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The THINK Club

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Coronavirus in Perspective

by Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'

The Coronavirus is officially a pandemic, nevertheless, as of yesterday, March 12, 2020, only 0.006% of the world's population perished due to this pandemic. Although one death is too many, let's understand its intensity in the right perspective.

The Black Plague in 1353 wiped out 20% of the world's population. The Plague of Justinian in 542 AD killed 11% of globally; the Antonine Plague in 165 AD and Flu Pandemic in 1918 each killed 2.1% of earth's inhabitants.

There is no denying that the coronavirus is scary despite the statistics cited above. The peripheral consequences of the coronavirus are so devastating that the stocks are in a free fall globally; schools are closing; unemployment is rising and entertainment and recreational activities are grinding to a halt. The only silver lining is that things will revert to normal in a foreseeable future.

While we, in the U.S, are acting as noble citizens, we must look at some culprits whose shameless and despicable acts caused this horrible pandemic to emerge and spread in the first place. The first and foremost perpetrator in the spread of Corona pandemic is the secretive, menacing and heartless government of China. Unfortunately, rather than using best practices, this outbreak in Wuhan, hina was covered up. According to the Heritage Foundation, "There's lots of



open-source reporting from China, from

Chinese nationals, that the doctors involved were either silenced or put in isolation, or that sort of thing, so that the word of this virus could not get out.”

According to an insubstantial conspiracy theory, the virus was engineered in the lab by the Chinese as a bio-weapon. In another version, the virus was being studied in the lab and then escaped or leaked. I won't be surprised at the reality of the above conspiracy theory knowing that China killed more than 1.5 million of its own citizens during the Cultural Revolution. About a million were killed later by the Gang of Four led by Mao's wife, Jiang Qing. Many of the victims were cannibalized.

I'll also blame the greedy corporations of America who put all their eggs in China's basket. Their shortsightedness has brought us on the brink of a recession. Now there are drug and auto parts shortages due to the disruption in China. The U.S. corporations should wake up and put a limit on what percentage of products should be outsourced to a single country.

The European countries are to blame for an uncontrolled spread of the virus initially in Italy and now spreading fast to France and Germany. According to my personal experience, the problem with Europe is that it spends more time in devising procedures and processes than implementing the project. They were late in banning travel from China. They also delayed testing and, in many cases, mistreated the patients. Their handling of Coronavirus has exposed the flaws in their medical system. There is a proposal in Italy to let the elderly patients die due to scarce resources. The same Europeans always gave moral lessons to America and were considered

par excellence by many sycophants. Lastly, I blame the demagogues at home for impeding the efforts to contain the Coronavirus for their own political gains. No sooner the Coronavirus entered into the U.S. than the politicians started blaming President Trump for mishandling the situation. Previous VP, Joe Biden delivered a speech today saying, "Public fears are being compounded by a pervasive lack of trust in this president, fueled by the adversarial relationship with the truth he continues to have,"

It's time to unite and help the nation deal with the pandemic. Demagoguery can wait for another day. I Hope the lessons learned from this pandemic will make us wiser. It should enable us to use our intellect so that we can discriminate between reality and fiction, friends and foes and the noble and ignoble.



Commentary

Demise of A Legend by Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'



On Saturday, February 8, 2020, the last Impala rolled out of General Motors (GM) Hamtramck-Detroit assembly line. I won't say that I was devastated to hear that, but I was certainly sad at the demise of a legend.

I first came to know Impala in the 1960s. I remember that the '65 Impala was a dream car of all Indians. In fact, GM sold more than a million Impalas world-

wide that year. It was a car of the Bollywood stars and a status symbol for the rest. Not many people know or may not remember that Impala was also assembled in Calcutta (now Kolkata)

between 1961 and 1964. As a matter of fact, Impalas from the 1960s are still in circulation in India, showing up regularly at vintage car rallies.

I, as a young man in India dreamed of driving an Impala someday. So far, I have driven 6 Impalas including Generation IX that I own now. I remember at least 2 Bollywood songs dedicated to Impala. One being "Karon me Kar Impala," meaning Impala is the best among all cars.

I also had the good fortune to work at the GM Technical Center in Warren, Michigan where Ed Cole, Chevrolet's famous chief engineer in the late 1950s, introduced and defined the Impala as a "prestige car." That was, of course, before my time. I personally worked on some of the manufacturing details of Impala and visited all its assembly lines in the US and Canada.

