

# The THINK Club<sup>®</sup>

A forum to encourage  
independent thinking

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## What's the Fuss about Rear-earth Elements?

*The Fear of  
Technology*



*Book Review: Why Nations Fail?*



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# Editorial

## I Am Fearful of the Rise in Antisemitism

by 'Musafir'

Antisemitism has been on rise lately. Even high-profile personalities have openly supported antisemitic sentiments. Former president Donald Trump dined recently with an outspoken Holocaust denier.

Beyond these headlines, there's also been a steady rise in the number of hateful incidents directed at Jewish people over the past several years.

The year 2023 has been the highest year on record for documented reports of harassment, vandalism and violence directed against Jews (Anti-Defamation League). The watchdog group has tracked these incidents since 1979, and it says the antisemitic activities are rising every year.

The current streak includes the 2018 attack on the Pittsburgh Tree of Life synagogue - where a gunman killed 11 Jewish worshippers, as well as the deadly "Unite the Right" rally in Charlottesville, Va. two years earlier extremist demonstrators chanted "Jews will not replace us" during a torchlit march. Thousands of smaller incidents like vandalizing Jewish schools and community centers, or extremists running campaigns against the Jews are happening in 2023. A few years ago, two young Orthodox boys were playing in their

yard in California and were shot with red paintballs. And we saw pictures of them.

Jews are attacked based on centuries-old myths about Jewish control and disloyalty. Even Shakespeare depicted them as asking for a pound flesh in lieu of the debt payment (Shylock in Merchant of Venice). That image of the Jews still continues. Jews are centered in a lot of conspiracy



theories, especially around economy or power or greed or whatever. We all heard Congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene claiming that California wildfires may have been caused by the Rothschilds, a prominent Jewish banking family.

Lately, the students in almost all major universities of America are demonstrating against Israel by adopting a racial tune against the Jews. This, in my mind, is also due to a lot of suppression of knowledge. I don't want to blame these students for it. They're very open, but they need to be taught, no doubt about it.

My fear is that today it is against the Jews and tomorrow can be against us. I shudder at this thought.

# Commentary

## What's the Fuss about Rear-earth Elements

Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'

Every birthday I buy a new trending electronic gadget for myself. I am pondering what to gift myself on my next birthday in December when I'll turn 77 years old. I've almost all the devices needed for daily life except an iWatch. So, I am planning to buy my first iWatch on my birthday.

Please don't be



mistaken, I don't buy new modern electronic devices to keep up with the Joneses. I buy them because I love them. In today's world, life circles with technology gadgets. Technology has been progressing quickly and has become an important part in our lives which provides conveniences, faster communication, and entertainment.

They also help me in writing articles by fetching information out of the internet.

Having worked with new technologies all my working life, I have an intrinsic love of learning about cutting-edge edge devices. Other than seeking pleasure, I also

experience personal growth as a result of a new gadget purchase. Just in the last three years, I learned to read and write in Urdu, learned three Internet languages, and designed a training course (<http://www.webgraf.org>) for beginners to learn Internet programming.

Besides my love for technology, it has changed my life for the better. I remember when our first child was born, I didn't know how to inform my parents in India immediately. I went to the Western Union to send a telegram to them. The message had to be short because it was very expensive to do so. Considering that, I only wrote, "Boy." My father replied back, "Congrats."

Later, I booked an international phone call to India which took three days to materialize. All we could say to each other was "Hello, hello!" Now we are in contact with families and friends all the time as if we are living with them.

The advent of ChatGPT has further improved my quality of life. When the Internet came along, information of all kinds was available to me but they lacked depth and many times were unreliable. On the other hand, an AI chatbot is a computer program that uses artificial intelligence (AI) and natural language processing (NLP) to simulate human conversation. AI chatbots are trained on large amounts of data, such as text conversations, to learn how to understand and respond to human language. Therefore, they tend to be more accurate than common search engines.

It's natural to look at new technologies with suspicion especially if they are AI related. People often fear that it would create unemployment and one day would enslave human beings. The truth is far from that. In the annul of human civilization, new technologies have opened new frontiers and have created jobs. We had a similar fear

of personal computers in the 80s. Many thought that all these devices would run amok, ruining the political system, and eventually turning into self-planning machines that would take power and disrupt the world.

