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PAKISTAN & WORLD

US Think Tanks and the Af-Pak Policy | Dr Mohammad Taqi

A recent report in the Times of India (TOI) titled “ISI has infiltrated US think tanks, Pak scholar says” has opened an interesting debate about the Pakistani intelligence agency ostensibly leveraging the United States think tanks’ clout to further its agenda. The report, apparently stitched together from assorted tweets by the eminent Pakistani scholar and author of the authoritative volume *Military Inc* Dr Ayesha Siddiqi, notes: “A prominent anti-establishment scholar in Pakistan has caused a flutter in Washington by suggesting that the country’s spy outfit Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) has infiltrated think tanks in the US capital.” Dr Siddiqi has since distanced herself from parts of the report stating that her comments were taken out of context and while she had taken some issue with the academic qualifications and the narrative of certain Pakistani-origin scholars associated with the US think tanks, she has not alleged that any of them worked for the Pakistani intelligence service.

A letter to the TOI editor by Professor Anatol Lieven of the New America Foundation and King’s College, London and signed by 26 others has rejected the TOI story and called it “a disturbing trend in public debate where disagreement is dealt with by accusations of someone working for one intelligence agency or the other and that “insinuations against respected scholars not only harm the individuals concerned, they also undermine free and honest intellectual debate concerning Pakistan.” Fair statement, one must say. The ferocity and swiftness of the response, however, would have one think that everything coming out of the US think tanks is gospel truth and there has never been any manipulation of the think tanks’ narrative by the domestic political forces in the US or foreign governments and special interest groups. The creationist nonsense like the anti-evolutionist “Intelligent Design” theory came out of a Seattle-based think tank and from Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton to the monarchies like the UAE, Qatar and Saudi Arabia and dictatorships like Kazakhstan have all leveraged think tanks.

The US think tanks sit at the crossroads of the academia, politics, business, media and government and their associates frequently switch careers between these realms. They are the brokerages of research to support and push positions that ultimately may become governmental policies. With a massive growth in their numbers and clout over the last several decades the US think tanks are of interest to anyone who will be

affected by the US policies. While overlapping closely and at times working with the academia the think tanks are not exactly the 'universities without classes' that some of them claim to be. Most think tanks have tax exemption/benefits under the US tax code but are not mandated to disclose their donors publicly. While all donations over \$5,000 are reported to the government (IRS Form 990) many think tanks also voluntarily make their donors' lists public. However, unlike the academic research the disclosures are neither full nor forthcoming in many cases and as Ken Silverstein of The Nation, USA pointed out in his May 2013 report on secret donors of the think tanks "it's not always easy to see what sort of benefits money can buy."

But it is the tune played by the piper not the payer that should be of interest. The objectivity and impact of the narrative coming out of the US think tanks is what matters the most, especially as the US drawdown in Afghanistan with consequences for that whole region approaches. Consider, for example, Anatol Lieven's claim in his 2011 book Pakistan: a hard country that "One of the most striking things about Pakistan's military dictatorships is in fact how mild they have been... only one Prime Minister (Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto) and a tiny handful of politicians have ever been executed in Pakistan ... Few senior politicians have been tortured." The research on which the book, dedicated to the Indian, Bangladeshi and Pakistani civil and military services is based, was underwritten in part by the think tanks New America Foundation and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Unless Pol Pot is a benchmark and one is totally ignorant of the contemporary history of Pakistan one might not make such disingenuous and callous claim. But Lieven has been in and out of Pakistan since 1988, when he had described General Ziaul Haq as "less than vindictive" in that brutal dictator's obituary. No marks for guessing that Lieven remained mum when the Pakistan Army's Green Book named Ayesha Siddiqi and the South Asia Free Media Association as Indian agents in its very first chapter on psychological warfare. The same chapter incidentally also proposes to co-opt media people and 'independent think tank groups' to support a psychological warfare division it recommends establishing under the defense ministry.

Some signatories of Lieven's letter have consistently made a case for giving the Taliban a predominant role in what they called the Afghan endgame. They had projected the Taliban as a legitimate Pashtun nationalist entity while castigating the Afghan National Army as unrepresentative of Afghanistan's ethnic makeup and called for truncating its size. The premise they sold in the US goes like this: Pakistan holds the key to the Afghanistan issue but Pakistan is too big and armed with nukes to be confronted and, therefore, its whims should be accommodated. This line was not terribly different from what the Pakistanis military establishment had been pushing but coming from the

scholars it did find buyers in the US including some of senior wonks who fell for it hook, line and sinker. It would have been prudent to ask how and why the majority of Pakistani scholars — handful of notable exceptions notwithstanding — coming to the US conform to the Pakistani party line on Afghanistan. The problem is that 'Pakistan can and will solve the Afghanistan imbroglio' theory was an utter disaster for the region in the 1990s and culminated with the 9/11 tragedy for the US. It is safe to predict that this erroneous thesis will backfire again within the next few years. The Doha debacle is merely a start.

No one should doubt the integrity of the awesome work that most think tanks do. But opacity and stonewalling are as detrimental to a free and honest intellectual debate as any unsubstantiated insinuation. More not less transparency in the research and policy work is needed. The US, Pakistani and Afghan citizens have a lot at stake in the narratives coming out of the think tanks and must know the processes through which they arrive at their policy recommendations.

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Source: <http://dailytimes.com.pk/opinion/30-Apr-16/us-think-tanks-and-the-af-pak-policy>

Pakistan Against the Climatic Crises | Editorial

Last year, Paris made headlines around the world for two reasons: the devastating terror attack on its civilians, which claimed 130 lives and left hundreds wounded; and the success of its climate conference in draughting a first-ever universal agreement on climate change. Both terrorism, as well as climatic changes, are increasingly establishing themselves as mighty threats to the existence of many countries including Pakistan. Nevertheless, neither Pakistani society nor its administration appears serious in its treatment of this conjecture on global warming. Climate change experts must have had this general oblivion towards the unchecked monster in mind, when they met the National Assembly Standing Committee on Climate Change. They briefed the parliamentary panel about the greater intensity of security threats posed to the Pakistani economical and societal futures by the ongoing environmental degradation when compared to the growing radicalism. These experts are not alone in prioritising the existential threat of climate change. Many strong voices, including the US President Barack Obama, were seen united in their resolve to pursue the Paris Agreement last week. Nevertheless, countries like Pakistan need to achieve much more than participate in such grandeur, if they aspire to get the climatic ball rolling. It is to the country's misfortune, however, that its public opinion on climate issues remains strongly overshadowed by other security threats. According to a survey recently conducted by the Pew Research Center, only 25 percent of respondents in Pakistan seemed "very concerned" about global warming. Such widespread prevalence of ignorance is particularly detrimental for a country already struggling with a potential ticking time bomb of global climate change. The experts suggested the government bodies kick off mass awareness projects about global warming to counter the public nonchalance, in addition to designing special curricular units for school students.

Moreover, the rapid deforestation in Pakistan has already started taking its toll on the local environment. In lieu of supplementing the existing green spaces across the country with additional plantations, expansive urbanisation has further dropped off its forest share to a mere four percent. Consequently, the concrete jungle has now converted many major cities including Karachi into urban heat islands—man-made furnaces, which further intensify the heat wave conditions. The high deforestation rate is also considered responsible for the ongoing destructive pattern of massive floods in succession to severe droughts in Pakistan. However, a significant legislation on these critical crises still remains a distant dream. The committee applauded the eco-friendly initiatives taken by the provincial government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in its pursuit of becoming a "green" province. Not only has its

administration designed a mega reforestation project, with an aim to plant one billion samplings, it also plans to soon table a legislation outlawing the production of plastic bags. The federal government should also pay heed to the impending environmental crises and implement its pledged targets on an immediate basis. A much-needed first step in this direction should be setting forth legislations that aim to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In addition to authorising concrete regulations to mitigate emissions by the industrial sector, the administration should also institute an extensive afforestation campaign across the country. The civic society can also supplement governmental afforestation efforts by following the example undertaken by a small community of Piplantri village in the Indian state of Rajasthan. Over the past few years, their unprecedented crusade of planting 111 trees every time a girl is born has increased the local green cover by over a quarter million trees. In order to effectively combat both environmental as well as power crises, Pakistan should also develop its hydel power units by installing a greater number of small dams all over the country. Yet again, no significant progress can be achieved by the government unless it revolutionises the mindset of its citizens. The environmental issues are constantly being sidelined in favour of other pressing grievances. However, if the giant of climate changes is still not dealt with, it will further exacerbate all existing administrative problems. It is hoped that both people and the leadership of Pakistan soon start valuing their environment more significantly so that they can jointly strive towards its preservation.

Source: <http://dailytimes.com.pk/editorial/02-May-16/pakistan-against-the-climatic-crises>

The Less Explored Foreign Policy Options | Nasuruallah Brohi

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the formation of the Central Asia Republics (CARs), these countries with their huge economic potential have been less explored foreign policy options of Pakistan. Despite the fact that being located in the same region and sharing common characteristics, the geo-political and geo-economic importance of Pakistan and CARs should stimulate the two sides to reach out to each other.

Pakistan has always sustained a hope to become a gateway to the Central Asia but other than some occasional efforts, the two sides have not been so successful to forge closer political and economic relations, and even after almost three decades, Pakistan is yet to make any breakthrough into the Central Asian region. Despite CARs immense richness in terms of energy and other natural resources, Pakistan could not benefit much, and not even to address its energy issues through bilateral relations with these countries.

Gas fields of Uzbekistan are also overlooked, whereas if the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) connected with the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), the region can linkup the natural gasresources of Uzbekistan that could easily be utilised to overcome Pakistan's energy crisis and help boost Pakistan's ties with all the states in the Central Asian region. The Central Asian region vastly rich in untapped natural resources and being landlocked have no sailing route and sea connection with the rest of the world; this is actually one of its foremost drawbacks that also decreases the chances of trade and exports of the resources from this region. And therefore not surprisingly, despite being located in the immediate neighbourhood, the South Asian region is colossally energy-starved.

However, together with the Gwadar port of Pakistan and the CPEC project there is incomparable potential to make over the regional dynamics in terms of trade, investment and development. It would be without any exaggeration to actually call it a game changer that would of course uplift the lives of about threebillion people across China, Central Asia, South Asia and the Middle East. The Gwadar port and the CPEC have outstandingly brought the strategic and economic moments in favour of Pakistan, and have presented a wide range of opportunities for the country where it has assumed the position of economic pivot for the whole region.

The Central Asian States also show enthusiasm for a regional linkage and are eagerly desirous to benefit from the projects that will remarkably assist in connecting the Central Asian countries for trading and exporting their energy resources to the European markets. Moreover, with the advent of the CPEC, regional geopolitics has also assumed new characteristics as the region and their people are going to be better connected than ever before

Notably, during the visit of Turkmenistan President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov in March 2016, the two sides keenly agreed to overcome their detachment and explore options on enhancing trade, economic relations, energy sharing, people-to-people contacts and tourism. The particular focus also remained on the timely completion of the projects of extraordinary importance, ranging from the TAPI pipeline to Dushanbe's potential linkup with the CPEC. Moreover, because of the unique geo-economic and geo-political significance of both sides, Pakistan and Turkmenistan have decided to pay special attention to establishing air, road and rail links on a priority basis.

The greater interests of the two sides link with the TAPI and the CPEC that would further move forward to improve the regional connectivity and serve the economic activity. The emergence of the CPEC is an incomparable trade route to discover the potential of the region. Besides, Pakistan's accession to the TIR (international road transport) convention is another good opportunity, whereas the TAPI could provide crucial linkage to the CPEC. Nevertheless, with the initiation of the CPEC project, the manifold options have increased the optimism about Pakistan benefitting from lucrative foreign trade and investment, with the prospect of Central Asian states joining aboard as well.

Finally, to make the long cherished dream a resounding success, the reality lies with the facts of regional peace and stability. The chaotic security situation in Afghanistan is one factor that could seriously undermine and hinge the linkage between Pakistan and the Central Asian States. The instable political and security situation in Afghanistan has gloomy repercussions for the rest of the region, and the main reason for the delay in the timely execution of the TAPI project conceived since 1990s. Aware of its importance Pakistan considers the TAPI project a 'trailblazing project' that enables the region to become an energy hub and source of diplomatic networking. However, all possible efforts should be made to address the Afghan issue on a priority basis. The region's economic development mainly depends on the fact that the TAPI will only work if there is peace and stability in Afghanistan since the pipeline will pass through the northeastern part of Afghanistan.

Foreign Policy Stumbles | Editorial

The year 2015 was marked by perceptible shifts in foreign policy that were indicative of a state moving into youthful maturity. There was a swing away from the states in the Gulf region and on the Arabian Peninsula which have dominated the foreign policy landscape for decades, tied as we are to their oil supplies and largesse when we are in financial difficulty. Pakistan declined the invitation to join the war being fought by Saudi Arabia in Yemen to the considerable irritation of the Saudis who are used to Pakistan doing their bidding. Eyes turned instead to the east and China, with the emergent China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) being touted as the Uber-Fix for a myriad of economic and social woes, the fix-all to fix everything. Eyes also turned to Iran as the opportunities opened up by the lifting of American sanctions suddenly made the long-delayed pipeline project between Iran and Pakistan more of a possibility. Relations with India seemed to improve and a halting dialogue got under way. Even relations with Afghanistan took an uptick. America warmed slightly as well and by the end of the year, the foreign policy environment was beginning to look healthier than it had for decades — but it may all have been a house of cards.

” To cap four months of foreign policy discomfort, Russian President Vladimir Putin has decided to refuse the invitation to visit Pakistan

The collapse began with the attack on the Indian airbase at Pathankot that skewered the bilateral talks that were about to move to the foreign secretary level. There were efforts to keep the talks on track and as recently as last week, there were ‘contacts’ between the two sides but the talks are effectively dead in the water, killed off by a group that has a base in Pakistan. It is that failure by the state to control or even regulate extremist and terrorist groups that has been the stiletto through the ribs for our nascent foreign policy shifts, and the rot does not stop there. As previously noted in these columns, American lawmakers are far from happy with the obvious and continuing presence and capacity of Taliban groups to operate from Pakistan; so irritated are they that the latest F16 purchase has run into the sand and Pakistan is going to have to find \$700 million because the US Congress refuses to use American taxpayers’ money to fund the deal.

To cap four months of foreign policy discomfort, Russian President Vladimir Putin has decided to refuse the invitation to visit Pakistan in what is the diplomatic equivalent of a mighty slap in the face. Russia is not a country that is to the fore in terms of protecting the human rights of its citizenry and has its own problems with extremist groups, Muslim and otherwise — to say nothing of its interventionist positions in the Middle East and Ukraine. A state already the subject of sanctions in the wider world yet disdainful of an invitation by Pakistan. The reasons for declining the visit are somewhat opaque but Russia is believed to be less than delighted — as are any number of other states — with the persistence, indeed proliferation, of extremist groups within our borders. Russia has considerable potential for Pakistan as a trading partner, but citing insufficient “substance” to Mr Putin’s trip as the reason to refuse the invitation, which in diplomatic terms is almost unparalleled as invitations such as this are only given after the back-channel work has been done — is virtually unprecedented.

Pakistan keeps snakes in the back garden. They are not fussy about who they bite. When they bite other states around us or those with which we have economic or cultural ties, then unsurprisingly those states want to know why our snakes have bitten them and what we are doing about not letting it happen again. Snakes are never friendly. They cannot be tamed or domesticated though they can be defanged and rendered harmless but have to be caught first. They bit foreign policy. Unfortunately, nobody had bothered to remove their fangs.

Published in The Express Tribune, May 2nd, 2016.

Source:<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1095264/foreign-policy-stumbles/>

US Elections not to Affect Pak-US Relations: Harkenrider

US Consul General to Lahore Zachary Harkenrider has said that Pak-US relations would remain important for the US government irrespective of the fact Donald Trump, Bernie Sanders or Hillary Clinton is elected the next US president in November 2016 elections.

Addressing Invitation Talk on the U S electoral system at the Government College University (GCU) on Saturday, he said if one goes through the history of Pak-US relations since 1947, one comes to know there are moments of discord that punctuate much longer and much more significant periods of convergence, agreement and mutual interests.

The talk was organised by Quaid-e-Azam Political Science Society of the GCU.

The Counsel General said any government in Pakistan, whether of left or right, democratic or undemocratic, understands and values its relationship with the United States. The situation is similar in the United States.

Responding to a question about US relations with the Islamic world, Zachary Harkenrider said the American society is highly receptive and tolerant of religious diversity, adding that: "There are millions and millions of Americans who are Muslims, and they are as important citizens of the US as I am."

Harkenrider briefed the students about the complete electoral process for the President of United States from his party nominations through primaries and caucuses, general voting and election through the Electoral College.

He also told the participants about the different voting trends and nomination processes in the different states.

The students were also apprised of the history of US elections and voting trends since 1789.

The consul general discussed the reasons why no significant third political party has emerged in United States, adding that democracy and political institutions are strengthening in Pakistan.

Speaking on the occasion, Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Hassan Amir Shah said that there was a great interest among the university students about the American Presidential elections and they follow it on media.

Source:<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2016/05/07/national/us-elections-not-to-affect-pak-us-relations-harkenrider/>

Issues with Pakistani Foreign Policy | F R Khan

As the Pakistani foreign policy enters the new century, it is confronted with a multitude of problems, whose resolution will eventually determine its vision and capacity to effectively portray Pakistan's interest on the world scene. Pakistani foreign policy was created in the crucible of the ideological struggle between the United States and the erstwhile former Soviet Union that dominated the affairs of the world for the better part of the twentieth century. The Cold War had a defining influence on the implementation of Pakistan's foreign policy and would be, to a significant degree, responsible for its straitjacketed sensitivities throughout its history.

The Cold War's defining diplomatic *raison d'État* was a world view based on different ideological premises (communism/authoritarianism versus capitalism/democracy) hinged on the perceptual notion of a balance of power between the United States and the Soviet Union. The United States and the Soviet Union had resurrected the old idea of balance of power, first advocated at the Treaty of Westphalia, ending the Thirty Years' War (1618-48) in Europe. This balance of power would be later be codified into a diplomatic arrangement during the Congress of Vienna, in 1814-15, to govern the relations between the European nations in the aftermath of the French Revolution and the military defeat of Napoleon Bonaparte. The balance of power, as it was rationalized at the Congress of Vienna, was designed to prevent conflict and settle European diplomatic differences through consensus.

This balance of power arrangement would be institutionalized by the United States and the Soviet Union in Finland, agreed during the ratification of the Helsinki Accords of 1974. The Americans and the Soviets would legitimize the division of Europe into an American sphere of influence and a Soviet sphere of influence and to govern their relations in the rest of the world by respecting each other's sphere of political interests. However, when Pakistan entered the world scene, the United States and the Soviet Union were still in the early formative stages of their confrontational policies and were engaged in carving a niche for their respective political ideologies in the post-Second World War world. Pakistani foreign policy, immediately upon the creation of Pakistan, was presented with the task to define Pakistan's interests on the world scene. Given the emerging contours of the international politics, dominated as it was by the American-Soviet rivalry, Pakistani foreign policy was being pressurized to make a decision in favor of either the United States or the Soviet Union.

