

Shinzo Abe Is Dead, But The Chinese Still Love To Hate

By Srikanth Kondapalli

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Abe was convinced that China's military forays on the Senkaku islands since September 2010

China's official response to the assassination of former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe as "shocking" and "unexpected incident" is at variance with the scorn being poured out on its rabid Communist Party-backed nationalist social networking sites. In some Chinese quarters, there is even elation, depicting Abe's assassin as a hero!

These conflicting views of Abe is an outcome of the complex relationship between him and China's leaders in the past decade and a half. Although Abe's visit to China in October 2006 was considered an "ice-breaker" visit, as was his last visit in 2018, and though Japan developed substantial economic interdependency with China in those years, China's rise created the conditions for Abe to hedge and explore balancing mechanisms against China in both economic and security terms.

China viewed Abe's revoking of crucial aspects of Japan's 1950s' "peace constitution" negatively, without acknowledging that it was Beijing's brazen territorial and irredentist claims that were at the root of Abe's gradual rethinking on China.

Abe also took the bull by the horns by visiting the Yasukuni shrine in December 2013 – a temple where the war-dead were honoured. While Abe discontinued such visits, he exposed the double-standards of China on historical issues, conveying the message that what happens in Japan's politics is the domain of the Japanese and China has no veto over it.

Abe also did away with the routine annual offering of apology by Japan's leaders to China and other countries in the region for past wrongs. Abe suggested that the current generation of Japanese are not responsible for what happened in the 1930s and need not apologise for them.

Over time, Abe also reduced the quantum of Official Development Assistance that Japan disburses to these countries as "compensation" for historical issues – including for the modernisation of China and the iconic Pudong Special Economic Zone in Shanghai -- and increased such assistance for India and other countries.

But it was Abe's renewal of a debate on enhancing Japan's defence budget (capped previously at 1% of GDP, but marginally increased to 1.2%), on operating its Self-Defence Forces beyond the 1,000 nautical miles limit, the exporting of arms to Philippines, Vietnam and others, and his recent comments on nuclear deployments in the face of China's muscle-flexing in the Taiwan Straits that raised China's hackles the most.

On the other hand, Abenomics, as his economic thinking came to be known, acknowledged the importance of reviving the economic "lost decades" of Japan and, for this reason,

Abe had sent his senior-most party colleague to China's Belt and Road Initiative meetings, seeking to invest in infrastructure projects and enhancing economic interdependencies. Abe also tried the "quality infrastructure" route by committing over \$100 billion, but the progress was lax. To combine efforts with the Chinese was a way to reduce conflict with China.

This was also Abe's consideration for moving faster on the 15-member Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership agreement that was cobbled up last year. There were also the East Asian free trade negotiations with South Korea and China.

Most significantly, Abe, tirelessly and against all odds, pushed the idea of the Indo-Pacific into mainstream strategic thinking in the last decade. As China walked away from UN maritime convention law and its arbitration procedures in July 2016, the writing on the wall was clear to Abe and others. Much of global trade is dependent on maritime areas and China's stealthy grabbing and militarisation of islands unnerved many countries dependent on the seas.

[Read complete article on website deccanherald.com](https://www.deccanherald.com)

China Has Yet To Learn The Rules Of The Pacific Chess Game

By David Fickling

Author is a Bloomberg Opinion columnist covering energy and commodities.

Island nations have grown skilled at playing larger powers against each other. This leverage will be important as they face the existential threat of global warming.

China's growing influence in the microstates of the Pacific Ocean has raised alarm among the powers that traditionally dominated the region — Australia, New Zealand, and the US. If they want to halt Beijing's advance, they're going to have to start offering more in return.

A security pact with the Solomon Islands earlier this year first showed the scope of Beijing's ambitions, permitting China's police and military to operate in the country. Similar deals were offered to a group of 10 countries alongside a visit by Foreign Minister Wang Yi in May. Wang is now seeking a meeting with foreign ministers of the island countries at the same time that leaders assemble in July for the annual Pacific Islands Forum, the main multilateral body for the region.

China can afford to be so energetic in its diplomacy because the status quo has grown stale and is no longer clearly serving the interests of these governments. Traditionally, the Pacific has been divided between an Australian sphere of influence in the mountainous, more populous territories of Papua New Guinea and Melanesia; a New Zealand sphere in the Polynesian archipelagoes south of the equator; and a US one in the smaller islands of Micronesia strung between Hawaii and Guam north of the equator.