TV media and newspapers play role in spreading the fear of technology such as new technologies may create mass unemployment, child mental health issues, and lack of personal interaction. Looking back, it's not clear that any of this occurred. We have the lowest unemployment rate in 55 years, demand for front-line workers is at an all-time high, and the need for manufacturing, process, logistics, and tech workers is still unfilled. As a matter of fact, every technology has created more job opportunities, more opportunities for learning, and greater interaction with families and long-lost friends and acquaintances from all over the globe.

Similarly, ChatGPT is creating thousands of new jobs for software engineers GPT trainers, and integration specialists. According to a recent report, more than 2,000 jobs are asking for GPT or generative AI skills right now. And techies that I talk with ( I know a few) tell me AI will create new job opportunities instead of eliminating them.

It's my firm belief that there will be new skills, tools, and technologies to learn, the age of AI will unleash one of the biggest new markets for talent we have seen in years.



Humor

HUMOR



## English Is Spoken Here

(Reprint from an old issue)

Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'

Just because you may be fluent in English doesn't mean folks will understand half the things you say at their places of business. Plain English seems to be in particularly short supply when it comes to business. For instance, on my recent visit to India, a couple of my checks bounced because I didn't write 'only' in front of the amount to be paid. So, I rushed to the nearest CITI Bank branch and asked the banker why were my checks not honored? "You didn't write a complete sentence. That's why," replied Dave Ramsey. "But I don't have to write a sentence, I have to only mention the amount and denomination." "It doesn't tell

me how much you want to pay to the payee," he replied.

"Yes, it does, here is the amount," I pointed to the amount on the check"

"But this doesn't tell me where you want to stop. Therefore, it is important to end your sentence with 'only.'"

"OK. I'll print 'only' after the amount, but don't call it a sentence," I said to him in frustration, "and how come your name is Dave Ramsey? "

"You may call me Devangna Ramaswaminathan, if you like," he said with a grin.

Of course, these idiosyncrasies are not limited to the Indian businesses only. It could get worse in the United States where one has to remember the exact semantics and idiom to convey the meaning. I once checked into a hotel and asked where the exercise room was. The receptionist gave me a blank look. She simply could not comprehend what I asked. Frustrated, I performed a few pushups making a fool of myself in front of other guests.

"I see, you mean the fitness room!" She exclaimed.

I find ordering food at drive-through windows of fast-food chains even more challenging. The problem is that every chain calls the same item by a different name. A good example will be smoothies, shakes, Slurpee, slush, etc. So, here I go again. After I finished ordering my food at the drive-through window, the attendant asked me. "Will that be all?"

"Well, I'd like to order a drink." "Pardon us! We don't have drinks, sir," she replied.

"Come on who are you kidding? I can see them on your menu." I made my point.

"Will that be all," she wanted to wrap up the conversation. "

Didn't I say that I wanted to order a drink?"

"And didn't I tell you SIR that we don't serve drinks in our establishment? Will that be all?" She seemed irritated.

"How about those pictures of coke and coffee that you are displaying on the board?" I tried to remind her.

"So, you want a beverage. What kind?" She asked.

"I'd like a mango shake." "We don't have mango shakes," she replied.

"You have it. I just ordered it last week. Maybe, you call it Slurpee" I was irritated.

"No sir, we don't sell Slurpee either. Will that be all?"

"OK! Let me come inside the store." I was not ready to give up. As I walked inside, I pointed her to the picture of the drinks.

"So, you mean a mango smoothie. Will that be all?" she replied calmly. Finally, I got my order.

Dealing with waiters in formal restaurants is not a piece of cake either. The other day, after finishing my meal, I asked for the bill. The waiter looked clueless at first then he called the manager to talk to me.

"Sir, we don't bill our customers," said the manager to me. "

So, do you serve free meals?" I interrupted him.

"That's not correct either. You'll have to pay here and now," the manager replied.

"I understand. That's why I asked for the bill,"

The manager turned to the waiter and asked, "Didn't this gentleman ask for the check?"

"No sir, he wanted to be billed," replied the waiter. Somehow, the matter was resolved.

