and feelings of alienation resulting from online rather than interpersonal interactions are growing. Video games, for example, seem to have six attributes of addiction: salience, mood modification (self-medication), tolerance, withdrawal, conflict, and relapse. A recent report had revealed that excess facebook use was associated with lower self-reported mental health.

Lord Buddha maintained there were eightfold Dukkhas in the world, but then they were philosophical expositions. We have a different criterion of measuring happiness in the life of an individual in eightfold concrete terms, which were applied by this report. They are—per capita GDP, social support, healthy life expectancy, freedom to make life choices, generosity, perception of corruption, dystopia (a perception of everything unpleasant or bad, typically a totalitarian or environmentally degrading one) and residual, and confidence interval. Our root cause lies in the failure of scoring higher in these eightfold criteria.

India is falling very badly in life ladder index since 2006 when it scored 5.348, which fell to 4.424 in 2014, when India voted for a change and Narendra Modi became Prime Minister of India. However, the situation increasingly worsened. GDP per capita

score has slightly improved from 8.13 to 8.76 between 2006 and 2017. Social support score has declined from 0.70 to 0.60 in the meantime. Healthy life expectancy at birth for the Indians has increased from 56.1 to 59.5 in the last 12 years. Score for freedom to make life choices has increased from 0.77 to 0.88.

As for the generosity of Indians, we had achieved a score of 0.07 in 2013 but it has declined to a negative level of (-0.05). It means we have become far less generous in the last five years. Our scores have fallen to a negative all through these years except in 2016 when it was 0.03, at less than half the generosity which we had in 2013. We have very disheartening data on perception of corruption index. The score shows that the situation has been increasingly worsening for the last seven years. In 2011 our score was better at 0.90, which has now fallen to 0.78 in 2017. Positive effect score has also been declining from 2014 when it was 0.71, which is now 0.68. Negative effect score has fallen from 0.33 in 2013 to 0.31 in 2017.

Confidence in national government has improved from a score of 0.53 in 2013 to 0.83 in 2017. However, the democratic quality has deteriorated, the score of which has always been in the negative for the last 12 years. Democratic quality score in 2016 was -0.27. The score of 2017 is not available. It was -0.39 in 2013. The delivery quality score has also been in the negative since 2016. It was -0.30 in 2013 and -0.14 in 2016. GINI index of household income shows a decline from 0.62 in 2009 to 0.42 in 2014 to 0.38 in 2017. The score for dystopia, a sense of everything unpleasant, and residuals is 1.43 and India ranks 134th. It is a worst kind of condition prevailing in the country (IPA)



Jubal Nawar Kotkhai Youth Association organised a cultural program at Gaiety Theater, in Shimla on Saturday

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|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| ACROSS | DOWN |
| 1 Put away | 1 Slender |
| 5 Bitterly pungent | 2 Sallow |
| 9 Mustering rope | 3 Public speaker |
| 10 Part of the verb 'to be' | 4 Drink |
| 11 Country | 5 Dressed |
| 12 Large volumes | 6 Male sheep |
| 14 Luke warm | 7 Anger |
| 16 Region | 8 Office furniture |
| 19 Uncommon | 13 Lyric poem |
| 21 Walks through water | 15 Model of excellence |
| 24 Jargon | 17 Guarantee |
| 27 Deceive | 18 Corrodes |
| 29 Small child | 20 Bars of barley |
| 30 Musical dramas | 22 Paradise |
| 31 Bear tankard | 23 Fewer |
| 32 Tidings | 26 Consumed |
| | 28 Animal's foot |

SUDOKU: 2156

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Yesterday's Solution 2155

6	3	9	5	8	7	4	2	1
7	5	2	3	4	1	6	9	8
8	4	1	2	9	6	7	5	3
5	8	4	7	6	9	3	1	2
9	7	6	1	2	3	5	8	4
1	2	3	4	5	8	9	7	6
2	9	7	8	3	4	1	6	5
3	1	8	6	7	5	2	4	9
4	6	5	9	1	2	8	3	7

Yesterday's Cross Word Solution 164

S	P	E	C	K	S	M	U	D
P	R	C	R	A	T	E		
R	E	M	O	R	A	R	A	W
E	R	O	S	E	R	A	S	H
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F	A	S	T	M	A	R	E	
F	I	N	E	V	A	D	E	D
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New Labour leadership

FOCUS

Alan Simpson

It is four years since the death of my friend and mentor, Tony Benn. I could argue that he turns up in every article I write, but that's a poor substitute for the daily conversations into which he poured tea and optimism in equally copious quantities. Benn would be as excited as anyone about Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell's leadership of today's Labour Party—but he would be no less anxious about the bigger canvas upon which a new politics needs to be written.