In either case, Pakistan was destined to adopt the ideological banner of its prospective mentor and tailor its foreign policy accordingly. It would not have mattered much as to which side Pakistan would eventually side with, because the execution of the Pakistani foreign policy was flawed from its inception; it was destined to be marred by policies of confusion and contradiction. The initial problem confronted in the creation of the Pakistani foreign policy was how to balance its *raison d'État* with its founding ideology, which was predicated on the universalism of an Islamic/Muslim identity. The Pakistani

constitution of 1956, and later the constitution of 1973, would prove to be the greatest obstacles towards rationalizing an effective Pakistani foreign policy.

The most important question in Pakistani diplomacy, which hinders the coherence of an effective, logical and insightful implementation of Pakistani interests in international relations, is the debate within the Pakistani diplomacy itself between the policies of *raison d' E'tat* and the universalism of Islam. The constitution of 1956 had made Pakistan into an Islamic republic and the reconstituted constitution of 1973 had mandated that its policies be in accordance with the provisions of Islam. In totem, both the constitutions of 1956 and 1973 only managed to place Pakistan in a position of diplomatic inflexibility, which undermined its options on how to articulate its foreign policy concerns. It has been the lack of a credible answer to this debate, which has posed the most serious challenge towards the creation of a realistic Pakistani foreign policy.

A nation's foreign policy is a reflection of its domestic political philosophy. Furthermore, the effectiveness of a nation's foreign policy is proportional to the cohesion and clarity of its domestic political beliefs. Pakistani foreign policy has always oscillated between the considerations of *Realpolitik* determining the *raison d' E'tat* of Pakistani foreign interests and the appeals to the morality of Islamic/Muslim values. Since the political debate in Pakistan has never adequately settled the issue of what is the national characteristic of Pakistani polity and what is its ideology; is it Islamic or secular; or a progressive moderate Muslim republic or a theocratic state; is it constitutional or an autocratic nation, this has proved to be the Pakistani foreign policy's most glaring failure.

This lack of determination is reflected in the Pakistani foreign policy, which at times exhibits an acute susceptibility of being its own worst enemy. The opaque nature of the Pakistani foreign policy is directly related to its inability to harmonize a sense of compromise, between its *Realpolitik* imperatives and its commitments to the Islamic ideology as the underlying principle of its foreign policy machinations. The lack of this answer is clearly evident in the *modus operandi* of Pakistani foreign policy and explains its inability to define its diplomatic vision; a vision that can convincingly project and protect Pakistani interests in the world.

International relations maneuver on the logic of perceptual reactions to tangible considerations. The international relations exist within a fluid environment, where no state exists in isolation and the interaction of the states is based on the underlying, immutable, principles of diplomacy " *raison d' E'tat*. Diplomacy, which characterizes international relations, is defined by consensus and not conflict. Contrary to the popular believe, international relations are not based on the political Darwinian notions of a zero-sum game confrontation, but rather on the ability to manage embryonic crisis from escalating into inflexible diplomatic situations.

International diplomacy operates, as its premise, on the twin themes of *raison d' E'tat* and on the cold calculating logic of *Realpolitik*. Though the two may seem to have similarity of purposes, there is a distinct difference in their rationales and it is usually

when Realpolitik is complimented with a *raison d' E'tat* that a nation's foreign policy exhibits a well defined articulation of its intentions. Realpolitik is not a Machiavellian exercise in the manipulation of power, as it has been understood, but an ability to accommodate the changes in the international relations' regime by accepting the *fait accompli* of a prevailing situation. The truism that Realpolitik is based on the calculations of power is a valid one, but the success to Realpolitik's effective implementation lies in adjusting to the changing international situations without limiting one's options and without posing a challenge to the existing equilibrium of international affairs. In other words, Realpolitik is the art of the possible; Realpolitik is the ability to realistically adjust to the various changes in international balance of power arrangements by keeping the political interests of the state supreme at all times. On the other hand, the term *raison d'état* • denotes a national interest to which all other considerations should be subordinated. A nation's *raison d' E'tat* should be based on well-reasoned political imperatives and not on the merits of political ambiguity. *Raison d' E'tat* is defined as a reaction to the perception of events, which have the ability to influence a state's behavior, and options, in dealing within the regime of international relations. Furthermore, national interests, or *raison d' E'tat*, should be flexible enough to be amended to a given situation and should increase the options available to a state, in dealing with foreign policy issues, and not limit them to the detriment of a nation's ability to project its interests in international affairs.

The doctrine of *raison d' E'tat* was the brainchild of a Frenchman by the name of Armand Jean du Plessis, otherwise known to history as Cardinal Richelieu. The philosophy of *raison d' E'tat*, as it was suggested by Richelieu, was in response to a question of how to manage the affairs of the state within the restrictions of a religious obligation. Cardinal Richelieu articulated the idea of *raison d' E'tat*, when he foresaw a clash of interests between the universalism of the Catholic Church's religious influence in the politics of France and the church's insistence that national politics of the European states be subordinated to religious considerations. Even though Richelieu was a cardinal in the service of the Catholic Church, he had realized that religion should be separated from foreign policy considerations of France, because a religion's orthodoxy restricted a nation's sense of flexibility in dealing with political considerations predicated on a state's willingness to compromise.

According to Richelieu, national interest must never be subordinated to a religious goal and national interest must be realistically pursued without any paeans to an ideological fanaticism or a religious zeal. The underlying assumption, of Cardinal Richelieu, behind this was that religion was absolute in its orthodoxies and it did not allow an option of compromise in its expectations, whereas politics was all about compromising and being flexible enough to amend to the changing political realities of the day. Richelieu, as he articulated the logical necessity of a *raison d' E'tat*, did so because he considered religion to be inflexible and counter-productive toward a state's interests. Since religion was based on a law of morality, it automatically limited certain actions due to their immoral connotations and in fact, straitjacketed a politician/diplomat's ability to manipulate a situation in his country's favor.

Cardinal Richelieu himself stated his policy of serving the national interest at expense of his religious obligations to the Church by stating that, œman is immortal; his salvation is in the hereafter, but the state has no immortality; its salvation is now or never• . In other words, Richelieu was of the opinion that raison d' E'tat must be divorced from religion, because the two were incompatible and the existence of a nation; the successful implementation of its policies was predicated on its ability to compromise and accommodate its interests without being restricted by the inflexibility of a religious doctrine of absolutism.

The question, which prompted Richelieu to advocate the logic of raison d' E'tat “ the separation of religious considerations from politics, has been the curse of the Pakistani foreign policy and the principle reason behind its mediocre performance on the international stage. Pakistani foreign policy has no raison d' E'tat, which can guide the creation of its foreign policy objectives, because its domestic politics are divided over its national identity. This national confusion, in the domestic politics, is reflective of the Pakistani diplomacy, whose international appearance is one of reactionary, adventurous, destabilizing and schizophrenic inconsistencies. The question, which Cardinal Richelieu was able to answer and one, which seems to evade Pakistani foreign policy apparatchiks, is how strike a balance between Pakistan's foreign policy interests and the universalism of Islamic compulsions, which Pakistani foreign policy attempts to appease by its deliberations.

Pakistani foreign policy mandarins, but more importantly Pakistani politicians, have to realize that religious universalism; Pakistan's policy imperatives being influenced by Islamic/Muslim thought and ideals are the main reason behind Pakistan's foreign policy failures. Pakistani foreign policy has a schizophrenic tendency in its articulations and lacks a viable raison d' E'tat, because it is confused and fragmented. The creation of Pakistani foreign policy has never been coherent, because it is influenced not only by the foreign office in Islamabad; it is also created by the Inter-Services-Intelligence (the military intelligence of the Pakistani armed forces); the various militant/Islamic jihadi groups, which operate from the soil of Pakistan; domestic political considerations of exiled and discredited politicians (like Benazir Bhutto, Nawaz Sharif and Altaf Hussain) to advance their own domestic interests in Pakistan. Pakistani foreign policy has no raison d' E'tat to pursue, because it has been held hostage to the general sense of confusion prevailing in Pakistani domestic politics.

As mentioned earlier in this article, since a nation's foreign policy is the reflection of its domestic politics, Pakistan suffers from an incoherence of rationality in its foreign policy. The reason, why Pakistan is finding itself increasingly difficult to voice its concerns in the forum of international opinion is, because its domestic political situation hinders all attempts to create a logical foreign policy, which will help the strategic interests of Pakistan instead of undermining them. The reason being that Pakistani options, in its international relations, are held hostage to its commitments to Islamic/Muslim contemplations of its foreign policy.

Pakistani foreign policy, if it wants to reverse its slide into a diplomatic void, will have to start with putting its national politics under the writ of Islamabad and stop being dictated by the various entities, which influence the Pakistani political scene. Pakistan will have to separate the universalism of the Islamic influence from its political discourse; and if that is impossible, it will have to maintain a polite, but firm indifference to the universality of Islam, while it pursues its foreign policy objectives with a cold calculated logic of Realpolitik and its *raison d' E'tat*.

Pakistan should adopt independence in its foreign policy options, by realistically following its interest, when those interests present themselves. It should not narrow or restrict its foreign policy opportunities by making any unnecessary declarations or hinting of support, to another nation or a group, just because of its religious obligations. It should judge its foreign policy options on the basis of the uniqueness of the opportunity and should not be guided by appeals to a religious brotherhood or by a devotion to the cause of religion.

In this sense, the activities of the various Islamic militant/jehadi groups have to be curtailed, because they are, by their actions, creating the impression that Pakistani foreign policy is harboring and supporting destabilizing influences. The regime of international relations frowns upon disruptions in international affairs. Pakistani will never be able to effectively reverse its diplomatic isolation and end it unless it is seen as stabilizing, instead of a destabilizing, force in the world. Since it seems to the international community that Pakistan has no writ of authority over its own territory to stop the activities of these groups, the international opinion has opted to put a cordon sanitairE' around Pakistan in guise of international sanctions. The idea behind this international action is to limit Pakistan's destabilizing influence in international affairs. Hence, Pakistan in order to end its international isolation will have to implement a regime, which lessens the specter of political disunity and religious/ethnic sectarianism in Pakistan. Religious sectarianism has been the bane of Pakistani foreign policy, because it has been chiefly responsible for internal political fragmentation threatening the Pakistani polity. Pakistan will have to introduce harsh, even draconian, measures to stem tide of religious and ethnic intolerance, which is manifesting itself in Pakistan. In an ominous sense, Pakistan will have to cross the proverbial Rubicon and strictly enforce the rule of the law and restore the traditional writ of the state's authority.

However, Pakistan will be faced with an acute dilemma once it embarks on this path towards national renaissance. Pakistan is already under a host of international sanctions due its failure to have a democratic system of government and this course of action will only worsen Pakistan's lot in the world. Pakistan's ability to get the periodic infusions of international monetary aid, to keep its anemic economy from breathing its last, depends on its ability to restore democracy in the shortest time possible. This is the challenge confronting the Pakistani foreign policy presently: how to satisfy the demands of the international community while resorting to non-democratic means to restore the writ of the state in Pakistani civil society.

The irony of the matter is that if Pakistan tries to re-establish its writ of authority through democratic means, it is destined for failure, because domestic politics in Pakistan are averse to the idea of a plurality of political opinions. On the other hand, if Pakistan reverts to desperate policies to restore its writ – policies lacking any vestiges of a democratic practice, it will merely succeed in isolating itself more in the affairs of the world. Pakistan domestic policies, which is reflective of its foreign policy confusion, is in an unenviable position, because religious/provincial/ethnic intolerance is destroying Pakistan as a nation state and only policies of intolerance, to stamp out the evil of ethnic and religious sectarianism, by a strong willed government apathetic to the democratic sensibilities can save Pakistan from its own past misdeeds.

This dilemma confronting the effective articulation of the Pakistani foreign policy is only an auxiliary to the major problem confronting Pakistan. The recent change of directions in the Pakistani foreign policy towards the issues of reviving Pakistan's sagging economic fortunes is overtly dependent on its ability to ensure a sense of political stability in its domestic affairs; stability that will attract and keep foreign investments in Pakistan.

Consequently, like a reoccurring nightmare, Pakistani foreign policy's ability to project the interests of Pakistan are directly proportional to its domestic problems and unless Pakistan restores a semblance of a credible law and order environment domestically, Pakistani foreign policy will be clueless as how to project Pakistan in a positive light on the international scene. It would be of great of help to Pakistan if its foreign policy desists from policies of Islamic universalism and stops trying to present Pakistan as the last remaining champion of Muslim/Islamic moral values in the world. Pakistan should, instead, base its policies on the precepts of Realekonomik “ economic realism and pursue only those foreign policy objectives, which puts the sovereign economic interests of the Pakistani state before all other considerations.

Therefore, the Pakistani foreign policy, but more importantly the nation of Pakistan, has to settle the debate concerning its *raison d' ˆatre* “ is it an Islamic or a secular state. Pakistani foreign policy will be nothing more than an institutionalized set of well documented mishaps unless its answers this question; an answer that will lend coherence to its interests and objectives on the international scene. The world will not respect Pakistan, as a nation-state, unless the Pakistanis learn to respect themselves first. The question is do the Pakistanis know who they are themselves and do they have the courage and the confidence to tell the world what and who they really are and what they believe in?

Source: <http://www.ravimagazine.com/issues-with-pakistani-foreign-policy-by-f-r-khan/>

An ill-educated Judiciary | OpEd

The Chief Justice of Pakistan, Justice Anwar Zaheer Jamali, has hit several nails regarding the education debate squarely on the head. He was speaking at a conference on judicial education in Karachi and he did not mince his words. The judiciary lacked able and competent judges as a direct result of having come through an education system that was “obsolete and outdated”. It is today difficult to find competent judges because of the inherent flaws in the basic education system. As a consequence, the judiciary is divided into two segments, one having a strong educational background and the other populated by people who had joined the legal profession having failed in other career options. It used to be said that teaching was the last resort of those that failed or were mediocre educationally, and the CJ has just added the legal profession to the national pool of second-and-third best.

This is a sobering admission, but as has been pointed out in these columns many times, given the failure to invest in education at every level, and such investment as there is being insufficient to raise standards, it is inevitable that a poorly-educated workforce is going to be the end result. This is reflected not only in the legal profession, but across every strata of society, and grand talk of Pakistan joining the ‘Knowledge Economy’ in the near future is mere smoke and mirrors. The CJ lamented the fact that perhaps a majority of judges had poor English, the lingua franca of international legal systems. He pointed out the high failure rate of those seeking appointment as judge because of their poor English proficiency — yet that is but a part of the problem. Applicants are handicapped by their poor baseline, secondary and higher education, and not just poor English — they have poor everything and for that they cannot be blamed. The state failed them over their entire span in the public education system. The failure of the education system is systemic and goes to the heart of the question as to why Pakistan is not more developed than it is.

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Source: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1100056/an-ill-educated-judiciary/>

'Relationship Between Pakistan and United States is Imbalanced'

| Raza Khan

ISLAMABAD: Senate Chairman Raza Rabbani on Wednesday termed the relationship between Pakistan and United States as imbalanced and expressed concern at US' tilt towards India.

"Bilateral relationship between US and Pakistan seems to be driven by giving priority to US national security interests in the region rather those of Pakistan", Rabbani observed while chairing a Senate session.

He added that he has great respect for the US Congress and congressmen, but as a parliamentarian he has serious concerns over bilateral ties between Islamabad and Washington.

Referring to US' tilt towards India in recent years, Rabbani stated that US has an agreement with India on civil nuclear cooperation, but refuses to offer Pakistan a similar deal, casting doubt on Pakistan's utility for the US at a time when major combat operations have winded down in Afghanistan.

"Chairman Foreign Affairs Committee of the Congress is reported to have said that one of the reasons for the blockage of assistance for F-16s is due to Indian concerns," added the Senate chairman.

"US has no respect for Pakistani courts and laws, as was witnessed in the Raymond Davis case, and which can now be seen in the case of Shakil Afridi."

Rabbani also expressed reservations that US did not hold court martial of its officers and men who according to their own inquiry are responsible for the bombing of a hospital in Afghanistan, which killed women and children.

Sartaj Aziz, advisor to the prime minister on foreign affairs, also supported the reservations of chairman Senate.

Pakistan on Monday had raised the unresolved issue of F-16 sale to Pakistan and expressed concern with the visiting commander of US Central Command (Centcom) General Joseph Votel.

Secretary Defence Gen (r) Alam Khattak had reiterated Pakistan's need for the F-16 jets, and impressed upon the visiting Centcom commander the jet's utility in the war against terror.

'Pakistan has not taken enough action'

Pakistan had earlier reached an understanding with the US for buying eight F-16 planes. Under the deal, Pakistan was required to pay about \$270m from its national funds. The US was supposed to provide the rest from its Foreign Military Financing (FMF) fund.

Pakistan has conveyed to the US that it does not have the money to buy F-16 jets from its resources and has cautioned that if the stalemate over funding is not resolved it may consider buying some other fighter aircraft to meet its needs.

Among the key reasons behind the Congressional hold are concerns that Pakistan has not taken enough action against the Haqqani network; jail sentence for Dr Shakeel Afridi — the physician who had cooperated with the US in tracking Osama bin Laden; and fears about Pakistani nuclear programme. .

Source:<http://www.dawn.com/news/1257696/relationship-between-pakistan-and-united-states-is-imbalanced>

Pakistan's Cultural and Public Diplomacy | Editorial

Pakistan's UN mission recently organised a cultural festival of ideas for the first time in the history of foreign office in New York, and it aimed to promote Pakistan's diverse cultural aspects including arts and literature. Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the UN Dr Maleeha Lodhi as the keynote speaker stressed upon countering xenophobia through cultural exchanges and people-to-people contact. This step by Pakistan's UN Mission is a commendable effort in battling the some of the biases towards Pakistan in some international circles. Such programmes are part of a wider global campaign initiated by the foreign office, which has instructed major diplomatic stations to ensure effective cultural and public diplomacy in host countries.

A combination of cultural and public diplomacy is not only a powerful tool that can improve public image but can also help bring economic investment and tourism opportunities. Pakistan has been in negative limelight for a number of years owing to security challenges, but recent improvements and a team of influential diplomats such as Dr Lodhi in New York and Jauhar Saleem in Berlin has been able to pursue effective diplomatic measures to curb xenophobia to a certain extent.

The Berlin mission has been quite proactive in promoting Pakistan's culture along with interacting with public officials and university students recently. Not only this, it has also hosted regular receptions including a grand ceremony for Pakistan Day in March 2016 where 600 guests from Berlin's diplomatic and government circles were in attendance. Such interactions are positive and much needed, as they actually help improve Pakistan's perception as a peaceful and friendly state.

The automobile giant Audi has recently started a feasibility study for constructing a car assembly plant in Karachi, and the real credit goes to the Berlin Pakistan Mission for making it happen under Pakistan's new auto policy.

However, it also needs to be understood that Pakistan needs to up the ante for effective lobbying measures in countries such as the United States where India has almost overshadowed Pakistan. Pakistani diplomats and other concerned officials should come up with a strategy to develop close ties with powerful think tanks and political elites of certain host countries. Missions based in Berlin, New York, Beijing, London, Manama and other areas are already working day and night for projecting a positive image of the country, but there is a long way to go for rectifying past mistakes of certain governments that led to an abysmal situation for Pakistan's short and long-term foreign policy goals.