It's hard to argue the region has done very well from this arrangement. Thanks to their geographic isolation and minuscule populations, Pacific states do far worse than small island countries elsewhere in the world. Outside Fiji, tourism is rudimentary; to this day, most goods exports consist of fish, coconut and pearls. The offshore financial centers that helped make Mauritius and many Caribbean countries relatively wealthy were stamped out here before they got established. Income levels, when adjusted for the relatively high cost of living, are on a par with sub-Saharan Africa:

What the Pacific nations lack in terms of economic strength, however, they make up for with one strong card: their sovereignty. If you include East Timor, Pacific island nations make up 13 of the 38 members of the Small Island Developing States grouping at the UN.

That bloc, in theory, has greater voting power than the 27 nations of the European Union, or the 22 non-island states in the Americas, helping secure committee appointments and diplomatic wins for its allies². Melanesian countries like the Solomon Islands, moreover, are less than 2,000 kilometers (1,200 miles) from the coast of Australia, making a Chinese military presence there a worry for Canberra.

Island governments have a long history of trading diplomacy for development assistance. Four of the 14 states that recognize Taiwan instead of mainland China are in the Pacific; three others have in the past switched allegiance between Taipei and Beijing, making the most of the geopolitical competition between the powers.

Their willingness to entertain more substantial overtures from Beijing is a sign these nations are growing more assertive, according to Sarina Theys, a lecturer in diplomacy at the University of the South Pacific in Suva, Fiji. “They’re realizing they have more power than they initially thought,” she says. “They’re becoming more vocal and claiming their place on the global stage.”

In that sense, China’s growing interest is seen locally not so much as a threat, but as an opportunity to gain leverage with the traditional major powers on the periphery of the Pacific. Australian foreign minister Penny Wong’s first act after coming to power in the country’s May election was a diplomatic visit to woo governments attracted by Beijing’s overtures. A more open door for labor and permanent migration into Australia is also promised by Wong’s government.

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Ayodhya-The New Hub of Hinduism

By Udaya Kumar Varma

Author is a former IAS Officer of 1976 batch of Madhya Pradesh Cadre. He retired in 2013 from the post of Secretary, Information and Broadcasting, GOI.

Ayodhya is transforming, surely, rapidly and profoundly. The imminent hope is that this transformation will be overwhelmingly positive, massive in any case as it is. The evolution of a place or a person, however, is seldom perfect. The nature of evolution always entails all the manifestations of attributes that the process inheres, invariably contradictory—the luminous and the dark, the white and the black, the divine and the evil, the creative and the destructive. But a place like Ayodhya is divinely ordained to be dominated by good and auspicious, conciliatory, inclusive, and accommodative. Anything that makes it and its influence corrosive or contumacious, must have no place.

Every indication on the ground points to an ambitious design and plan to establish Ayodhya as a new hub of Hinduism. As Muslims from all over the world congregate to Mecca, the ones who are working on the development of Ayodhya seem to be nursing the dream of making Ayodhya, the new and modern hub of Hinduism, where adherents of Hinduism from all over the globe come and visit and even spend a few days here. The idea is ambitious and in line with today’s philosophy of fast development and rapid growth. Establishing a global center of faith for arguably the oldest faith on earth, serves most parameters of political and economic wisdom and expediency, even foresight.

The challenge, however, is how to make the place different and avoid the pitfalls of similar projects undertaken elsewhere in the world. Development per se perhaps is not a challenge. Given the political will and financial resources, anything is possible. The difficulty will arise when the strategy of development gets dominated and overwhelmed by the commercial concerns of the investors, relegating considerations of ethical and faithful tenets enshrined in Hinduism to the back ground in the name of development.

An equally daunting difficulty will be compromising ethics, equity and order in the name of populism and neutralizing the deleterious dimensions of the petty mindset of a less evolved perspective.

The dream needs our endorsement and support. But Lord Rama's birthplace, if Hinduism claims to be a religion that is rooted in tolerance and multiplicity of faiths, must also witness a transformation in the ethical and spiritual makeup of the people of Ayodhya and the region where it is located. Part of it must also rub on the devotees who congregate here.

While development of physical and material infrastructure, of roads and buildings, of temples and monuments, of water fronts and Ghats will certainly make the place beautiful, organized and modern, the real transformation will be if the place also becomes the center and the hub of a spiritual and moral renaissance.