The lore of Impala was not limited to India alone. From 1958 through 1996, Impala sales were in excess of 13 million world-wide, more than any other full-size car in the history of the automobile. When it comes to popular cars in music, not many have the range that the Impala can claim. From rap songs to rock videos to one-hit-wonders, the Impala has been a staple for music videos for quite some time. I can count close to fifty Impala songs by various singers. Some of the most famous ones are, Kevin Connolly's "Chevy Impala, Lolo Zouai's song of the same name and Beastie Boys', "So What Cha Want?"

Impala was the last symbol of the greatness of the American car companies when they were building cars that Americans wanted to buy. I don't wish for a return to that time. On the contrary. I like much of what is happening with cars today and all the jazz, but I

HUMOR

do hope that Impala will take another avatar in the future in the form of an EV and an autonomous car. Heroes get remembered but legends never die.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f0Gf3_WUoYY

Corona Corona

Corona Corona
by: AshokKumar Lal

This Corona virus
Has taken fun out of life
Now people are scared
Even to kiss their wife

Not shaking of hands
But namaste with palms touching
Is like eating tandoori chicken
With fork and knife

Don't know if one should blame China
Or is Iran the real source
Perhaps we will never know
Even after miss Corona has run her
course

Hairdressers closed, restaurants closed
Closed are cinema halls
Now ladies can't say
I wanna shop, take me to malls

Are we really scared
Or are we making a show
For avoiding those
Whom we don't wanna know

I want my Corona
No not the virus, but beer
I want to tell these sad fellows
Have it and say cheers

Task Well Done

By Anil Shrivastava 'Musafi'

For three years, lifetimes ago, I was Stu's superior at a major auto company. During those years, without exception, I never fired anyone. Probably this was because everyone quit first. I was also opposed to death penalty for similar reasons. Stu was a miserable employee. He was always wrapped in financial troubles; his marriage was on rocks and his short fuse, quite frequently, landed him in odds with the law. My superior, Jack was an aimless man who wanted me to fire Stu. I managed to evade him every time as I was bent on reforming Stu instead of firing him.

Stu was lazy and incompetent, but who was not? Our organization was full of people who were lazy and nincompoop. One time Stu was jailed for three weeks. I had no choice but to hire a temp to get the work done. The temp agency sent a twenty-one-year-old woman, Paula as his replacement. Paula did an outstanding job and was willing to take over Stu's position. To top it off, she brought Jack his morning coffee and whoppers with fries for lunch every day, something that Jack couldn't have imagined Stu doing for him.

Now Jack had a stronger case for firing Stu and replacing him with Paula. Since I was vehemently opposed to that idea, I reminded Jack how that could be deemed against company rules. Stu had to go through corporate retraining program first. I also suggested that Stu should go to an anger-management class at company's expense. I consulted the personnel and they agreed with me to justify their own top heavy staffing. More irrelevance meant more job security for them. Jack had no choice but to abide by my suggestion. Presumably there is a way to fire people, but Jack had not mastered that yet.



I always thought about the ways to reform Stu. During the next annual review, I recommended a hefty raise for him which put Jack at his wit's end.

"Are you crazy? How can you recommend a raise for Stu when he is so incompetent and is often absent due to serving jail time?" Jack seemed really agitated at me.

"Jack, a good manager has to know how to get the best performance out of his subordinates. Do you realize the root cause of Stu's problems? It's obviously money, Jack! He gets in fight with his wife due to his weak finances. Money will certainly contain his temper and combined with corporate retraining and anger management program, he will become productive," I tried to convince Jack..

"What do you suggest for Paula?" Jack asked anxiously.

"I'd make her permanent and will put her under Stu as his direct report. That way Stu will get much needed managerial experience after his reform. And don't forget Jack that you'll still have Paula bring you morning coffee and whopper with fries every day." I suggested.