The London Pakistan Mission has also remained very proactive, and there was a time when students' community was also brought under one umbrella for soft diplomacy in the United Kingdom. A student organisation in London, the National Union of Pakistani Students and Alumni, was set up under Dr Lodhi's watch almost a decade ago for such purposes, and it was quite successful in bringing young British and Pakistani professionals together. Such measures are not replicated in other host countries, and Pakistan government should pursue them for developing strong relations with other states for long-run stability. The role of Pakistani diplomatic community is laudable for pursuing soft diplomacy in the form of cultural and public ties, but some additional steps are still required for meeting the desired goals that shall likely take some years sans any major hindrance.

Source:<http://dailytimes.com.pk/editorial/14-May-16/pakistans-cultural-and-public-diplomacy>

Playing the Devil's Advocate | Hassam Khan

The Federal Public Service Commission (FPSC) has been under recurring fire from all 'hopefuls' aspiring to join the government service. It is constantly criticised for 'unfair' assessment of applicants, which are conducted predominantly through written competitive examinations and interviews. Such charges are accompanied by allegations of corruption, incompetence, nepotism and thus, failure to exercise proper merit. For those who are unaware, the FPSC is an autonomous statutory body which administers the recruitment of fresh talent and human resource to the federal government for employment in BS-16 and above. In other words, the commission is the leading public HR organisation that specialises in the provision of quality — the 'notorious bureaucrats' — to the state machinery that manages the affairs of government. It is perhaps best identified with conducting the annual CSS competitive examination.

Before we begin, take a note of the widely held notions. Logic 1: The FPSC is corrupt. Corruption leads to incompetence. Therefore, the FPSC is incompetent. Logic 2: The FPSC is incompetent. Incompetence leads to the death of merit. Therefore, the FPSC kills merit... or many other adjectives to describe the sorry state of affairs. While this logic makes sense, it is utterly unfair to the FPSC. And while the premise may validate its conclusion, it is more important to question the 'truth' of the premise itself. Admittedly, there are flaws in the methods of recruitment but it is equally important to give the devil his due. The onus of such 'incompetence' does not entirely lie on the FPSC but stems from other 'significant' factors — conveniently downplayed and left out — which bear on the quality of its operations.

Acknowledging the efforts for reforms is perhaps the least one can cede to the commission. A glance into the reform initiatives indicate appreciation of organisational inadequacies by the FPSC internally and reflect on its efforts for their resolution — the efforts of which many deny the existence. These administrative problems range from the long delays in handling of individual cases to the assessment of examination scripts, from the dilapidated conditions of examination centres to the publication of final merit lists, from minimum qualifications to age criteria and so on. The FPSC has also been subjected to immense criticism for being unable to assess 'rightly' the eligibility of candidates. You guessed it right. Such criticisms are hurled mostly by those who end up unsuccessful in the course of selection. You can't blame them for objecting to such 'unfair' treatment. Perhaps it is right to blame the FPSC for being thorough, no? One wonders if their thoughts on the matter would be different had the results turned out differently.

The FPSC can only table the proposals for reform, leaving them at the discretion of political whim. It has done that many times over, only for these proposed reforms to gather dust in the establishment division. Moreover, the FPSC is led by seasoned bureaucrats, who having a keen knowledge of the problems within and beyond any political control, invest their efforts in taking corrective measures. It has also been facing financial constraints but continues to provide services to the best of its abilities, despite the lack of resources. But never mind that. It's okay to blame it for following procedure. It's okay to blame it for not revising examination fee. Let's blame it for choosing the best 'few' in the interest of our country. Let's blame it for the prevailing political lethargy, which is actually responsible for the progressive decline of its service quality. After all, we have to blame the FPSC for everything. The problem is more political than organisational. The FPSC cannot be blamed for the inadequacies and incompetence of the politicians. The screening test for CSS is a case in point, which would effectively have led to the screening of serious candidates for the process. That alone would have helped address the better part of the problem of delay in the process. But no, we didn't like that either. We protested; we detested the notion of making the system better, more transparent and 'fairer'. Our own outcry led to the disapproval of something that was meant to be of service to the very candidates who venture for a race to the civil service.

Perhaps we should take time off from besmirching an organisation of known integrity, and figure what it is we actually want. We disapprove of inaction but we also disapprove of reforms. Furthermore, it would also help to address our own shortcomings than to criticise others for our failures. Thank God we've spared the FPSC the blame for the mediocrity of our schooling system.

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Source: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1103419/playing-the-devils-advocate/>

'India Might Not Be Able to Defend Itself From Pakistani Missiles' | Baqir Sajjad Syed

ISLAMABAD: A nuclear expert from Moscow says despite heavy investments in developing anti-ballistic missile systems, India may not be able to fully defend itself in a conflict from strikes by Pakistani missiles.

“Even in 10 years and with the huge budgets that India plans to spend on the development of nuclear weapons and capabilities, it is difficult to imagine it will be able to defend its territory from possible strikes from Pakistan in case of conflict,” said Petr Topychkanov, a senior researcher at the Carnegie Moscow Centre’s Non-Proliferation Programme.

Talking about ‘Non-Proliferation and Strategic Stability in South Asia: A Russian Perspective’ at the Strategic Vision Institute (SIV) which is an Islamabad-based think tank specialising in nuclear issues, Mr Topychkanov said that despite largescale cooperation between India and Israel for the development of a ballistic missile defence system and Indian efforts for acquiring S-400 defence systems from Russia, “India is very far from developing any system that could effectively defend itself from a Pakistani missile”.

Last Sunday India tested an Advanced Air Defence (AAD) interceptor missile and is working on developing a multi-layer ballistic missile defence system and Pakistan has expressed concerns over the test.

It is feared that the development of anti-ballistic missile systems may give Indian strategists a false sense of security when contemplating military action against Pakistan with the belief that they can take care of an incoming missile.

The possession of such a system could also increase pre-emption tendencies among Indian military planners. Pakistan experts also feel that with the short missile flight time between India and Pakistan, it will be impossible for intercepting incoming missiles. Talking about India’s candidature for the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) Mr Topychkanov said the world will be cautious about India.

“The nuclear waiver given to Indian became a very important part of the lesson for the international community because Delhi did not give a lot in exchange, it didn’t change policies and approaches,” he said.

When it was getting the waiver from NSG following an India-US Civilian Nuclear Agreement, India had committed that it will separate its civilian and military nuclear facilities in a phased manner, place civil nuclear facilities under International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards, sign and adhere to IAEA’s additional protocol, continue its unilateral moratorium on nuclear testing, work with the US for the conclusion of the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT), refrain from the transfer of enrichment and reprocessing technology to states that do not have them and support international efforts to limit their spread, introduce comprehensive export control legislation to secure nuclear material and adhere to the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) and NSG guidelines.

Mr Topychkanov said it would not be the same this time because India will have to show “serious progress in relations with IAEA, UN and the international nuclear community”.

Meanwhile, also claiming to have sound credentials for becoming an NSG member, Pakistan won rare acknowledgement from the US for its “significant efforts to harmonise its strategic trade controls with those of the NSG and other multilateral export control regimes” on Tuesday at a meeting of the Pak-US Security, Strategic Stability, and Nonproliferation (SSS&NP) Working Group.

Talking about Russia’s policy for strategic stability in South Asia, the Mr Topychkanov said Moscow is interested in regional strategic stability and is working on avoiding crisis in the area.

He said despite longstanding strategic partnership with India, Russia was developing relations with both Islamabad and Delhi.

SVI President Dr Zafar Iqbal Cheema expressed concern about the deteriorating strategic balance in the region because of India’s acquisition of conventional and nuclear weapons and said such developments seriously impact Pakistan’s interests.

Published in Dawn, May 19th, 2016

Gushing on Pakistan's Water | Reema Shaukat

Pakistan is a God gifted country with plenty of resources particularly water which is in abundance but it is becoming scarce due to politics played over it by local and international players. Climatic change is also one of leading factor which is effecting water resources. With the approaching hot summers, lack of water is definitely going to muddle situation for normal livelihood of Pakistanis. Water scarcity, shortage of electric supply and later monsoon rains and it's after effects are always troublesome for common man. But history suggests that water politics between India and Pakistan is partition old and since then dispute over water is never seriously taken up and seems Pakistan is always at suffering end.

Pakistan, in initial years after independence faced lot of problems particularly in agriculture because of stoppage of water by India. As the major rivers flowing towards Pakistan originate from India, dispute and sharing over water always came up issue for Pakistan because of Indian stubbornness. To overcome problems an Indus Water Treaty was signed between India and Pakistan with the help of World Bank in 1960. Apparently it seemed that this agreement will put an end to water issue between two neighbours but with passage of time it is observed that this treaty is often violated by India and it causes serious water shortages for the Pakistan.

Before independence British constructed canal system to irrigate the area which is now modern day Pakistan. Partition left that system dependent on India for supply of water to Pakistan. According to Indus Water Treaty, water that flows into river Indus will be shared between the two countries but as the tributaries of Indus River originate in India, it is always playing politics on distribution of water to Pakistan. Before Indus Water Treaty, distribution of water was made on an ad hoc basis. Following the treaty usage of three eastern offshoots of rivers Sutlej, Beas and Ravi were given to India while three western rivers tributaries Chenab, Jhelum and the Indus were approved for Pakistan. All of these six rivers flow through Kashmir which is bone of contention between two South Asian neighbours. Pakistan therefore depends on India for its water security.

Pakistan is concerned by Indian plans of making hydro power projects in Indian occupied Kashmir. According to Pakistan, India violated the terms and conditions of Indus Water Treaty many times by constructing dams and planning of more construction of hydro power projects thereby gaining full control on the waters of western rivers. India in order to sabotage Pakistan economically often generates water projects despite settlements through Indus Water Treaty.

In 1984 India started building Wullar Barrage on River Jhelum in IJK. In mid 90s India again violated IWT by construction of Baghliar Dam on River Chenab. In 2005, Pakistan pursued the World Bank's help to stop construction of the Baglihar dam. Although WB allowed India to go ahead with the venture after a few adjustments, yet it did not license the interruption of the agreed quota of water flow to Pakistan. Indian decision to construct two hydro power projects called Kishanganga on River Neelum are again violation of Indus Water Treaty. India is taking undue advantage in construction of Kishanganga and Ratle hydro power projects on western tributaries.

Indus Water Commission has also raised concerns on construction of dams by India in occupied territory of Kashmir. Indian is gaining favour on Kishanganga project (330MW) which is at final stage of construction. This dam is designed to divert water from the Kishanganga River to a power plant in the River Jhelum basin and located 5km north of Bandipore in Occupied Kashmir. Ratle project (850MW) is located at River Chenab and it would take one and half year for completion. If India manages to construct Ratle project on river Chenab, it is going to pose serious threat to irrigation in Punjab and Sindh provinces of Pakistan. Ratle project is designed in a way that it is going to reduce flow of River Chenab by 40 percent at the site of head Marala.

India has plans to generate 22,000MW from rivers in Occupied Kashmir till 2022. So far India is ahead of Pakistan in constructing dams. It has built 330 MW project of Dalhasti, 450 MW project on Baghliar and now near completion are its Kishanganga and Ratle hydropower projects. On River Neelum that joins the Jhelum River in Pakistan, India completed Uri-1, Uri-II hydropower projects. Apart from these big projects it also made Nimmo Bazgo and Chattak hydropower projects in occupied area. Pakistan has also raised concern on three other projects of India on River Chenab which include Paka Dul, a project of 1,000 MW, Miyar 120 MW and Lower Kalnai project of 48MW.

Somehow it is observed that Pakistani authorities and officials are not showing seriousness on Indian designs of Water terrorism against Pakistan. This attitude will definitely encourage India for its moves against Pakistan and will effect Pakistan's stance on water resources badly. The delay in making approach to World Bank to resolve dispute between two countries and asking for appointment of neutral party is favoring India and Pakistan losing its position. Therefore there is a need to make urgent call to concern authorities so that India be stopped from moving forward on construction of dams on Pakistan's share of water.

Indus Water Commission itself has raised concerns on construction of dams by India and termed it as violation to Indus Water Treaty. It also announced arbitrary party to

resolve dispute but laziness is seen on behalf of Pakistani officials. There is a dire need that Pakistan should take stand on its water resources as soon as possible so that India be stopped from water terrorism. Pakistan must also work on steady basis to construct more dams to overcome problems related to water scarcity and power generation.

— The writer works for Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies, a think tank based in Islamabad.

Quality Of Democracy This Year Still Reeling After Turbulent 2014: PILDAT Report

LAHORE (Staff Report) – The quality of democracy in Pakistan in 2015 has seen minor improvements, but has still struggled to reach the highs of 2013 after a turbulent 2014, according to a report released by PILDAT late on Tuesday.

In addition to the weakening writ of the civilian government and the growing role of the military in forming policies and taking decisions, the report expresses concern over the lack of improvement in the performance of the provincial and federal legislatures, especially the lack of priority afforded to its sessions by government ministers, including the Prime Minister, and opposition leaders, such as Imran Khan.

The report also notes that speedy and economical access to justice remains a major problem, as evinced by the increasing popularity of informal “Sharia” courts in major cities and the continual pendency of cases across most district-level courts. It also criticizes the lack of reform in the civilian court system during the first of the two-year period granted for the operation of military courts under the 21st Constitutional Amendment.

However, the report commends the superior judiciary for pushing through the most significant development for the quality of democracy this year: the holding of Local Government Elections.

While the report presents an encouraging outlook on the growth of the electronic and print media in terms of reach, it expresses concern over new forms of media control by the ‘establishment’ and various business interests.

The report also criticizes the National Accountability Bureau’s abdication of responsibility in seeing mega-corruption cases against the rich and powerful to their conclusion. These include cases against the Prime Minister, Chief Minister of the Punjab, former premiers, ministers and bureaucrats.

Source: <http://en.dailypakistan.com.pk/pakistan/quality-of-democracy-this-year-still-reeling-after-turbulent-2014-pildat-report/>

Chabahar: Indian Strategic Maneuvering | Dr Muhammad Khan

Sequel to signing of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in April 2015, India fostered its drive for completion of Iranian Port in Chabahar. The project started in 2003, but lingered on and later owing to international sanctions on Iran; India almost abandoned it until 2013. In November 2013, Pakistan handed over the Gwadar Port to Chinese Overseas Ports Holding Company Ltd (COPHCL) for further development and operationalisation. This development promoted India and it started consulting Iranian officials to re-start the construction of the port. Chabahar is located approximately 150 km from the Pakistani deep-sea port, Gwadar. In a way, its development by India was in strategic competition of Gwadar.

In a bid to start construction of the Chabahar port, India even ignored the US warnings, as Iran was still under sanction over its nuclear programme until 2015. In December 2013, Indian officials collaborated with Iranian and Afghan officials for a trilateral trade and transit agreement, with Chabahar Port as the pivot. Indeed, after its failure to get a transit trade route via Pakistan (New Delhi-Lahore-Kabul) India convinced Afghan Government to reduce its dependence on Pakistan by having an alternative route for its global and regional trade.

After Indian lobbying, Kabul felt that, “Chabahar Port could be valuable destination to Afghan businessmen to conduct their trade and commerce relations easily without facing hurdles and that, the Chabahar Port has major significance to Afghan businessmen as compare to other ports.” It is worth mentioning that, India worked on this project much earlier and even constructed a highway in Afghanistan. This Highway-Delaram–Zaranj is also called, as Route 606, has 220 km length and connects Delaram (border city of Afghanistan) to Zaranj (Capital of Nimruz province of Afghanistan). Indian Border Roads Organisation (BRO) of India has constructed this highway at the cost of 100 USDs from 2005 to 2009. The highway will be connected with Chabahar on one-side and Central Asian states on the other side.

In fact, through Iranian port, Chabahar, India gets easy access overland route to Afghanistan and Central Asia. In Afghanistan, India has made investment in the field of economy, security cooperation and social sectors to have ingress and securing its strategic and economic interests. Whereas, the CPEC impelled India to faster completion of the Chabahar Port, it is widely recognised that, India did play a key role in the brokering of nuclear deal between Iran and US, formally between P5 plus one

and Iran. India has its regional ambitions and US has its global agenda including containment of China through India. Then U.S is in the process of making new allies in the Middle East. Indian strategic and economic compulsions suit U.S and surely U.S compulsions best exploited by India. Indeed, there are stakes and complementarities of both countries at regional and global level. Today, Iran has a clear leaning towards US and India, which disturbed the traditional power balance in the Middle East. The Saudi led GCC countries are upset over this US shift. On its part, India is gained even in the Arab monarchs apart from Iran. Precisely, one can say that, India has been the net beneficiary of entire developments in the larger Asian region and US has been at its back throughout.

Indian Prime Minister is visiting Tehran next week and is likely to sign a number of agreements and MoUs. Among these, Chabahar Agreement will be an agreement of strategic nature. During the visit of Indian External Affairs Minister to Tehran early this month, it was through debated at the level of foreign ministers. This will be an agreement between Iran, India and Afghanistan. Officials of these three countries have now finalised the parameters of this trilateral agreement; “Chabahar Agreement”. The agreement will “allow India access to Afghanistan via the strategically located Iranian port of Chabahar, which sits on the Gulf of Oman.”

Upon signing of the agreement, Indian goods will reach Afghanistan without having to pass through Pakistan. New Delhi is optimistic that after this agreement and finalisation of the Chabahar Port, there will be greater regional connectivity and India will have a greater say over Tehran and Kabul. Surely, through the operationalisation of Chabahar, India and other regional countries will try down play the significance of Gwadar port. India is otherwise promoted sub-nationalism and terrorism in Balochistan to destabilize the Pakistan and to create hurdles in the completion of CPEC, the economic and strategic corridor for both Pakistan and China.

New Delhi is creating an impression that, Chabahar Agreement will “contribute to economic growth of Afghanistan and facilitate better regional connectivity, including between India and connections to Afghanistan and central Asia.” India is also likely to invest in the construction of 1380 km railway-line connecting Chabahar with Zahedan and Mashhad. India will provide \$400 million of steel rails for this railway linkage.

Contours of the Chabahar Agreement were conceived in 2013 and have been debated and negotiated between Indian and Afghan officials.

Earlier, this agreement was also discussed and agreed upon between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Afghan President Ashraf Ghani in December 2015. Iranian President Hassan Rouhani has sought massive Indian investment of \$8 billion in the development of infrastructure projects and wider economic development and growth of Iran.

The Chabahar Agreement is an indirect Indian strategy of isolating Pakistan; strategically and economically. After the agreement Afghan trade and logistic through Pakistan will reduce reasonably. Iran is otherwise more biased towards India. Rather having an equation and larger understanding between Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan, the emerging trends are anti-Pakistan. On the part of Pakistan, there is no strategic planning among its political elites, who largely protest their corruption and ill-gotten wealth, rather the national interests, the people's mandate. Time is running out and the national leadership must get back to its true role and take measures for safeguarding the national interest of Pakistan and in fact the future generation of Pakistan, rather two families. The Chabahar Agreement will seriously affect the implementation of CPEC and Gwadar port operationalisation.

— The writer is International Relations analyst based in Islamabad.