I come across these obstacles every day in my life. The worst one was last week when my General Manager took me for lunch and told me, "We have decided to leverage internal efficiencies by enlisting external resources, thus driving a reduction in operating costs, thereby enhancing shareholder value."

Translation: 'Your job is eliminated.' Bye for now

## What's in A Name?

**Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'**

America is a big town but men here have limited first names such as Mike, John, Bruce, Joe, Ed, Ted, Dave, Nick, Jim, Ron, George, Rogers, Charlie, James, and Hank. Of course, there are some aberrations too such as Hector, Hunter, Norman, Ben, Alex, Oliver, Leo, Oscar, and Nathan.

When I first came to this country, the above names belonged mostly to WASPs (White Anglo-Saxon Protestants). Now they are assumed by every ethnic group to sound homogeneous like an entree going into a melting pot.

I had a friend whose Indian name was Raj. He changed his name to Rogers not realizing that Rogers is called Raj in short. Oh well! I was Anil when I was a baby, remained Anil, and am still that after spending a lifetime here on earth. However, I can't make my friends in America pronounce my name correctly. I've a greater chance of being struck by lightning than my friends pronounce my name correctly.

I am pretty sure that if my parents knew that I'd move to America, they'd have been a tad more careful in naming me. Anyway, I was in the gym this morning balancing myself on an out-of-control trade mill when the guy next to me shouted, "Hi! I am John. What's your name?"

"Anil," I shouted back.

"What?" He yelled shaping his hand over his ear like a conch. I hate this gesture as it reminds me of Iggy Pop.

"I'll talk to you later buddy," I yelled back.

"What?" He yelled again shaping his hand over his ear like a conch.

I got down from the trade mill considering the safety factor for both of us.

"Tell me your name one more time," he screamed.

"Anil," I replied at the top of my voice.

"Bye, Ali!" He almost screamed.

I think people should feel lucky because I have a short one-syllable name. Imagine dealing with Ramchandran Ramaswamy or Nageshwaran. When I first moved to Indiana in 1974, my Hoosier boss proposed that people call me Ann for short. When I objected, he came up with Al. I still insisted on being called Anil.

Now almost everyone knows that I am Anil. Suddenly I saw John coming towards me with a coffee cup in his hand.

"Let's walk together to the car, Aleen" John said

"Don't worry about it Joann," I said as I waved goodbye.

# ESSAY

## *The Fear of Technology Is Unfounded*

**Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'**



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new technologies may create mass unemployment, child mental health issues, and lack of personal interaction. Looking back, it's not clear that any of this occurred. We have the lowest unemployment rate in 55 years, demand for front-line workers is at an all-time high, and the need for manufacturing, process, logistics, and tech workers is still unfilled. As a matter of fact, every technology has created more job opportunities, more opportunities for learning, and greater interaction with families and long-lost friends and acquaintances from all over the globe.

Now media and talking heads are spreading the fear of ChatGPT. Actually, ChatGPT is creating thousands of new jobs for software engineers, GPT trainers, and integration specialists. According to a recent report, more than 2,000 jobs are asking for GPT or generative AI skills right now. And techies that I talk with (I know a few) assure me that AI will create new job opportunities instead of eliminating them.

It's my firm belief that there will be new skills, tools, and technologies to learn and the age of AI will unleash one of the biggest new markets for talent we have seen in years like every technology in the past has done.

*"Change creates fear, and technology creates change. Sadly, most people don't behave very well when they are afraid." - Daniel H Wilson*

# CURRENT AFFAIRS

## Women of Iran (Part 2)

Anil Shrivastava

"



"In the January 2023 issue of TheThinkClub, I wrote about Miss Mahsa Amini who was arrested by the Iranian morality police on September 17, 2022, for not wearing a hijab in public properly. While in custody, she died of a head injury. I can't resist writing about another prominent woman of Iran who is in the Iranian prison for speaking against human rights violations in her

country. Her name is Narges Mohammadi. She received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2023 for being a tireless Iranian activist

It is the second time that an Iranian woman has won the prize, with the first being Shirin Ebadi, for almost the same issues of democracy, human rights, and emancipation. Coincidentally, Narges Mohammadi herself is the Vice President of

the “Defenders of Human Rights Center (DHRC),” which is headed by Shirin Ebadi, now in exile in London.