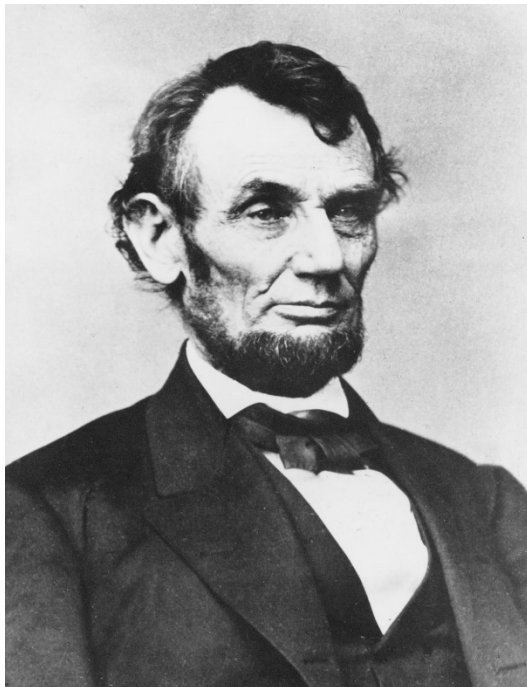
Jack very much seemed to like my idea. He smiled under his mustache and went to Paula and winked at her.

A year later, Stu's performance and attitude had really improved. I gave all the credit for that to Jack. The management was so happy with him that he was promoted to a more responsible position in another organization. Jack took Paula with her as he gathered his other trophies from his wall. That was a task well done by everyone.

Do Not Be Afraid of Your Feelings

by Anil Shrivastava "Musafir"

Like anyone else I also had my share of adversities in life. In the early years of my life, I was just lucky to cross the



hurdles and move on. Sometimes I wonder had I not been that lucky, what would my life have been like today. I can't even contemplate sometimes the emotional trauma I had to go through. Though I don't want to elaborate on that here, I carried the effects of that into my adulthood.

I also realize that "warriors are not born, they are created by themselves through trial and error and through pain and suffering that they shoulder through life" (Philip Messina). I have learned from others who have handled pain and difficulties greater than mine. I also learned compartmentalization as a coping mechanism by watching Bill Clinton go through personal humiliation and impeachment in 1998 and the way he still functioned. Compartmentalization is not being aware of all your emotions at the same time. This is how I can best explain that. I am not a psychologist by any means, but I have studied myself learning about my own emotions and its many conditions through my life's journey. I had a mental breakdown when I was 26. My stress became so debilitating that I just snapped. My mind decided to have a fit. I had treatment (medicinal), but my anxiety and agoraphobia became so intense that nothing worked. I virtually came to a halt. My mental breakdowns (in a milder form) became even more frequent. I looked at my wife and two kids and decided to rebuild myself and move on for their sake. I decided to take the bull by the horn like Dr. Nash did to

control his schizophrenia. I realized that I had too much to lose, if I didn't improve. I made a commitment to myself that I was going to help myself heal because I owed it to myself. I started to grow from the inside out. I started loving my broken self. Its side effect was narcissism that I realized later.

For the first time in my life, I could walk through the trees and feel fresh air in my lungs. An entire weight was lifted off my shoulders. I'm not a therapist but I had to be honest with myself to set myself free from paralyzing anxieties. The thing with emotional pain is that you can't cure it with medical help. You may control it as long as you take medicines but it will never go away. I decided that it was ok to not feel ok sometimes and what was going on with me was not unique to me. I was alright. There was no use fighting my emotion or being afraid of breakdowns. I cured myself as a fully functioning human being.

So, here is my advice to others, let yourself feel what you are feeling and



don't feel ashamed or afraid of that feeling. I hope you find your peace. Don't shun counseling or

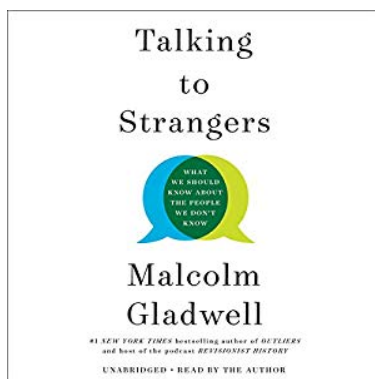
biofeedback method. Those techniques helped me tremendously on top of self-realization. Trust me, it's okay to feel strong and it is okay to feel weak. Don't believe the image that everyone portrays on social media. It's false. I'm thankful for my resilience and inner strength that God gave me when I needed them most and I wish the same to others.



Talking To Strangers

Author: Malcolm Gladwell

Published by Little Brown and Company in 2019 (400 pages)



Having read four of Malcolm Gladwell's books earlier (Blink, The Tipping Point, David and Goliath and Outliers), I must admit that I am

three days later was found hanged in her cell. According to Gladwell, it was all a result of a miscommunication. Making sense of the stranger, Gladwell writes, "Requires humility and thoughtfulness and a willingness to look beyond the stranger, and take time and place and context into account."

addicted to his writing style and always look forward to anecdotes that accompany his arguments. So, I decided to read his latest book, "Talking to Strangers."