Foreign Policy Challenges Confronting Pakistan | Talat Masood

The ebb and flow of US-Pakistan relations have historically been based on expediency and thus are primarily transient in nature. They are once again coming under serious strain due to the unfolding events in Afghanistan, which highlight the great divergence that exists regarding how to deal with the Afghan Taliban and the Haqqani network. The release of Shakil Afridi, who has been jailed for spying for the Americans and clandestinely assisting US efforts in locating Osama bin Laden, also remains a sore point. Pakistan considers him a traitor whereas he is lauded by the Americans for being a critical source in locating the whereabouts of a global and most wanted terrorist. The US also views the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and Pakistan's growing economic, defence and strategic convergence with China suspiciously. The strong Indian lobby in the US has been able to successfully prejudice members of both houses of Congress against Pakistan, which is creating hurdles to the sale of F-16s and other military hardware. Pakistan is also under pressure from the US to restrict the development of intermediate-range missiles, stop or reduce the production of fissile material as well as there being concerns over other nuclear and military related issues.

But when it relates to India, the US generally supports or at best looks the other way at its burgeoning nuclear and conventional weapons development. India's nuclear-armed and nuclear-propelled submarines have brought about a transformational change in the strategic landscape of the Indian Ocean. The plan to deploy a functional ballistic missile defence system with both low and high altitude interceptor missiles when it materialises would be another significant breakthrough with serious implications for Pakistan and the region. In addition, the development of the high-energy laser system, codenamed Kali, is a potential candidate for future induction although it is still years away from reaching the production phase. India takes advantage of the potential threat from China to justify these significant nuclear and conventional build-ups and remain close to the US, but in essence these weapons pose a greater threat to Pakistan. They could downgrade Pakistan's first and second strike capabilities, bringing us even closer to China.

” Nothing would be better for both Afghanistan and Pakistan than to resolve their differences peacefully through direct negotiations in a spirit of give and take. This should be the rational approach for winning mutual confidence and reducing outside interference

The differences with the US on our Afghan policy are even more serious. The Pakistan military maintains that we remain engaged and tolerate the Haqqanis and the Taliban leadership because they are a reality and a potent asymmetric force existing in our neighbourhood with which we have to deal with. Furthermore, we are fully engaged in fighting the TTP and other insurgents, and cannot create more enemies. We also maintain that we have only limited influence over the Afghan Taliban and cannot push them any further. With US satellites hovering over our territory, we cannot convince the world that the insurgent leaders are in Afghanistan if they happen to remain in hideouts in Fata or Balochistan or even in Karachi. By making claims that are contrary to facts, we are compromising our credibility and end up being accused of doublespeak. The drone attack in which Mullah Mansoor was killed poses fresh problems not only for Pakistan-Afghan, but also for Pakistan-US relations. The recent revelation that Mansoor may have been living in Karachi has deeply embarrassed our position and is likely to provide our detractors reason to malign us further. The main grievance of the Afghans is that the Taliban leadership draws strength and sustenance from being based in a protected environment in Pakistan. Consequently, it cannot be trusted. As a quid pro quo, they are playing the same game with us by giving sanctuary to TTP leaders. The US, Iran and India are more supportive and sympathetic towards the Afghan position. Regrettably, the more the Afghan government gets alienated from Pakistan, the greater it leans towards India, preventing us further from taking any decisive action against the Taliban. Thus Afghan-Pakistan relations are caught in a vicious cycle and have been unable to extricate from it. In this scenario, the beneficiary has been the Taliban, which had expanded their reach in several provinces of Afghanistan, including Kunduz in the north and Herat in the west.

Mullah Mansoor's death will surely be a major setback for the Taliban. It could lead to a power struggle and it may be sometime before a new leadership emerges. If the Taliban fragment, the Afghan government could exploit this to their advantage. Experience, however, shows that the Taliban have great resilience and can bounce back with renewed zeal. The drone attacks also demonstrates another aspect of the conflict, that the Taliban will never be allowed to militarily overrun Afghanistan as long as US and Nato support is available. Some analysts who remain critical of US-Afghan policy are of the view that Mansoor's assassination has sabotaged prospects for peace. What they fail to recognise is that Mansoor and his coterie were not inclined towards a peaceful settlement at least in the near future.

For Pakistan, the current scenario throws up a fresh challenge on dealing with the emerging Taliban leadership and balancing this with Afghan and American expectations. Unsurprisingly, our subdued initial reaction both at the official and public

levels could be indicative that the goals of the Afghan Taliban are not necessarily those of Pakistan itself and that we are gradually trying to distance from them. Recent border management issues also reinforce Pakistan's policy. Nothing would be better for both Afghanistan and Pakistan than to resolve their differences peacefully through direct negotiations in a spirit of give and take. This should be the rational approach for winning mutual confidence and reducing outside interference. In any case, with regional and global pressures, this evolution has to come sooner or later. The question here is how those forces in Pakistan that saw the Afghan Taliban as an asset and as a preferred means to protect our interest in Afghanistan would perceive this evolution in the future.

With these compelling foreign policy challenges, the prime minister will be well advised to give priority to appointing a full-time foreign minister. He should activate the committee on national security and foreign policy, benefit from consulting the cabinet and take parliament into confidence on major foreign policy issues.

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Gender Wage Gap | Zeenat Hisam

Hope is the thing with feathers — perches in the soul — and sings the tune ... and never stops. — Emily Dickinson

THE women of Pakistan keep on struggling on sheer grit and eternal hope but if you glance at the global data you would laugh at their tenacity and this ‘thing with feathers’ called ‘hope’: we live at the bottom of the pit when it comes to the gender gap.

According to the Global Gender Gap Index, 2015, Pakistan stands at the bottom — 144 out of 145 countries in the world. The index, prepared annually by the World Economic Forum, examines the gap between men and women covering four fundamental aspects: economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment.

The highest possible score is one (equality) and the lowest zero (inequality). Pakistan earned 0.559. But don’t sulk. Take this moment to rejoice at the status our Bangladeshi sisters have achieved: Bangladesh ranks 64 out of 145 with a score of 0.704. This restrains you from throwing in the ‘religious card’ as a reason for the sad state of affairs in Pakistan.

Let us single out the economic participation of women. You may say, who gives two hoots for economic participation and its indicators (such as the wage gap) when there are a hundred other sordid affairs confronted by women, ranging from inequity in education, skills and health to horrific extremes of sexual violence and social degradation — unless you win the argument that poor economic participation is linked with all other aspects of gender inequality.

Pakistan stands at the bottom of the Global Gender Gap Index 2015.

In the Gender Gap Index, 2015, economic participation and opportunity is counted as a crucial measure of equality, and comprises five aspects: labour force participation, wage equality for similar work, estimated earned income, number of legislators, senior officials, managers, and number of professional and technical workers.

Pakistan is doing poorly in all five: the female labour force participation rate is 22pc versus that for men at 67.8pc; women are paid 23pc less than men for similar work;

women's average monthly income is Rs9,760 compared to men's monthly earnings of Rs15,884, and only 0.3pc women are employed as managers, 6.4pc as professionals and 0.9pc as technical workers (Labour Force Survey 2014-2015).

Since the 2015 Oscar acceptance speech by Patricia Arquette, wage inequality in Hollywood has brought the issue of gender wage gap to the mainstream discourse. Globally, women's average wages are between 4pc to 36pc less than men's. According to a 2014 global dataset, Nordic countries are at the top with the least gap (0-5pc) in men and women's wages. In Europe and the US, the figure is between 15-20pc and in the Asian countries the gap is bigger at 20-25pc.

Gender pay gap is defined as the difference between women's and men's average full-time equivalent earnings expressed as a percentage of men's earnings. The gap between the earnings of men and women is a composite of many factors including the women's level of schooling and skills, social stereotypes, motherhood, unpaid care work or family responsibilities leading to part-time or flexi-work, and direct or indirect discrimination on the basis of sex.

The gender wage gap is divided into two parts: an 'explained' part which is accounted for by variables such as an individual's level of education or skills, and an 'unexplained' component which, according to the International Labour Organisation "...captures what remains after adjusting for these observable characteristics, and, therefore, suggests discrimination in the labour market".

If you scrutinise the five factors of the gender gap score card, you will note that Pakistan ranks 88th among 145 countries when it comes to wage equality for similar work, while Bangladesh stands at 126 and India even lower at 129. I have not come across any research on this aspect. Economists can explain it better.

Perhaps Pakistan's low female participation, compared to India's 33pc and Bangladesh's 58pc, is one of the factors. With the bulk of women working as unpaid employees the number of women in professional jobs and higher positions that bring better remuneration is skewed. The corporate sector does not pay a miserly sum to professional women though the number of women at the top is negligible. Government employees' pay scale from grade one to 21 is the same for both men and women though fewer women make it to grade 22.

What can be done to close the gender gap? The report says that "the closure or continuation of gaps is intrinsically connected to the framework of national policies".

Would our largely male policymakers want to close the gap? According to the World Economic Forum, the global pay gap between men and women is here to stay until another 118 years. So, till then we better keep struggling and nursing the thing with feathers called hope.

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18 Years Of Nuclear Deterrence: Why Pakistan And India Need Dialogue For ConfidenceBuilding Measures | Maimuna Ashraf

This May, the two South Asian nuclear states mark the eighteenth anniversary to the first detonation of their nuclear devices. Pakistan and India celebrates national days in commemoration of Chagai and Pokhran-II respectively that established nuclear deterrence for both states. The explosion of atomic bombs embarked 'overt' nuclearization of South Asia albeit the aspect of nuclear deterrence in the region can be traced back to the pre-nuclearization period when the debates raged with ambiguities regarding their nuclear capabilities.

The strategic stability debate in South Asia had already taken a new dimension when India conducted its so called peaceful nuclear test in 1974. After these tests Pakistan urged Western powers to establish a nuclear-free zone in South Asia, however all such efforts were opposed. In April 1998, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif addressed letters to world leaders, including President Clinton, drawing their attention to India's pronouncements which "connote a giant leap towards fully operationalizing Indian nuclear capability", but these requests were treated indifferently.

India announced two sets of nuclear detonations on May 11 and 13. It was a worrisome and shocking moment for the world especially for Pakistan. Notwithstanding it was the first explosion since the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) opened for signature in 1996 and Indian initiative of nuclear detonation had heavily tilted balance of power towards India in South Asia accompanied with the fear to start a destabilizing arms race between the neighboring states, there was no retaliatory action by the international community against India for violating the established norm of nuclear non-proliferation.

The change in the geostrategic situation of the region, after Indian nuclear tests, was evident in the seventeen days before Pakistan decided to exercise its nuclear option. The additional army divisions were sent into Indian-held Kashmir and Pakistan had been told 'to realize the new realities on the ground' by the then Indian home minister and former BJP president, Mr. Lal Krishan. He warned Pakistan about the government's new pro-active approach to deal firmly with Pakistan in Kashmir. India's entrance in the nuclear club had been declared a decisive step by the Indian policymakers to bring a qualitatively new stage in Indo-Pak relations, particularly in finding a lasting solution to the Kashmir problem. These seventeen days were the most critical in the history of Pakistan. After deliberating various policy options and days of excruciating, Pakistan

finally decided to carry out nuclear tests on May 28 and 30 in response to Indian nuclear explosions. Finally, the agonizing clouds displaced and replaced with the mushroom-shaped smoke. Interestingly, the United Nations Security Council Resolution to condemn the nuclear detonation of two states and US sanctions surfaced only after Pakistan conducted the nuclear tests.

After the nuclear tests by Pakistan and India, the debate on nuclear stability was divided into two groups: nuclear optimists and nuclear pessimists. The optimists maintained that the possession of nuclear weapons by both states would stabilize the region by ensuring nuclear parity and mutual fears of catastrophic destruction. Conversely, the pessimists argued that the miscalculations, misunderstandings and various organizational problems might lead to deterrence failure. In addition they highlighted the destabilizing consequence of nuclear proliferation. Many critics believe that nuclearization had positive impact on the crisis behavior and defends the argument that post nuclearization conflicts between India and Pakistan took place as result of regional tiffs and not as an effect of nuclearization. Moreover, these conflicts did not escalate due to the deterrence effects, potential nuclear escalation and danger of nuclear war.

Recounting to the realities of South Asia, pragmatically the presence of nuclear weapons influenced the strategic decisions in post nuclearization conflicts; Kargil, Operation Prakram and Mumbai attacks. The conventional asymmetry between the two arch rivals, can persuade the conventionally strong to adopt destabilizing measures even in the nuclearized environment. The threat to be retaliated by nuclear weapons prevents the conventionally stronger opponent from using its force and thus prevents the other nuclear power, with less conventional force, from full-scale conventional conquest. Furthermore, the existence of nuclear weapons internationalizes any confrontation between the two states, thus ensures a better resolution than what could be in absence of nuclear weapons.

In recent times, the growing disparity and asymmetry in South Asia is favorable to India but challenging for Pakistan. Nonetheless, the nuclear factor balances the strategic equation in South Asian landscape. Deterrence, as precisely termed, is “the exploitation of a threat without implementing it, or exploiting the existence of weapons without activating them”. Consequently, nuclear weapons are essentially supposed to be the weapons of peace and not war. It is extensively believed that the existence of nuclear weapons restrained Pakistan and India to wage another war after 1971. However, the need of time is that both states should start strategic dialogues to consider Confidence Building Measures (CBM) in order to avoid any misfortune event in

future. This would be significant move in a scenario when Pakistan in response to India is building up its nuclear capabilities to ensure the credibility of its nuclear deterrence. India's doctrinal transformation and ballistic missile defense capabilities, which are rapidly maturing, had indulged Pakistan in miniaturization of warheads. Lately, India's evolving sea-based capabilities is coercing Pakistan to develop full spectrum credible minimum deterrence capability, by having each leg of nuclear triad, to deter all form of aggression.

After eighteen years of deterrence, 28th May reminds the "historic milestone" towards reinforcement and maintenance of Pakistan's deterrence capability. This timely and successful response showed operational preparedness of the Strategic Forces and Pakistan's capabilities to safeguard its security, which should not be undermined. Every year the day recalls that Pakistan's decision to exercise the nuclear option had been taken in the interest of national self-defense, to deter aggression, whether nuclear or conventional. Thus, on 28th May Pakistan completed a landmark journey with triumph, which makes this a historical occasion for all the years to come.

Source:<http://nation.com.pk/blogs/30-May-2016/18-years-of-nuclear-deterrence-why-pakistan-and-india-need-dialogue-for-confidence-building>

The Woes of Pakistani Education | Editorial

The image of Pakistan among the international community is usually tainted with a rhetoric that highlights either its religious bigotry or its export of terrorism. The country is branded as a failed state by many. It is this negative image on the international front that many politicians often hanker to vanquish. Nevertheless, not much has been achieved to implement their much-touted resolves. One significant strategy in this regard — the appointment of key departmental chairs in foreign universities — to this day suffers from administrative delays. The vacant seats in as many as 14 countries under the banner of Urdu and Pakistan Studies, and Quaid-i-Azam and Allama Iqbal Fellowship postulate a very dismal state of Pakistani educational sector.

These chairs, alongside educating foreign students, play a highly critical role in building a positive projection of the country and its societal affairs. However, the administration's inability to appoint such a small number of eligible scholars points towards grave negligence shown by concerned authorities. It is particularly disappointing to observe the presence of these vacant seats despite the legions of PhD researchers produced by the country every year. India, on the other hand, appears to have realised the potential of academia in building its image, and has, hence, appointed 300 Chairs in foreign institutions.

The official selection committee cannot alone, however, be blamed for sticking out a lack of interest towards this initiative. It is also the responsibility of Higher Education Commission to oversee all policies with regard to higher education in Pakistan. Yet again, the institution has not achieved much significant progress in overcoming the throes of the educational sector, even on the domestic front. Only recently was the Commission reprimanded by the Senate Standing Committee on Federal Education and Professional Training on the irregularities in the governance of Hazara University. One particular cause of concern was the university's management in the absence of a functional Vice Chancellor for the past two and a half years. These examples propose a blatant decades-old oblivion of the education crisis by the federal government. The shambolic state of public education should be addressed by the authorities on an immediate basis. Revolutionising the educational reforms is not only required to create a positive image of the Pakistani nation among the global community, but also to cure the country of all its societal as well as economic woes. At present, Pakistan only spends a meagre 2.14 percent of its GDP on developing education. Consequently, it has only been able to achieve a measly 58 percent literacy rate, which is far behind that proposed by the Millennium Development Goals. In addition to reforming the primary

schools in every province, the government should also pay heed towards the underdeveloped institutes of higher learning. Unless a handsome package is not offered by the public universities to hire highly qualified scholars, they will continue to sustain the “brain drain” in their pursuit of a better quality of life. It is high time that the parliament discourses over such legislations, which will initiate capacity-building of the public educational institutes. A very influential first step in this regard can be the appointment of deserving personnel to the vacant Chairs, followed by a pursuit to extend these posts to other foreign universities. Unless a change in the education sector is engineered by the governmental machinery, a change in the increasingly dismal state of Pakistan cannot be effected.

Source:<http://dailytimes.com.pk/editorial/06-May-16/the-woes-of-pakistani-education>

ECONOMY

Is Pak on way to say good-bye to IMF? | Editorial

GLAD tidings continue to pour in about Pakistan's economy, with International Monetary Fund (IMF) recognizing the economic strides and consolidation made by it over the last few years now. It manifests that the country does not need another loan programme, in wake of its enhanced foreign exchange reserves and growth rate.

Other economic indicators are positive with inflation rate standing below four per cent. Chairing a meeting in Islamabad on Friday, Finance Minister Ishaq Dar said, the budget deficit has been brought down to 4.3 percent from 8.8 percent while revenue collection has witnessed a growth of 19 percent this year due to better fiscal management. Indeed, these are healthy signals and if the trend continues on positive note, one can hope that the country will not seek any new IMF loan package to peddle the economy and pay off the loans. The IMF still has to disburse \$1.1 billion under the existing loan package of \$ 6.7 billion before the end of September. Certainly, Pakistan has the resources and the potential to stand on its own feet by making right interventions in the important sectors of economy including textile, agriculture and industries which will not only create many job opportunities for our youth but also enhance our exports which currently stand at paltry \$ 25 billion. To build on the economic gains, what the country especially needs at this point of time is the political stability but it is regrettable that whenever the economy is about to take off, certain elements surface again to harm the interests of the country. This time around Panama disclosures have caused an uproar in the national politics and the Prime Minister did the right thing by offering himself and his family for accountability process and also wrote a letter to the Chief Justice of Pakistan to form a Commission for fair and transparent inquiry into the leaks that also contains the names of many other bigwigs in different realms. Undoubtedly, this matter should be investigated in toto and across the board action should be taken against those found involved in money laundering and illegal transfer of funds abroad as such malpractices have also caused a great harm to our economy. It indeed will be a great service to the nation if this matter of illegal offshore holdings is settled once and for all but at the same time we will ask the opposition parties not to pull government's legs on the matter as it will again bring us to a standstill position. Besides, we will also urge our leaders to shun their extravaganza lifestyle in order to inculcate the same spirit in the common man.

Economic Opportunities for Pakistan | Farhat Ali

Pakistan has significantly benefited from soft oil prices, which account for almost a third of its imports. But the country could not benefit much from this unprecedented windfall and did not manage to achieve the economic growth, as the opportunity offered. For the last three years, the economic growth is hovering around 4 percent.