Many of Benn's post-parliamentary reflections took account of the time he had to be with his grand-children, and of the uncertain legacy we might leave them. His thoughts increasingly focused on setting lifelong themes—peace, democracy, equality, international solidarity and social justice—into a context that grasped how runaway climate change could sink everyone's boats. In doing so, Tony was, a seer, pre-scripting Corbyn and McDonnell's most incisive recent speeches, and addressing the real opportunities that Labour's colossal growth in membership brings with it. As ever, Benn's thoughts would invite us to look outwards rather than inwards.

I doubt he would have wasted much time on the acrimonious exchanges between Tory factions in the Brexit debacle. His focus would

more have been on two different ends of the debate. At the macro level, Benn would surely be urging Labour to rebuild some of its European fences. He understood how a retreat into narrow nationalisms twice dragged Europe into catastrophically destructive wars. He had warned that EU obligations to reduce Europe to a delivery mechanism for free market capitalism could do the same again.

Today, he would almost certainly be pointing to the resurgence of populist movements on the right—in Italy, Germany, Austria, the Netherlands, Poland, France and in Britain—that could threaten to do so again. Against this, Benn would be urging Labour to seize the unique opportunity it has created. Corbyn, McDonnell, Momentum, and a mass of others, have turned Labour into Europe's biggest progressive populist movement. Labour has become the embodiment of what "Another world is possible" means—a populist movement of the left. But the movement needs to establish itself at a European level as well as a domestic one.

Corbyn and McDonnell are uniquely placed to help grassroots activism morph into a level of democratic engagement Britain has long resisted. Brexit distracts us from a wider European crisis. The EU's single market has

delivered for corporations what it refuses to share with citizens. The recent EU offer to Balkan states works on the same misguided premise; markets that would undermine the local to the benefit of the transnational. In contrast, China has stepped in with huge direct investment; a new rail infrastructure stretching from Athens to Belgrade and Budapest. The EU, lacking a coherent anti-austerity programme of its own, simply opens a Balkan door that Russia and Turkey would use to create mischief among divided religious communities. Benn would be the first to see this danger, urging Labour to give a European lead into a different anti-austerity politics.

Many will remember Benn's "Five Questions of Power"—his interrogation of the powerful on behalf of the public. My guess is that, today, Benn would be adding a sixth. It is no longer enough for Labour to ask those in power how they use it, or how we get rid of them. Today's popular movement also want to know "what part do I play?" Labour's burgeoning party membership is not made up of passengers or frustrated bureaucrats. There is no queue for the (largely neutered) policy

forums, no squabbling over questions of who gets to write branch minutes or distribute national leaflets. You don't have to scratch the surface to see that today's hunger is for a more meaningful democracy. Labour's window of opportunity is to turn almost everything the Tories have come to stand for upside down. Instead of giving frackers the right to overrule local objectors, Labour has to do the opposite.

Instead of capping local authority borrowing powers for social housing, these should be unlocked. Instead of voluntary "sweetheart" deals with polluters there should be statutory duties and statutory penalties. And wherever possible the lines of accountability should be to localities rather than commercial lobbyists. Democratic credibility must be rebuilt from the base, not the top. Who better to do this than Corbyn and McDonnell? Not since the days of Clem Attlee has there been a Labour leadership with direct experience of local government. Corbyn and McDonnell are uniquely placed to help grassroots activism morph into a level of

democratic engagement Britain has long resisted. The good news is that a whole raft of today's technologies would allow Labour to drive social renewal in ways that hugely enhance public engagement and accountability.

This isn't restricted to major cities. It can work, at a co-operative level, in schools, neighbourhoods and villages. Democratic renewal must walk hand in hand with climate repair. It needs a new politics; one in which national leadership sets down climate (and carbon) obligations, and localities are given the power to determine how best deliver; from food security to housing and water supply from transport and air quality to health and energy systems. Forty years ago, in his Arguments for Democracy, Benn observed that "if the people are supposed to lack responsibility, it may be because they have too little power. Perhaps the remedy lies in decentralising power by moving it down from the top, instead of shifting more of it to the top."

Those currently jockeying for positions within the Labour Party and those hungry for a more just, inclusive and sustainable future, would do well to reflect on these words. Four years after Tony Benn's death, our best tribute to his life would be to pick up ideas he had floated four decades before we were able to catch up. (IPA)