Gladwell continues to emphasize his point by citing interesting anecdotal accounts ranging from Hernán Cortés, the Spanish conquistador, whose inability to communicate with Aztec ruler Montezuma II led to Montezuma's death and the eventual end of the Aztec empire to Neville Chamberlain believing Hitler's promise that all he (Hitler) really wanted was the Sudetenland, the ethnic-German part of Czechoslovakia, and had no designs on Poland or the rest of Europe. Gladwell further narrates the story from Fidel Castro to Bernie Madoff, who conned his way to the top of a massive Ponzi scheme involving some of the biggest institutions on Wall Street.

Talking to Strangers is about miscommunication and its negative results on individuals and society at large. The book begins with the infamous incident that happened in July 2015 that ended up in tragedy because of miscommunication. Sandra Bland, a young African American woman, was stopped by police near the campus of A&M University in Texas. She was pulled over by a cop, Brian Encinia, a 30 years old white man for changing lanes without signaling. Sandra Bland didn't like that she was pulled over for a minor incident and argued with Brian Encina. Their argument got heated. Brian called for other cops. Miss Bland was arrested and

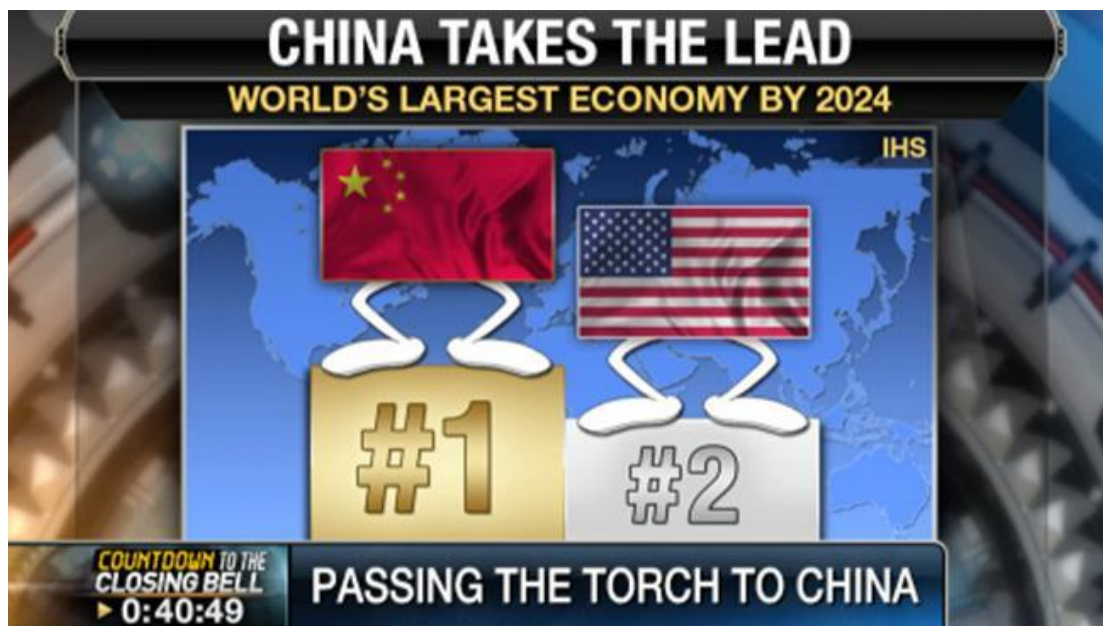
Gladwell conveys a great message: We shouldn't be naive when dealing with strangers. We should question people instead of trusting them. But this should be done in the context in which the stranger is operating.

-Reviewed by Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'

Essay

Chinese Model of State Capitalism Vs. Free Economy of The United States

BY ANIL SHRIVASTAVA 'MUSAFIR'



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The
buzz
has
been
going
on
since
the

beginning of the twenty-first century that China will not only be the number one economy, it's rise will taper the economic might and influence of the United States around the globe. This dire prediction was supposed to come about in 2020. Now, it has been pushed to 2030.