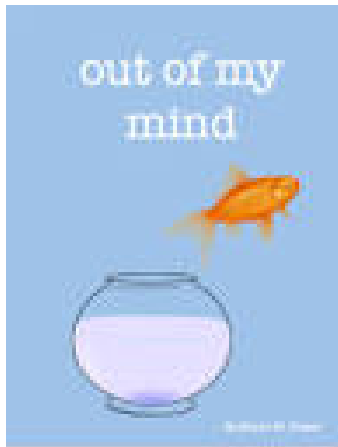
Miss Mohammadi has indefatigably demonstrated against the forcible usage of hijab and has refused to bend to the regime. Her Nobel citation said she was being recognized “for her fight against the oppression of women in Iran and her fight to promote human rights and freedom for all. Her brave struggle has come at a tremendous personal cost. Altogether, the regime has arrested her 13 times, convicted her five times, and sentenced her to a total of 31 years in prison and 154 lashes. Narges continues to pay the price for her valorous defiance and remains incarcerated in an Iranian prison, almost continuously since 2010.”

It is a strange situation for such women, who have had to endure the most vile, false, and vicious barbs and innuendoes that range from personal slander to accusations of being anti-national when all they protested for as proud Iranians was reform and a progressive outlook. These women have alluded to gender apartheid as an institutionalized phenomenon in the Iranian narrative. Even today the Iranian constitution notes the worth of a life of a woman to be half that of a man and that the testimony of two women equals the weight of the testimony of one man! The Hijab is only a fraction and a metaphor of

the inequities and diminishment that the Iranian women face whenever the hardliners assert their own interpretation of Islam.

Women like Narges Mohammadi are proud Iranians and have immense faith in their religion, culture, and the Iranian nation. However, they revolt against the puritanic and regressive interpretation of some within the clergy who seek to deny, suppress, and even decry the aspirations of women. These women have passionately argued that their faith i.e., Islam, is compatible with human rights, democracy, and freedom of rights, if interpreted liberally and honestly.

But it will be difficult to keep suppressing brave voices like Narges Mohammadi, who said eloquently, “I am, in my own homeland, convicted and imprisoned for the crime of being a human rights defender, a feminist and an opponent of the death penalty. Not only have my imprisonment and my recent 16-year sentence not made me feel any regret, they have actually strengthened my convictions and commitment to defending human rights more than ever before”.



# Anger Management

Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'

So, I'm sitting in my surgeon's office with my arm in a sling being seen by an assistant while my surgeon is in Hawaii wearing garlands and surrounded by girls dancing with dangling hula loops around their invisible midriff, compliments of my last surgery.

It strikes me a bit odd when the assistant tells the intern shadowing him to take her lunch break at 9 A.M. Well, when it comes to medical staff, go figure. I mean we're talking about a man whose livelihood comes from cutting human bones and flesh, right?

"Relax your muscles. Don't be stiff while I am examining you," orders the assistant.

I shake my limbs and become loose like a zombie.

"You don't remember me, do you?" He asks.

Under the circumstances, I won't remember Gandhi. Just the same, this guy doesn't look the least bit familiar.

"I sat next to you in Olive & Twist Lounge when you gulped my beer and made me pay for that," he says.

"Ha!" I say wondering, "Which of the two times are you talking about?"

"Remember? I asked you to fight it out but you copped out."

"Impossible!" I said angrily.

He shakes his head and chuckles. Then he opened my surgery wound and started scratching around it with a surgical blade and said, "Let me know if it hurts."

By that time the fear of retaliation had overtaken any pain I was experiencing. I should never have stood this guy up. I was thinking.

Thinking that it was never safe to be alone with him especially when he was armed with knives and scissors, I asked him to end the post-op checkup immediately and reschedule my appointment with the real surgeon.

I drove 40 miles over hills and dales and creeks stopping once for coffee before reaching home.

"Hi," I said when my wife opened the door.

"Did you run away from your appointment again?" My wife shouted looking at the dangling piece of dressing over my surgical arm.

"No, actually it was a bar fight," I answered.

"Have you started drinking in the morning again? You should be ashamed of yourself," my wife's rage graduated to hysteria.