A real tribute to Lord Rama will be to make Ayodhya the spiritual capital of the world. And this would require a far deeper and profound commitment and thinking that what obtains today. The risks that accompany modern development shall surely manifest in Ayodhya also, unless there is a consciousness to appreciate, understand and address its many pernicious aspects. The investors' interest and agenda that drives them, whether it be state or private capitalist, has to be moderated and balanced, and at times completely rejected.

One of the more formidable challenges will also be the play of interests of local influences - religious, social and political. Each of them will resist the change in status quo, as such directed and planned development will impact, dilute and attenuate their existing advantage. The stumbling blocks will be no ideological opposition but the multitude of local interests- petty, shortsighted and stubborn. They will be a far more intractable challenge politically than any other.

This calls for great sagacity and forbearance and will demand a will and determination to look beyond the immediate and imminent, and to anticipate and address the adverse but inevitable fall outs of the development models that will frame the future of Ayodhya.

The birth, growth and evolution oldest religious cities of the world whether Jerusalem or Rome, have valuable lessons to offer. These lessons need to be kept in mind as also the follies and foibles of those who wrote the destinies of such places.

A Hindu pilgrimage undertaken to celebrate a God whose personal conduct and the social code that he envisaged and enforced (Ram Rajya) for the people he ruled, could be a model and ideal for human civilization, must in some way or the other reflect these ideals in the living ways of its citizens and rub on the character of people visiting this place. This aspect of the development of a place that is often never perceived nor practiced must find central place in the minds and efforts of those who nurse the transformative ambition of making Ayodhya the Spiritual hub of Hinduism.

But for this aspect, it will be remembered in history of evolution of human civilization as yet another example of an experiment that while bringing great glory to them who attempted it will yet be merely transient and short-lived. Hindus across the world may look up to this experiment as the beginning of a resurgence that may possibly establish India as the Spiritual Teacher (Dharma Guru) of the world.

The hope carries conviction and courage, energy and emotion, promise and prescience!

Does it indeed? Only Lord Rama knows!

Whose Criminal History?

By Sanjay Sahay

Author is former Police Officer of Karnataka. Now he is Founder & Director of TechConPro Pvt Ltd., Bengaluru

While the probationers in police are taught about criminal gangs of yore; of the days of dacoity, road hold ups and burglary and a large number of crimes based on modus operandi, modern day opened newer vistas of crime. Some were built on the expertise gained out of the conventional crimes, while new ones kept getting added. Today money laundering to organized crime to terrorism will not find a mention in the history of traditional crimes. Moving further the crimes of the cyber world and the ones emanating out of our existence in the social media world, will tell a different story altogether. The impact any genre of crime makes is directly proportional to the attention it grabs, and the efforts made to curb, if not eliminate it.

The understanding has been that criminality is limited to groups of people called criminals and that they can be tackled by the long arm of law. They are very small in number and generally not dispersed. The criminals' groups are believed to be the main practitioners of crime, specialise in different offences, and most of the offences committed are their handiwork. The general world is no way connected to it, but for becoming victims of it. This means that there is a clear-cut difference between criminals and non-criminals. Criminal history is thus a history of criminal gangs / groups or a history of a well-known genres of crime. What we talk of state and non-state actors in the realm of cyber-crime / security did not exist till the advent of this genre of crime. You could safely recognize a non-criminal, but that is not the case anymore.

Quite often we are bewildered as to how someone known to us or in positions known to be responsible or in professions known to totally unconnected to the criminal world, throw up offenders. We need to get into few classes and areas, which are transforming the landscape, to be documented or researched upon, in the interest of having an objective history of it. It would help in devising remedial action. and implemented when needed. It can help in planning and initiating legal enactments to curb this malaise. If we talk of the political class, there are variety of cases that are registered against them. There is whole genre of cases today which fall under the general understating of political cases. The law of the land does not accept this categorization. It is also taken as an excuse to withdraw cases. From criminals being on the fringes of the political ecosystem, today we have quite a few from the political class, involved in serious offences. Voting from jail or being a candidate while being inside, is not a rarity.

The wide spectrum of crimes being committed by this class deserves serious documentation, as a chronicle of crime, otherwise the connects, patterns, causality etc would be lost forever. We will keep believing that these were aberrations, for the lack of the complete picture of it. Some crimes are across board, some are area specific and there would be many that can be termed as opportunity specific. From political murders / violence happening for long many years, money laundering seems to have taken the pride of place today. This is without any indulgent investigation into Panama / Paradise / Pandora papers with clear cut leads available. There would be lots of leads locally available as well. From 1993 JMM bribery case till today's legislative hitchhiking happening quite openly, the historian has to keep track of. In the same manner, the criminal history of communal discord, with treacherous actions or giving appropriate action a go by, has to through the historians discerning eye. Procurement can itself be in the best of genre crime history. Can it remain a political football? It's time this genre of criminal history is objectively recorded with clear cut conclusions for posterity to decide on the wheeling dealing of the de facto democracy of India.