The World Bank, in its report issued last Thursday, projected Pakistan's GDP growth at 4.5 percent for the current fiscal year against government's target of 5.5 percent. The country's growth rate is expected to rise to 4.8 percent in 2016/17. The growth up to 2019 is also projected to be modest. These projections are quite modest as compared to ambitious figures of GDP presented in the Budget Strategy Paper 2016 by the Ministry of Finance just a few days back.

"The growth outlook for FY 16 remains modest with growth expected to increase slightly to 4.5 percent of GDP in FY 16 from 4.2 percent in FY 15, driven by large scale manufacturing growth of 4.0-4.5 percent and services growth of over 5 percent," said the bank in its report titled "Pakistani's development update: from stability to prosperity".

Much of the country's economic growth is largely on account of external factors such as low oil prices and strong remittances while private and public investments continue to remain low. Remittances of \$9.7 billion in the first half more than compensated for the trade deficit, whereas oil prices effected a 9.1 percent fall in the import bill.

The World Bank report said that Pakistan's expected growth rate remains well below the growth rates of the country's South Asia peers. "A further growth revival will remain contingent on the government," it said.

Pakistan's economic recovery can be best rated as stable and modest. It has not yet embarked on the path of prosperity as it should have been the case in view of many positive and favourable factors which could have made it happen. The country's economy continues to suffer from inherent weaknesses. Exports fell by 11.1 percent in the first half largely due to softer global demands, domestic logistics bottlenecks, a lack of government's export strategy and a laid-back attitude of the public functionaries in Pakistan and the commercial counsellors positioned aboard to facilitate trade.

Country's agriculture growth remains sluggish and is expected to slow down to 2-2.5 percent for 2015-16 as compared to 2.9 percent in 2014-15. Although the services and

large scale manufacturing have recorded growth and are expected to grow by 5 percent and 4-4.5 percent in the current fiscal year, respectively, the small and medium-scale enterprises' (SMEs) growth is sluggish.

Pakistan's urban economy, which accounts for almost half of the GDP, sharply fell 3.0 percent over the last six years due to decline in the industrial growth. The growth rate recorded in the period 2002 to 2008 was 6.5 percent as against 3.5 percent in 2014-15.

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the country continues to be sluggish. Except for some FDI from China on account of the Economic Corridor, FDI from other countries, such as the US and the EU states is drying out and there are no positive signs of its coming back.

Loss-making enterprises in the public sector continue to cause a dent on the national exchequer while the privatisation plan of these units has been rolled back with no alternate strategy to plug the losses.

Pakistan today is positioned much better than it was three years ago. The law and order situation in the country has significantly improved. The global perception of the country is now much better. The local and foreign investors look at Pakistan with more confidence. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor has added new dimensions to Pakistan's strategic and economic alignment with China. The global political and economic dynamics are undergoing a dramatic change and Pakistan is positioned well to cash in on these changes in its favour.

The Central Asia Regional Economic Co-operation (CAREC) programme, under ADP, has undertaken \$1 billion projects in Pakistan since its inception mainly in road infrastructure. On the sidelines of the 49th annual meeting of the ADP last week, ADP's Director General stated that the CAREC initiative is meant to construct economic corridors and \$22 billion was meant only for transport and road sector. Under the initiative of CAREC, Central Asia is on the move. This region is witnessing the rebuilding of ancient transport and trade routes that once connected Euro-Asia. Rich in natural resources the CAREC countries are embarking on a new path of prosperity. Its success will be the defining feature for its leading role in the changing economic and politic dynamics of the world. There is no country better positioned in the region to benefit from this initiative of ADP than Pakistan considering its lead in the region with the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. This corridor will be the only state of art and open land route connecting South Asia to Central Asia. It is in Pakistan's interest to open the corridor for investment by other sources in addition to that from China.

Investors' confidence has improved: The Overseas Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OICCI), a business chamber of foreign and multinational companies, conducts each year a Business Confidence Index (BCI) survey, which is a practice for the last 12 years. Report based on surveys and is sent each year to all the policymakers and stakeholders. A recent BCI survey expressed bullishness and confidence over the growth and sustainability of Pakistan's economy with a note of caution about poor infrastructure, lack of policy implementation, delays in tax refunds, cumbersome procedures and a lack of accountability and slow decision-making processes. The survey identified that real estate and financial services performed the best followed by fast moving consumer goods sector. The survey, with feedback from all over the country and involving nearly 200 foreign and multinational companies, is considered the most comprehensive and reliable document reflecting the business strategies and mindset of these valuable investors.

Pakistan has made progress in restoring macroeconomic stability but much has to be done to put it on a solid economic growth footing. We need to get on this path. There are a number of positive economic indicators such as reduced petroleum product prices, low single-digit inflation, low borrowing rates, opportunities offered by the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, the return of Iran to the international community and ongoing energy and infrastructure projects and a much improved law and order situation has the potential to kick-start this process. The government needs to put its act together.

(The writer is former President Overseas investors Chamber of Commerce and Industry)

Source: <http://www.brecorder.com/articles-a-letters/187:articles/43691:economic-opportunities-for-pakistan/?date=2016-05-07>

‘Pakistan is World’s Seventh Most Restrictive and Protected Economy’ | Abdul Qadir Memon | Hira Fareed

ISLAMABAD: The government deserves praise for bringing stability and discipline to the economy.

The growth outlook for current financial year is at 4.5% as compared to 4.2% in the preceding period. The current account is in a healthy position where in the preceding few months it has shown a surplus compared to deficit. Also, workers’ remittances have shown vigorous trends.

The cynics may like to point out that it was more to the luck of the government than the policies that brought about the ‘economic space’ for the present government.

The fall in the prices of crude oil was a relief to countries like Pakistan that are energy deficient and spend considerable foreign exchange resources on oil.

Moreover, the present government subscribed to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme for accessing credit with stringent conditions that also brought about some semblance of fiscal discipline in the economy.

Least effect on exports

But despite all these efforts, the export sector is lagging behind. It was expected that low interest rates and reduction in energy prices would create a conducive environment for the country’s exports to perform well but current figures do not portray a very optimistic picture.

It is expected that the export figures for current financial year will be 14% less as compared to last year. The policymakers blame it on the global economic downturn due to slowdown in the Chinese economy that brought the commodity prices to downward spiral.

The World Bank, in its latest Pakistan Development Report, has discussed this issue and believes that it has more to do with the structural defects in the economy.

Pakistan’s export competitiveness has diminished due to protectionist policies, poor infrastructure, and high transaction costs for trade. Consequently, Pakistan exports-to-

GDP ratio is declining for the last two decades. It has reduced from 13.5 % in 1995 to 10.5% in 2015. This year it is expected to reach around 10%. Pakistan's overall market share in global trade is also coming down and the country is losing its share at an average of 1.5% annually over the past decade.

Removing structural defects

Pakistan will be required to undertake some bitter policy prescriptions to address structural defects in the economy that would help its export sector improve its competitiveness.

One of the important areas of concern with the experts has been high import tariffs in Pakistan. Like many developing countries nascent protection is dear to the policy makers in Pakistan. In reality, it is limited fiscal space more than the protection of domestic industry that is responsible in contributing to high import tariffs. Pakistan relies considerably for revenue generation by taxing international trade. The share of import taxes to the total revenue collection of Pakistan is as much as 46%.

Pakistan is the world's seventh most restrictive and protected economy, according to Overall Trade Restrictiveness Index compiled by the World Bank. The high tariffs have undermined the potential of Pakistan's domestic industry in integrating with global value chain where global firms have fragmented their manufacturing processes to various geographical locations. According to the World Trade Organisation's (WTO) estimate 35% of global trade is of intermediately and semi-finished goods and high import tariffs erode competitiveness of domestic firms in benefiting from global value chains.

Pakistan has also slipped in the ranking on the ease of doing business indicator. This has created further disadvantages for the export industry in Pakistan and enhanced their transaction costs.

TFA

The other important aspect for enhancing trade competitiveness is the implementation of Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) signed by the WTO members in 2014.

WTO Secretary General Roberto Azvedo recently visited Pakistan and advised the policymakers to take ambitious positions in implementing the TFA provisions that could help Pakistan reduce trade costs as much as 13%. The WTO is of the view that TFA will have a much bigger impact than eliminating the import tariff globally. This would also help countries like Pakistan integrate with the global value chains.

To address the declining exports, the Ministry of Commerce has undertaken a number of initiatives for trade promotion. The recently held Textile Expo Pakistan brought textile buyers from major markets for Business-to-Business collaboration. The Commerce Ministry is also planning road shows in the Central Asian Republics to promote Pakistan's exports to these regions.

The aggressive trade promotion strategy without addressing the structural issues in the economy may not provide sustainable growth.

The writer is a development professional with over 20 years' experience in public and development sectors

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Source:<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1099549/export-competitiveness-addressing-structural-issues/>

Monetary Policy | Editorial

It might seem odd that the State Bank would say “inflation is likely to attain a higher plateau” in the future on the one hand, and yet cut the policy discount rate, even if by a meagre quarter of a percentage point. Nevertheless, the cut is too meagre to count as a meaningful step, and even if inflation is on the rise, this is still a healthy sign given the lows to which it had fallen in 2015. An increase in inflation can be considered healthy when the economy is struggling to recover from years of moribund growth, because it can be a sign of a revival in demand. But the uptick could also come from new revenue measures that a severely cash-strapped government could resort to in the forthcoming budget, or the upward movement of oil prices.

The least convincing part about the monetary policy statement, though, is where it dwells on the state of the economy. Celebrating a revival of growth, led by construction and consumption, ought to be beneath the dignity of an institution entrusted to look out for the medium term, as well as the underlying fundamentals. The ongoing collapse in the farm sector should not be papered over the way the State Bank did, by simply arguing that growth in industry can “salvage some of the lost momentum” from agriculture. Important reforms are needed to make agriculture more productive and less vulnerable to exogenous shocks, and the government should not be allowed to use industrial growth as an excuse for failures in this sector. Likewise in industry, “buoyant growth in construction and improved demand for consumer durables” is hardly something to cheer about, especially in the context of falling exports. But going on to say that these developments are “expected to provide the needed sustainability in growth trajectory and the basis for further improvement in FY17” simply stretches the argument to breaking point. The reserves do paint a positive picture, and the arrival of CPEC projects will surely boost the economy, as the statement points out. But one can only hope that too many eggs are not being put in that basket, given that the reserves growth owes to “favourable developments” and not any reforms, and the benefits of CPEC may or may not be as large or shared as widely as is being anticipated. The State Bank owes us a better description of the economy than this.

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WORLD

Spectre of Nuclear Terror | Umar Waqar

THERE is no doubt that if these mad men ever got their hands on a nuclear bomb or nuclear material, they would certainly use it to kill as many people as possible,” President Obama. The fourth Nuclear Security Summit headed by President Obama ended with announcement of following objectives: Evolving threat and steps that can be taken together to minimize the use of highly-enriched uranium, counter nuclear smuggling and deter and disrupt attempts at nuclear terrorism. The global effort required to prevent nuclear terrorism.

The urgency of the summit can be discerned from the fact that President Obama wanted to leave a legacy of doing substantial work in the field of Nuclear Safety against threat of nuclear terrorism. Is it the guilt of destabilizing the Middle East or something already foreseen by the US establishment? Meanwhile changing landscape of the Middle East has allowed ISIS to expand her operations, it seems to be operating in Arabian Peninsula, Horn of Africa, North Africa and even into mainland Europe.

As the strategic chaos in Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region culminates into more ugly and ruthless domain, the Islamic World and her leadership remains oblivious to the spectre of Nuclear Holocaust. Recent media chatter on possibility of Nuclear weapons falling into the hands of Islamic State were brushed aside by mainstream media in Pakistan and Middle East, however a deep insight into projections of trajectories of the conflict in the MENA region, tells another story.

MENA region stands on the brink of a nuclear holocaust because of following reasons: One, the Iraqi test lab under the supervision of the West and because of selfish motives of the states in MENA has uncovered the ugly head of sectarianism with Shias and Sunnis on each other’s throat; sectarianism has entered the new phase of ‘I will kill you because you are..’ and it is very simple. Two, creation of entities like ISIS in the vacuum left by loss of state authority in Iraq, Syria and Yemen has made vast expanses of spaces and demographic units ungovernable. If we combine these non-governable areas from Libya and Syria to Yemen and Iraq, we can easily form a Disunited States of Arabia (DSA) of more than 40 million people

Three, the two poles of schism in Islamic World, Iran and KSA have neither realized the possibility of a nuclear holocaust nor made any effort to stop the madness of sectarianism. Four, the organizations of collective action within Islamic World like OIC, GCC and the Arab League etc, have no capacity to stop the madness. Despite recent initiative by Pakistani politico military leadership to cool the temperatures in the Iran-KSA tension, the leadership in the regions appears to be mired in point scoring. Even the recently held OIC Summit in Turkey could not resolve the teething problems faced by a divided Islamic World.

Five, apathy to loss of life and death has crossed all limits, the new 'normal' in MENA region is the day when you have less than 50 deaths in conflicts and wars. Bashar Al Assad's Barrel Bombs and beheading by IS are becoming the new Infotainment with people watching and sharing these on social media channels with the words, RIP, and OMG, and that's all. Islamic World is sitting on a nuclear powder keg with sectarianism as its adopted ideology. How will the scenario of nuclear holocaust play in MENA region? The stage is set. I have tried to do some crystal ball gazing and developed two possible scenarios for a nuclear holocaust in MENA region.

By 2017, ISIS has become an acceptable household name in MENA region and beyond. The international media had been building a false story since 2015 that IS was getting some technology from countries like Pakistan or through KSA and then the news is broken on CNN, Al Jazeera and BBC that IS has finally acquired a crude nuclear device. Meanwhile Iran announces that it cannot tolerate IS to hold nuclear weapons and goes nuclear. By end of 2017, ISIS has advanced over Baghdad and Shia community is massacred in big numbers, Iran threatens to retaliate. IS or Iran take the initiative and hit opposing urban centres with nukes. Entire region goes up in flames with Muslim countries getting involved based on what sect the majority follows. More than twenty million Muslims perish within a short span of three months and it becomes difficult to identify who is buried in which grave.

MENA suffers huge economic loss, a false case is built against Pakistan for proliferation of nukes and international community moves in to take control of Pakistan's nuclear programme. Whereas the KSA and Iran avoid direct conflict, the simmering war continues into early 2020 with IS expanding her area into Iraq, Syria, Jordan and even Yemen. Iran becomes a declared nuclear power and KSA also acquires nuclear capability. IS has now a full-fledged military with crude nukes smuggled by Israel. By March 2020, the simmering conflict has divided the Islamic World on sectarian grounds, Shia Crescent of Iran, Southern Iraq, Western Syria and Hezbollah on one side and rest of MENA barring IS on the other.

In one of the terrorist attacks within Iranian metropolitan cities, IS succeeds in developing a perception that it was done on Saudi's behalf, Iran retaliates with strikes in the coastal region of KSA and a general war commences between Shia and Sunni Islam with no hold bars. Due to poor command and control mechanisms, the wars enters into nuclear domain, total cost is flattening of the MENA region and death of 100 million Muslims, the entire region becomes a cauldron of human tragedy ; however the conflict between Shias and Sunnis comes to an end as none is left to fight for another day.

Food for thought, can the Islamic World develop an alternative trajectory to avoid this nuclear holocaust? Do we have some sane people left who can see writing on the wall and take action to stop the slide of Islamic world into the nuclear hell hole?

Source:<http://pakobserver.net/2016/05/01/spectre-of-nuclear-terror/>

Trump's Foreign Policy Revealed, Sort Of – Analysis | Zachary Fillingham

The obvious takeaway from our first glimpse of Donald Trump's foreign policy is that it's singularly focused on the domestic audience. There's no real posturing here or signalling intentions for foreign governments; it's a speech that continues to play on many of the themes that have made the Trump campaign such a surprising success in the GOP presidential field.

There's the "no one respects America anymore" trope, evident to Trump in free-riding US allies, Air Force One snubs from Cuba and Saudi Arabia, and China's flouting of trade rules; the "America has become weak" line, evident in funding cuts to the US military; the "this is nuts/the government doesn't know what it's doing anymore"; and finally the "I'm the only one who's willing to tell you the truth" and call out radical Islam as the United States' number-one enemy (something my opponents are unwilling to do!).

These themes are nothing new to the Trump campaign, and we see them now carefully transplanted from the economic/political realm and into the foreign policy sphere. The result is a neat piece of foreign policypoliticking – imaging the world as voters might prefer it to be rather than how it actually is – that tells us precious little about how a Trump administration would operate.

Yet the speech is not a total wash. Buried amongst the allusions to America's ruin and redemption, there are a few snippets worthy of note:

"We are getting out of the nation-building business, and instead focusing on creating stability in the world."

This is the biggest foreign policy departure in the speech, though one could argue that it's merely continuing a trend started by the Obama administration (which has been conspicuously silent over military coups in two US allies in Thailand and Egypt). Any student of history can tell you that "stability" is often code for an authoritarian government; in this, Trump's foreign policy would bring about a return to the more realist calculations of US interests, where a state's geopolitical position and posture towards Washington are more important than its human rights record. This is a change that's easy for Trump to make given the negative consequences of the United States' recent

'humanitarian' military adventures, far easier than for Clinton, who still needs to cater to a liberal base with more of an appetite for saving the world.

All told this would put Trump's foreign policy more in line with the Republican Party's traditional foreign policy stance: isolationism & state-centric realism. It was the George W Bush administration that threw the established order of things out of whack by calling for the promotion of democracy and human rights worldwide, by military means if necessary. Broadly speaking, the idea of a Responsibility to Protect had previously belonged to the Left.

"Instead of trying to spread "universal values" that not everyone shares, we should understand that strengthening and promoting Western civilization and its accomplishments will do more to inspire positive reforms around the world than military interventions."

Though this has been seized on by some as promoting a "clash of civilizations," really it is far less provocative than the alternative of presenting Western values as universal (an approach that has arguably prompted greater 'civilizational' awareness in China and Russia). What's interesting here is that Trump seems to be discarding some of the messianic elements of recent US foreign policy, shifting back toward being the "city upon a hill" that others actually want to emulate rather than the one attacking all of the other, different cities...

"I believe an easing of tensions and improved relations with Russia – from a position of strength – is possible. Common sense says this cycle of hostility must end. Some say the Russians won't be reasonable. I intend to find out. If we can't make a good deal for America, then we will quickly walk from the table."

Détente with Russia would be an easy target for Trump's foreign policy; after all, there was a reason Hillary reached for the 'reset button' in the early days of the Obama administration. Put simply, US and Russian interests aren't necessarily antagonistic, especially should the next US administration give up on the urge to spread 'universal values,' and/or allow the East-West border to be drawn on the eastern frontiers of Poland and the Baltics as opposed to Ukraine. There are also many possible areas of cooperation between the two states. Trump cited one of them in his foreign policy speech – the fight against Islamic radicalism – and there's also nuclear non-proliferation, the Arctic, North Korea, Syria, and whatever the next international crisis is that requires a consensus on the Security Council.

“We will no longer surrender this country, or its people, to the false song of globalism”

Trump brings his anti-globalization message that’s generally reserved for railing on companies that offshore their jobs to China into the foreign policy realm here. Specifically, Trump targets NAFTA (“it has been a total disaster for the U.S!”) but he also reaffirms the nation-state as the “true foundation for happiness and harmony” and declares himself “skeptical of international unions that tie us up and bring America down.” Here is a suggested return to a more isolationist stance and a rejection of the international institutions that will only increase in importance as the international system transitions towards multipolarity. It’s another hard turn towards a realist, state-centric foreign policy after years of interventionist dabbling from successive US administrations.