Yes, China may overtake the US in terms of Gross Domestic Product (GPD) someday because its population is more than three times that of the United States and its workforce is five times bigger than the US. This too is uncertain should China's GDP growth slow down and USA's keep growing. Remember when Japan was going to become

the world's biggest economy in late 70s and early 80s? Decades later, its GDP is 4.9 trillion dollars whereas the USA's GDP stands at 20.5 trillion dollars (Ref. IMF 2020 report).

GDP in absolute terms doesn't reflect the economic well being of a country. A nation with the population of 1.5 billion may boast of becoming the largest economy in the world in terms of GDP, but they'd still depend on wealthy nation for work and growth. As a matter of fact, GDP per capita of a country is the true measure of its prosperity and wealth. USA is the third largest nation in terms of population behind China and India but its per capita income is close to 65,000 dollars.

China's per capita income is nearly 10,000 dollars. There are six countries whose GDP per person is higher than the US, but most of those countries are either islands or city states. The rest are of the size of Atlanta or New York in population.

The question that many of us are asking is which is a better economic model between free-market system of the US and the state capitalism of China? The cynics and invidious have been telling us that free-market policies had lost the punch in creating jobs, new industries, wealth, and a bright future for the United States. Chinese state capitalism, on the other hand, had already won the round by adopting the state capitalism model.

The fact remains that a state capitalism cannot match the vigor of a free economy. If we look closely, we'll find that most of the emerging Chinese tech companies are trying to mimic the features of the US tech giants such as Google, Facebook and Twitter. At the same time, China restricts Western companies to operate in their country freely. The Chinese companies thrive on imitation and copycat. They also steal the American technology through agents and spies imbedded in the US companies and universities. Thus, they can never match up to the free capitalist economy of America because the USA thrives on creative destruction, the engine of its economic growth and dominance. The game-changing innovations go on changing the entire world again and again from railroad to aviation to computers to space programs and beyond. State capitalism lacks that engine of growth.

A free economy encourages risk taking, innovation and entrepreneurship. Since people and companies in the US free economy are encouraged to be pioneers, no one knows what the next huge product and industry will be. One recent example is fracking that has made the United States the biggest producer of oil surpassing Saudi Arabia and Russia. We don't know what the likes of Bezos, Musk, Gates and others will work on tomorrow. Their imaginations are not controlled by the state, so the possibilities are limitless.

Another big source of innovations and ideas are the US universities. Those are the places where real new products and industry of tomorrow are created making the US wealthy and great. Cranking out iPhones might employ more people, but it's not the foundation for a new kind of industry that economy will need tomorrow.

State capitalism may churn out some good financial reports, but it lacks the fundamental strength inherent in a free economy. As mentioned above, state capitalism is just a pale imitation of the real thing, where there's neither the ability nor desire to go beyond



catching up with America's innovations.

The coronavirus epidemic has further exposed some critical flaws in China's governance system. It is clear that China hasn't truly modernized its governance system 17 years after the SARS epidemic nor has it established a public epidemic prevention system. The regime in China only seems interested in safeguarding the regime by ignoring the facts and basic ethics. The leader of the state capitalism, Xi Jinping disappeared from public view for days after losing control on coronavirus, something unthinkable in a free economy. A lack of transparency cannot match the lucidity, reliability, trustworthiness and responsiveness of a free economy. As John Galbraith said, "In economics, hope and faith coexist with great scientific pretension and also a deep desire for respectability."

American Scene

All Said and Done

By Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'

President Trump was impeached by the Democrats on December 18, 2019 and was acquitted by the Republicans on February 5, 2020. All said and done, this

Although the Congress provided a good reality show for us to watch, I don't think it was worth it. During all this drama, the only person who worked



was a mere power play, egoism and a waste of time. Everyone knew the outcome including the Democrats. Overall, the biggest losers, undoubtedly, were the voters who didn't ask for the impeachment or the acquittal. Neal Katyal summed it up on Twitter like this:
"There's no sense of apology for putting our nation through something that will tear at us. Nothing. Just insults to the opposition. I can't think of something more un-American."

indefatigably and without pay was President Trump. As a result, Mr. Trump is in an advantageous position now, but there is no denying that he persuaded the Senate to block the witnesses and was indifferent to Democratic requests. The Republications were in denial that Mr. Trump abused the power of the office though it may not have been an impeachable act, after all. The Republicans didn't care about the fact that holding up duly appropriated aid to Ukraine was illegal. Rep. Val Deming's tweet said this the best:



“Apparently the White House team decided to pretend that John Bolton doesn’t exist.”