"You can't just get mad just because you are so beautiful," I said.

"How was your appointment today, dear?" My wife asked smilingly and sweetly.

# The Taj Mahal Redux

Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'



I have visited the Taj Mahal at least four times. I found it irresistibly picturesque every time I looked at the Taj. My first visit to the Taj Mahal was with my parents when I was twenty-one years old. My father decided to take us from Patna to Agra, a distance of 500 miles in our family car which was a Fiat sedan. There were six of us including the driver. We all were cooped up inside the car for the entire journey. It took us two days and two nights to reach our destination via Grand Trunk Road of India which was constructed 2,500 years ago and ran from the border of Myanmar to Afghanistan.

My first impression of the beauty of the Taj standing at its main entrance was sublime, wondrous, and out of this world. I was in awe. It was more fabulous than I had ever imagined to be. Seeing Taj was like a dream. It felt as if I was floating in clouds. Simply said, I was swept off my feet at its sight. I could probably just stand there and look at it for eternity.

I remember having a family photograph taken sitting on the bench in front of the Taj, the same bench on which millions of people have sat and been photographed including the kings, queens, and



presidents of almost every country of the world. The same bench on which the queen of Iran, Elizabeth Taylor, and Princess Diana sat.

The second time I saw the Taj was in 1970 when I started working in Delhi. This time I hired a professional guide who let me look at the Taj Mahal from an entirely different perspective.

He took me to the maroon gate which is the entrance to the Taj Mahal and asked me what I saw.

“A maroon gate,” I replied.

“Look again. That is a picture frame,” he contradicted me.

“What do you see behind the Taj?’ He asked.

“Blue sky,” was my answer.

“No, you are looking at a blue velvet screen,” he corrected me.

“What is on that blue velvet screen?”

“Taj Mahal,” was my obvious answer.

“No, look again. That is an embroidery in white silk thread,” he corrected me again.

I was mesmerized. I was really looking at a picture frame with a blue velvet background on which Taj was embroidered in white silk threads. That was the most spectacular embroidery I had ever witnessed in my life.

I marveled at the intricate design and inlays throughout the exterior of the mausoleum. We (the guide and I) walked

along the pathway next to the reflecting pool. A visitor to the monument may very well stand agape at this spectacle, the romanticism and sheer majesty of the structure was unbelievably true.

I visited the Taj Mahal a third time during the full moon. Its sensuous appeal was more heightened as on a full moon night. The dome is what was highlighted, while the other aspects of the structure were, nevertheless, united in look, the balance was perfect. The rows of cypress trees offset by the green carpet of grass completed the picture of idyllic proportions, resplendent in royal dignity.

I must also mention the history of the Taj Mahal. Shah Jahan the fifth emperor of the Mogul empire built the Taj Mahal to hold the body of his beloved wife, Mumtaz Mahal, who died in 1631. Built on a terrace above the Yamuna River, it took 20,000 craftsmen and laborers over a decade to complete.

The tomb chamber houses the emperor and his bride in highly decorated marble fashioned into exquisite floral patterns and calligraphy of Koranic script. The story is given added poignancy by Shah Jahan’s fate. Deposed by his ruthless son, Aurangzeb, he spent his last years imprisoned in the nearby Agra fort, with a view of the Taj.

It’s a symbol of love for people all over the world. Of all the structures of the world, the Taj Mahal to me is still the most wonderful.