In closing, though we should always be skeptical of foreign policy that’s drafted on the campaign trail, a Trump presidency would be uniquely situated to break with some recent US foreign policy trends. On one hand Trump would inevitably have some of his more extreme ideas tempered by the dictates of the office (the Wall, a Muslim immigration ban, etc); on the other, his ‘outsider’ status could be leveraged to break decisively from the Bush Doctrine era and reboot some of the country’s more troubled relationships under President Obama, including Russia and also Israel, another bilateral relationship that Trump singled out as needing some attention in his speech.

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Welcome to the Third Nuclear Age | Karl-Heinz Kamp

Dividing historical periods into eras is often a difficult endeavor, if only because contemporaries rarely recognize the age they live in as new or special.

The First Nuclear Age

Few would have anticipated in 1945 that the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki would herald the beginning of the ascent of nuclear weapons as a central currency of power in the East-West conflict. Instead, U.S. military leaders tended to consider nuclear weapons as a sort of heavily reinforced artillery that helped them “get more bang for their buck.” It was only during the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 that officials in Washington and Moscow realized that nuclear weapons could well bring about the end of the world. The logic of nuclear deterrence began to take shape: there was no gain—however large—an aggressor could hope for that would compensate the immeasurable damage he would suffer from his enemy’s nuclear retaliation. In a nuclear war, there could be no winners, only losers.

The arsenals of nuclear weapons on both sides thus gained the power to exert, through mutual deterrence, a moderating influence on political decisions in the East and in the West. They altered the cost-benefit calculation of a potential aggressor by drastically demonstrating to him the dangers of his actions. Avoiding the use of nuclear weapons therefore became the stated aim of the two superpowers. At the same time, the use of nuclear weapons—and this is one of the fundamental dilemmas—had to be a very real possibility in order to achieve a credible political deterrent. This means that it must be possible to use nuclear weapons in order to prevent them from being used. This inherent contradiction in the concept of nuclear deterrence has always been difficult to explain to the public.

Mutually assured destruction did not only prevent a nuclear conflict, but also prevented a conventional war between the two blocs. Since any military confrontation would have carried the risk of escalating into an atomic exchange, there was an apparent reason to exercise restraint—whoever shoots first dies second. Instead, the adversaries fought proxy wars and attempted to win the arms race between their opposing systems. Whenever a crisis threatened to escalate into a nuclear conflict, caution was the order of the day. The absence of a Western response to the building of the Berlin Wall or to the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia are cases in point.

Some observers even believed that a “nuclear taboo” would increasingly establish itself in East-West relations. The longer nuclear weapons were not used, the greater the aversion on both sides would be to ever cross the nuclear threshold and to open the nuclear Pandora’s box at all. It would therefore eventually become virtually impossible to use nuclear weapons. However, others dismissed such considerations as being excessively academic. They believed that in extreme crises, instead of continuing with long-standing patterns of behavior, decisionmakers were more likely to make decisions based on their own perceptions and immediate constraints.

The Second Nuclear Age

The fall of the Berlin Wall thus ended the First Nuclear Age, without a nuclear holocaust as was so often predicted. That the end of the Cold War would mark the immediate beginning of a new atomic era was not initially obvious. While nuclear weapons arsenals were significantly reduced, especially by the Western powers, traditional ways of thinking prevailed when it came to the function of the remaining arsenals. Nuclear weapons were considered to be insurance against a possible restoration of Soviet/Russian power. Very few experts thought about what the purpose of nuclear weapons might be in what was supposed to become a partnership with Russia.

The nuclear tests performed by India and Pakistan in 1998 provided a taste of what were to be the new challenges of the Second Nuclear Age. Two states had joined the nuclear club and posed no immediate threat to the United States or Russia, but targeted their nuclear weapons against each other. What is more, India saw its nuclear potential as a deterrent against China, while Beijing’s concerns were directed at Moscow. Suddenly, deterrence had become multilateral instead of bilateral. How was a logic of deterrence to be formulated that would force India and Pakistan to exercise nuclear restraint in the event of a conflict? Would Moscow or Washington really be able to threaten Islamabad or New Delhi with nuclear annihilation should any of the two cross the nuclear threshold and use nuclear weapons against their neighbor?

The transition to a new age became even more apparent when, three years later, the September 11 attacks happened. Instead of hostile governments, suddenly violent Islamists were capable of committing mass murder and humiliating large military powers. Against such threats, nuclear weapons turned out to be virtually useless. Nonstate actors have no address to which one’s nuclear deterrence threat may be directed. What is more, if the attackers are fanatics willing to sacrifice themselves, the traditional logic of nuclear deterrence will fail, since it is based on a mutual interest in survival.

Instead, another nuclear disaster was looming. Nuclear material in the hands of terrorists—whether in the form of nuclear weapons or as easy-to-build “dirty bombs” (mixing conventional explosives with radioactive substances)—seemed an ideal means of conducting high-profile attacks. If the idea of a “nuclear taboo” ever had a binding effect in the East-West context, it came crashing down with the twin towers in New York. In order to achieve their objective of spreading terror and fear, terrorists would be particularly keen to break this taboo, provided that they managed to obtain a nuclear explosive device.

The Second Nuclear Age was thus no longer only about deterrence between nuclear powers. It was also about recognizing and preventing possible terrorist attacks—whether nuclear or conventional. For this reason, intelligence agents became more important than the nuclear strategists of the Cold War. Strategies, called nuclear forensics, were developed that made it possible to determine the origin of fissile material used even if an explosion was induced by terrorists. Based on the radiation released, experts can read “nuclear DNA” like a fingerprint and match it to the country that produced the material. If it could then also be proven that the country of origin passed on the nuclear weapons material intentionally, for instance to provide targeted support for terrorist objectives or groups, the persons pulling the strings could be held accountable.

Given this complicated nuclear challenges, some people thought it was almost logical to completely abolish nuclear weapons in the future in order to eliminate the nuclear element from international politics once and for all. President Obama’s dream of a world free of nuclear weapons, which he announced as a political objective in his speech in Prague in 2009, also reflected this stance. Obama’s concept of “global zero” was met with a very positive response—at least in the Western world—and rewarded with the Nobel Peace Prize.

The Third Nuclear Age

Future historians will mark 2014 as the beginning of the Third Nuclear Age, linking this turning point to the illegal Russian annexation of Crimea. With this act, Russia finally left the pan-European security order, terminated its partnership with NATO and has (again) been using its enormous nuclear potential to threaten its neighbors ever since. By conducting flyovers with nuclear bomber aircraft and simulating nuclear strikes against Sweden and Poland, it is marking its supposed sphere of influence and unambiguously threatening NATO. All this was not a response to a supposed transgression by NATO and the European Union, but a conscious decision by the political leadership in Moscow to re-establish Russia as an influential world power.

In trying to answer the question of what a sustainable strategy of deterrence for this Third Nuclear Age should look like, one might be tempted to simply combine the lessons of the two previous ages—nuclear deterrence of a nuclear power in the Cold War connected with concepts for the deterrence of nonstate or irrational actors. This solution falls short. There are fundamental differences with the situation in the former East-West conflict. While the Warsaw Pact at the time, to some extent, outmatched NATO in terms of conventional power, Moscow's conventional capabilities today are clearly inferior to those of the United States and its allies, a fact that Russia is well aware of. Russian military planning for a potential conflict in Europe is thus focused on preventing U.S. support of its NATO allies and blocking the deployment of U.S. armed forces across the Atlantic. In military jargon, this is referred to as "A2/AD" (Anti Access / Area Denial). Russia also considers its nuclear arsenal as a useful military substitute for its lack of conventional weapons capability.

Moreover, North Korea has developed into an additional factor of instability and irrationality. While Pyongyang's first nuclear test was conducted as early as 2006, it remained unclear for a long time whether the regime would actually be capable of producing functioning nuclear weapons. After three more nuclear tests in 2009, 2013 and 2016, there is hardly any doubt. Although knowledge about the status of North Korea's nuclear weapons program is still fragmented, Pyongyang could in a few years possess more nuclear warheads than France or the United Kingdom. A largely erratic actor consumed by the paranoid fear of losing power has joined the nuclear club.

This raises a number of radically new issues regarding the role of nuclear weapons in the Third Nuclear Age. For example, how can Russia be deterred? It is an obviously declining power as it has no economic basis to back up its claim to global significance and is inferior in military terms. Russia's weakness is less a result of low energy prices than of its decades-long failure to take necessary economic, political and social steps towards modernization. It is very likely that Russia will not be able to fulfill the needs of its people a few years from now, which might lead to destabilization or even disintegration. Practicing nuclear deterrence on declining powers is generally difficult because it is likely that the inferior opponent will panic or behave irrationally. This similarly applies to North Korea, although the level of irrationality in this case is dramatically higher.

Another question is—will there still be any treaty-based nuclear arms control in the Third Nuclear Age? If Russia sees its nuclear weapons as a functional part of its armed forces that can be used to compensate for deficiencies in its conventional posture, it will have little interest in reducing this potential. Since a number of outdated systems are due to

be phased out, there may still be some decrease in the strategic nuclear arsenals of both the United States and Russia. However, this is another area where Russia now refuses to share information. In November 2014, Russia declared that it would no longer participate in the annual Russian-American summits on nuclear safety. One month later, Russia announced its withdrawal from the bilateral cooperation program designed to increase nuclear safety under the so-called Nunn-Lugar Act. Since 1991, the United States has provided considerable financial and material support for the safe scrapping and disposal of Russia's surplus nuclear weapons and nuclear submarines. The purpose of this program designed by the two U.S. Sens. Sam Nunn and Richard Lugar was to prevent radioactive substances, nuclear weapon elements and nuclear expertise from falling into the wrong hands.

When it comes to tactical nuclear weapons in Europe, the chances of concluding reduction treaties are virtually zero because Russia sees them as a "usable" part of its military's ability to balance NATO's conventional superiority. Instead, there are signs that Russia is circumventing the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) by stationing new systems. Likewise, NATO's Eastern European members have little interest in a withdrawal of the few American nuclear weapons stationed in Europe. They are seen as a symbol of America's alliance commitments.

In the Asia Pacific, disarmament is even more unlikely since China's thirst for power is increasing tensions in the region and because arms control is not a common concept in the minds of the political elite. Why dismantle nuclear arsenals that one has spent so much money and effort on? Also, the states in this region have never learned the traumatic lesson of the Cuban Missile Crisis, in which two nuclear powers were gazing into the abyss of mutual annihilation. The idea of a nuclear-free world, which has been upheld for years and could allegedly be realized through good will and a genuine intention to disarm, now seems to be off the table for good. However, many experts now point out that the proposal made by the U.S. president was an illusion in the first place—gleefully believed without there ever being a realistic chance of implementation.

A further question to be answered is how can future deterrence strategies be effectively combined with sustainable crisis communication? If Russia continues to launch nuclear bomber aircraft as an implicit threat or in order to mark its supposed sphere of influence, send nuclear submarines to foreign coastal waters or simulate nuclear strikes against neighboring countries, then the risk of misunderstanding and accidents will increase. In 2014 alone, fourteen risk or high-risk incidents (i.e., entailing a considerable risk of escalation) occurred between Russian and Western aircraft or ships. What security

precautions must be taken in order to prevent an unwanted military confrontation—be it conventional or even nuclear?

Another open question is: what effects will the missile defense system currently being set up by NATO have regarding the requirements for a credible system of nuclear deterrence? Since President Ronald Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative in the early 1980s, there have been worldwide efforts to establish capabilities that can be used to neutralize approaching missiles. The discussion about whether such a defense capability would undermine the idea of deterrence—whoever shoots first dies second—and therefore also endanger international stability dates back to the same time. Any state that successfully sets up a complete defense umbrella would no longer need to fear nuclear retaliation and could therefore aggressively threaten other states. For a long time, this discussion was of limited relevance, because a perfectly functioning strategic missile defense system seemed difficult to implement—it was the equivalent of hitting a rifle bullet with another rifle bullet.

Meanwhile, systems of this kind have become a reality. With its Iron Dome air defense system, Israel has managed to successfully detect and shoot down most of the short-range missiles launched by Hamas in the Gaza Strip, even though they are only in the air for a few minutes. NATO is also procuring a defense system in several stages that uses U.S. interceptor missiles and also integrates the existing radar and sensor systems of the European alliance partners.

Moscow has been suspicious for a long time, arguing that the missile defense system would ultimately be aimed against Russia and that it would diminish its ballistic potential. Moscow has also stated that this would endanger strategic stability. NATO has always pointed out that a missile defense system is genuinely a defensive weapon that only takes effect after an opponent has launched an attacking weapon. Whoever criticizes missile defense as a fundamental idea should therefore answer the question whether he wants to retain the option to attack. Nuclear warheads can also be delivered with other means that are not affected by missile defense systems—e.g., aircraft and cruise missiles. In view of debates such as these, the connection between nuclear deterrence and missile defense is quite obvious and should therefore be taken into account in strategic considerations.

Finally, there must be a debate about how nuclear cooperation between NATO's three nuclear powers—the United States, Britain and France—can be improved in order to achieve a coherent deterrence strategy. There has always been nuclear cooperation between Washington and London. Britain and France have considerably stepped up

their nuclear relations with the Lancaster House agreement of 2010. Even France and the United States discretely cooperate on nuclear matters now and then. What is missing is trilateral coordination that goes beyond an occasional exchange on nuclear forensics as mentioned above. France, while apparently not generally opposed to such cooperation, does not want it to be conducted in the relevant NATO bodies such as the Nuclear Planning Group.

Faced with a changed nuclear reality and a multitude of unanswered questions, NATO will have to put nuclear deterrence back on the agenda. NATO does have a current nuclear strategy, which is enshrined in a document with the cumbersome title *Deterrence and Defense Posture Review*. However, this document was approved at the NATO Summit in Chicago in 2012, and it is based on two fundamental assumptions that no longer apply today: Russia is a partner of NATO and will not threaten to use its nuclear weapons against NATO. Meanwhile, Moscow has ended its partnership with NATO and, in addition, is also simulating the use of nuclear weapons against neighboring countries in military exercises. NATO will therefore inevitably be forced to redraft its nuclear strategy.

Since this is a controversial subject in some member states, it will be difficult to reach an agreement on the much-needed nuclear strategy debate before the NATO Summit in Warsaw in July 2016. But after this meeting of allied heads of state and government, the nuclear question of *how* to deter *whom* and by *what means* must be up for discussion.

This is no reason for nuclear alarmism. Despite the tensions with Russia, nuclear weapons will not regain the significance they had as a currency of power in the Cold War. Their numbers have been dramatically reduced in the past decades, at least in the relations between Russia and the United States, and it is unlikely that there will be a new nuclear arms race. Moreover, nuclear deterrence is only a small part in the overall spectrum of security provision. Effective and deployable conventional armed forces, as well as the will to cooperate despite existing differences, are at least as important for the security of the NATO member states and for the stability of Europe.

That is why the upcoming nuclear debate should not be focused on new or more modern nuclear weapons, but on a coherent political concept that fulfills NATO's own requirements and is also regarded as credible by a potential opponent. Besides clear political statements, this also includes exercises and simulations that are designed to test the procedures and nuclear decision processes. Because one thing is clear: the challenges of the Third Nuclear Age will not be met using the formulas of the previous two.

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Image: Wikimedia Commons/U.S. Energy Department.

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4 Million Muslims Killed In Western Wars: Should We Call It Genocide? | Kit O'Connell

Harkening back to the Japanese interment camps of WWII, some Americans are now calling for Muslims to be placed in camps or even openly calling for genocide against the 1.6 billion practitioners of the faith.

AUSTIN, Texas — It may never be possible to know the true death toll of the modern Western wars on the Middle East, but that figure could be 4 million or higher. Since the vast majority of those killed were of Arab descent, and mostly Muslim, when would it be fair to accuse the United States and its allies of genocide?

A March report by Physicians for Social Responsibility calculates the body count of the Iraq War at around 1.3 million, and possibly as many as 2 million. However, the numbers of those killed in Middle Eastern wars could be much higher. In April, investigative journalist Nafeez Ahmed argued that the actual death toll could reach as high as 4 million if one includes not just those killed in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, but also the victims of the sanctions against Iraq, which left about 1.7 million more dead, half of them children, according to figures from the United Nations.

Raphael Lemkin and the definition of genocide

The term “genocide” did not exist prior to 1943, when it was coined by a Polish-Jewish lawyer named Raphael Lemkin. Lemkin created the word by combining the Greek root “geno,” which means people or tribe, with “-cide,” derived from the Latin word for killing.

The Nuremberg trials, in which top Nazi officials were prosecuted for crimes against humanity, began in 1945 and were based around Lemkin’s idea of genocide. By the following year, it was becoming international law, according to United to End Genocide:

“In 1946, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution that ‘affirmed’ that genocide was a crime under international law, but did not provide a legal definition of the crime.”

With support from representatives of the U.S., Lemkin presented the first draft of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide to the United Nations. The General Assembly adopted the convention in 1948, although it would take three more years for enough countries to sign the convention, allowing it to be ratified

According to this convention, genocide is defined as:

“...any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, such as:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.”

Under the convention, genocide is not merely defined as a deliberate act of killing, but can include a broad range of other harmful activities:

“Deliberately inflicting conditions of life calculated to destroy a group includes the deliberate deprivation of resources needed for the group’s physical survival, such as clean water, food, clothing, shelter or medical services. Deprivation of the means to sustain life can be imposed through confiscation of harvests, blockade of foodstuffs, detention in camps, forcible relocation or expulsion into deserts.”

It can also include forced sterilization, forced abortion, prevention of marriage or the transfer of children out of their families. In 2008, the U.N. expanded the definition to acknowledge that “rape and other forms of sexual violence can constitute war crimes, crimes against humanity or a constitutive act with respect to genocide.”

A Middle Eastern genocide

A key phrase in the convention on genocide is “acts committed with intent to destroy.” While the facts back up a massive death toll in Arab and Muslim lives, it might be more difficult to argue that the actions were carried out with the deliberate intent to destroy “a national, ethnic, racial or religious group.”

The authors of the convention were aware, however, that few of those who commit genocide are so bold as to put their policies in writing as brazenly as the Nazis did. Yet, as Genocide Watch noted in 2002: “Intent can be proven directly from statements or orders. But more often, it must be inferred from a systematic pattern of coordinated acts.”

In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, President George W. Bush employed a curious and controversial choice of words in one of his first speeches. He alarmed some by referencing historic, religious conflicts, as The Wall Street Journal staff writers Peter Waldman and Hugh Pope noted:

“President Bush vowed ... to ‘rid the world of evil-doers,’ then cautioned: ‘This crusade, this war on terrorism, is going to take a while.’

Crusade? In strict usage, the word describes the Christian military expeditions a millennium ago to capture the Holy Land from Muslims. But in much of the Islamic world, where history and religion suffuse daily life in ways unfathomable to most Americans, it is shorthand for something else: a cultural and economic Western invasion that, Muslims fear, could subjugate them and desecrate Islam.”