Dave Brook, an opinion columnist at The New York Times describes Mr. Trump’s success as:

“As several people have noticed, this was the most politically successful week of the Trump presidency. First, President Trump’s job approval numbers are rising. When the impeachment inquiry got rolling in October his Gallup approval rating was 39. Now it’s 49. If he can hold this level, he’ll probably be re-elected.”

President Trump’s State of the Union speech was so effective that Nancy Pelosi had to tear that in full view of the camera. Consequently, she got a new name now, Nancy the Ripper. Michael More supported her by twitting: “Thank you. That felt good. #NancyTheRipper”

Many are comparing Trump’s post impeachment attitude with Clinton’s. Bill Clinton conceded in public that what he did was wrong. In contrast to that, Mr. Trump publicly denied that he

did anything wrong. Monica Lewinsky summed this the best (pardon the language): “this is definitely an “are you f*cking kidding me?” kinda day.”

I also wondered what Chief Justice John Robert was doing in the Senate trial. Well, his role can be described by the following tweet from Kimberly Robinson:

“Some details about Chief Justice’s impeachment role: - He’ll wear his normal robe (no stripes) - He’ll attend arguments in the AM, Sentate trial in the PM - If he misses an argument, Justice Thomas will preside - He’ll be driven across the street, escorted by #Scouts security”

Overall, the growing public support for the Republicans and Mr. Trump may not bode well for the Democrats in 2020 elections. Mitt Romney’s position in the Republican Party is that of a pariah. We shouldn’t be surprised if he, eventually, becomes a Democrat or an independent. This is what the President said about him:

“I don’t like people who use their faith as justification for doing what they know is wrong. Nor do I like people who say ‘I pray for you’ when they know that that’s not so. So many people have been hurt and we can’t let that go on.”

Ultimately it was an interesting but a futile show. Shakespeare would have said, “It is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury; signifying nothing.” (Macbeth)

Current Affairs

Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Need Education and Employment

BY ANIL SHRIVASTAVA 'MUSAFIR'



The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) have been in turmoil ever since I learned how to spell “Middle” and “East.” People there turn violent in the name of religion; they oppress women; they use young children as suicide bombers; they breed terrorists and they still seem to live in the medieval era except for some gulf states like UAR or Kuwait.

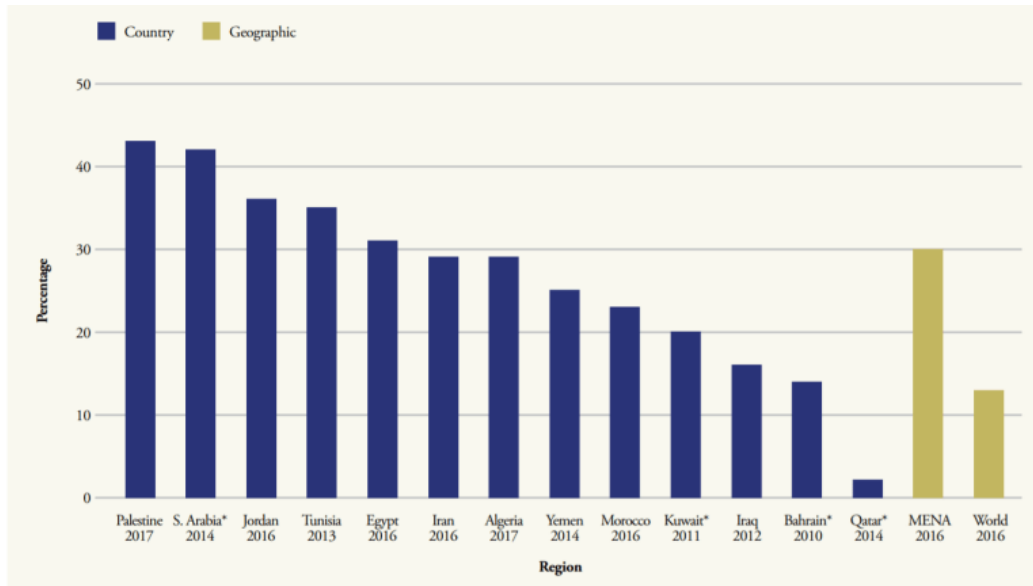
There is truth to the above statement, but the West’s engagement with the region is also a great factor in their cynicism, anger, frustration and radicalism. We cannot ignore the argument that their anger at the West’s foreign policy, political exploitation (for

their own self-interest) are at the heart of MENA’s anger and upheaval.