# QUIZ

1. In what country did the first [Starbucks](#) open outside of North America?

**Answer:** Japan

2. What does CODA stand for?

**Answer:** Child of Deaf Adults

3. In a website browser address bar, what does "www" stand for?

**Answer:** World Wide Web

4. Where were the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights stored during World War II?

**Answer:** Fort Knox

5. What is the tiny piece at the end of a shoelace called?

**Answer:** An aglet

6. Which company's slogan is "You're in good hands?"

**Answer:** Allstate

7. Who was the first televised [President](#)?

**Answer:** Franklin D. Roosevelt

8. Pocahontas was baptized and given what English name?

**Answer:** Rebecca

9. Originally, Amazon only sold what kind of product?

**Answer:** Books

10. In 2009, what became the first Morse code character to be added since WWII?

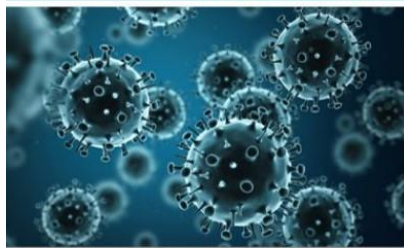
**Answer:** The "@" symbol

## Health Talk

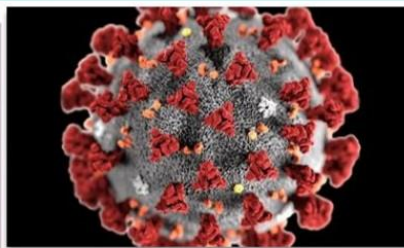
# The Role of Vaccinations Among Children for the Upcoming Flu Season

Dr. Niru Prasad

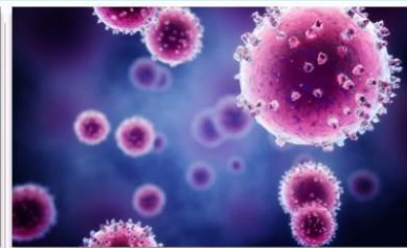
### What are the types of viruses involved?



**Influenza**  
PromoCell



**COVID-19**  
Smithsonian



**RSV**  
Willis-Knighton Health System

**Introduction** A sustained increase has been reported nationwide among children suffering from flu viral illnesses. During the fall and winter months, there have been more incidences of common colds, allergies, and flu cases among children due to them being unable to acclimatize to weather

changes easily. Fewer regular checkups by pediatricians during the COVID era, uninsured parents and caretakers due to loss of jobs, and missing regular immunization updates.

**What is the Flu?** Flu (Influenza) is an extremely contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza A/B virus. Symptoms of flu are more or less the same as the common cold which are cold, sneezing, sore throat, congestions, and running nose

however these symptoms generally resolve in 3 to 5 days. Symptoms of persistent fever, chills, muscle aches, productive cough, and trouble breathing prompt attention to further investigate a more serious viral illness. A recent survey by the Centers for Disease Control in October revealed at least 780,000 people sick with flu so far this season resulting in hospitalization and death due to complications from flu among children and adults. (CDC)

**What is COVID-19?** COVID-19 is a disease caused by the very contagious SARS-CoV-2 virus. The virus specifically targets the lungs and can lead to symptoms similar to that of the flu or pneumonia. SARS also mutates very quickly and presents different variants such as omicron, delta, and alpha. The total number of COVID cases is getting less due to proper immunizations and early detection. However, recent data from Wastewater Scan - a group that receives data from wastewater collection sites in 36 states 3 times a week looking for viruses shed in sewages - shows that COVID remains widespread from northeast through western parts of the US. (vaccineinformation.org).

**What is RSV?** RSV (respiratory syncytial virus) is a highly contagious respiratory disease that causes cold-like symptoms. Most kids sick with RSV have stuffy noses, cough or wheezing fever, and general weakness. More severe cases of RSV can lead to bronchitis and pneumonia. Infants and immunocompromised individuals are more at risk of developing more severe cases of RSV. This year the RSV virus is hitting earlier than usual since the typical peak is around Jan-Feb due to lack of

vaccinations. The lack of vaccinations may stem from heightened stigma and anti-vax ideologies surrounding vaccines during/post-COVID era.

### **Innate Immunity vs Adaptive Immunity**

**Innate immunity** refers to physical barriers that prevent pathogens from infecting the body. These physical barriers include the skin, mucus, lysozymes, and antibodies. Children are born with innate immunity reflective of their mothers, who provide antibodies through breastfeeding.

**Adaptive immunity** refers to immune responses to specific antigens that get past any first-line barriers and is the basis for vaccine immunizations. Just as the name suggests, the immune system can learn to recognize specific antigens (markers specific to a pathogen) and utilize this information to synthesize antibodies against the foreign invader and store the information in case of later infection.