In the wars that followed in Iraq and Afghanistan, the U.S. not only killed millions, but systematically destroyed the infrastructure necessary for healthy, prosperous life in those countries, then used rebuilding efforts as opportunities for profit, rather than to benefit the occupied populations. To further add to the genocidal pattern of behavior, there is ample evidence of torture and persistent rumors of sexual assault from the aftermath of Iraq’s fall. It appears likely the U.S. has contributed to further destabilization and death in the region by supporting the rise of the self-declared Islamic State of Iraq and Syria by arming rebel groups on all sides of the conflict.

After 9/11, the U.S. declared a global “War on Terror,” ensuring an endless cycle of destabilization and wars in the Middle East in the process. The vast majority of the victims of these wars, and of ISIS, are Muslims. And, as extremist terrorists created by the unrest increase tensions with their attacks on the West, some Americans are embracing Bush’s controversial language of religious warfare, calling for Muslims to be placed in camps or even openly calling for genocide.

By Kit O’Connell @KitOConnell | Via MINTPRESS NEWS

The Pendulum Of American Power – OpEd | Paul Woodward

Having been exercised with the imperial hubris of the neoconservatives, American power thereby overextended was inevitably going to swing in the opposite direction. What was not inevitable was that an administration when forced to deal with current events would cling so persistently to the past.

Through the frequent use of a number of catch phrases — “we need to look forward,” his promise “to end the mindset that got us into war,” and so forth — Barack Obama presented his administration as one that would unshackle the U.S. from the misadventures of his predecessor.

Nevertheless, Ben Rhodes, Obama’s closest adviser helping him craft this message, has a mindset in 2016 that shows no signs of having evolved in any significant way since he was on the 2008 campaign trail. As one of the lead authors of the 2006 Iraq Study Group report, Rhodes became and remains fixated on his notion of Iraq.

In a New York Times magazine profile of Rhodes, David Samuels writes:

What has interested me most about watching him and his cohort in the White House over the past seven years, I tell him, is the evolution of their ability to get comfortable with tragedy. I am thinking specifically about Syria, I add, where more than 450,000 people have been slaughtered.

“Yeah, I admit very much to that reality,” he says. “There’s a numbing element to Syria in particular. But I will tell you this,” he continues. “I profoundly do not believe that the United States could make things better in Syria by being there. And we have an evidentiary record of what happens when we’re there — nearly a decade in Iraq.”

Iraq is his one-word answer to any and all criticism. I was against the Iraq war from the beginning, I tell Rhodes, so I understand why he perpetually returns to it. I also understand why Obama pulled the plug on America’s engagement with the Middle East, I say, but it was also true as a result that more people are dying there on his watch than died during the Bush presidency, even if very few of them are Americans. What I don’t understand is why, if America is getting out of the Middle East, we are apparently spending so much time and energy trying to strong-arm Syrian rebels into surrendering to the dictator who murdered their families, or why it is so important for Iran to maintain its supply lines to Hezbollah. He mutters something about John Kerry, and then goes off

the record, to suggest, in effect, that the world of the Sunni Arabs that the American establishment built has collapsed. The buck stops with the establishment, not with Obama, who was left to clean up their mess.

In this regard — “their ability to get comfortable with tragedy” — Rhodes and Obama mirror mainstream America which views the mess in the Middle East as being beyond America’s power to repair.

The fact that the U.S. bears a major portion of the blame in precipitating the region’s unraveling, is perversely presented as the reason the U.S. should now limit its involvement.

What, it’s reasonable to ask, does Iraq actually represent from this vantage point?

Wasted American lives? Wasted U.S. dollars? The destructive effect of American imperial power?

Is Iraq just a prism through which Americans look at America?

Is Iraq merely America’s shadow, or is there room for Iraqis anywhere in this picture?

What Samuel’s describes as this administration’s willingness to accept tragedy can also be seen as the required measure of indifference that makes it possible to look the other way.

The desire to make things better in Syria and Iraq is not contingent solely on an assessment of U.S. capabilities; it is more importantly a reflection of the degree to which Syrian and Iraqi lives matter to Americans.

The evidentiary record clearly shows that the scale of this tragedy all too accurately reflects the breadth of American indifference.

Source:<http://www.eurasiareview.com/09052016-the-pendulum-of-american-power-oped/>

Will Assad Survive? – OpEd | Neville Teller

It is almost unbelievable, given the roller-coaster ride of Bashar al-Assad's fortunes these past five years, that he remains President of Syria (albeit a much reduced dominion), and stands a fair chance of remaining so.

At the start of 2011 Assad was the absolute ruler of a brutal and repressive regime, and as firmly entrenched in power as his father, Hafez, had been throughout the thirty years of his presidency. For at that time the so-called "Arab Spring" – popular uprisings against repressive regimes which began in Tunisia in December 2010 – had as yet claimed no victims among the autocratic rulers of the Arab world.

Then they started to topple – on 14 January 2011 Tunisian President Zine el Abidine fled to Saudi Arabia; on 11 February Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak resigned; on 23 August Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi was overthrown; in February 2012 Yemeni President Saleh abdicated and was replaced. Later the president of Sudan resigned, as did the Iraqi and Kuwaiti prime ministers. The uprising in Tunisia had spread like a forest fire across the Middle East, engulfing state after state.

Not all succumbed. Some managed to douse the flames with the firehose of financial generosity. For instance in February 2011, immediately after the fall of Egypt's President Mubarak, Saudi Arabia announced a social welfare package for its citizens worth \$10.7 billion, featuring pay raises for government employees, new jobs and loan cancellation schemes. By the end of the month, the handouts totaled \$37 billion. In March Saudi's King Abdullah announced an additional \$93 billion in social spending.

The United Arab Emirates provided some \$2 billion in housing loans to Emiratis, while Qatar announced an \$8 billion payout in salary and benefits increases for all state and military personnel. Oman and Bahrain also increased social spending by billions.

This was not Bashar al-Assad's reaction when, in March 2011, a few teenagers in a southern Syrian city daubed some inflammatory slogans on a school wall. Unfortunately for them, the Syria that Assad had inherited in 2000 from his autocratic father was a tightly controlled police state, in which a powerful and all-encompassing security machine ensured that the slightest hint of opposition to the régime was ruthlessly crushed.

The youngsters were hunted down, arrested and tortured. When details of their ordeal became known, protesters took to the streets. The security forces, unable to break up the demonstration, eventually fired into the crowd. That was enough to spark widespread rebellion. Groups antagonistic to Assad's government began nationwide protests. Gradually, popular dissent developed into an armed revolt. The opposition, consisting of a variety of groups, but primarily the Free Syrian Army, were finally seeking to overthrow the despotic Assad régime and substitute a democratic form of government.

Assad brought himself to offer concessions, but they were too little and too late. He released dozens of political prisoners, dismissed the government, lifted the 48-year-old state of emergency and pledged to start a "national dialogue" on reform. It was all to no avail. Armed anti-regime protests intensified, and in May Assad sent tanks into Deraa, Banyas, Homs and the suburbs of Damascus in an effort to crush them.

Given the sequence of events elsewhere in the Middle East, Assad's days seemed numbered. Surely he would succumb to popular rebellion as fellow autocrats had done. Both the Western world led by the US, and the Arab League, declared that Assad's rule was unsustainable. In May 2011 the US and the EU tightened sanctions against him. In November the Arab League suspended Syria from membership, and itself imposed sanctions.

Had assistance of any sort been forthcoming to those fighting Assad in the name of democracy, he could have been defeated, to be replaced by a democratically elected government. But President Obama continued vacillating, even after it was clear in August 2013 that Assad had used chemical weapons against his opponents, utterly indifferent to the extensive civilian casualties that ensued. Calls by the US and the EU urging Assad to step down, echoed by Jordan's King Abdullah and Turkey's President Erdogan, fell on deaf ears.

By 2014 Assad was facing two existential dangers – not only his domestic rebels fighting a civil war aimed at replacing autocracy with democracy, but also so-called Islamic State (IS), set on establishing a caliphate across Iraq and Syria. Over 2014 and 2015 IS succeeded in seizing great swathes of Syrian territory. At the nadir of his fortunes in August 2015, Assad controlled only some 20 percent of his original dominion.

Obama's policy decision to abstain as far as possible from direct engagement in the Middle East had created a power vacuum which Russia's President Vladimir Putin was only too eager to fill. In September 2015 Putin sent in a vast arsenal of Russian military equipment, and began full-scale operations in support of Assad. The resultant

readjustment of the relative strengths of the opposing forces, added to the enhanced operations of the US-led anti-IS coalition, resulted in IS losing some 22 percent of the territory it had controlled. It also facilitated the UN's peace-keeping efforts, although too late for the demand of most Western leaders that Assad should play no part in Syria's future.

So Assad hangs on, his position strengthened by both Russian and Iranian support and by his consequential territorial gains. A UN-sponsored truce in February 2016 between Assad's forces and so-called "moderate" rebels – with Assad's future left out of the agreement – seemed a hopeful step towards resolving the five-year conflict.

Then, on May 4, negotiations began in Berlin aimed at finalizing a new truce agreement. These, though, are unlikely to succeed until Assad's bid, backed by his Russian and Iranian allies, to seize back the city of Aleppo from his domestic rebels is resolved, although the brutality of his onslaught, and the mounting civilian death toll, will do little to soften the West's opposition to him.

Clinging to power in a much-reduced domain, Assad nevertheless remains a major player in the effort to resolve the multi-layered battles raging across what has been "Syria" since it became an independent republic in 1946. Whether he will survive as president, what sort and size of state he would be ruling over if he does, and if he does not, what manner of state or states will succeed his regime – these are matters that only time, chance and circumstance will resolve.

Source:<http://www.eurasiareview.com/11052016-will-assad-survive-oped/>

'The US Can't Fix The Middle East' | David Ignatius

Early in his tenure as director of national intelligence, James Clapper could sometimes be heard complaining, "I'm too old for this [expletive]!" He has now served almost six years as America's top intelligence official, and when I asked him this week how much longer he would be in harness, he consulted his calendar and answered with relief, "Two hundred sixty-five days!"

Clapper, 75, has worked in intelligence for 53 years, starting when he joined the Air Force in 1963. He's a crusty, sometimes cranky veteran of the ingrown spy world, and he has a perspective that's probably unmatched in Washington. He offered some surprisingly candid comments — starting with a frank endorsement of President Obama's view that the United States can't unilaterally fix the Middle East.

Given Clapper's view that intelligence services must cooperate against terrorism, a small breakthrough seems to have taken place in mid-April when Clapper met with some European intelligence chiefs near Ramstein Air Base in Germany to discuss better sharing of intelligence. The meeting was requested by the White House, but it hasn't been publicised. "We are on the same page, and we should do everything we can to improve intelligence coordination and information sharing, within the limits of our legal framework," said Peter Wittig, German ambassador to Washington, confirming the meeting.

The terrorist threat has shadowed Clapper's tenure. He admitted in a September 2014 interview that the United States had "underestimated" the ISIS. He isn't making that mistake now. He says the United States is slowly "degrading" the extremists but probably won't capture the Islamic State's key Iraqi stronghold this year and faces a long-term struggle that will last "decades." "They've lost a lot of territory," he told me Monday. "We're killing a lot of their fighters. We will retake Mosul, but it will take a long time and be very messy. I don't see that happening in this administration."

Even after the extremists are defeated in Iraq and Syria, the problem will persist. "We'll be in a perpetual state of suppression for a long time," he warned. "I don't have an answer," Clapper said frankly. "The US can't fix it. The fundamental issues they have — the large population bulge of disaffected young males, ungoverned spaces, economic challenges and the availability of weapons — won't go away for a long time." He said at another point: "Somehow the expectation is that we can find the silver needle, and we'll

create ‘the city on a hill.’ ” That’s not realistic, he cautioned, because the problem is so complex.

I asked Clapper whether he shared Obama’s view, as expressed in Jeffrey Goldberg’s article in the Atlantic, that America doesn’t need the Middle East economically as it once did, that it can’t solve the region’s problems and that, in trying, the United States would harm its interests elsewhere. “I’m there,” said Clapper, endorsing Obama’s basic pessimism. But he explained: “I don’t think the US can just leave town. Things happen around the world when US leadership is absent. We have to be present — to facilitate, broker and sometimes provide the force.”

Clapper said the United States still can’t be certain how much harm was done to intelligence collection by the revelations of disaffected National Security Agency contractor Edward Snowden. “We’ve been very conservative in the damage assessment. Overall, there’s a lot,” Clapper said, noting that the Snowden disclosures made terrorist groups “very security-conscious” and speeded the move to unbreakable encryption of data. And he said the Snowden revelations may not have ended: “The assumption is that there are a lot more documents out there in escrow [to be revealed] at a time of his choosing.”

Clapper had just returned from a trip to Asia, where he said he’s had “tense exchanges” with Chinese officials about their militarisation of the South China Sea. He predicted that China would declare an “air defence identification zone” soon in that area, and said “they’re already moving in that direction.”

Asked what he had achieved in his nearly six years as director of national intelligence, Clapper cited his basic mission of coordinating the 17 agencies that work under him. “The reason this position was created was to provide integration in the intelligence community. We’re better than we were.” After a career in the spy world, Clapper argues that intelligence issues are basically simple; it’s the politics surrounding them that are complicated. “I can’t wait to get back to simplicity,” he said, his eye on that calendar.

— Courtesy: The Washington Post

Source: <http://pakobserver.net/2016/05/12/the-us-cant-fix-the-middle-east/>

Indo-US Alliance & Regional Dynamics | Maryam Nazir

In changing regional dynamics, most talked and discussed the Indo-US strategic partnership. With the inter-regional overlapping occurring at a critical point, we see India and the United States outlining the vast scope and depth of the present and planned Indo-US military relationship; which includes co-production of advanced defence articles, joint research on advanced jet engines and aircraft carrier technologies, strategic cooperation on maritime security, surveillance sharing and access to Indian military bases for logistic support.

This sort of extended cooperation between India and the US starts a new chapter in the history of South Asia. The United States has far-reaching ambitious plans at hand and India at the moment does the need full. The US Secretary of Defence, Ashton Carter who calls himself a 'friend of India' has reportedly visited India four times in last one year. In the year 2015, as both countries signed the New Framework for the Indo-US Defence Relationship, Carter described it as the setting of the US and India on a path to increase broad, complex and strategic cooperation to help safeguard security and stability across the region.

Moreover, through these strategic agreements, India has sent out a clear signal that it has no inhibitions about being bound in strategic engagements with the US. From a realistic perspective, the US wants to retain its influence in the region with different priorities and India fits in the equation, replacing Pakistan.

With this Indo-US alliance, there would be some obvious negative implications for Pakistan's security. India has been the world's largest arms importers, buying over \$100 billions of weapons each year, for the past eight years. Two-third of this pile is already deployed against Pakistan. However, US military and political support through this strategic alliance would encourage India to continue with its aggressive behavior against Pakistan. Besides, support of this intensity from US would only escalate arms race in South Asia.

Further, this Alliance has come up at a time when Pakistan's converged interests with the US might be fading over Afghanistan. Infact, Pakistan is already feeling the heat. As per reports, Afghan CEO Abdullah Abdullah has shown the desire of increased Indian presence and participation in Afghanistan. While, we see that India has been busy in building infrastructures and training forces, increasing their capacity building. At the same time, we hear from Ashton Carter, telling Indians that US has given up on

Pakistan's cooperation in terms of Afghanistan, wanting India to play a bigger role there, as per the claims of Indian press.

Also, the US has been encouraging closer ties between India and Gulf Cooperation Council. Modi has visited Saudi Arabia recently, with wishes for stronger inter-regional ties. There could be an Indo-Iranian gambit for the strategic concerns associated with intense Indian naval investments and Chabahar port, following the developments at Gawadar. A greater collaboration between US, India and Iran for the stabilization process in Afghanistan cannot be ruled out.

Another important factor is of increased strategic cooperation on maritime security and maneuvering in South China Sea by the US which needs due attention. As outlined in the Joint Strategic Vision released by President Obama and Prime Minister Modi in January 2015, it says that India and the US share the vision of peace, stability and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific Region. India also has endorsed the US stand on the South-China Sea islands dispute with China, vowing support for "regional security architecture". Right now, India is the only country in the region that could work in cohesion with the US ambitions for the containment of China.

Meanwhile, Pakistan and China are all weathered friends who have been taking care of each other's interests very well. As counter, it is expected that China must be sharing its cutting edge weapons with Pakistan, if US provides India with advanced military supplies. The emerging alliance is big while a solution at hand resides in developing robust, dynamic and imaginative policies. Pakistan and China together have that capacity to neutralize effects of any new regrouping.

Pakistan has to reinvent its relations with other regional powers. Russia being biggest arms producer could help Pakistan from elevating its defence stature. Several Russian weapons systems, such as the S300 anti-ballistic missile, the SU-31 and the SU-35s fighter-bombers are among the best in the world. Russia can strengthen relations with China and Pakistan as India moves closer to the US.

Pakistan has to reinvigorate its stance in Afghanistan. The revival of peace will take time; however, Pakistan has to continue engaging Afghan leadership. Being neighbor, Pakistan must engage Iran for peace process in Afghanistan, cutting space for Indian influence, shedding away any regrouping. The need is to take along Iran and Afghanistan for stability on both sides of Pakistan's western border with the underlined belief of Indian involvement in Pakistan.

Pakistan has to keep its relations intact with GCC, with a special focus to rebuild relations with Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia, alone has that power to deter Indian influence in its region. Pakistan must not detach itself completely from US with its emerging alliance with India.

The US-China rivalry is nowhere to get less. However, the US would engage China in ways other than war because of the deep economic relationship. The US holds the rage but it will come to terms of coexistence and cooperation with the new regional power. Pakistan at this moment must keep nerves calm and exploit opportunities by renovating relations on common grounds with intra and inter-regional players.

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Source:<http://pakobserver.net/2016/05/14/indo-us-alliance-regional-dynamics/>

What Cost Israel – OpEd | Jamal Kanj

Much had been argued about the creation of Israel and the ensuing 1948 ethnic cleansing of non-Jewish Palestinians. Sadly, however, most had become a desensitized academic debate, a lifeless abstract portrayal failing to depict what it really meant for one to be a refugee without a country.

On this 68th commemoration of the Nakba (or catastrophe), I wanted to show what it meant to one Palestinian refugee.

On May 15, 1948, Zionist Jews danced and firecrackers burst over the streets of New York, celebrating the founding of Israel. About the same time, and on the other side of the world, Zionist terrorists' mortar exploded in the middle of Jebal Al Luz (Mountains of Almonds), burning homes and forcing civilians to flee their village.

During the middle of the night, Abu Musa carried his physically disabled blind mother on his shoulders. His wife, Um Musa picked up their infant baby, Musa, and joined a throng of refugees escaping for their lives. Abu Musa's family hid in a ditch on the outskirts of their village. The morning sun exposed the scattered refugees hiding in nearby bushes and under trees.

Sorties after sorties, Zionist planes strafed the area pushing the villagers further north towards Lebanon. Under heavy gunfire, panicking civilians ran in all directions. Abu Musa picked up his newborn son and ran for his life. Um Musa followed in his footsteps. Panting for air an hour later, Abu Musa realised he had left his blind mother behind.