We cannot also ignore the fact that, in the most cases, people in MENA are uneducated and unemployed. Had the West spent even a fraction of the cost of insatiable and indefatigable bombing on education and opening manufacturing establishments, the story would have been far opposite of what we witness and hear about them incessantly. I am not ignoring the fact that there are other factors for their state of affairs such as internal fighting, tribalism and political struggle for power by their leaders.

1. Here are some statistical facts about the folks in that region according to the

Technological and industrial transformation of the region is essential to



- World Bank:
 54% of the people in MENA region are unemployed.
 2. Among the educated with university degrees, 30% are unemployed and unemployable.
 3. They have no source of legitimate employment other than joining scarce public sector jobs.

employment. The big companies can start with opening small facilities in those regions jointly with the public sector. MENA-OECD (Middle East and North Africa – Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development) has started this initiative. The big business houses need to work with them as responsible social and global citizens.

It should be very obvious to the world leaders and critics that MENA needs help which can be provided by investing in schools and skill centers so that people there can think beyond the box and be employable. We need to be working inside those countries to provide expertise and challenge the status-quo in regards to a lack of education and skills.

Let's think this way, when an alarming number of erudite lack sense and sensibility giving rise to blind partisanship and constant bickering, what can be expected from those who are at the bottom rung of the food chain? It's time to halt the bombing and start healing.

Health

Sleep Disorder

Niru Prasad, MD



Common sleep disorders in the elderly are due to the following facts:

1. The percentage of dream sleep decreases with age. As we grow older, we sleep less.
2. Over-the-counter sleep medications, if taken over long periods, have adverse effects on health.
3. A heart or lung condition or depression will affect sleep patterns.
4. Taking too much tea, coffee or alcohol affects your sleep at night.
5. Sleeping pills impair your coordination which increases the risk of falling and breaking bones. They may also cause daytime drowsiness or sleep.

How to get a better sleep at night:

1. Avoid arguments or major discussions before bedtime.
2. Try going to bed at the same time every night.
3. Wear comfortable loose night clothes.
4. Keep bedding and pillows comfortable.
5. Use your shades and curtains to darken the room.
6. Avoid heavy meals at night. Try a light snack or glass of warm milk before bedtime.
7. Drink less liquid after supper in order to reduce the frequency of urination at night.
8. Avoid daytime sleep.
9. Avoid alcohol before bedtime. Once the effect of alcohol wears off, you will wake up.
10. Try to exercise daily.
11. Create a relaxing mental routine before bedtime by reading or watching television.

Observation

Is America Still A Melting Pot?

by Anil Shrivastava ‘Musafir’

When I first came to this country in the 70s, assimilation meant acting like the natives, eating hot dog, becoming baseball fan, watching fireworks on the Fourth of July and celebrating Halloween and Christmas. The magazine racks then were adored by blue-eyed blondes. Who can forget Cheryl Tiegs, Lauren Hutton, Patti Hansen and Brooke Shields? Dressing up on Sundays meant going to the church and people made sure to perform at least one good deed of the day.

Having an American-sounding name was also a badge of assimilation

that conferred genuine economic and social benefits. Devendra became Dev and Kanan became Connie. It was that simple. People thought that with less-foreign-sounding names they were more likely to be unemployed than their counterparts whose names sounded more foreign.

That reminds me of an interesting anecdote:

My first boss in the U.S. was a British immigrant named Glen. He spoke in not so *savoir faire* Brummies’ accent instead of cockney. The truth was that our co-workers didn’t understand either of us. I became so infamous for my unusual accent that whenever I sneezed, Gloria who sat next to my desk would shout, “Anil is sneezing with accent again,” instead of saying “God bless you”



Ultimately, Glen gave me a warning, that if I didn’t improve my accent within a month, he’d have me fired. Fortunately (and unfortunately for him), Glen was fired by the plant manager before the former could fire me. We were both victims of nonconformance or a lack of assimilation. However I lucked out.

Well, that was then. Assimilation today is different from the Age of Mass Migration in the early 20th century till the 70s. In the 70s immigration rules became highly regulated, favoring those with money, education, and skills and drawing migrants primarily from Asia. They were more skilled and educated

than their compatriots who stayed in their countries of origin. This, of course, was contrary to the immigrants who came in the first wave (1920s) who were less skilled than those who stayed behind.