**Vaccines** take advantage of the adaptive immune system and provide a safer way of granting immunity. Vaccines can contain dead, inactivated, or genetic material of viruses or pathogens. The vaccines contain only a tiny fraction of the pathogen, which is enough for the adaptive immune system to mark it as an antigen, synthesize antibodies, and store its specific information in the form of memory B-cells. Vaccinations allow us the opportunity to avoid exposure to live viruses, giving us a much safer alternative to generating immunity against certain pathogens. Modern technologies have since advanced and improved vaccinations to be more effective against a wider variety of diseases and infections.

# The West has shut its eyes

(Courtesy: The Statesman, India)

Over the past weeks, the world has seen a widespread wave of pro-Palestine protests in revulsion against the Israeli attacks against Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank in the form of an Israeli invasion and bombing campaign that, in a disproportionate response to the initial attack on Israel by Hamas on October 7 2023, has thus far killed nearly 20,000 and wounded 55,000, the majority being women and children. A key question now is whether the perpetration of this atrocity by Israel in the spurious name of ‘self-defense’ will result in any change of attitude in the Western democracies that are presently standing ‘unflinchingly’ behind Israel’s flagrant violations of international humanitarian and human rights law.

While this of course will depend on the particular country concerned, the answer, generally speaking, will be in negative. And this applies most clearly to the countries that have the greatest influence over Israel’s position. In the United States, lawmakers are deliberately avoiding appeals from their constituents who call for a ceasefire, and President Joe Biden, when asked by reporters if there was any possibility of a halt to Israel’s violence, replied that there was none.

This should be a cause for worry because in a democracy, at least in principle, politicians are supposed to respond to the wishes of their constituents and conform to the popular will, given that their electoral futures depend on the opinions of the voters. Arab-Americans, including in key swing American states, are especially frustrated

with the Biden administration’s policies in general – but also now specifically with its dealings with Israel. Support for Biden among them stands at a scant 17 percent, while 40 percent, according to a poll conducted by the Arab-American Institute, are now inclined to vote for the likely Republican nominee former President Donald Trump in the presidential election in 2024 – despite Trump’s known proclivity favoring Israel.

Massive pro-Palestine protests and the possibility that Biden’s position on Israel could add to his many disadvantages in the upcoming election have strangely not prompted any change in the administration’s support for Israel’s deplorable actions in Gaza and the West Bank against the Palestinians. Joe Biden has resisted all efforts to alter his pro-Israel leanings. To quote the then-Senator Biden, a self-described pro-Zionist, from 1986, “There’s no apology to be made [for supporting Israel]. None. It is the best three-billion-dollar investment we make. Were there not an Israel, the United States of America would have to invent an Israel to protect her interests in the region.”

Now as the nation’s president, it could be supposed that Biden has a responsibility to abandon his personal predilections in order to preserve national unity – especially when it is under assault by the Republicans, an opposition party that casts doubt on the legitimacy of elections and seeks to impeach the president himself. But the fact remains that Biden is standing firm on his position of support for Israel, despite protests from his



own bureaucracy and appeals from among his traditional electoral support base.

quick to do, is both unjustified and prejudicial.

The situation in Europe is somewhat more nuanced. Countries, like Austria, the Czech Republic and Hungary are steadfast in their unwavering support for Israel despite some limited opposition, and the Czechs have even outlawed pro-Palestine demonstrations. French President Emmanuel Macron recently urged Israel to stop bombing Gaza, but he is facing open criticism from his own diplomatic service for his support for Israel. France has also outlawed pro-Palestine protests. But other countries, like Ireland, Spain and Belgium, are openly critical of Israel.

This lack of uniformity demonstrates the fragility of a common EU foreign policy on this issue. This is especially the case given the fact that Ursula von der Leyen, the German president of the European Commission, has shown herself to be a strident supporter of Israel's actions despite public contradiction from her colleague, the Commission's high representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy and his staff.

What stands out in the current situation in the Middle East is that each day that the Israeli attack on Gaza continues, the more difficult it becomes to morally and logically justify the common Western position, as evidenced primarily by the USA and UK in the UN Security Council, of supporting Israel despite immense and unprecedented public pressure in support of the beleaguered Palestinians.

The rest of the world is justified in regarding this attitude as racially motivated and anti-Islam. Conflating criticism of Israel with anti-Semitism, as the pro-Israel lobby is

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