HISTORY IS THE DOCUMENTATION OF ACTIONS OF THE RULING CLASS / ELITE IN A LARGE NUMBER OF AVATARS.

India-Pakistan: Regional Rivalries Still Rule In

By Syed Fazl-e-Haider

Author is a contributing analyst at the South Asia desk of Wikistrat. He is a freelance columnist and the author of several books, including *The Economic Development of Balochistan*.

The visit of an Indian delegation for talks with the Taliban in Kabul has raised eyebrows in neighbouring Pakistan.

Growing ties between India and the Taliban in Afghanistan have raised eyebrows in Pakistan which doesn't want to see a New Delhi-friendly Kabul due to its own security concerns.

The Taliban have shown in recent weeks that they are willing to strengthen relations with India including defence ties. Afghanistan's Defence Minister Mullah Mohammad Yaqoob answered "yes" when asked about sending Afghan army personnel to India for military training. "We don't see any issue with it," Yaqoob remarked. "Afghan-India relations get strengthened and set the ground for this. There will be no issues with it." While stressing that Afghanistan did not want to interfere or get involved in the issues between India and Pakistan, he said: "We are an independent country, and our foreign policy is guided by our national interests."

Yaqoob is the son of Taliban founder Mullah Omar, who led the Taliban while it ruled in the late 1990s until 2001. Mullah Omar had forced India out of Afghanistan in 1996, and it was only following the 2001 US invasion that India was able to re-establish a presence.

After the Taliban takeover in Kabul last year and being denied widespread diplomatic recognition, the group has sought to foster international connections in a bid to cement control. A delegation of Indian foreign ministry officials visited Kabul earlier this month, with Taliban Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi declaring the visit a "good beginning" in bilateral ties. Muttaqi reportedly asked the delegation to resume India's projects and reopen the country's embassy in Afghanistan. The Taliban has also claimed India has supported the opening of borders and ports for Afghanistan exports although India has downplayed the significance of the delegation's visit.

Official statements aside, the visit does appear remarkable. For one thing it marks a U-turn in the Taliban's decades-old India policy, which has carried strategic implications for the region, particularly Pakistan. Engaging India could be a sign to indicate that Pakistan no longer wields a preponderant influence in the Taliban-led Afghanistan. The Indian visit certainly stirred concerns in Islamabad, with Pakistan's Foreign Office spokesperson declaring "we would not like to see anyone playing a role that is negative in any sense, or the role of a spoiler". Another Pakistani official privately said reopening the Indian embassy in Kabul would not be an issue but questioned the need for any Indian consulates along the border regions of Pakistan.

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Significance Of India's Ties With Gulf Countries

By Ajit Ranade

The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Secretariat, "condemned and denounced" statements made by two spokespersons of India's ruling party, the BJP, for their comments on Prophet Muhammad. The statement of the OIC also referred to the spate of hatred and defamation of Islam in India. The OIC, founded in 1969, has 57 member countries, all of whom have Muslim-majority populations. India, with more than 200 million Muslims, is not a member and does not even have observer status. India has the second-largest Muslim population of any country, only next to Indonesia.

The Indian government rejected the OIC statement and said that the views of two individuals do not reflect the views of the government, or indeed that of the people of India. Along with the joint statement of OIC, many of its members summoned the Indian ambassadors in their respective countries and expressed disappointment and their condemnation of statements on the Prophet. The embassies defended the stance of the government.

Two countries that summoned Indian envoys are Qatar and Kuwait. Both these countries are also a part of the six-member Gulf Coordination Council (GCC). It is to be noted that two other members of the GCC, Bahrain and Oman, publicly appreciated the measures taken by the government and the BJP against the two spokespersons. Their actions at least show that not all members of the GCC, or indeed of the OIC, are equally vehement or determined to corner India diplomatically. It is without a doubt that this incident has been an embarrassment to the government, and that is why strict action was taken against the two spokespersons. It was not only the OIC statement but even the observations and comments of other countries, including America, that put India on the backfoot.

In the wake of the international furore came the wave of protests, violence and police action, at times quite brutal, within the country, which is a source of major headaches and embarrassment. The two (or maybe three) camps are getting firmly divided and entrenched, on issues of freedom of speech, selective outrage, blasphemy and majoritarian politics.