Today most of the immigrants come from both Asia and Central America. The Hispanic population has increased from 9 million in 1970 to 54 million now whereas the Caucasian share of the population has decreased from more than 80% in the 70s to below 70% now. The Central American immigrants are fast changing the demography of the Southern and Southern west states, especially those of California, Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas. Today's immigrants are more fearful of words like assimilation and melting pot. Many of them reject the very idea of assimilation which, in their views, is denying one culture for the other. The fact remains that this fear was also prevalent in previous batches of immigrants. Despite that, immigrants have always made a distinctive contribution to the economy, innovation and culture.

However, the above tells the story of the first generation immigrants only. The second and the third generation immigrants still become wholly American by learning the language, embracing the folkways and traditions and becoming deeply patriotic. I have personally talked to many second generation Hispanic Americans. They



prefer to speak in English and they identify themselves as Americans only.

In my view, the American melting pot is still alive and well. One in five newlyweds is marrying someone of another race (Pew Report). As stated above, they identify themselves as Americans. The fear that today's immigrants cannot assimilate is misplaced. Of course, we won't see many blue eyed blondes on magazine covers. Many of them won't go to the Church on Sundays. I hope they'd still do the good deed of the day without giving any name to it. They are the new generation of Americans who come in all colors and traits. They may not look homogeneous as before, but they are distinctly Americans.

Out of My Mind

My Pre-interview with A Census Bureau Agent

by Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir



"Musafir?" The voice on the other end of the phone asked.

"Yeeees, this is he," I answered.

"Good to hear from you! I thought you'd be dead by now," the caller said.

"No, I am not expired yet. Who the heck are you?" I asked.

"My name is Mat Data and I work for the U.S Census Bureau. I am going to ask you some census related questions"

"That's not a nice way to introduce yourself. Moreover, why did you say that you thought that I'd be dead? That's a rude way to initiate a conversation. Do you realize this?" I asked in disappointment.

"We ask this to avoid counting dead people. You won't believe that we encounter dead people every day which may cause error in reporting the results.

"OK! But what kind of name is Mat Data anyway?"

"Well that's Matri Dutta. Mat Data is the Americanized way of saying my name," Mat explained.

"OK Mat, shoot your questions to me," I



desperately wanted to get over with this rude interruption in my daily life.

"Let's start. Are you a gay, bi, transgender or queer?"

"No sir, I am straight."

"You should consider one of the above categories. That will give you special status, protection and prestige that you don't have now. That's, of course just a suggestion for being a fellow countryman, you know what I mean? Alright, the next question: Do you enjoy or participate in ethnic jokes?"

"Generally no except for the Ladinis," I answered."

"May I ask why the Ladinis?" Mat asked.

"Because no one talks about them. They'd be happy to get any kind of recognition," I replied.

"Who are the Ladinis?"

"You tell me. You are the census guy not I."

"Time for the next question. Are you a Vegetarian, non-vegetarian, Vegan or fruitarian?" Mat further asked.

"I consider myself a selectarian," was my answer.

"What's a selectarian? Never heard of that," Mat sounded perplexed.

"Two things. First, I choose my selection based on situations. People know me as a vegetarian, but when no one is watching, I eat everything that can fly, swim, crawl and walk." I was just being honest.

"And what is the second thing?" Mat was curious.

"Since I have respect for the female gender, I don't eat she-animals."

"How do you do that?" Mat wanted to know.

"See brother, I take a sample of the meat for DNA testing before I eat them. When the test comes out as female, I don't eat unless I am starving."

"That could be quite tedious," Mat said surprisingly.

"Not as tedious as the 100 plus pages in your 2020 census survey."

"Well brother, we'll mail you the mandatory survey soon. I must say you are an interesting fella."

"I wish I could say the same for you." I quipped. The conversation ended.

<https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/2020/operations/planned-questions-2020-acs.pdf>

1. What razor-thin country accounts for more than half of the western coastline of South America?

2. What river runs through Baghdad?

3. What country has the most natural lakes?

4. What is the only sea without any coasts?

5. What is the driest place on Earth?

6. In what country can you visit Machu Picchu?

7. Which African nation has the most pyramids?

8. What African country served as the setting for Tatooine in *Star Wars*?

9. What percentage of the River Nile is located in Egypt?

10. What country has the most coastline?

Send your answers to: letters@TheThinkClub.com (We'll reveal the answers in the next issue)