Zionist forces continued to bomb from air and ground. Abu Musa attempted to go back, but all was in vain. The next day and during a lull in the Zionist terrorist bombardment, Abu Musa went looking for his mother. But she was nowhere to be found. He came across local villagers who returned to check on their properties. They told him they had just buried the remains of what had appeared to be an elderly woman. Her body ripped apart by animals.

“Was my mother eaten alive by wild animals? Or had she been murdered by Zionists?” Those questions haunted Abu Musa all his life. The loss of his country and mother were just the start of his lugubrious life until his death in the mid-1990s.

Abu Musa ended up settling in the same camp as my parents. In addition to baby Musa, he had three more children in the camp, two boys and a girl.

Musa, who had left Palestine as an infant, joined the revolution in the early 1970s and returned to Palestine. He was murdered by the Israeli army and buried in an unmarked grave. Abu Musa, who did not see his mother's corpse, was unable to see or bury his eldest son either.

A short time after losing Musa, Abu Musa became disabled. I made it a point to call on him whenever I visited the camp. It broke my heart during the last visit before his death as I watched him crawling out of the bathroom like a little baby. I knelt down and kissed him; he kissed me back and then asked, "Who are you, my son?"

Calamity was a continuum for this one refugee. In the early 1990s, his youngest son, Kama, was murdered while he was on his way to school in Tripoli, Lebanon. He was butchered in the year he would have graduated from high school.

For Israel, Abu Musa and the other Palestinian refugees like my parents were dispensable nuisances. In a 1948 foreign ministry study, Israel predicted the refugees "... will waste away. Some will die but most will turn into human debris and social outcasts ... in the Arab countries."

To Israel's chagrin, the grandchildren of Abu Musa's surviving son and daughter did not turn to "human debris." Sixty-eight years later, Abu Musa's progeny is more determined to find and bury their great-grandmother's remains, in their original village.

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Source:<http://www.eurasiareview.com/16052016-what-cost-israel-oped/>

What You Need To Know About India's Newly Launched Ballistic Missile Defence | Ali Osman

The test of Ashwin missile, part of Indian Ballistic Missile Defence Program, is part of a concentrated effort to develop a two-tiered missile defence system by India to counter the threat emanating from Pakistan's strategic missile force.

India seeks to deploy a functional 'iron dome' ballistic missile defence (BMD), incorporating both low-altitude and high-altitude interceptor missiles.

Why

India's decision to develop a BMD in 1999 can be attributed to the Kargil War, when tensions between the two nuclear armed neighbours reached an all-time high, and a warning by then Pakistani Foreign Secretary Shamshad Ahmad that Pakistan can use "any weapon" in its arsenal if the limited conflict were to escalate.

Development for the anti-ballistic missile system started in 1999, with around 40 public and private companies participating in the development process. As a stop-gap measure, India procured six-batteries of the highly effective Russian S-300 air defence systems to protect major cities, including New Delhi.

What

Two interceptor missiles, the Prithivi air defence missile and the Advanced Air Defence (Ashwin) missile are designed to provide a high-low cover against incoming ballistic missiles. Prithivi is reported to be capable of intercepting missiles at exo-atmospheric altitudes of 50 – 80km, while the AAD is designed to operate at endo-atmospheric altitudes of upto 30kms.

The development makes India the fourth country in the world, after the US, Russia and Israel to have successfully developed a ballistic missile defence system.

Prompted by a growing Pakistani arsenal, of both delivery systems and nuclear warheads, India has embarked upon and given priority to creating a BMD, which will also augment India's overall air defence capabilities. Former Indian army chief, V.K Singh,

revealed in March 2014 that 97 per cent of air defences are obsolete, further reinforcing earlier reports regarding the state of air defences employed by the Indian armed forces.

When

The test conducted of the interceptor missile on Sunday was a success, and an important technological milestone was achieved. But a single successful test in controlled conditions does not imply that the system would retain the same level of effectiveness in combat conditions.

A BMD, although effective against a small number of incoming missiles, can be overwhelmed by employing saturation fire. If an opposing force were to shoot multiple missiles in an area of operation, a BMD battery can track and shoot down some missiles, but not all.

Capability

It is yet not known what the capability of the tracking systems linked with the Indian BMD are, as the effectiveness of the planned 'iron dome' will eventually come down to how effective those systems are, and their capability to track multiple incoming missiles.

The development of India's BMD is a cause of concern for Pakistan, as an effective system would to a certain degree negate Pakistan's strategic strike capability. It will force the armed forces to counter it, a solution which would prove to be both costly and time consuming. India has thus, once again contributed to an unhealthy arms race between the two countries.

Source: <http://www.dawn.com/news/1258707/what-you-need-to-know-about-indias-newly-launched-ballistic-missile-defence>

Obama's Nuclear-Free World Vision has Come to Naught – OpEd | Jonathan Power

During the Cold War barely a week went by without some reportage or debate on nuclear weapons. Not today. Yet most of the nuclear weapons around then are still around.

It would be alright if they were left to quietly rust in their silos. But they are not. When in 2010 President Barack Obama made a deal with Russian President Dimitri Medvedev to cut their respective arsenals of strategic missiles by one-third the Republican-dominated U.S. Congress, as the price for its ratification of the deal, decreed that Obama and future presidents be made to spend a trillion dollars on updating and modernizing America's massive arsenal.

Now that chicken is coming home to roost – and a few other chickens too.

President Barack Obama's unexpected legacy is that he has presided over an America that has been at war longer than any previous president. Moreover, of recent presidents, apart from Bill Clinton, he has cut the U.S. nuclear weapon stockpile at the slowest rate.

The Republican's extreme right clipped Obama's wings. Of that there is no doubt, making it impossible thus far, to negotiate with Russia any further cuts. At the same time the counterproductive U.S.-EU confrontation with Russia over Ukraine pushed President Vladimir Putin into the foolish tactic of talking about the possible use of nuclear weapons and deploying intimidating flights over the airspace of the Baltic Sea. When Putin was asked a year ago if Russia was prepared to bring nuclear weapons into play in the confrontation over Crimea, he replied: "We were ready."

Yet not all can be pinned on Congress or Putin. Obama's vision of a nuclear-free world outlined in his famous speech in Prague in April 2009 has come to naught. "The Prague vision has been empty of calories," says Bruce Blair, the former Air Force nuclear launch officer who revealed the tenuous controls on launching that exists in the underground silos that contain long-range ballistic missiles.

Why for example has Obama set about cutting the proposed budget for nuclear security? Yet (according to some figures) there are a 200,000 putative nuclear weapons

in the world in the form of highly enriched uranium and plutonium, as well as those already in service. The cuts will affect the Global Material Security Program which has the task of improving the security of nuclear materials around the world, securing orphaned or disused radiological sources and strengthening nuclear smuggling detection.

Why is Obama building the Ballistic Missile Defence System, based in Romania and Poland? It is meant to fire “a bullet at a bullet”, supposedly to defend Europe and the U.S. against a nuclear attack by Iran. (Dutch and Danish warships are also being fitted with sensors that plug into the system.) But one of Obama’s greatest achievements is the nuclear defanging of Iran – an effort that was strongly helped by Russia’s contribution to the negotiations.

Obama and the Pentagon say this is not about Russia. But Russia believes it is. NATO’s Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg, says that “many countries are seeking to develop or acquire their own ballistic missiles”. But which ones? North Korea? It would not use this flight-path. Or Pakistan and India which only aim at each other and in India’s case at China. Richard Burt, who negotiated the path-breaking Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty with Russia at the time of President George H. W. Bush says: “It is debatable whether other countries will go nuclear.”

Stoltenberg also defends the Ballistic Missile System, arguing that “the interceptors are too few and located too far south to intercept Russian intercontinental missiles”. Yet once the system is fully in place it can be upgraded relatively easily and this is what perturbs Russia. Even now it could probably take out in flight Russian short and medium range missiles.

No wonder Putin talks the nuclear talk. The System destabilizes the nuclear balance.

Jonathan Beale, the BBC’s defence correspondent, recently broadcast an analysis of the System. He concludes that “NATO and the U.S. may risk being accused of not telling the whole truth”.

Recently a dozen Democratic senators wrote to Obama asking him to “redouble” his efforts to reduce nuclear threats”. They went on to say that Washington should propose again that the U.S. and Russia reduce their nuclear arsenals to 1,000 weapons and 500 delivery systems apiece. That is less than half of what they currently have deployed. Richard Burt believes that Washington could be doing more to engage Moscow. “I don’t think we are trying hard enough to bring Putin to the table”.

Obama has only six months left to make his mark. A deal with Russia could not be negotiated in that time even if he wanted to. But he could emulate his predecessor, George W. Bush, who simply announced he was unilaterally putting 1,000 nuclear missiles on the shelf. He could also cancel the Ballistic Missile Defence System. [IDN-INPS – 17 May 2016]

*Jonathan Power syndicates his opinion articles. He forwarded this and his previous Viewpoints for publication in IDN-INPS.

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Modi In Iran: Shifting Alliances | Shahid M Amin

INDIAN Prime Minister Narendra Modi's official visit to Iran beginning May 22, 2016 has considerable significance in geostrategic terms. India is clearly getting closer to Iran, now that there are no longer any constraints due to sanctions against Iran, imposed by the West and the UN. Even during the sanctions regime, India had been given special permission to continue to import oil from Iran, which had ranked as the second largest source of Indian oil imports until 2012.

In the last twenty years, there has been a steady growth in India-Iran relations. From Iran's perspective, a deliberate "look east" policy has made India an attractive choice. This shift was necessitated by the ground reality that Iran continued to have an adversarial relationship with the USA, coupled with the fear that Israel, seen as a US protégé, might make a pre-emptive attack on Iran. In 1994, Iran considered building a possible anti-US alliance consisting of Iran, India and China. The Iranian idea got nowhere because neither China nor India would join such an alliance. In 2003, President Khatami made a state visit to India when he was the chief guest at India's National Day celebrations.

During the visit, Khatami signed the New Delhi Declaration with Prime Minister Vajpayee setting forth the vision of a "strategic partnership" between the two countries. They pledged to collaborate on energy, trade and economic issues. They decided to strengthen their cooperation in counter-terrorism and "broaden their strategic collaboration" in third countries. Soon thereafter, Iranian and Indian warships conducted joint naval exercises. India agreed to train Iranian military personnel. The two sides agreed, along with Russia, to create a Russo-Iranian-Indian transport corridor. Ever since, India has been working on the Chabahar port and its onward linkage with Afghanistan. The obvious purpose is to provide an alternate transit route to Afghanistan and Central Asia, in competition with Pakistan.

Thousands of Iranian students are studying in India. A recent opinion poll in Iran has shown that a large percentage of Iranians have a favourable impression of India. India is home to the world's second largest Shia population, second only to Iran. These Indian Shia Muslims are a pro-Iran lobby in India. With the lifting of sanctions against Iran, there are enhanced possibilities of trade and investment between the two countries. Ahead of Modi's visit, an Indian official said "we are ready to do business with Iran in a big way." The visit's centrepiece will be the trilateral agreement on Chabahar

but India is also interested in another major project, the International South-South Transport Corridor. It seems that CPEC, the China Pakistan Economic Corridor, has jolted India, as well as Iran and Afghanistan, who see it also as a rival transit route to Afghanistan and Central Asia.

There are some restraining factors in the growth of India-Iran relations. There is the issue of a long-pending debt of about six billion dollars that India has to pay back to Iran for oil imports. Iran also feels aggrieved that India has been slow to respond to its overtures for the past many years. Even apart from the various sanctions on Iran, India was hesitant to respond due to its growing strategic alliance with the USA, particularly in the last decade. Moreover, India has grown closer to Israel for strategic and military reasons. The USA and Israel are seen as the main adversaries by Iran. Against this background, Modi has a balancing act to perform during his current visit to Iran.

Though President Rouhani visited Pakistan in March 2016 and assured that “Pakistan’s security is Iran’s security”, it seems that both sides continue to have mental reservations about each other. Pakistan is worried by the growing ties between Iran and India. It sees the Chabahar transit route as a clear bid to sideline Pakistan as a transit route. The arrest of an Indian RAW agent Kulbhushan Yadav revealed that he had been operating for years from his base in Chabahar. The matter was taken up with Iran but there is no indication that Iran has done something to arrest his accomplices in Iran. Since the 1990s, Pakistan and Iran have been supporting opposing sides in Afghanistan: Pakistan being closer to Pakhtuns whereas Iran has been siding with the non-Pakhtuns.

The Taliban regime (1994-2001), which fought against the non-Pakhtuns, was seen as an ally of Pakistan. Even at present, both Iran and Afghanistan have the impression that Pakistan supports the Taliban in the current fighting in Afghanistan. Iran has also been critical that some Baluch groups have used sanctuaries in Pakistan to create an insurgency in Iranian Baluchistan. Finally, Iran is worried about Pakistan’s close military ties with Saudi Arabia with whom Iran is engaged at present in a cold war. At the outset, the Iranian Islamic Revolution seemed to be focused on Islamic ideology. The country was renamed as the Islamic Republic of Iran. Allama Iqbal was said to be one of the inspirations of the Islamic Revolution. The supreme leader Ayatollah Khamenai is author of a book on Iqbal. But from Iran’s actual conduct, it has become increasingly evident that national interests rather than ideology motivate the regime’s foreign policy. Since the 1990s, Iran has stopped supporting the Kashmiri freedom struggle, evidently as a concession to India. Iran has also established close ties with Russia.

In geostrategic terms, a shifting of alliances is currently taking place. On one hand, Pakistan and China have entered a long-term alliance through ambitious projects under CPEC. On the other hand, India seems to be getting closer to Iran and Afghanistan, which looks like a kind of encirclement of Pakistan. Pakistani public opinion finds it difficult to digest as to how two Muslim neighbours, with whom they have so many historical and cultural ties, should prefer India over Pakistan. Clearly, there is a need for introspection. One obvious explanation is that, for many years, Pakistan has allowed itself to become a sanctuary for militants of various hues, particularly the Jihadists, who have been involved in operations against neighbouring countries. It is imperative for both Pakistan's internal and external security to continue the crackdown against extremists under Operation Zarb-e-Azb. Also, it is high time to complete the Pakistan-Iran gas pipeline project to enhance relations with Iran.

— The writer served as Pakistan's Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, the ex-Soviet Union, France, Nigeria and Libya.

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A New Power Game | Dr Naazir Mahmood

On May 23, Presidents Hassan Rouhani and Ashraf Ghani, and Prime Minister Modi were beaming with jubilation as Iran, Afghanistan and India endorsed a new transit trade agreement, also known as Chabahar. It may have been a coincidence that, just a day earlier, the US claimed an American drone strike had killed the Taliban leader Mullah Akhtar Mansoor in Balochistan. It has also been reported that he was coming from the Pak-Iran border town of Taftan. Apparently unconnected, in a broader perspective the two events may have far-reaching implications for this region.

The agreement signed in Tehran stipulates that the Iranian port of Chabahar will make available all facilities of transit trade to Afghanistan; and to operationalise this trilateral agreement, the three countries will make investments from their own resources. The event made it clear that the happiest of the three leaders was the host, Hassan Rouhani, whose last visit to Pakistan was marred by the revelation that an Indian spy had been caught after sneaking into Pakistan from Iran. Some analysts believe the episode was blown out of proportion at an inauspicious time.

The president of Iran was made to feel uncomfortable and awkward in the face of allegations that Iran was not doing enough to prevent Indian spies from entering into Pakistan. Just one spy was allowed to ruin any chances of better relations between the two countries, and that too when the president was a guest.

After signing the agreement, President Rouhani gave a message to the neighbouring countries [read Pakistan] that Delhi, Kabul, and Tehran will work together for peace and prosperity of this region by opening new avenues for cooperation and mutual utilisation of resources.

Perhaps, the most prominent element of the recent get-together in Tehran was the commitment that India made about \$500m worth of investment in Iran; in addition, dozens of joint projects have been promised. India plans to invest \$200m right away, and the remaining amount will be spent in the near future.

For Pakistan, the point to ponder is that Chabahar is hardly a 100 kilometres away from Pakistan; hardly as far as Hyderabad is from Karachi. Even more important is the fact that this port will serve not only Iran, India, and Afghanistan, but also serve as a corridor to the Central Asian countries; whereas we are exclusively focused on our China-Pak Economic Corridor (CPEC).

Essentially China focused, CPEC could have been a bonanza for us had we been able to normalise our relations with other neighbours. Not only China, but even Russia and the US would like us to make CPEC a regional resource benefiting all rather than just one country. It does not require much to figure that out, provided we learn to look beyond the traditional binary.

The US makes no secret of its relations with India; especially after the civilian nuclear agreement they signed in 2008. As Pakistan gets closer to China, the US gets closer to India, and in this context our role in Afghanistan becomes more 'controversial'.

The friendship India has nurtured with Afghanistan and Iran is not a recent phenomenon and India has always enjoyed excellent relations with Russia and erstwhile Soviet Union. The Central Asian countries that broke away from the USSR have always had a soft corner with secular India, while we have been trying to reignite a common religious flame with them.

The recent agreement that India has signed with Iran includes many projects involving science, technology, and cultural cooperation.

After the removal of most sanctions imposed by the US, Iran has emerged as an ideal trade partner in this region, and Pakistan had a golden opportunity to capitalise on this by improving relations with at least one neighbour. India has been a big oil importer from Iran, whereas we have been mostly relying on Saudi Arabia from where we import much more than oil; and those additional imports from Saudi Arabia have permeated across Pakistan during the last four decades. Even then, Modi was accorded a warm welcome by the new Saudi king recently.



So, how exactly has the new agreement sidelined Pakistan and what is the scope of our loss? Pakistan has been sidelined in at least three areas of influence: economic, political, and diplomatic. Economically, Pakistan has sidelined itself by being reluctant to provide access to trade facilities from India to Afghanistan and onward to Central Asia.

Similarly, it has been hesitant to complete its part of Iran-Pakistan-India pipeline. By doing so, Pakistan's self-proclaimed patriots wanted to deprive India, Afghanistan, and Iran of some economic advantage they might have got through Pakistan. By showing some foresight, Pakistan would have earned billions of dollars in transit fee. But we lost that opportunity.

Politically, we have lost an opportunity to enhance our neighbours' dependence on us and emerge as an astute political partner in this region. We have lowered our own strategic hold on the land-locked countries of Central Asia by trying to reduce access to sea and to India. Open access through Wagah border would have given us more political than economic clout. By being a facilitator rather than a troublemaker, we would have burnished our political image.

Diplomatically, cultural linkages play an important role. But that depends on how civilised you look to other nations. Diplomacy is no more a zero-sum game; it's

like human relations that need consideration and mutual respect but we seemed to have annoyed all our neighbours — Afghanistan, India, and Iran.

Now a million-dollar question: why didn't the Pakistani policy makers anticipate the colossal loss of this missed opportunity? If history is any guide, we have paid a heavy price for this recidivist behavior but refuse to be counselled.

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Recent history has time and again proved our calculations wrong; and there have been writers, journalists and intellectuals pinpointing our errors of judgment, but they have been repeatedly marginalised and overruled.

This region is witnessing a sharp polarisation in which Pakistan appears to be standing with China and Saudi Arabia; whereas America, Afghanistan, India, and Iran appear to be gravitating closer. This is creating a new power game. We need to decide whether we want to keep moving away from our three neighbours with whom we share the longest borders.

Source: <http://tns.thenews.com.pk/new-power-game/#.V012ATV97cu>