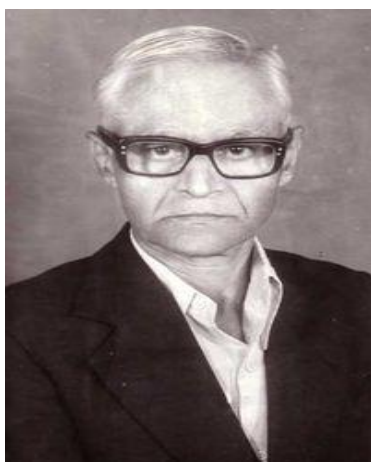
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Nation is Indebted to:

Baba Ram Chandra

Crusader of Awadh region for Farmer's cause



Baba Ram Chandra was an Indian trade unionist who organised the farmers of Awadh, India into forming a united front to fight against the abuses of landlords in 1920s and 1930s. He was also an influential figure in the history of Fiji, and owed his inspiration to take up the cause of the down-trodden to his 12 years as an indentured labourer in Fiji and to his efforts to end the indenture system.

Ram Chandra was born in a small village in Gwalior State in 1864 or 1875. His real name was Shridhar Balwant Jodhpurkar. He left for Fiji as an indentured labourer in 1904 after changing his name to Ram Chandra Rao in order to conceal his identity as a person from priestly class, since priestly class people were not preferred as indentured labourers.

He stayed in Fiji for thirteen years and took active part in the movement to emancipate the lot of the indentured labourers. Ram Chandra used religion to organise the people. He was responsible for the staging of Ram Lila in Fiji which helped in creating a sense of solidarity among the Indian indentured labourers. He also ensured the dismissal of an official who rode roughshod over the religious sentiments of the labourers. He led popular demonstrations in Fiji to focus on the grievances of indentured labourers. He smuggled into India an article on the deplorable and inhuman conditions of indentured labourers, which was published in Bharat Mitra, a newspaper from Calcutta. The Fiji Government was alarmed by this article and was on the lookout for its writer. The article created such a furore that Ram Chandra was advised by his friends to leave Fiji before the authorities were able to lay their hands on him. He left Fiji in 1916.

On his return to India, he settled in Ayodhya and became a Sadhu (saint). He was accused by the local police of spreading disaffection among the peasantry. He married a woman of middle caste and commenced calling himself "Baba Ram Chandra." He moved around the region with a copy of the Ramayana under his arm, blending readings from this popular Hindu epic with denunciations of both the British Raj and the landlords, and appealed to the peasants to act together against their exploiters.

In the 1920s, the Indian National Congress moved away from an elite politics of widening Indian participation in the colonial administration and towards an engagement with the peasantry and the agrarian question. At the heart of this agrarian turn were two contending figures, whose careers had been closely associated with indenture: MK Gandhi in South Africa and Shridhar Balwant Jodhpurkar, known as Baba Ramchandra, who had been an indentured labourer in Fiji. On his return to India, Gandhi continued to invoke the idea of imperial citizenship and the duties of the British Empire in his early campaigns in Champaran and Kheda. Baba Ramchandra, on the other hand, invoked a religious idiom and local traditions in launching a hugely successful peasant agitation in the United Provinces between 1919 and 1921. His charismatic and millenarian style of politics emerged as a threat to the secular style and hierarchical organisation of the Congress. Both Nehru and Gandhi worked to subdue and co-opt the peasant movement in the United Provinces and delegitimise the maverick authority of Baba Ramchandra.

Baba Ramchandra began to mobilise the peasants. He encouraged peasants to pay only the required rent and refrain from customary donations. In 1919 he led the first peasant protest against the landlords and by 1920 had organised all the farmers associations in Oudh, forming the Oudh Kisan Sabha (Oudh Farmers' Association). He was arrested on a number of occasions for organising public protests.

In June 1920, Nehru toured the villages of Awadh. By October the sabha was headed by Baba Ramchandra, Nehru and a few others. Within a month it had set up over 300 branches. It helped integrate the peasants.

Baba Ramchandra tried to get the support of Nehru and other Indian National Congress leaders to fight for the rights of the farmers, he was disappointed to discover that the Congress, with its urban-based leadership, was concerned only with independence and did not seem to understand the needs of the peasants.

Baba Ramchandra treaded his own course against all odds and worked for the rights of farmers of Awadh region. He left an inedible mark on the farmers movement of Awadh region during colonial rule.

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